

Town of *Dunstable* Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
October 5, 2016
Town Hall, Dunstable, MA 01827

Convened: 6:40 pm

Present: Daniel F. Devlin, chair, Walter F. Alterisio, Leah D. Basbanes, member(s); Tracey Hutton, Town Administrator; Stephanie Cronin, School Committee; Joe Dean, Veterans Agent; Joan Simmons, Planning Board; Michael Martin, Roads Commission; Kellee Wilson, Nathaniel St. Jean, Patti Starbird, Sharon Shen, Lauren Chennell, and Dave Wallace, Babcock Scholarship Trustees; Susan Metzler, Susan Tully, Jean Phelan, Dunstable Gardening Group

Selectboard Reviewed & Signed the Following:

- Vendor & Payroll Warrants
- Standard Contracts

Open Forum

Mr. Alterisio briefly explained the purpose of the public forum and went over the Boards agenda which included an appointment, proposed by-law changes for the Annual Town Meeting, adoption of a Town Building Dog Policy, and support for Inspectional Services.

Veterans Agent Update

Mr. Dean publicly thanked the parties responsible for cleaning up the memorials in front of the Town Hall. He noted that the monuments get a lot of attention, especially from Veterans. Mr. Dean then took the opportunity to remind the Board that a report has been provided by the Memorials & Monuments Committee and provided a copy of the report to Ms. Basbanes.

135 Pleasant Street

Mr. Dean started off by informing the Board that the issue concerning 135 Pleasant Street remains ongoing. He reported that a large backhoe remains on the property and is in addition to the commercial vehicle that has been consistently on the property. The Board responded that discussion has been had with the Zoning Enforcement Officer relating to this matter. Ms. Hutton noted that she is working with Mr. Barnes who is the Zoning Enforcement Officer to address the matter and issue a letter to the property owner. There was further discussion of what actions the Board may take and what exactly has been done by the property owner. Mr. Dean informed the Board that the property owner continues to bring in more earth and other materials as well as removing materials. The Board noted that the issue of bringing materials and earth in is not entirely clear under the Zoning By-Laws, however, the Zoning By-Laws are clear on the matter of removing earth. Mr. Dean responded that if materials brought in were being used for landscaping it would be one thing, but these materials are clearly for contractor purposes and lodged his objections. Ms. Simmons made some comments as to the zoning and noted that the same property owner has a property where he has a special permit for operating a B2 business in an otherwise B1 zoned property. The Board responded that that property has no immediate relation to the property in question which is 135 Pleasant Street. The Board then concluded discussion on this topic.

Dunstable Gardening Group

Ms. Tully and her colleagues addressed the Board regarding some thoughts and concerns about the landscaping and maintenance around the Town Hall and Town Common. There are certain activities which DIG has done over the years, but faces a conundrum specifically about what they should do around the Town Hall. They would like to maintain the Town Hall sign and see to it that the memorials stay clear of weeds.

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While on the topic of the memorials, DIG noted an invasive plant that is nearly impossible to get rid of. The species requires repeated use of herbicides in order to kill it. One option with this invasive species is to allow it to remain as ground cover, but prevent it from spreading as much as possible. If it is to be treated, the whole area will need to have it removed, including other plants, and the herbicide deployed. The Board was not opposed to eradicating the plant in question. Discussion turned to some side beds around edging along the entrances to the Town Hall. Several options were proposed and discussed. Ms. Phelan noted she is a landscaper and designer and offered the services of her company at cost for addressing some of the landscaping. She subsequently provided the Board with a proposal of things that could be done. The cost would be \$4,400 and done over the course of 2-3 years. Additionally, the town would be able to pick what would be done or not done.

The Board stated that unfortunately the town does not have a specific line item for landscaping. Ms. Hutton noted that there is a line item for mowing, but it is currently dedicated solely for that purpose. She is working on finding a different vendor for the mowing, and some of the funds could potentially be opened up, perhaps in next year's budget, for addressing some of the landscaping. Ms. Hutton promised she would save the materials provided by Ms. Phelan for the upcoming budget season. Ms. Phelan then turned discussion to the AC units and their current state. Ms. Hutton reported that the previous fence has been removed and a new split railing fence will be installed. Some plantings will be done because they are required by the Massachusetts Historical Commission as part of the permission to change the area around the Town Hall which is a protected and designated historical building. Ms. Hutton agreed to meet with DIG about what plantings should be considered for that area. Discussion then turned to some difficulties that DIG has had with the Parks Commission regarding some of the work that should be done in areas under their authority. Ms. Hutton briefly turned discussion to the issue of the fire hydrant in front of the Town Hall. The hydrant is functional, but currently is too surrounded by shrubbery. As a result, the shrubbery will need to be removed. The Board's consensus was to determine how to possibly generate resources to address the needs brought up by DIG.

Administrative Support for Inspectional Services

Ms. Hutton reported that the individual who has provided administrative support to the Inspections Department has decided to give up the position. As a result, the town needs to determine a replacement. The Personnel Board has forwarded a job description to the Board for discussion relating to the pay rate and the duties and responsibilities of the position. Currently the position is paid via a stipend. The Board expressed some concern about taking immediate action. Ms. Hutton responded by elaborating further on the situation. This includes some of the frustrations of staff and contractors. She has spoken repeatedly with the software company to address the issues that staff and contractors have. Ms. Hutton noted that the individual who is giving up this position has been expressing a desire to do so for a while and she doubts that their mind may be changed on this. Ms. Hutton then turned discussion to a possible solution. This includes designating a different staff member to do the work for a trial period to see if it works, and assuming it does, a permanent solution may therefore be found.

There was a question of where the stipend for the work comes from. Ms. Hutton elaborated that it comes out of the Building Inspectors budget. From there she stated that she would like to change the grade of the position to a grade 5. This prompted some light discussion regarding what Personnel Board may do in regards to grades. The Board then expressed some reservations at appointing the person proposed and discussion revolved around the possibility of creating a new position that could cover for other areas such as providing an assistant to the Town Clerk. Ms. Hutton felt that the person proposed for the position can do it, and she stated that any additional position to be created will take further discussion and careful consideration. There was some further discussion by the Board regarding the exact rate and what the proper response should be. Whether there should be different grades. It was proposed that the person in question, should they accept the position, be paid the same rate for additional hours as the rate they are otherwise paid for their other position. With that settled, the Board concluded it would move forward with Ms. Hutton's proposal.

Proposed By-Law Changes for Annual Town Meeting

Ms. Hutton started off by noting and elaborating on various by-law changes that have been recommended. She asks the Board to determine whether such changes should be pursued, and if so, whether they should be done

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overtime in this situation, not the chain of command. Ms. Hutton then turned the Board to a modification to the vacation time provision. The modification would be to make it clearer that employees may carry some vacation time, as permitted, by the policy past the July 1st threshold. The existing wording makes it appear that carrying this time might be denied. The change would lessen this as a possibility. Mr. Martin had some comments and questions regarding the policy which Ms. Hutton and the Board answered. Ms. Simmons inquired as to when the raises will go through. Ms. Hutton explained the current situation with the Wage & Classification Chart and the related job descriptions. Once the process has been completed the raises will go through. Currently the plan is to pay retroactively to July 1st, 2016 once the raises are implemented. The Board elaborated over the process and explained that the town will need to consider the financial aspects. There was brief discussion of whether the raises should be done over three years as planned or done faster. Ms. Hutton noted that the Annual Town Meeting approved a third of the necessary funds and any additional funds would have to come out of free cash, depending on how much the town will ultimately have. From there Ms. Hutton finished by informing the Board that the Personnel Board's next meeting will be on Tuesday, October 11th, 2016.

Request for Support Relating to a Grant Matter

Ms. Cronin started off by explaining to the Board that she is not asking for funds, but rather the support of the Board in applying for a grant for \$64,000. The Board inquired as to what the grant will require. Ms. Cronin elaborated on what the grant would pay for and how the school district would benefit. The Board noted that the concern with grants is that they tend to be seed money. The problem as a result is that it is not always possible to sustain the grants work once the grant is exhausted. Ms. Cronin responded by noting that this grant, although it has shrunken over the years, is a renewing one. The Board responded that if this is serious, it should be considered as part of future budgeting should the grant be discontinued at some point. Ms. Cronin responded by explaining how the program works and the way it works with private companies as well. There was discussion as to what, if any fees are applicable. Ms. Cronin responded that she is not looking for any funds from the town at this point, just the go ahead to submit an application for the grant. The Board was not averse to supporting Ms. Cronin on this matter and generally extended its support for the application.

Babcock Scholarship Trustees

Ms. Wilson updated the Board on the recent appointments of new trustees. These include Nathan St. Jean, and Patti Starbird. In addition, Ms. Wilson noted, two members will be re-appointed. These include Dave Wallace and Sharon Shen. Mr. Devlin then subsequently agreed to continue as the Board's representative to the scholarship's board of trustees.

A motion was made by Mr. Devlin to approve the trustee appointments. The motion was seconded by Mr. Alterisio and passed without objection.

Administrators Report

Ms. Hutton started off by reporting on a request from GDRSD to look at the possibility and cost of bringing a water pipeline to the high school building. The school district has provisional permission to continue using its existing water source, but must change it. Ms. Hutton promised to keep the Board updated on any further developments. From there she turned discussion to the public safety complex that has been proposed for Fire and Police. A presentation on this will be done on the project in November. Ms. Hutton then turned to Affordable Housing and the RFP that will be done soon for the development of affordable housing on the MUD. She then noted that the Fire Chief will be on vacation from the 11th to the 17th. From there she informed the Board about a grant received from the Commonwealth. This included some related contracts for Mr. Devlin to sign. Ms. Hutton assured the Board that she has discussed the continuing costs after the grant funds are exhausted with the Advisory Board and they are on board. There was some discussion by the Board regarding some of the work done for the stormwater.

Mr. Martin elaborated on some of the painted lines and arrows which indicate catch basins and how some of the lines noted may actually be highway related and not strictly stormwater. Ms. Hutton reported she is not aware of them serving a stormwater purpose. Ms. Simmons inquired as to how many policies the town has and whether they are listed anywhere. The Board responded that the town has reached the point where it is now,

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essentially, by evolution. Unfortunately, the town has not always codified the ways that things are done, and this is why it may appear that there is a flurry of policies being adopted. Ms. Hutton responded that she files policies with the Town Clerk and maintains copies of them in her office, but to her knowledge there isn't a full list. The Board responded that there is an effort to standardize and codify. It was determined that a tabulation would be a good idea and the matter should be explored further.

Use of Town Property

The Babcock Trustees made a request for use of the Town Hall for a meeting to be held on October 5th, 2016. The Board agreed to approve the request retroactively. The Grange requested use of the Town Hall on November 19th, 2016. The Board saw no reason to deny the request.

A motion to approve the request by Babcock Trustees retroactively was made by Mr. Alterisio, and seconded by Ms. Basbanes, and passed by majority vote.

A motion to approve the request by the Dunstable Grange for use of the Town Hall on November 19th, 2016 was made by Mr. Alterisio, and seconded by Ms. Basbanes. The motion passed unanimously.

Minutes

The Board considered the minutes drafted for September 21st, 2016. The Board noted a change that should be made to the Administrators Report concerning the Animal Control Officer and the licensing of dogs. The Board determined the minutes should reflect that the licensing matter is not just about enforcement of the law, but about protecting the dog and the owner.

A motion was made by Mr. Alterisio to approve the minutes of September 21st, 2016 as amended and otherwise presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Basbanes and passed without objection.

Warrants & Mail

The Board reviewed the vender and payroll warrants and went through their mail.

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Basbanes at 8:00 pm. The motion was seconded by Mr. Alterisio and passed without objection.

Respectfully submitted by



Jakob K. Hamm
Admin. Assistant to the Selectboard & Town Administrator

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