

Approved Minutes
Town of Brookline Selectboard Meeting
Wednesday, December 2, 2020, 6:30 PM
(videoconference)

Present

Selectboard:
David Jones (Chair)
Gwen Tanza
Bruce Mello
Shelby Brimmer
Joseph Dutton

Town Officers:
Guy Tanza (Town Clerk, videographer)
Mark Bills
Somara Zwick

Members of the Public:
Peter Barus (Recorder)
FACTV (Videoconference recording)

Call the meeting to order

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 PM.

Review changes to agenda if any

New Business: treasurer/bookkeeper update.

Scheduled members of the public

Somara Zwick attending.

Unscheduled members of the public

Approve Minutes

Minutes from November 18, 2020 Regular Meeting

Correction were made.

Mr. Jones moved to approve the minutes for November 18, 2020, as amended. Second by Mr. Mello. All in favor.

New Business

Treasurer/Bookkeeper Update

Ms. Zwick noted one response from a candidate for treasurer, and a bookkeeper candidate; and discussed the approach of hiring a bookkeeper as Assistant Treasurer (appointment not required); and suggested salary flexibility, a temporary contractor or employee, depending on insurance situation, offering current Treasurer rate at \$20/hour until to Town Meeting, after which a new treasurer might have their own ideas; and noted that the current Treasurer intends not to run for the position.

Ms. Zwick had sent the bookkeeper candidates resumé, and noted that their usual rate as a contractor was higher than \$20/hour. There was discussion. The chair polled the members, there was consensus in favor of hiring the candidate. Ms. Zwick will call the candidate, and forward board questions if any; and noted that Ms. Wiswall has been kept informed.

It was noted that any Treasurer candidate must be a resident, and the bookkeeper candidate is not a resident.

Meeting Structure

Mr. Jones read the online meeting rules, noting previous discussions, and that there were also VLCT recommendations; and polled the members on the rules. There was general consensus for following the rules as read, with reasonable exceptions.

Selectboard Terms

Mr. Jones cited previous discussions at Town Meeting about the one-year term, and explained that this year, with three terms up for re-election at the same time, this could disable the Selectboard if nobody stands for election; and suggested alternatives so that no more than two seats will be up for re-election in any given year. It was noted that a vote in Town Meeting is needed to change the length of terms. There was discussion. Mr. Jones noted that Mr. Tanza had consulted with VLCT attorney. There was consensus that while a one-year term could be an incentive for new candidates to run, the Town Meeting vote should be taken to prevent more than three seats being open in any given year, as would occur every three years under the current structure; and that this situation will not be rectified until 2022 in any case. Ms. Brimmer asked whether a Selectboard could create a policy to address the occasional shortage of members and candidates.

Recycling Site

Mr. Jones noted Mr. Meyer's previous questions about cost, illegal dumping, and general maintenance; and a letter from Triple-T about their drivers' repeated attempts to clean up and close the door to the bin. There was discussion about the feasibility of placing cameras at the site; already high costs of operation; continuing problems of misuse and abuse; materials at the town garage that could support cameras; that Town Meeting might have to vote funding for surveillance. Mr. Bills confirmed that poles could be installed. There was consensus that if the Town votes to keep the bin, steps must be taken to monitor the site.

Old Business

Town Meeting

Mr. Jones discussed the current state of legislation on electronic meetings; that it was not possible legally to hold a hybrid or remote Town Meeting; there had been hearings and no action. Mr. Tanza had discussed this with the Secretary of State and legislators, and no change was anticipated; and summarized as likely options, that the Warning must be voted by the January 20, 2021 meeting, that that no decision would be taken at the current meeting, and that the three options include:

- Hold the entire meeting by Australian Ballot, with a remotely conducted informational meeting a week to ten days in advance, at which everything to be voted must be presented, nominees pre-nominated, all matters to be voted listed in the Warning; on Town Meeting Day yes/no ballots to be dropped off at the Town Office.
- Indoor Town Meeting at SLP or NewBrook Elementary School, adhering to state public health guidance.
- Outdoor meeting.

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There was discussion; that Australian Ballot would be safest, and with advance preparation could enhance participation; that outdoors would be too cold; that the Governor or Legislature would be unlikely to act. It was noted that candidate petitions had already been waived by the Legislature; that the Selectboard must vote on the format for Town Meeting; the public must be fully informed well in advance; no discussion would be possible under the Australian Ballot format; and that this could affect outcomes such as the budget vote.

There was consensus in favor of conducting Town Meeting by Australian Ballot. Town Meeting options will be on the December 16 agenda for a vote.

Mr. Jones will consult with Dave Parker and invite to next meeting.

Building Update

Mr. Mello reported two major issues. The first was a billing question after a boiler cleaning and repair by Jeffers. There was discussion. It was recommended that Jeffers be consulted directly about the matter before involving another vendor. Mr. Mello will call Jeffers and update the board.

The second issue involved water hammering in the system, Mr. Mello awaiting a call from Mr. Bovat.

Summary / Update / Reports

Guy Tanza – Town Clerk Report

Mr. Tanza reported town business being conducted by appointment, a bit slower than usual, still property transfer and refinancing were going well.

Highways & Roads

Mark Bills – Road Supervisor

Mr. Bills reported call from the line-painting vendor wanting to work at night (less traffic), and asking that locations be marked; new pavement was painted, a good job; and discussed signage repair and replacement, roads holding up well after storms with a few potholes; that grading was not indicated this time of year; and had received a call from the milling vendor saying they did not receive payment for work in the fall. Mr. Tanza explained the matter was being addressed, that Ms. Zwick had asked for another invoice in the amount of \$1,078.25.

Mr. Bills discussed a question from a resident about town jurisdiction at Parker Road and an old trail beyond the turn-around. Mr. Tanza explained that the town road went to Mr. Parker's residence, at the turn-around, and from that point the ancient road had come under private ownership from the gate west; that Mr. Parker had consulted a surveyor and the Inner Fire owners before the purchase took place.

Mr. Bills addressed maintenance items with the grader.

Communications

Email

Regular Mail

- Letter from Jehova's Witnesses
- Solicitation from NewBrook Fire & Rescue
- Solicitation from Library in Dummerston

Pay Orders

(Signed last week.)

Payroll

Mr. Jones polled the members for questions.

Mr. Jones moved to approve Payroll Warrant 2020-75 nov 25 \$1,187.82. Second by Mr. Mello. By roll call, **approved** with one abstaining.

Accounts Payable

Mr. Jones polled the members for questions.

Mr. Jones moved to approve Accounts Payable 2020-76 Dec 2 2020, \$248,121.97. Second by Ms. Brimmer. By roll call, **approved** with one opposed, one abstaining.

Set agenda for the next meeting – Wednesday December 16, 2020

- Vote on conducting Town Meeting by Australian Ballot
- Treasurer
- Public Meeting Conduct

Adjournment

Mr. Jones moved to Adjourn. Second by Ms. Tanza. All in favor.

The meeting was Adjourned at 8:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Peter Barus, Recorder, December 4, 2020