

Selectboard Regular Meeting and Joint Meeting with Housing Authority  
Monday, February 8, 2021 via Zoom

1. CALL TO ORDER SELECTBOARD REGUALR MEETING - Chairman Bannon opened the meeting at 6:00pm; those present via zoom: Ed Abrahams, Kate Burke, Bill Cooke, Leigh Davis. Town Manager Mark Pruhenski; Assistant Town Manager Chris Rembold.

2. SELECTBOARD'S ANNOUNCEMENTS/STATEMENTS

- a. Election Warden Retirement – On behalf of the Selectboard, Town Manager and the community, Chairman Bannon thanked Paul Ivory for his service and dedication as Election Warden for precincts A, C, D in Great Barrington. He presented a certificate of recognition from the Town and its residents.
- b. L. Davis raised concerns about the timing of the lights on the brown/red bridge and the low underpass on Taconic Avenue and asked that they be addressed.
- c. E. Abraham noted questions raised about reducing the Police Department budget and suggested the Selectboard open the conversation to focus on what is being done currently and what are potential future objectives first, rather than budget.
  - i. K. Burke stated that it is important to have a committee to review policing in GB to support/optimize diversity and inclusion and potentially make systemic change. She stated it may be too late to consider budget.
  - ii. S. Bannon stated budget could still be discussed.

3. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. HWW – M. Pruhenski stated the engineers were continuing their study/appraisal and there would be a presentation of findings in the spring.
- b. Board/Committee Vacancies – M. Pruhenski noted there were a number of vacancies on Town boards/committees and encouraged the public to consider serving.
- c. HIC Update – M. Pruhenski stated that Dan Bailly and Eric Gabriel, Housatonic Improvement Committee co-chairs requested an extension to February 22 to update the Selectboard on the Housatonic School.
- d. FY22 Budget Season – M. Pruhenski noted FY22 budget season starts next week. Meetings will occur virtually and the proposed budget will be posted on the Town's website.

4. LICENSES AND PERMITS

- a. Wayland Benbow for an Annual Common Victualler License for the Subway Restaurant at 246 Stockbridge Road.

E. Abrahams made a motion to approve the Annual Common Victualler License for the Subway Restaurant at 246 Stockbridge Road; B. Cooke seconded. S. Bannon asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: E. Abrahams, "aye," S. Bannon, "aye," K. Burke, "aye," B. Cooke, "aye," L. Davis, "aye." All in favor, 5-0.

5. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Referral of proposed zoning amendments to the Planning Board for Public Hearing
  - i. S. Bannon noted this is a procedural vote.
  - ii. E. Abrahams encouraged reading the zoning changes and to comment as appropriate. He inquired if boundaries were changing on River Street. C. Rembold stated they were not changing.

E. Abrahams made a motion to send the proposed zoning amendments to the Planning Board for Public Hearing; B. Cooke seconded. S. Bannon asked if any discussion –

- iii. K. Burke asked if the Selectboard could discuss the table of use and restrictions in the area. S. Bannon suggested adding to the next Selectboard meeting agenda.

Roll call vote: E. Abrahams, “aye,” S. Bannon, “aye,” K. Burke, “aye,” B. Cooke, “aye,” L. Davis, “aye.” All in favor, 5-0.

iv. C. Rembold stated that three citizen petitions were not acted on at the September 2020 Town Meeting and suggested that those petitions and the Planning Board article be discussed at the March 11 meeting.

b. FY22 Budget Policy – M. Pruhenski noted that the budget policy was unchanged from last year and was approved by the Finance Committee with one correction.

E. Abrahams made a motion to approve the budget policy with one correction; B. Cooke seconded. S. Bannon asked if any discussion –

i. Anne O’Dwyer, member Finance Committee, confirmed the Finance Committee and the Selectboard approved the corrected version of the budget policy last year and it remains unchanged.

ii. K. Burke raised a question about the clarity of one strategic priority.

K. Burke made an amendment to the motion to delete the line: *maintain and develop stable and healthy communities*.

Roll call vote: E. Abrahams, “aye,” S. Bannon, “aye,” K. Burke, “aye,” B. Cooke, “aye,” L. Davis, “aye.” All in favor, 5-0.

Roll call vote on the amended motion: E. Abrahams, “aye,” S. Bannon, “aye,” K. Burke, “aye,” B. Cooke, “aye,” L. Davis, “aye.” All in favor, 5-0.

iii. Anne O’Dwyer stated that she would take it back to the Finance Committee.

## 6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Trust Policy Committee – M. Pruhenski stated that the Selectboard had received the executive summary of the proposed charter for the Trust Policy Committee – created to enforce the Trust Policy. He noted the idea the Commission might expand its mission to include police oversight, or another body might be created for that purpose.

i. The Selectboard discussed the options and opportunities for the Trust Policy Committee to take an advisory/oversight role with the Police Department vs establishing a separate committee.

Citizens shared their perspectives –

- Jeff Loenstein stated that he was happy the Town was moving forward with the Trust Policy Committee and encouraged inclusivity and transparency in constituting the group
- Erica Mielke stated that training is an important part of this initiative.
- Gwendolyn VanSant stated there has already been significant action by the Police Department to meet with the community and build relationships. She also clarified that training is available for Town employees.
- Dan Neilson noted that many community organizations have established support structures and relationships with immigrant and other communities and should be part of the effort to implement the Trust Policy.
- Lily Swartz, who was part of the Trust Policy creation, emphasized that the process is important and that all marginalized groups should be part of the effort.
- Anne Alquist noted that it is important for the community to have a say in policing and would support the creation of an oversight committee.
- Alina Hsu stated that the commission should be data rather than complaint driven.
- William Walsh, former Police Chief stated that he supported the creation of a citizens’ committee to work with the Police Department.

E. Abrahams made a motion to create a working group that reflects the needs and diversity of the community to review current practices and policies, and if necessary, to make recommendations with respect to Police

Department transparency and accountability in handling of allegations of misconduct directing resources to community-based services to support residents and divert them from the criminal justice system; B. Cooke seconded. S. Bannon asked if any additional discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: E. Abrahams, “aye,” S. Bannon, “aye,” K. Burke, “aye,” B. Cooke, “aye,” L. Davis, “aye.” All in favor, 5-0.

Chairman Bannon stated that there were 7 panelists and 43 attendees at the meeting.

b. Personnel Policy – M. Pruhenski the Personnel Policy was updated with edits.

i. E. Abrahams stated the drug and alcohol -free work policy need to explicitly exclude medical/prescribed marijuana.

E. Abrahams made a motion to approve the Personnel Policy with the changes re: medically prescribed marijuana; B. Cooke seconded. S. Bannon asked if any additional discussion –

i. It was clarified that this is for employees without CDL.

ii. K. Burke stated that the diversity and inclusion statement about complaints should clarify the process.

K. Burke made a motion to amend the pending motion on page 2 to read: direct supervisor, Town Manager or other appropriate authorities; E. Abrahams seconded.

iii. M. Pruhenski noted this would be added to every section of the policy.

Roll call vote: E. Abrahams, “aye,” S. Bannon, “aye,” K. Burke, “aye,” B. Cooke, “aye,” L. Davis, “aye.” All in favor, 5-0.

c. Lover’s Lane/Route 7 Intersection (stakeholder discussion) – Chairman Bannon stated the purpose of the discussion is to get input from local residents. Letters received had good suggestions.

i. Amanda Height and her family live on Lovers Lane and stated there had been few accidents over many years at the corner of Lovers Lane and Route 7 - but that any changes to traffic patterns/requirements would be more detrimental. She stated drivers just need to be careful.

ii. GB Fire Chief Charlie Berger stated that Lovers Lane is a shortcut for fire trucks to Blue Hill and was not in favor of closing the road.

E. Abrahams made a motion to request Town staff work with the DOT to determine which signage is best for the intersection; B. Cooke seconded. S. Bannon asked if any discussion –

iii. L. Davis asked to consider eliminating left turns at the corner. E. Abrahams stated that all that is needed is improved signage, maybe flashing lights.

Roll call vote: E. Abrahams, “aye,” S. Bannon, “aye,” K. Burke, “aye,” B. Cooke, “aye,” L. Davis, “no.” Motion passed 4-1.

## 7. CITIZEN SPEAK TIME

## 8. SELECTBOARD’S TIME

a. L. Davis reiterated her concern about the corner of Lovers Lane and Route 7.

b. B. Cooke stated that the BRIDGE program is great, and people should consider participating.

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1. CALL TO ORDER SELECTBOARD AND HOUSING AUTHORITY JOINT MEETING - Chairman Bannon opened the meeting at 7:00pm; those present via zoom: Selectboard: Ed Abrahams, Kate Burke, Bill Cooke, Leigh Davis. Housing Authority: Mary Pat Akers, James Mercer, Eileen Mooney. Town Manager Mark Pruhenski.

2. JOINT APPOINTMENT TO THE HOUSING AUTHORITY –

a. M. Pruhenski clarified this is one vote of the two boards.

b. E. Mooney asked if the candidate was in attendance. M. Pruhenski stated he asked him to attend, if possible.

E. Abrahams made a motion to appoint John Grogan to fill the vacancy on the Housing Authority Board; B. Cooke seconded. Ed Abrahams, "aye," Steve Bannon, "aye," Kate Burke, "aye," Bill Cooke, "aye," Leigh Davis, "aye," Mary Pat Akers, "aye," James Mercer, "aye," Eileen Mooney, "aye." All in favor 8-0.

3. CITIZEN SPEAK TIME

4. MEDIA TIME

9. ADJOURNMENT Chairman Bannon adjourned the meeting by unanimous consent at 7:19pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Stacy Ostrow  
Recording Clerk