

Selectboard Regular Meeting via Zoom
Monday, March 22, 2021

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; Town Clerk, Jenn Messina.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. October 26, 2020

E. Abrahams made a motion to approve the October 26, 2020 minutes; 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.

b. November 23, 2020

i. E. Abrahams noted a change to the minutes on page 3 re: Public Housing Coastal Cultivars LLC, - Peter Puciloski stated that the Town Meeting has already spoken.

E. Abrahams made a motion to approve the November 23, 2020 minutes as amended; 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.

c. December 7, 2020 – S. Bannon stated the minutes were not provided to the Selectboard

3. SELECTBOARD’S ANNOUNCEMENTS/STATEMENTS

a. L. Davis raised that there are often a number of people waiting at the bus stop near St. James/People’s Pantry and it would be good to have some benches. M. Pruhenski to come back to Selectboard with information on adding benches.

b. K. Burke thanked the Health Inspector for his help get the word out about a vaccine clinic to the immigrant/undocumented community via outreach to local restaurants. She reported 200 vaccines were administered.

4. TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT

a. Housatonic Water Works – M. Pruhenski stated there is no update at this time.

b. Fairgrounds – M. Pruhenski stated that despite the Town’s repeated attempts to reach the Fairgrounds owners/board there has been no response.

i. L. Davis expressed concern with the lack of response and asked that the public reach out to board members and ask them to speak with the Town. S. Bannon stated it is disrespectful to not respond/agree to talk to the Town.

c. Railroad Street Outdoor Dining Summer/Fall 2021 – M. Pruhenski shared the plan for Friday/Saturday night outside dining on Railroad Street to reopen in the spring. There have been efforts to make it more café-like and festive including adding movable planters, string lights and music performances through Berkshire Busk in July/August. He also thanked the Chamber for doing outreach to retailers on Railroad Steet to get their input.

i. Karen Allen stated outside dining was nice, but expressed concerns about dining starting at 4pm which has had a negative impact on her business as that is a busy shopping time. She shared that the prior year was difficult due to COVID and this is presenting an additional challenge. She also pointed out that there had been little communication and opportunity for feedback from retailers. She asked for dining set up to start at 5pm instead of 4pm. She also pointed out dangers to pedestrians from the lane of traffic on Railroad Street.

- M. Pruhenski responded that they had moved to 5pm start time last year. K. Allen stated she was not aware and asked if it could be pushed to 5:30pm. M. Pruhenski said he would look into it, but there needed to be enough lead time for set-up.
- ii. Eric Bruun, owner SoCo Creamery, stated this is a great initiative and he liked outside dining, but expressed an interest in starting a bit later and also stated that safety due to car traffic is an issue.
 - iii. Richard Stanley stated outside dining was a good idea and has many benefits. He noted people were happy to have the parking lot area near the Triplex for outside dining. He also stated traffic was dangerous and suggested having signage at Railroad and Main warning drivers and perhaps to add speed bumps.
- S. Bannon stated that these issues would be on the next Selectboard meeting agenda. M. Pruhenski stated that he was aware of the need to increase safety and anticipated creating pedestrian crossings and signage.
- d. Add on item – M. Pruhenski stated the roundabout at the intersection of routes 23 and 41 is proceeding and work will begin this week to continue for two summer seasons.
 - e. Add on item – M. Pruhenski noted that Mass DOT expects work on the brown/red bridge to be completed in June.

5. LICENSES AND PERMITS

- a. Wyantenuck Country Club Annual Renewal of Seasonal All Alcoholic Liquor License
- E. Abrahams made a motion to approve the Wyantenuck Country Club Annual Renewal of Seasonal All Alcoholic Liquor License; 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.

6. NEW BUSINESS

- a. SB to recommend last zoning citizen petition to PB for public hearing (Maple Ave).
- E. Abrahams made a motion to recommend last zoning citizen petition to PB for public hearing; 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.
- b. 40 Grove Street—transfer of deed. C. Rembold stated that pursuant to approval at Town Meeting the town’s property at 40 Grove Street is being transferred to the Housing Trust for affordable housing purposes.
- E. Abrahams made a motion to approve the transfer of the deed for 40 Grove Street; 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.
- c. Local Rapid Recovery Grant – C. Rembold noted an application was submitted to the Massachusetts Downtown initiative for a Local Rapid Recovery technical assistance grant focused on addressing COVID impacts. C. Rembold introduced Laura Brennan of Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, to provide background/context for the grant provisions. L. Brennan explained this is a planning grant to research, identify and assess challenges and to easily prioritize and implement strategies/projects that can also provide a foundation for the longer term vitality and prosperity of downtown. C. Rembold encouraged downtown area business owners to complete the survey to ensure robust data is collected.
 - i. L. Davis stated that rearranging benches downtown could encourage congregation and engagement.
 - ii. R. Stanley asked for clarification about parameters and implementation of projects.
 - d. Elderly Tax Deferral Safety Net Pilot Program – Vivian Orłowski presented on the Elderly Tax Deferral Program providing an extensive overview of community needs and program goals including

history/background, potential guidelines as well as examples of program set-up and implementation. She requested that the Selectboard consider looking into the program.

- i. S. Bannon asked Town Manager's Office to provide an Executive Summary for the program. After additional discussion about the timeframe for information gathering and assessment, it was unlikely to be ready for Town Meeting, but best efforts would be made.
 - ii. Carol Diehl, 225 Grove Street, stated this is a critical safety net program that is of value to seniors and the entire community.
- e. Local Elections – Jenn Messina provided an update on early voting and potentially changing local election dates. She recommended that the election date stay the same, but early voting should be conducted only by mail, not in person. She noted that voters need to request a ballot and availability will be widely promoted via social, print media and otherwise. The Selectboard agreed with the suggested approach.

S. Bannon reported there were 7 panelists and 20 attendees for the meeting.

7. CITIZEN SPEAK TIME

- a. R. Stanley asked why electronic signatures were not allowed on ballots. S. Bannon stated J. Messina would find out if it is possible.

8. MEDIA TIME

9. CONVENE INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION

- a. Motion and vote to meet in executive session pursuant to M.G.L. c.30A §21 (a) (1) for purpose to discuss the discipline or dismissal of or complaints or charges brought against a public officer, employee, staff member or individual (GBHA).
- b. Motion and vote to meet in executive session pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(7) to review and approve executive session minutes in compliance with G.L. c. 30A, § 22.
- c. SELECTBOARD CHAIR'S DECLARATION

- i. I declare, under M.G.L. c.30A, §21 (a) (1) for the purpose of the executive session will be to discuss the discipline or dismissal of or complaints or charges brought against a public officer, employee, staff member or individual (GBHA) and review and approve executive session minutes in compliance with G.L. c. 30A, § 22.

- d. MOTION CONVENING THE EXECUTIVE SESSION

E. Abrahams made a motion that the Selectboard go into executive session under M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a) (1) for the purposes and reasons declared by the Chair and with the Board not return to open session at the conclusion of the executive session; B. Cooke seconded. Roll call vote: Roll call vote: E. Abrahams, "aye," S. Bannon, "aye," K. Burke, "aye," B. Cooke, "aye," L. Davis, "aye." All in favor, 5-0.

10. ADJOURNMENT - Chairman Bannon adjourned the meeting by unanimous consent at 7:08pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Stacy Ostrow
Recording Clerk