

Selectboard Regular Meeting via Zoom
Monday, August 22, 2022

1. CALL TO ORDER SELECTBOARD REGULAR MEETING

- a. Roll Call - Chairman Bannon opened the meeting at 6:00pm. Roll call: Steve Bannon, “aye,” Leigh Davis, “aye,” Eric Gabriel, “aye,” Garfield Reed, “aye.”
Absent: Ed Abrahams
Additional attendees: Town Manager Mark Pruhenski; Assistant Town Manager Chris Rembold

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. August 8, 2022

L. Davis made a motion to approve the minutes of August 8, 2022; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: S. Bannon, “aye,” L. Davis, “aye,” E. Gabriel, “aye,” G. Reed, “aye.” All in favor 4-0.

3. SELECTBOARD’S ANNOUNCEMENTS/STATEMENTS

- a. G. Reed reported on Great Barrington Day stating participation was acceptable, but would like to try something different next year – and will approach the Selectboard.
- b. E. Gabriel welcomed Joe Aberdale to his new position as Superintendent for the Town’s Department of Public Works and thanked Town staff for its recruiting efforts and hiring someone so qualified in this tough job market. He also stated on August 25 at 6:30 there will be a Housatonic Improvement Committee meeting to discuss the proposals for the Housatonic School and a Housatonic Party in the Park on October 1.
- c. L. Davis stated on August 16 she attended a meeting of Housatonic Water Works customers and relayed concerns expressed at the meeting for immediate help to provide clean water for low income and elderly residents of Flag Rock. She also stated that on August 27 at the Housatonic River Walk Park at 20 River Street, there will be a music and poetry event – W.E.B. Du Bois, I’ve Known Rivers, a walking tour of Great Barrington sites and a reception. She also stated there was a Housing Subcommittee meeting on August 9 where she was elected chair and Malcolm Fick vice chair of the Subcommittee. Also, Carolyn Valli of Habitat for Humanity provided an update on the North Plain Road housing development. She noted the next Subcommittee meeting is on September 6 at 1:00pm.

4. TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT

- a. Housatonic Water Works – M. Pruhenski stated there would be a meeting at the conclusion of this meeting to continue discussions on legal strategy with Town Counsel, David Doneski. He noted in addition, over the last few weeks, the Town has been copied on HWW customer complaints to the DEP and DPU – and thanked residents for keeping Town Hall in the loop. He also stated he is in conversations with staff to Senator Hines on how temporary relief can be provided, while researching longer-term plans.
- b. Added item – M. Pruhenski provided a staffing update – he welcomed two new staff members – Joe Aberdale who started on Monday as Superintendent of the Department of Public Works and Samara Klein, Housatonic resident, and new Library Director who is starting in the role on August 29. M. Pruhenski also stated Sue Carmel is stepping down August 26 - he thanked her for her 4+ years of service and wished her the best. In addition, he stated there is a transition plan in place to ensure payroll/vendor warrants are paid and Town finances are managed during the search for a replacement.

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- a. William Heaton and Christine Bump for Black Sheep Brewing Company d/b/a Big Elm Brewing at 389 Stockbridge Road for a New Farmer Series Pouring Permit, Christine Bump Manager
L. Davis made a motion to open the public hearing; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon, “aye,” L. Davis, “aye,” E. Gabriel, “aye,” G. Reed, “aye.” All in favor 4-0.
 - i. W. Heaton and C. Bump were in attendance and presented on their plans for 389 Stockbridge Road for a secondary tap room as an extension of their existing business in Sheffield where they have been operating for 10 years. They noted 17 years of experience in the beer making/selling business. The intent is for it to be a gathering place open 12:00-7:00/8:00pm for beer service and/or purchase of 6-packs on the premises.
 - ii. S. Bannon asked for public comment – there was none.
 - iii. S. Bannon asked for Selectboard questions/comments – E. Gabriel confirmed they will serve at a bar/tables and beer can be purchased in 6-packs. L. Davis confirmed this is the first Farmers Series Pouring Permit to be issued in Great Barrington and that there is no limit on the number of permits.
- L. Davis made a motion to close the public hearing; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon, “aye,” L. Davis, “aye,” E. Gabriel, “aye,” G. Reed, “aye.” All in favor 4-0.
- L. Davis made a motion to grant to Black Sheep Brewing Company d/b/a Big Elm Brewing a New Farmer Series Pouring Permit; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked for any additional discussion – there was none. S. Bannon, “aye,” L. Davis, “aye,” E. Gabriel, “aye,” G. Reed, “aye.” All in favor 4-0.

6. PREVIOUS BUSINESS

- a. Housatonic School re-development presentations – M. Pruhenski provided background stating the Selectboard, through Town staff, issued an RFP for the Housatonic School on January 26 and followed with an extensive marketing campaign. Four proposals were received by the June 10 deadline and after staff review, only two met the minimum requirements. He continued to clarify the process go forward – the two developers selected will present tonight; in stage 2, staff will request/collect additional information/data detailed in the RFP p.14-15; and at the next meeting there will be Selectboard and public comment/questions.
 - i. Arete Venture Partners, LLC – Kate McCormick, Esq., McCormick, Murtagh & Marcus, opened, stating she is representing Arete Venture Partners. She is a real estate zoning/land use attorney - and Housatonic life-long resident involved in past Housatonic zoning changes. She introduced the team – Jeff Glickman, Arete Venture Partners; Anthony Barnaba, architect, Blueline Design; and Suzanne Ward, Housatonic Real Estate, real estate consultant/realty management.
 - J. Glickman stated his partner Elliott Firewalker was traveling. He shared their interest in rehabilitation/repositioning of existing buildings with significant history, character and presence into mixed use spaces.
 - He stated project goals - making the building functional/practical and mixed-use with living and commercial/institutional; tying into the park/playground area and improving landscaping; designing for 14 high-quality residential one and two bedroom, and studio units on 2nd/3rd floors and creating a ground floor clean shell for a commercial/ industrial tenant; and providing a pop-up tent for events that can flow into the park/playground area – creating more activity in/around the building.

- A. Barnaba stated the Selectboard has drawings and noted the school is center stage in the village. He noted plans to replace the asphalt into a water/botanical garden and expressed the importance of mixed-use properties in “place-making” and a tool for economic development.
 - J. Glickman stated he is speaking with local construction companies/general contractors and can manage the work remotely. He noted the timeline is 18 months once terms are negotiated with potential completion in early 2024. He added his company’s vision for the project is to be involved/committed for the long-term
- S. Bannon asked if the Selectboard had any questions specifically about the presentation – there were none. He noted public comment would be at the next meeting.
- ii. WDM Properties, LLC – Dave Carver, of WDM and CT Management Group, the umbrella for investment/real estate management in Berkshire County since 1980 - presented stating his company’s history in renovating/adaptive reuse of properties for housing in Berkshire County and noted experience with projects of similar size.
- The proposal is to create 10 apartments – four on 2nd/3rd floors and two on the lower level with additional space for tenant storage and utilities. Plans also include removing asphalt on the east/park side of the building and 20 parking spaces on the opposite side. He noted that in exchange for the grant proposal, there could be discussion on restricting the units to income levels that are 100% of LMI as published by HUD each year. He noted mixed use was not proposed due to building code complications. He stated the timeline is 4-5 months for permitting and private financing is available, plus grant funding, but applications for historic tax credits can take a year until acquired. He also stated Bradley Architects would be on the team and they have worked together extensively.

S. Bannon asked if the Selectboard had any questions – there were none.

L. Davis confirmed Town staff will provide information to the Selectboard on the financial/other asks of the Town for each proposal.

7. NEW BUSINESS

C. Rembold stated both items under new business require Selectboard approval to accept land or interest in land – and involve improvements to the pumping station at Rising Pond near the Senior Center, south of Town.

a. Acceptance of a deed of 2,228 square feet of land on the east bank of Rising Pond from General Electric Company, for the purpose of improvements to the Town’s wastewater pumping station.

i. C. Rembold stated the Town is seeking land immediately south of the existing pumping station at Rising Pond - land on the east bank, except for the pumping station, is owned by General Electric who is willing to donate the land to the Town to be used for the project.

L. Davis made a motion for the Town of Great Barrington to accept the land from General Electric; E.

Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: S. Bannon, “aye,” L. Davis, “aye,” E. Gabriel, “aye,” G. Reed, “aye.” All in favor 4-0.

b. Acceptance of an easement over 2,699 square feet of land at 927 Main Street from Massachusetts

Electric Company, for the purpose of improvements to the Town's wastewater pumping station.

- i. C. Rembold stated a small portion of the field owned by National Grid/Massachusetts Electric Co. is needed to put in improvements to the pumping station and sewer lines.

L. Davis made a motion to accept 2,699 square feet of land at 927 Main Street from Massachusetts Electric Company; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: S. Bannon, “aye,” L. Davis, “aye,” E. Gabriel, “aye,” G. Reed, “aye.” All in favor 4-0.

S. Bannon stated there were 5 panelists and 29 attendees at the meeting.

8. CITIZEN SPEAK

- a. Michelle Loubert, 70 Division Street, stated she forwarded correspondence with the Town Manager re: Division Street Bridge to the Selectboard. She expressed concerns about large trucks backing up on Division Street without guidance and noted OSHA rules requiring such guidance as well as sanitary facilities for workers and flagmen/traffic controls which are especially important in a residential area.
- b. Denise Forbes, 325 North Plain Road, emphasized the need for water for Flag Rock residents and asked for the Town's help. She stated brown water is still an issue and a protest is being organized.
- c. Trevor Forbes, 325 North Plain Road, stated the HWW meeting was well-attended with about 40 people. He emphasized the urgency of the situation.
- d. Jen Windram, 214 Highland Street, asked when there would be additional information/Q&A about the Housatonic School proposals – S. Bannon responded at the next Selectboard meeting the groups would be back and phase 2 information would be shared. At that time there would be opportunity for Selectboard/ public questions/input.
- e. Elizabeth Rockefeller, 284 Park Street North, suggested providing a stainless steel tanker for clean water for everyone who is impacted. She also inquired how the new Housatonic School and North Plain Road projects would be impacted by substandard water. It was noted there are water filling stations at the Mason Library and Town Hall.

9. SELECTBOARD'S TIME

- a. G. Reed stated there has been conversation about co-housing where a group of people would run the project with Affordable Housing – he will try to get additional information.
- b. E. Gabriel stated he is happy with the Housatonic School proposals and looking forward to receiving phase 2 information and Q&A with the developers. He reiterated the availability of clean water at bottle filling stations in Great Barrington.
- c. L. Davis acknowledged the many customers of HWW who are in need of water, but her intention was to reflect the needs of Flag Rock residents expressed at the meeting. She also stated the Community Preservation Commission is meeting on August 23 at 5:30pm and everyone is welcome to join.

10. MEDIA TIME – there were no questions/comments.

14. CONVENE INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION (and not return to open session)

- a. Executive Session under MGL Ch 30A, sec. 21(a) for the following purpose: (3) To discuss

strategy with respect to litigation, regarding Housatonic Water Works. And, (6) To consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real estate, regarding Housatonic Water Works.

L. Davis made a motion that the Board meet in executive session pursuant to MGL Ch. 30A sec. 21(a) for the following purpose: (3) To discuss strategy with respect to Housatonic Water Works because an open discussion may have a detrimental effect on the litigation and position of the Board. And, (6) to consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real estate, regarding Housatonic Water Works because an open discussion may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body, and not to return to open session; E. Gabriel seconded. Roll call vote: S. Bannon, "aye," L. Davis, "aye," E. Gabriel, "aye," G. Reed, "aye." All in favor: 4-0.

b. Executive Session under MGL ch 30A, sec. 21 (a) for the following purpose: (7) To comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements.

L. Davis made a motion that the Board meet in executive session pursuant to MGL Ch. 30A sec. 21 to approve executive session minutes from the following meeting: July 11, 2022; E. Gabriel seconded. Roll call vote: S. Bannon, "aye," L. Davis, "aye," E. Gabriel, "aye," G. Reed, "aye." All in favor: 4-0.

15. ADJOURNMENT - Chairman Bannon adjourned the meeting by unanimous consent at 7:03pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Stacy Ostrow, Recording Clerk