

Selectboard Regular Meeting via Zoom
Monday, June 28, 2021

1. CALL TO ORDER - Chairman Bannon opened the meeting at 6:00pm; those present via zoom: Ed Abrahams, Leigh Davis, Eric Gabriel, Garfield Reed. Assistant Town Manager Chris Rembold.

2. Selectboard's Announcements/Statements

3. David Isby/WSBS Radio/Sounds of Summer for 8-One Weekday Entertainment Licenses (7/6, 7/13, 7/20, 7/27, 8/3, 8/10, 8/17, 8/24) at 800 Main Street Great Barrington (the VFW)

a. E. Abrahams stated he would recuse due to connections to WSBS programming.

b. David Isby provided an overview of the concert series in July-August at the VFW.

L. Davis made a motion to grant 8-One Weekday Entertainment Licenses to David Isby for WSBS Radio/Sounds of Summer at the VFW; E. Gabriel seconded. S. Bannon asked if any discussion – there was none. Roll call vote: E. Abrahams, “recused,” S. Bannon, “aye,” L. Davis, “aye,” E. Gabriel, “aye,” G. Reed, “aye.” All in favor, 4-0.

4. Goal Setting

S. Bannon stated that 2-3 times per year the Selectboard gives instruction and advice to the Town staff regarding priorities by reviewing each topic and determining if it remains a high (red) or moderate (yellow) priority or to add additional direction. He also noted priorities are ranked 1/2/3 or long-term to provide more clarity as to their importance. He stated there is no need to go into depth on all priorities.

The Selectboard proceeded to review the priorities. Chris Rembold provided an overview and updates.

a. High Priority Projects

- Affordable Housing (Market rate/working class) – C. Rembold stated the Affordable Housing Trust Fund/Selectboard/Task Force with the Planning Board have focused on this extensively. A housing needs study was completed last year; a grant was received for rental assistance; and design/development of homes on North Plain Road and Grove Street are moving forward. The Selectboard agreed this is a high priority.
- Ambulance Service Study – Charlie Burger presented stating the Fire Department had received an ambulance license that allows the provision of medical care when first on the scene - and that the Fire Department is collaborating with South Berkshire Ambulance re: EMT services. There is also an effort county-wide for shared solutions around emergency services. Selectboard agreed this remains a high priority.
- Cook's Garage Property – C. Rembold reported this is part of the redevelopment program. The Town owns the property and has assessed contamination issues. Current focus is on artesian well on the property which is shared with an abutter. He noted there would be a community meeting scheduled to review all the brown field sites and get ideas from the public for reuse/disposition of the sites. Selectboard agreed to keep this a high priority and to consider the several brown field projects as a whole.
- COVID-19 State of Emergency – C. Rembold stated the staff is spending less time on COVID emergency issues and the Board of Health stays connected with the state. Staff focus now is on long-term effects of COVID on downtown. Select board agreed to remove it from the list.
- Housatonic Community Center (updates/conf. room/grants) – S. Bannon stated that upgrades are in progress and plan is to have future meetings in the space. Work will continue.

- Housatonic Fiber – C. Rembold stated this was moving along, but slowly. A study is being conducted on the poles on Park Street/Route 183 re: who owns the poles and what infrastructure is needed to add additional fiber optic cable. E. Abrahams asked about timing though noted it's up to National Grid/Verizon. E. Gabriel stated fiber optics is a priority for Housatonic. He noted that fiber is being installed down Main St, GB. E. Abrahams responded it is being driven by Fiber Connect starting downtown GB, with no plan to expand beyond that at this time. The Town is doing the pole study to see if Fiber Connect wants to extend the work. The state installed a trunk network of fiber in GB, not Housatonic. The Selectboard agreed, this continues to be a high priority.
- Human Resources Director – S. Bannon noted the position has been filled and this can be taken off the list.
- Infrastructure – S. Bannon noted the Selectboard had an update from Sean VanDeusen at last week's meeting. C. Rembold stated that projects are currently in progress, but the Town is also applying for grants/financing to lay groundwork for future projects. He also noted that stormwater, sewer and water are part of infrastructure – noting this is a big topic. S. Bannon stated this remains a high priority – Sean will continue to provide updates on current work and Chris on pipeline of projects/funding. He also stated it is important to keep the public updated. G. Reed asked about the berm on Bentley Avenue – S. Bannon stated it will be addressed in the Town manager's report.
- Parking Concerns – S. Bannon stated the Town Meeting voted down parking lot purchase. L. Davis stated we should look back at prior proposals for any viable solutions. E. Abrahams stated the Selectboard should decide which way to go with this. G. Reed stated it was not a high priority and not much has happened to address it. S. Bannon stated a lot was done, it just had not been successful - he suggested keeping it on as a priority for discussion.
- Personnel Policy/Manual – S. Bannon stated this is completed and can be removed from the list.
- Reid Cleaners Property – C. Rembold stated the EPA finished soil removal and sampled onsite to determine extent of excavation. He stated a report was expected soon to determine next steps – it is a remediation/redevelopment priority, but need to determine what to do at the site. E. Abrahams suggested reviewing the topic before remediation is done.
- Systemic Racism Proclamation – A committee is being formed – no update as this time. Remains a top priority.
- Trip Hazards Main Street – S. Bannon stated the DPW will address this as soon as funds are available. He noted this needs to be discussed with Sean as it should be resolved.
- Water Systems Study – S. Bannon stated this is something that has been discussed in detail with Mark Pruhenski. The engineers will present at the next two Selectboard meetings.

b. Moderate Priority Projects

- 5G Technology – S. Bannon stated there is nothing the Town can do as this is up to providers. E. Abrahams asked if the Planning Board should be consulted on whether to do this? C. Rembold agreed to bring it up with the Planning Board as it might be a zoning or Town bylaws issue. The Selectboard agreed to keep it on the list.
- Business Improvement District – S. Bannon stated this had been tried twice to get conversations/efforts moved forward, but it was not successful as landlords were not interested in forming a BID. C. Rembold clarified for the Selectboard the structure/operation of a BID and the significant staff time/effort required to get it started. He also stated that the

Cultural District was doing downtown business/visitor promotion. S. Bannon stated it should stay on the list, but as long-term.

- Committee Chairs-Meeting of Chairs – S. Bannon stated this is an effort to get all committees to operate under the same set of rules. He noted GBLABS is working on it and the Selectboard will expect a report.
- Conservation Fund for Land Purchases – C. Rembold stated this was not funded and was unsure if this is a priority for the Selectboard or the Conservation Commission. He suggested updating this to Open Space/Recreation Plan as the priority. The Selectboard agreed.
- Courthouse Improvements – S. Bannon stated this should be skipped for now and S. VanDeusen should provide an update.
- Downtown (Pride/energy/marketing/entertainment) – C. Rembold stated the Cultural District is working on a banner campaign. S. Bannon stated this is still a priority.
- Economic Development/Small Business Assistance – S. Bannon stated this is a priority. G. Reed suggested job creation should be part of this effort. The Selectboard agreed.
- Elevator Repairs - S. Bannon stated this should be skipped for now and S. VanDeusen should provide an update. He added elevator repairs are important especially if in person meetings resume.
- EV Charging Stations – C. Rembold stated this is incorporated into upcoming repaving Triplex parking lot and Town Hall repair projects.
- Fire Department Study – C. Burger stated he would provide a complete update at the next Selectboard meeting.
- Fire Station Easement - S. Bannon stated this should be skipped and S. VanDeusen should provide an update.
- Grove Street Property – C. Rembold stated the Town had taken the property for back taxes and transferred to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Habitat for Humanity is the developer and will make repairs creating an affordable home. He noted it can be taken off the list and incorporated into broader affordable housing category.
- Hosting Community Discussions with BRIDGE – S. Bannon stated this should be discussed with M. Pruhenski.
- Housatonic School – S. Bannon suggested this should be moved to a high priority and should move forward. The Selectboard agreed.
- Inclusiveness/Diversity (Town Hall/ Town-wide) – S. Bannon stated translation tablets were in place and diversity training was delayed due to COVID. The Selectboard confirmed this remains a priority.
- Licensing Board – S. Bannon clarified this was initially a suggestion to create a subcommittee or another group to relieve the Selectboard from approving standard annual license renewals. He stated this was no longer necessary or a priority and it should be removed. The Selectboard agreed.
- Marijuana License Limits – Marijuana Revenue – S. Bannon stated that in August the Selectboard will have an update on revenue overall including cannabis. Regarding limiting the number of licenses, that was voted down at Town Meeting twice and L. Davis stated citizens can petition on it. The Selectboard agreed it was not something it wanted staff to work on and should be taken off the priority list.
- Marketing to Young Families – S. Bannon stated this is in progress though held up by COVID.

- Master Plan Review with Planning Board - C. Rembold stated there is an annual review of the Master Plan by the Selectboard and Planning Board. It will be scheduled for the fall.
- Mission Statement for Selectboard and Town – S. Bannon nothing has been done on this. C. Rembold noted nothing had been assigned and asked what is the intent? S. Bannon stated he would discuss with M. Pruhenski as it might be part of a larger marketing campaign.
- Neighborhood Meetings/Meetings in Housatonic – S. Bannon stated the Selectboard is planning to meet in Housatonic in August and that it would continue to do meetings in various neighborhoods.
- Open Meetings/Public Records Training for Boards – S. Bannon stated this could be folded into committee charters and chairs. The intention is to have consistent handling for the removal of committee/board members. There is nothing in the Town bylaws or charter. This should remain on the list.
- Rest of River Status – S. Bannon stated this is with the EPA appeals board and it is still a priority item with a lot of impact on the Town.
- Selectboard Policies – S. Bannon stated policies should be reviewed to determine if any updating is required. This can be added as an agenda item, and remain on the list.
- Sewer Rate Study – C. Rembold reported this is completed. S. Bannon stated it can be removed from the list.
- Short-term Rental Regulations – E. Abrahams stated this is a high priority, but a lot of work for staff so would defer to M. Pruhenski and C. Rembold. L. Davis stated this is a high priority. S. Bannon agreed and stated there are other towns that have passed legislation that GB can use as a model – he asked it be moved to a high priority. L. Davis stated that the Selectboard/Planning Board Subcommittee will be doing a lot of the work so should take some of the load off staff.
- Sign Zoning (+Banners) – C. Rembold stated this is about interpretation of the sign code and it is a significant time commitment as it requires legal funds and First Amendment review. S. Bannon suggested changing it to long-term status.
- Tax Classification (Kate) – S. Bannon stated he could not recollect what this is about, but to leave it on the list or now.
- Tree Committee – C. Rembold reported that the Tree Committee has been established and this can be removed from the priority list.
- Website and URL for Email Addresses – S. Bannon stated he would ask M. Pruhenski where this stands.
- Zoning Enforcement – S. Bannon stated this is something that has been discussed by the Selectboard and emphasized the Town should be proactive where possible around investigating zoning issues. C. Rembold stated the Town relies on residents to raise issues. S. Bannon agreed, but stated it is a frustration for residents. It should be left on the priority list as a reminder even though the Select board isn't directly responsible – it is more a guiding philosophy.

S. Bannon asked if the Selectboard had any additions to the list of priorities –

- L. Davis stated regarding the Housatonic Water Study – it is about the broader water issue, not just the study. S. Bannon clarified that the study was for both the Fire District and Housatonic Water Works, but agreed Housatonic Water Works should be added as a priority. She also raised the Monument Mountain High School entrance. S. Bannon replied it is ultimately a School decision, but should be added to the list as the

Selectboard can press on it. L. Davis also asked that Main Street pedestrian safety and downtown traffic be kept on the radar. S. Bannon suggested putting on the priority list as an acknowledgement and it can be considered at the Selectboard July meeting. She also suggested adding preparing for an aging population - including senior housing and the senior center expansion. S. Bannon stated it does not need to be on the list as it can be added as an agenda item instead. She also asked was there interest in adding a dog park? E. Abrahams stated the committees that have access to land were not interested.

- E. Gabriel confirmed Housatonic Water Works is a high priority and that residents have a right to clean, clear, healthy drinking water. He also suggested having a full reopening of the Ramsdell Library as it is a gathering place for residents. S. Bannon stated it was in progress.
- C. Rembold stated he would talk with M. Pruhenski about the priorities that were added at the meeting.

5. Citizen Speak Time

- a. Larissa Yapple, 15 Castle Hill Avenue asked for branches to be pruned at crosswalks. C. Rembold state the Town is aware of the issue. S. VanDeusen will be asked for an update.

6. Selectboard's Time

7. Media Time

8. Adjournment - Chairman Bannon adjourned the meeting by unanimous consent at 7:37pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Stacy Ostrow
Recording Clerk