

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
NOVEMBER 18, 2020
REGULAR SESSION

Members Present: Justin Sullivan, Chris Zorra, David Viera, Adam Petronio

David Andrade was in attendance via conference call.

Town Administrator: Shawn E. Cadime

Assistant Town Administrator/
Human Resources Director: Carol Ann Days

Chairman Sullivan opened the meeting at 7 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and moment of silence.

He announced that, per Governor Baker's Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 20, it is necessary to limit the number of attendees allowed to physically access the meeting to ten. Pre-registration is encouraged to reserve a seat at a meeting. Also, per Governor's Baker order, the meeting should conclude by 9:30 p.m.

Public comments and questions could have been submitted to the Board in advance of the meeting by completing the Google form by Monday, November 16, 2020, at noon. The meeting is broadcast live via Seekonk Cable TV9.

Per M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 20(f), any person recording the meeting must notify the Chairman.

Chairman Sullivan advised that Mr. Andrade is in attendance via conference call. Due to COVID-19, Governor Baker ordered that participation and voting is allowed remotely.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE OPENINGS

Mr. Petronio announced that volunteers are needed on the Capital Improvement Committee (2 Board of Selectmen appointments), Commission on Disability (5-13 BOS), Conservation Commission (1 BOS), Economic Development Committee (5 BOS), Energy Committee (1 BOS), Historical Commission (3 BOS), Parks & Recreation (1 BOS), Recycling Committee (3 BOS), Zoning Board of Appeals (2 Alternates).

COMMUNITY SPEAKS – None.

PUBLIC HEARING

Fiscal Year 2021 Tax Classification Hearing

A motion was made by Mr. Viera, seconded by Mr. Petronio, and it was unanimously

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VOTED: To open the Public Hearing at 7:30 p.m.

The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Aye; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Mr. Andrade – Aye; Chairman Sullivan – Aye.

Board of Assessors Chairman Paul Buckley and Principal Assessor Lydia Cordeiro had a slide presentation.

Mr. Buckley explained this Classification Act requires municipalities to classify real property into four classes: residential, open space, commercial, and industrial. The purpose of this hearing is to determine the percentage share of the tax levy that each class will pay. The residential factor is used by the Assessors to determine the tax levy paid by each class of property and calculate the tax rate. It is the responsibility of the Board of Selectmen to determine the residential factor.

For FY 2021, the total residential values increased at 2.63% from last year while commercial values increased by 0.45%. New growth declined 40.68%. The average residential single family assessment increased 2.4%. The Maximum Levy for this year increased 4.25%. Current Residential Tax Rate is \$13.17. Current Commercial, Industrial Rate is \$28.87, Current Personal Property Rate is \$28.80.

The top five taxpayers for FY 2021 based on FY'20 tax rate are as follows:

1. Algonquin Gas Lines - \$1,053,976
2. RI Seekonk Holdings, LLC - \$805,344
3. Seekonk Square Realty Trust - \$803,288
4. Seekonk Shop Center Equity - \$703,019
5. Scannell Properties #254, LLC - \$610,403

The report showed the growth and levy history over the past five years. The average single family value in 2020 is \$361,623 and the single family tax bill is \$4,763.

Forty four commercial properties in Seekonk qualify for exemption with 10% total value at \$1,206,100.

The maximum commercial, industrial and personal property (CIP) shift for Seekonk for FY'21 is 1.73 or a residential factor of .7760 as defined by the Department of Revenue.

A residential factor of 100 will result in the taxation of all property at the same rate (single tax rate). A residential factor of less than 100 increases the share of the levy raised by commercial, industrial, and personal property (CIP) owners and reduces the share paid by the residential property owners (split tax rate).

In FY'20, the Board of Selectmen chose a Commercial, Industrial and Personal (CIP) property shift of 1.7028 (full) or a residential factor of .7785 with the 10% Commercial exemption. If the Selectmen were to continue a full CIP shift of 1.73 with a residential factor of .7760 for FY 2021, the shift equals a 4.1% increase for both CIP property and Residential.

Mr. Buckley pointed out that the Board of Assessors is not in a position to advise the Selectmen.

Mr. Viera asked about the criteria to qualify for exemptions.

Mr. Buckley said if there are less than ten employees and the property is less than \$1M, those qualify for the 10% exemption.

Mr. Viera asked what would happen if the Board decided not to raise taxes. He realizes that leads to reduced revenue for the town but it helps taxpayers, especially the elderly. He knows taxes have to go up at least 2%.

Mr. Cadime noted the increase of taxes was voted at Town Meeting. There is going to be a tax increase. Tonight, the Board has to decide the tax factor - commercial vs. residential. The highest is 1.73 based on average value. The question is where is the medium.

Mr. Viera pointed out the importance of attending Town Meeting.

Mr. Zorra asked Mr. Buckley for his personal opinion.

Mr. Buckley said four or five years ago he agreed with the Board. It never really went to the full shift. He feels they should try to keep it even between CIP and residential factor.

Mr. Viera said that would increase the burden on residents. That is not good in the economic times we are in right now.

Mr. Petronio said it would promote growth in commercial.

A motion was made by Mr. Viera, seconded by Mr. Petronio, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To close the public hearing at 6:25 p.m.

The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Aye; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Mr. Andrade – Aye; Chairman Sullivan – Aye.

A motion was made by Mr. Andrade, seconded by Mr. Petronio, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To set the CIP shift at 1.73 which is .7760 residential factor with a 10% commercial exemption.

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The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Aye; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Mr. Andrade – Aye; Chairman Sullivan – Aye.

LICENSE HEARING

Consider the Request for a Change of Manager for American Legion #311, 351 Fall River Avenue, Seekonk, MA, to Michael Domenici, Manager

Mr. Cadime requested Board approval.

A motion was made by Mr. Viera, seconded by Mr. Petronio, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve the change of manager for American Legion #311, 351 Fall River Avenue, to Michael Domenici Manager.

The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Aye; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Mr. Andrade – Aye; Chairman Sullivan – Aye.

In response to Mr. Viera’s question, Mr. Cadime said he didn’t think there is a fee but he will check and let him know.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Consider the Appointment of Dean Isabella to the Position of Chief of Police

Mr. Cadime noted the Board had previously extended a conditional offer of employment. Tests were completed and the State Police conducted a background check.

Mr. Cadime recommended the appointment.

A motion was made by Mr. Andrade, seconded by Mr. Petronio, and it was

VOTED: 4 Ayes; 1 Nay; To appoint Dean Isabella to the position of Chief of Police as of December 2, 2020.

The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Nay; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Mr. Andrade – Aye; Chairman Sullivan – Aye.

Chief Isabella stated he was honored and humbled to be chosen as the next Police Chief. He looks forward to working with the Seekonk team. He thanked Deputy Chief Enos for the fine job he has done as Interim Chief. He’s sure there will be a great transition.

Deputy Chief David Enos and Capt. Matthew Jardin were in attendance. Mr. Cadime recognized them for doing a phenomenal job. He noted that Deputy Chief Enos stepped into the chief’s

position about two weeks after being appointed as deputy chief. The men and women of the Seekonk Police Department did a phenomenal job to make sure the continuity of services provided were seamless. He thanked them. Mr. Cadime said, throughout the State, the Seekonk Police Department is one to be emulated and a place to work. He felt Chief Isabella understands he is coming to a great department.

Chairman Sullivan added that Deputy Chief Enos has done a lot and showed tremendous leadership to keep the department on course and on track. It speaks to Capt. Jardin and every police officer we have. They handled the COVID rules and regulations with the utmost professionalism.

Consider the Approval of the Police Chief Contract

A motion was made by Mr. Zorra, seconded by Mr. Petronio, and it was

VOTED: 4 Ayes; 1 Nay; To approve the contract with Police Chief Dean Isabella.

The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Nay; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Mr. Andrade – Aye; Chairman Sullivan – Aye.

Consider the Conditional Offer of Employment for Scott Burns to the Position of Director of Communications

Mr. Cadime advised a hiring committee was formed and interviewed candidates. Two very good finalist were presented to him. Mr. Burns has all certifications and a willingness to continue to learn. In a prior position, he had to convert a call firefighter to full professional department and convert with the Police Department a civilian dispatch center. Unfortunately, that position was regionalized and he was not chosen as the person to handle that. Mr. Cadime noted Mr. Burns lives in Springfield and he understands he has to move closer to the Town of Seekonk and has begun to look at locations to relocate with his family.

Mr. Cadime recommended to extend a conditional offer of employment pending a background check.

A motion was made by Mr. Viera, seconded by Mr. Petronio, and it was

VOTED: 4 Ayes; 1 Nay; To extend a conditional offer of employment to Scott Burns as Director of Communications.

The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Aye; Mr. Zorra – Nay; Mr. Andrade – Aye; Chairman Sullivan.

Prior to the vote, Mr. Viera noted Mr. Cadime mentioned in a communication to the Board that he would like to give Mr. Burns a year to move closer to town. He would rather see it at six months. Springfield is 1 ½ hours away.

Mr. Cadime said it is up to the Board. It could happen sooner than a year. Mr. Burns has children in the school system and has to sell his house. He has begun to look in the area.

Chairman Sullivan said that Mrs. Days can fill in that position if needed in an emergency. It is fortunate for the town to have that ability.

Mr. Andrade said that is a discussion during contract negotiations.

Mr. Petronio noted that Mr. Burns travels to Westport. He would like to see a shorter travel time as well but he wants to be reasonable about the job offering.

Mr. Zorra asked about in-house candidates.

Mr. Cadime said there was one.

Consider the Appointment of Jeffrey Mello to the Position of Building Inspector

Mr. Cadime recommended the appointment.

A motion was made by Mr. Petronio, seconded by Mr. Zorra, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To appoint Jeffrey Mello to the position of Building Inspector.

The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Aye; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Mr. Andrade – Aye; Chairman Sullivan – Aye.

Consider the Conditional Offer of Employment to Helen Connors for the Position of Part-Time Kennel Worker

ACO Andrea Russo recommended the appointment of Helen Connors. She noted Ms. Connors is a very dedicated animal person.

Mr. Cadime recommended as presented.

A motion was made by Mr. Viera, seconded by Mr. Petronio, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To extend a conditional offer of employment to Helen Connors for the position of part-time Kennel Worker.

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The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Aye; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Mr. Andrade – Aye; Chairman Sullivan – Aye.

Consider the Appointment of Robert Emlen to the Cultural Council

Mr. Cadime advised that he interviewed Mr. Emlen. During the conversation, Mr. Emlen expressed an interest in the Conservation Commission. He will be coming before the Board for an appointment to the Conservation Commission as well.

A motion was made by Mr. Viera, seconded by Mr. Zorra, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To appoint Robert Emlen to the Cultural Council.

The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Aye; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Mr. Andrade – Aye; Chairman Sullivan – Aye.

Consider Rescinding the Conditional Offer of Employment for Luke Carvalho as Police Officer

Mr. Cadime noted Mr. Carvalho was injured and cannot attend the Academy.

A motion was made by Mr. Viera, seconded by Mr. Petronio, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To rescind the conditional offer of employment for Luke Carvalho as Police Officer.

The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Aye; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Mr. Andrade – Aye; Chairman Sullivan – Aye.

Mr. Petronio suggested Mr. Carvalho might want to try again once he has recovered from his injuries.

Consider Accepting Donations to the Seekonk Animal Shelter in Memory of Mr. Raymond P. Mucci from the Forever Friends Group

A motion was made by Mr. Viera, seconded by Mr. Petronio, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To accept the donations from the Forever Friends Group to the Seekonk Animal Shelter in memory of Raymond P. Mucci.

Consider Accepting Various Donations Totaling \$255 for the Police Department K9

A motion was made by Mr. Viera, seconded by Mr. Petronio, and it was unanimously

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VOTED: To accept the various donations to the Police Department K9 in the amount of \$255.

The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Aye; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Mr. Andrade – Aye; Chairman Sullivan – Aye.

Board members expressed their appreciation for the above donations.

Consider Accepting the Regular Session Minutes of October 26, 2020 and October 28, 2020

A motion was made by Mr. Viera, seconded by Mr. Petronio, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To accept the Regular Session minutes of October 26, 2020 and October 28, 2020.

The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Aye; Mr. Zorra - Aye; Mr. Andrade – Aye; Chairman Sullivan – Aye.

COMMUNITY SPEAKS

Mr. Petronio reminded residents of the Comcast Public Hearings on November 21 at 10 a.m. and November 23 at 6 p.m. on Zoom.

OTHER BUSINESS – None.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT

Mr. Cadime also mentioned the public hearings.

He advised that all municipal buildings are closed due to the increased COVID numbers. Anyone who needs to come into Town Hall on an urgent matter can call the department and set up an appointment. Payments can be made in the drop box outside the front entrance to Town Hall.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN LIAISON REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Bristol County Advisory Board

Chairman Sullivan will attend a meeting on Thursday, November 19, 2020. They will be reviewing the budget

Aitken School Expansion Building Committee Report

Mr. Zorra reported they are moving ahead on outside and inside work.

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Mr. Zorra asked about sending another letter to Mass DOT regarding the left hand signals on Route 44.

He suggested someone reach out to the car wash at the East Providence line. They can accommodate larger trucks.

Mr. Zorra asked who cancelled the Veterans Day vehicle parade.

Mr. Cadime felt it was the Veterans Council and Veterans Agent. He said it was a good decision.

Mr. Viera, Chairman of the Veterans Council, said it was his decision along with the Veterans Agent after consulting with the Health Agent. The ceremony following the parade was a concern. He noted that Seekonk is in the Red Zone for COVID.

540 Arcade Avenue Building Committee Report – None.

Mr. Viera extended best wishes for a Happy and Safe Thanksgiving. He noted everybody has to social distance.

Chairman Sullivan also said Happy Thanksgiving. He urged people to social distance, wear masks, wash hands, sanitize, etc. to stay safe.

Mr. Andrade said he is quarantined because he came in contact with a person with COVID while out to dinner.

He added it is not safe to have Thanksgiving dinner with a large group.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – None.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mr. Viera, seconded by Mr. Petronio, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To adjourn at 8:01 p.m.

The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Aye; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Mr. Andrade – Aye; Chairman Sullivan – Aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Prepared by:

David Viera, Clerk

Patricia Gamer, Secretary

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Items Distributed at the November 18, 2020 Board of Selectmen Meeting

FY 2021 Tax Classification Documentation

Documentation for Change of Manager at American Legion

Application for Scott Burns for the position of Director of Communications

Application for Jeffrey Mello for the position of Building Inspector

List of donations to the Seekonk Animal Shelter from the Forever Friends Group

List of donations to the Police Department K9