

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
JANUARY 20, 2021
REGULAR SESSION

Members Present: Justin Sullivan, Chris Zorra, David Viera, David Andrade

Adam Petronio was absent.

Town Administrator: Shawn E. Cadime

Asst. Town Administrator/
Director of Human Resources: Carol-Ann Days

The meeting was held via Zoom Webinar due to COVID-19.

Chairman Sullivan opened the meeting at 7 p.m.

He announced that, per Governor Baker's Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 20, the public will not be allowed to physically access this Board of Selectmen meeting. Public comments and questions could have been submitted to the Board prior to the meeting by Tuesday, January 19, 2021 at 4:30 p.m. The meeting will be broadcast live via Seekonk Cable TV and streamed live on Seekonk Town Hall Facebook.

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

BOARD AND COMMITTEE OPENINGS

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

GENERAL BUSINESS

Consider the Conditional Offer of Employment for Donna Wunschel for the Position of Communications Director

Mr. Cadime apologized to Board members. He felt the documentation was included in the original packet in November. Ms. Wunschel was one of the top three candidates for the job. The individual appointed withdrew. The second candidate accepted another position.

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

VOTED: To extend a conditional offer of employment to Donna Wunschel for the position of Communications Director.

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

Prior to the vote, Mr. Viera asked Mrs. Days if Ms. Wunschel could fill her shoes.

Mrs. Days accepted that as a compliment. She felt Ms. Wunschel will exceed anything she did as Communications Director.

Consider the Appointment of Margaret Perkins to the Position of Community Liaison for Human Services

Mr. Cadime recommended the appointment. He noted Mrs. Perkins has been working under a grant. She will now work for the town to fill a resignation.

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

VOTED: To appoint Margaret Perkins to the position of Community Liaison for Human Services.

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

At Mr. Zorra's request, Mr. Cadime explained the community liaison assists the Human Services staff in providing services to the seniors.

Mr. Viera noted that he received a well-being check from the center. He spoke to a resident who was pleased to also get the call. He commended Human Services Director Brittney Faria

Mr. Cadime agreed that the crew at Human Services, including Ms. Perkins, does a great job.

Consider the Annual Designation of Sharonlynn Hall as Animal Control Officer per M.G.L. Chapter 140, Section 151

Consider the Annual Designation of Andrea Russo as Animal Control Officer per M.G.L. Chapter 140, Section 15

Consider the Annual Designation of Jessica Blake as Assistant Animal Control Officer per M.G.L. Chapter 140, Section 151

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

VOTED: To approve the annual designation of Sharonlynn Hall as Animal Control Officer, Andrea Russo as Animal Control Officer, and Jessica Blake as Assistant Animal Control Officer per M.G.L. Chapter 140, Section 151.

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

Consider and Vote on the Animal Control Officer Warrant

Mr. Cadime read the report. Ms. Russo explained that every cat that comes to the center is spade or neutered before release in order to control the population.

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

VOTED: To approve the Animal Control Officer Warrant.

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

Continued Discussion Regarding Increased Road Traffic on Plainfield Street

Chairman Sullivan said Mr. Gary Sagar was in attendance to representing himself and others regarding the action taken by the Board on December 16, 2020 to place barriers at a section of Plainfield Street.

Mr. Sagar noted he was supposed to attend the meeting of December 16; but, due to lengthy agenda, he was rescheduled to this meeting. He reviewed material that was included in agenda packets. He provided a map of the original Bakers Corner plat back to February 1911. His goal is to have Plainfield Street reopened. He said there was no input from the Planning Board with regard to the action taken by the Board of Selectmen.

He is asking questions from his service on the Board and the late David Parker, who was a stickler about agenda items.

He read from a document, Potential Legal Issues.

He offered the following suggestions:

1. Leave barriers in place, remove the chanr and open road to one way;
2. Install reduced speed signs;
3. Ban all trucks over a certain weight;
4. Perform a full traffic study of Plainfield Street;
5. Discuss speed bumps, signage or stop signs;
6. Install radar speed limit camera;
7. Move bus stop to Plainfield Street between Brewster and Chester Streets;
8. Accept, through town meeting, Chapter 90, Section 17c for the Board to have the ability to reduce speed limits without state approve;
9. Research other street laws to enhance traffic enforcement;
10. Increase police patrols.

Mr. Viera noted that speed cameras are not recognized or legal in the State of Massachusetts. Speed limit signs have to be enforced. He said maybe the Board acted too quickly but the Board is also criticized for not taking action.

Mr. Andrade apologized to Mr. Sagar because he was unable to meet him at the site. He pointed out what is there now is more than discussed that night. This is a private lot being utilized as a cut through endangering people going to those stores in the plaza. Plainfield Street was never intended to serve as a cut through to Newman Avenue. He stands by the Board's vote. He saw comments on Facebook.

Mr. Cadime explained an agenda item notifies what is going to be discussed. It does not have to mention a vote will be taken.

Mr. Andrade said speed bumps might reduce speed but does not prevent the cut through, endangering lives of people.

Mr. Zorra suggested Mr. Cabral check on increasing the time on the traffic light at Central Avenue and Pine Street because cars are backing up.

Mr. Cabral said it requires an engineering firm to do a study in order to change the timing on the traffic lights. He doesn't think it would make a huge change. It would cost about \$3,000 to \$4,000 for study and \$1,000 to implement the plan.

Chairman Sullivan and Mr. Viera felt the traffic might change once the pandemic is over and people are back to work.

Joseph and Joyce Silvestri of 15 Brewster Street were on the line. Mr. Silvestri said he saw some of the feedback from closing that area. He suggested maybe residents of Brewster, Chester, and Plainfield Streets are the ones who use it. He is willing to give it up for safety reasons. He spends more time on Pine Street but has not seen more traffic than before. He timed the lights. He can't image why people are so distraught about creating a safer area for that neighborhood. He felt Selectmen made a good decision. He has been a resident of Brewster Street for 35 years.

Daniel Knox of 25 Brewster Street said prior to the barrier he experienced heavy traffic on Plainfield Street. The bus stop for his seven year old is located at Plainfield and Pine Streets. He understands the decision of Stop & Shop. He believes that safety of small children in the neighborhood should be paramount. He used the cut through as well.

James Baril of 5 Chester Street has lived in the area for 20 years. Years ago it was a commercial area. He said the road was full of potholes. Stop & Shop had it asphalted. He suggested the town gift or sell the property to Stop & Shop.

Carla Wahnnon said the main concern has been commercial traffic.

Mr. Andrade said it would be a problem if the land was gifted to Stop & Shop. There are lots behind Brewster Street that would be landlocked.

With respect to the comment that the Planning Board had no input, there was no reason to approach the Planning Board.

Sandra Lopes thanked her neighbors for their comments. She wholeheartedly supports them. Some people have given excuses to do the wrong thing.

Mr. Sagar thanked Board members. He disagreed with some of the comments. He felt that once the barrier is up it will not come down.

Mr. Zorra asked if it would be possible to move the barriers two feet.

Mr. Cabral said he talked to the manager at Stop & Shop and Chief Isabella. Stop & Shop is not opposed to the barriers. The resident at 5 Brewster Street is concerned. If barriers are moved, cars will drive across his lawn. Drivers for Stop & Shop were told not to use Plainfield Street. Mr. Cabral has not heard any concerns from Stop & Shop. .

Mr. Andrade and Chairman Sullivan received e-mails from residents concerned that police will not patrol the area because the barriers are up.

He assured that patrolling of neighborhoods comes from the Board to Mr. Cadime and the Police Chief.

Chairman Sullivan explained the reason for the vote by the Board was to address safety concerns raised by residents. Speed bumps and signs would not work.

Reconsideration of the Pine Street Memorandum of Understanding.

Mr. Cadime stated that, in reviewing the Memorandum of Understanding, Atty. Fair reviewed the minutes and felt the Board did not provide a reason for an emergency or state of emergency and suggested the Board retake that vote to highlight the emergency so as not to be in violation of the by-law. A redline version and finalized version were included assuming all changes are accepted.

Mr. Andrade said he is not in favor of amending the motion to consider the term “emergency.” They had the conversation based on the fact that the by-law was developed to preserve infrastructure and financial investment of the town on our roadways. They have preserved that while allowing for any future benefits to any development put in. This is a chip seal application. The developer will overlay the chip seal 100 ft. in length. That was done intentionally to ensure the town’s investment of the roadway will be preserved. In a mill and overlay, the Board had the property owner go to the nearest seam to preserve the financial investment of the town.

Mr. Cadime said Atty. Fair would say it is up to the Board to decide whether to accept his recommendation.

Chairman Sullivan concurred with Mr. Andrade for all the reasons he stated. He said he has issues with the by-law that need to be addressed at Spring Town Meeting. Should look at different paving being done, preserving investments, etc.

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

Mr. Cabral referred to paragraph 7 under “Conditions of Agreement.” He recommended \$30,000 prevailing wage.

Board members felt it should be around \$50,000.

In response to Mr. Andrade, Mr. Cabral said he is comfortable with the \$30,000.

Mr. Cabral said a contractor will not come to Seekonk to do 150 ft. of roadway. It would have to be done under DPW.

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

VOTED: To accept the changes in the Pine Street Memorandum of Understanding with the exception of the language “pursuant to emergency determination.”

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

Mr. DuVally requested a copy of the MOU.

Second Quarter Budget Discussion

Mr. Cadime advised the presentation is on the website. The FY 2021 budget is balanced with no major issues. Salaries and expenditures are below budget forecast. Overall revenues are tracking ahead of budget projections. It was expected that state funding would be cut by \$30,000 for general government and \$120,000 for schools. It came in at \$40,809 on the town side. That can be absorbed in expenditures and revenues. Chapter 70 is \$135,612 to be absorbed by the School Department. Free cash was certified on September 16, 2020 at \$2,456,178 General Fund and \$457,054 Enterprise Fund. Revenue numbers will be modified at Town Meeting.

Department heads requests were forwarded to the Board. The Governor’s numbers were expected today.

Mr. Cadime went through all departments. He recognized Lydia Cordeiro and Richard Gonsalves in the Assessor’s Office who worked on the conversion. That office is down one employee.

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Mr. Cadime talked about meal and hotel taxes. If the current trend continues, it could be \$125,000 off for hotel tax. It will be made up. The meal tax is strong.

Chairman Sullivan said the hotel tax might be impacted by the surge in COVID-19.

Mr. Viera said there are no functions in the Providence area. People usually stay in hotels in Seekonk. It should improve when people go back to work.

Consider the Donation in the Amount of \$25 from John and Judith Carney for the Human Services Gift Account

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

VOTED: To accept the \$25 donation from John and Judith Carney for the Human Services Gift Account.

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

Consider the Donation in the Amount of \$25 from Mildred Desorcy for the Human Services Gift Account

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

VOTED: To accept the \$25 donation from Mildred Desorcy for the Human Services Gift Account.

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

Chairman Sullivan thanked the above for their donations.

Consider the Approval of Regular Session Minutes of January 6, 2021

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

VOTED: To approve the Regular Session minutes of January 6, 2021.

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

COMMUNITY SPEAKS - None.

OTHER BUSINESS – None.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT – None.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN LIAISON REPRTS AND COMMENTS

Bristol County Advisory Board – None.

Aitken School Expansion Building Committee Report – None.

540 Arcade Avenue Building Committee Report – None.

Veterans' Council – None

South End Fire Station Building Committee

Mr. Cadime advised about 17 persons have expressed an interest in the OPM position.

Mr. Viera said he had a request for an additional stop sign at the intersection of Provassa and Hull Streets. He asked that Mr. Cabral check on that.

Mr. Viera announced he is a candidate for reelection in April.

Mr. Zorra talked about significant potholes starting at Newport Creamery down to Commerce Way.

Chairman Sullivan said he heard that CVS in Somerset will start giving the vaccine. He asked if any progress with Sen. Feeney or Rep. Howitt.

Mr. Cadime said he got an e-mail from Rep. Howitt. No Attleboro has similar concerns. Some communities will host a testing facility. The charge will be \$10 or \$15. The State has not given much consideration to this area.

Mr. Viera said that CVS on President Avenue in Fall River will have vaccine.

Mr. Cadime said the concern is testing facilities.

Chairman Sullivan would prefer to have a vaccine site in Seekonk. Locally, people can go to McCoy Stadium for testing.

Mr. Viera agreed.

Mr. Cadime said Virginia or Maryland decided to go against the guidelines for vaccine. The numbers are dropping drastically on how it is rolling out.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 9:10 p.m. Mr. Andrade motioned, seconded by Mr. Viera, to go into Executive Session to consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)(6) as having the discussion in open session would be detrimental to the negotiating position of the town (1 North Street); not to return to open session.

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

Respectfully submitted,

David Viera, Clerk

Prepared by:

Patricia Gamer, Secretary

Items Distributed at the January 20, 2021 Board of Selectmen Meeting

Resume and application for Donna Wunschel for the position of Communications Director

Application for Margaret Perkins for Community Liaison for Human Services

Request for Annual Designation for Sharonlynn Hall as ACO, Andrea Russo as ACO; and Jessica Blake as Assistant ACO

Animal Control Officer Warrant

Documents submitted by Gary Sagar re: Plainfield Street

Amended Memorandum of Agreement for Pine Street

Second quarter budget documentation

Check in the amount of \$25 from John and Judith Carney for Human Services Gift Account

Check in the amount of \$25 from Mildred Desorcy for Human Services Gift Account