

Town of Brookline Selectboard Meeting

Wednesday, December 15, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

Attending

Selectboard:

Dot Maggio (Chair)
David Jones
Bruce Mello
Stan Noga
Gwen Tanza

Town Officers: Guy Tanza (Town Clerk,
videographer)
Mark Bills (Road Supervisor)

Members of the Public:

Dan Towler
Peter Barus (Recorder) FACTV (Videoconference
recording)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

Changes to the agenda if any

Executive Session at end of meeting.

Discussion of the Lists under Other Reports.

Recycling discussion after Members of the Public.

Review / Approve Regular meeting minutes from December 1, 2021

There was discussion of whether a donation was “matching.”

Ms. Maggio moved to approve the minutes for December 1, 2021, as amended. Second by Mr. Jones. All in favor.

Review / Approve Special meeting minutes from December 8, 2021

Ms. Maggio moved to approve the minutes for December 8, 2021. Second by Mr. Noga. All in favor.

Members of the Public

Mr. Towler (WSWMD Representative) was recognized and discussed walking in the area, carrying a bag to pick up cans and refuse along the road, that routinely 25 cans as well as plastic containers and other trash were collected; that people were driving around drinking and tossing cans out; cleaning up the area around the recycling bin; the need for the facility, or lack thereof, unmonitored, abused, and used by unknown numbers of people from unknown places; that Town Meetings average about fifty people, and possible negative consequences if recycling was voted down; that costs were going up each year; that there had been discussion of a better location for monitoring, other problems; that hauling by trash collectors was already required by statute; that recycling could continue without the facility; that Athens subsidized trash and recycling for all residents, town report showing cost at \$37,452 with hauling by a NH contractor, recouping funds from the sale of trash bags, net expense about \$35,000; and suggested this approach might work for Brookline, offered a list of arguments for and against the recycling facility by email to the selectboard.

Ms. Maggio thanked Mr. Towler. There was discussion. Mr. Jones noted that Athens had a transfer station, and that southern Vermont trash goes to Rutland; that many residents hold permits and haul their own trash. Mr. Towler suggested a plan similar to Athens might possibly yield a net saving. Mr. Jones noted that information was limited, but could be researched further. There was discussion. Mr. Tanza noted that Athens was not part of the waste management district, for which dues were \$3,487. Ms. Maggio thanked Mr. Towler.

Mr. Towler discussed preparations for Town Meeting so that voters could make an informed decision.

Old Business

Review - Discuss - Lease Contract for the school building currently known as Suzy's Little Peanuts Daycare.

A motion may be made to find that premature general public knowledge regarding the town's lease contract with Suzy's Little Peanuts owner Suzy Coutermarsh would place the town at a disadvantage, because the selectboard risks disclosing its negotiation strategy if it discusses the proposed contract terms in public.

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A second motion may be made at this time to enter into executive session to discuss the town's lease contract with Suzy Coutermarsh under the provisions of Title 1, Section 212 (a)(1)(A) of the Vermont Statutes.

Recycling in Brookline

(addressed above)

Town Meeting - Discussion about inperson town meeting on Monday

February 28, 2022 at 6:00 pm in the Multipurpose Room of the Day Care building vs. Australian ballot vote with Zoom informational meeting preceding as was done for Town Meeting 2021.

Ms. Maggio discussed an email from David Parker, resigning as Moderator after 17 years, and not running in 2022; and discussed Australian ballot and in-person meetings. Mr. Jones explained that the town did not have the choice of changing the voting method without a special in-person Town Meeting vote. There was discussion; that the legislature could make changes, but was not in session. Ms. Maggio noted that a special meeting about a gravel pit had been sparsely attended because of a lack of clarity about masking requirements for the meeting. Mr. Jones asked whether the selectboard had the authority to mandate masks at a Town Meeting if no mandate had been voted in the town. Mr. Tanza explained that the town did have such authority. Mr. Jones clarified that should this not be done, the question was whether the Warning for Town Meeting could fill this need. Mr. Mello read from Mr. Parker's letter, regarding safe personal conduct during a pandemic; and noted high current levels of infection. Ms. Maggio discussed the question of finding a Moderator. Mr. Noga noted that the Brattleboro Moderator was retiring. It was noted that the Moderator must be a resident.

Mr. Tanza will call the Secretary of State and inquire as to options.

Budget 2022-23

There was discussion of an annual bond payment and the restrictions under which the bond funds could be used; that this would not affect budgeting as the annual payments were fixed; that the funds were restricted to bridge and culvert repairs; that the bond was considered a liability; that the bond bank was taking a proactive approach to reduce the burden; that the bond would end in 2030;

Ms. Maggio noted discussions of budget categories for which there was data; that most were revenues, with expenditures for payroll tax, contract services, equipment. It was noted that flood contractor services and materials were tracked separately for FEMA as flood-related expenses. Mr. Tanza discussed common budgeting strategies for unforeseen circumstances. Ms. Maggio noted that many states maintain budget stabilization funds. Mr. Tanza suggested that such circumstances involved a percentage of costs paid by FEMA, and would likely be more frequent (weather events) in the future. Ms. Maggio discussed sand and salt, winter materials; road grants.

Mr. Noga discussed insurance reduction items. Mr. Tanza noted the volatility of these items year to year.

Mr. Jones discussed a distinction between summer and winter materials (stone versus sand and salt); noting that there would be a need to discuss methods of classifying such items and how bills were to be paid with the treasurers, as these distinctions could not be assumed to be understood clearly by everyone.

Mr. Jones discussed whether to warn a separate Article on the recycling bins, as had always been done in the past. There was discussion of annual recycling expenses

Mr. Jones discussed the non-restricted highway fund balance and its known revenues (taxes and state aid), versus an estimate of expenditures for the remainder of the year, as representing actual unrestricted funds.

Ms. Maggio noted that the FEMA reimbursement rates (from 2019) were lower than the rates charged by contractors; the ability to submit for reimbursement as projects continue, rather than putting up all the funds and waiting for the reimbursement; and suggested budgeting for unforeseen emergencies.

There was discussion of whether to create an Article to allocate funds annually for budget stabilization.

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Mr. Tanza discussed the possibility of being reimbursed by FEMA before June, 2022. Ms. Maggio explained that the data must be in by January 11, 2022, and the eighteen-month period to complete repairs.

Ms. Maggio suggested adding a line item for budget stabilization. There was discussion of whether this should be up to five percent as the contribution, or a dollar amount. Mr. Jones suggested that the treasury should be involved in the deliberations; and noted that the budget must be finalized by January 5, 2022, with a vote on January 19; that the treasurer takes the board's numbers and submits a budget to the Auditors; and the Articles must be ready for Town Meeting.

Ms. Maggio will communicate with the auditors.

New Business

Reports

Town Clerk Report - Guy Tanza

Mr. Tanza reported land records, conveyances slowing; public asking questions; digitizing the records; 10% of the town turned over.

Selectboard Chair Report - Dot Maggio

Ms. Maggio noted that Margorie Gray had recused as board representative to DVFiber, and Donald Demaine (alternate) would step in.

Mr. Tanza reported that the wifi hotspot was installed, with two firewalls; that it could be unplugged for any reason; and Brookline will be listed as a wifi hotspot. There was discussion of signage; of potential abuse of the open connection.

Building Commissioner Report - Bruce Mello

Mr. Mello noted that upon the 250th anniversary of the USA in 2026, the BMH would be 190 years old; and suggested a five-year plan be developed. Ms. Maggio noted a forthcoming meeting and a list of items.

Mr. Mello reported much time spent on the heating system at SLP; that documentation had been found; that the Cota & Cota service plan was working out well, C&C responding the same day every time; and discussed the complexity of the system.

Any other reports - discussions by Selectboard members

There was discussion as requested, of the Listers; that most have other jobs; that the positions are up for election.

Road Supervisor Report - E. Mark Bills

Mr. Bills reported heavy wind and rains, cleaning up recycle bins, more truckloads of ¾" crushed stone delivered; a thaw had brought four-inch ruts, requiring monitoring, stone as needed; work with FEMA slowing with changing weather.

Communications

Regular Mail

- Fish and Wildlife re: conservation camp.
- Rescue, Inc. re: flat fee invoice, expected to increase.
- Town of Putney re: annual letter for the inter-local road maintenance agreement for Holland Hill and Bennett Road, requesting \$2,091.48.
- SE Vt Watershed Alliance re: thank-you note.

Email

Pay Orders

Payroll Warrant

Ms. Maggio moved to approve Payroll Warrant #2022-23, Dated December 8, 2021, in the amount of \$5,044.58. Second by Mr. Mello. All in favor.

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Accounts Payable Warrant

Ms. Maggio moved to approve #2022-24, Dated December 15, 2021, in the amount of \$261,319.77. Second by Mr. Mello. All in favor.

(TABLED UNTIL REVIEWED)

Set Agenda

- Budget
- Draft Warning

Executive session

Ms. Maggio moved the negotiating strategy motion (agenda item above). Second by Mr. Noga. All in favor.

Ms. Maggio moved to enter Executive Session, citing statute (from previous agenda). Second by Mr. Jones. All in favor.

The selectboard entered Executive Session at 8:54 p.m.

Next Regular Selectboard meeting for January 5, 2022

Adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted, Peter Barus, Recorder, December 21, 2021