

Draft Minutes
Town of Brookline Selectboard Meeting
Wednesday, March 17, 2021, 6:30 PM
(videoconference)

Present

Selectboard:

Dot Maggio (Chair)
David Jones
Gwen Tanza
Bruce Mello

Town Officers:

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

Members of the Public:

Mike Bills (Lister, Townshend)
Helen Holt (Lister, Townshend)
Jay Maciejowski (WHPA)
Camilla Roberts (WHPA)
Peter Barus (Recorder)
FACTV (Videoconference recording)

Call the meeting to order

The Meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM.

Review changes to agenda if any

Scheduled members of the public

A. Helen Holt & Mike Bills re: Lister's appointment

Mr. (Mike) Bills was introduced and recognized; and introduced himself, in 12th year as a Lister in Townshend, experienced with CAMA and NEMRC, Current Use, etc., and familiar with Brookline. Mr. Bills will receive a confirmation email on appointment. Mr. Tanza thanked Mr. Bills for coming forward to assist the town.

Ms. Holt was subsequently recognized and introduced herself, also a Lister in Townshend and familiar with the software, etc. Ms. Maggio thanked Ms. Holt and noted that appointments for Lister were on the agenda to be done this meeting, and that there could be some paperwork regarding salaries.

B. James "Silas" Roberts re: Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association's Conservation Project of 187 Brookline Acres

Mr. Maciejowski, representing WHPA, was recognized and explained the Lands and Trails committee, the 650 acre parcel for sale a number of years including half of a lily pond, bear habitat, many opportunities for trails and recreational activities; that the Massey brothers had accepted their offer of \$500,000; that the property is off the ridgeline between Westminster, Athens and Brookline.

It was noted that embers were familiar with the organization, noting plans for a parking area for the Town Line Trail off of Grassy Brook Road; that the land had previously been posted and inaccessible. Mr. Maciejowski explained that WHPA would be developing a management plan to combine the parcel with other properties and put them in Current Use; that there would be public access, a trail, and a lot of good habitat to protect; that WHPA was looking for endorsement by the selectboard for use in approaching potential funding sources. Ms. Roberts noted that taxes would be paid, that no changes would be made in that regard.

Ms. Maggio discussed a letter of February 10, 2020, from James Roberts, that included photos and a summary of the proposed project; and opened the floor for discussion of signing an endorsement drafted by WHPA.

Mr. Jones expressed support, with the caveat that the selectboard should discuss whether to communicate with abutters; and suggested some minor edits to the letter.

Ms. Tanza had not seen the letter.

Ms. Roberts discussed a new abutter just north of the property who recently purchased a cabin west of Grassy Brook.

Ms. Maggio noted that the land is approximately 187 acres in Brookline.

Mr. Mello observed that it would be wonderful to have trails off Grassy Brook into the woods and supported the proposal.

Mr. Tanza noted that Brookline has a small tax base, a net worth of \$74 million that is down to \$71 million because of similar land transactions; that some residents are concerned about the tax base; that Current Use brings a Hold Harmless payment, but that this comes from the taxpayers; that when land is in Current Use, that also reduces the town's net worth; and that some adjoining properties, and buildable parcels, will increase in value.

Ms. Roberts explained that the property is already enrolled in Current Use; that Pinnacle not expecting to pay less tax than the prior owners, and does not plan to build; and noted that Mr. Massey had wanted the land conserved; that his family had offered it for sale about three years ago

Ms. Maggio invited further questions or comments. There was discussion of when the endorsement was wanted. Ms. Roberts explained two grant deadlines of April 14th and 20th, 2021.

The selectboard will review and discuss the endorsement letter; it was noted that there is a selectboard meeting April 7th.

Ms. Roberts offered to return and answer any further questions.

Unscheduled members of the public

Approve Minutes

Minutes from February 24, 2021 meeting

Mr. Jones moved to approve the minutes for February 24, 2021. Second by Ms. Tanza. Passed as corrected, with one abstaining.

Minutes from March 3, 2021 Reorganization meeting

Ms. Maggio moved to approve the minutes for March 3, 2021. Second by Mr. Mello.

There were corrections. **Passed** as corrected

New Business

A. Letter of support from the Town of Brookline for the conservation project of 187 acres of the Massey Land in Brookline.

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Ms. Maggio opened the floor for discussion. Mr. Jones explained that during a previous transfer of property for Deer Run nature preserve, Mr. Tanza had identified the abutting land owners from the tax maps, and a letter was addressed to each explaining that the selectboard would vote on a letter of support for the acquisition of property and inviting comment; and suggested that abutters in the present case be offered the same opportunity.

Mr. Jones noted that there was adequate time for response, and that approval of the letter should be on the next agenda.

Mr. Tanza will compile the list of abutters.

B. Selectboard Goals / Projects in the upcoming year.

Short statement from each board member on what they would like to see happen in and for the town of Brookline in the next twelve months.

Ms. Maggio: on BMH committee, would like to have monthly open house and community activities, ball games, ice cream social, etc., when pandemic restrictions are lifted.

Ms. Tanza: just want to be as helpful as possible, get others involved, and volunteers need to follow through.

Mr. Jones: concur on community engagement; and would like the selectboard to stay on top of the road grant cycle, complete the salt & sand shed; and would contribute however possible.

Mr. Mello: we might now have the most talented and experienced selectboard in my seven years as member; thank you to the clerks, road team, Ms. Nau and others who have helped the town for years; time to get others engaged; thank you Mr. Tanza for locating the candidates for Listers; four Bs: Blacktop, Buildings, Balanced Budget; concur on community engagement after pandemic; Brookline is missing a town center, BMH is closest thing; suggest buying a wheeled excavator would be economical as discussed with Mr. Bills.

Mr. Tanza: a dynamic situation, changes coming weekly; a community center is something to work toward; the town should have some equipment for Mr. Bills; pleased to be in this town of 550 people; need some fresh blood in the town offices.

Old Business

A. Review Policies – Signed Hard copies at Town Hall office

Mr. Maggio had reviewed and signed the (following) policies; Ms. Brimmer's signature was needed.

- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Rules of Procedure
- Purchase Policy

B. Appointed Positions still unfilled

1. Listers – H. Holt & M. Bills

Ms. Maggio nominated Helen Holt and Mike Bills as Listers for the town of Brookline until such time as residents are found for the positions. Mr. Jones inquired whether appointment is needed if no person is elected, according to VLCT. Mr. Tanza confirmed.

Mr. Jones noted that the Treasurer could not be a nonresident; however, since the Lister positions were put forward for election and no nominations were made, appointment was now proper.

Mr. Tanza noted that appointees are answerable to the selectboard.

There was discussion of compensation. Mr. Tanza had discussed with Ms. Holt \$15/hr.; that this would be raised in 2021 to \$16 and this was accepted, and would be within budget. Mr. Jones noted that there had always been two rates for the Listers; that the Chair had been compensated at \$15, others at \$14, and both were budgeted to increase by one dollar July 1st. Mr. Tanza noted that the selectboard decides compensation for appointees. Mr. Jones asked whether the \$15/hr compensation should be considered adequate for both appointees on the basis of discussion with Ms. Holt. Mr. Tanza noted the long experience of the appointees. There was discussion.

Ms. Maggio discussed asking one of the previous Listers to work with the appointees, having local knowledge.

Mr. Mello noted that an appointee had been promised \$15/hr. There was discussion; that it was fair compensation in a situation where no candidates had come forth. Mr. Jones noted this change to a structure in long use, and suggested appointing and paying at the promised rate, and that a previous Lister should also be compensated at that rate if hired again.

Ms. Maggio suggested appointing Ms. Holt and Mr. Bills for the amount of \$15/hr for the remainder of FY2021, to be reevaluated in the new budget. There was discussion. Mr. Maggio read a letter from Mike Bills (similar to his verbal introduction).

Ms. Maggio moved to appoint Ms. Helen Holt and Mr. Michael Bills for the amount of \$15/hr for the remainder of FY2021. Second by Mr. Jones. All in favor.

2. Planning Committee – D. Dobson

Mr. Jones nominated Daniel Dobson to one of the five-year terms on the Planning Commission. Second by Ms. Maggio.

It was noted that Mr. Dobson had expressed willingness to continue in the position. **All in favor.**

3. LEMP - D. Maggio & Gwen Tanza

There was discussion. The matter was Tabled.

4. Bank Resolution to sign Checks – G. Tanza & M. Masters

Ms. Maggio moved that Guy Tanza and Mike Masters be authorized to sign checks for the town of Brookline. Second by Mr. Mello. **All in favor.**

Summary / Update / Reports

A. Town Clerk Report – Guy Tanza

Mr. Tanza thanked everyone who helped with the vote, and noted that one is coming up for the West River Modified Union Education District and the budget, and the volunteers will be needed, the March 23 Information Meeting will be held by Zoom; the vote will be held March 24th; the usual activity in the office, new dog licenses, land transfers; and noted observing protocols under the emergency declaration, doing very well.

B. Building Commissioner Report – Bruce Mello

Mr. Mello acknowledged Mr. Bills for his assistance with the office, Round Schoolhouse and SLP; discussed mouse mitigation at town office, bat guano everywhere, calling a contractor to clean out; in the Round Schoolhouse the powderpost beetles are controlled, but moisture and dirt, and outside wall of the addition are problems; a 7x7 timber donated by Mr. Bills not used for years; and suggested window screens to mitigate the

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moisture problems.

Mr. Bills noted that the sign at the round schoolhouse could be refreshed.

Mr. Mellow had not entered the BMH; and discussed the boiler, septic system, and water systems at SLP, noting filter changes, septic not full, boiler exhaust pipe replaced by Mr. Bills; Daumpier was called to fix the exterior lights, timer behind needs replacement; the UV water system will be expensive; was shown how to maintain the system by Bovat, and shared with Mr. Bills; expansion tank and pressure tank replaced last year; after consulting with Canadian supplier, paid \$257 for two filters and housing to control the iron; Gary Lynde had mentioned that there are two systems in parallel, and only one is needed; both were repaired; about \$900 was spent; one side now operating, one shut down; and discussed expenses.

Ms. Maggio concurred with the need to mitigate the mice, noted the dual water system at SLP, and asked about checking fire extinguishers. Mr. Tanza noted that Code 3 had been responsible for fire extinguishers and will inquire. Ms. Maggio explained that the fire department recommended monthly checks. Mr. Bills concurred.

Highways & Roads

A. Road Supervisor – Mark Bills

Mr. Bills reported on mud season arriving; leveling areas when temperature is above freezing; many loads of 1-1/2" crushed stone where there was direct sunlight; grading regularly last two weeks; another warmup coming; good stockpile of stone at the town garage; the roads were in fair to good shape.

Ms. Maggio had observed and appreciated the work.

Mr. Bills reported that things to accomplish in the next year include upgrading several culverts that are failing, rusted, or undersized by state standard; would like to continue under the new budget to remove hazardous trees; a ditch project on Hill Road north of the power line can begin after a few more trees are removed, to remove some ledge for drainage; on Whitney Hill a project needs about twenty stumps removed for better drainage and to widen the road for better passage and plowing; and there were Better Backroad grants outstanding for Parker Road, on water quality, discussed with Mr. Daigneault (GMP).

Mr. Jones recalled discussing this with Alan May, who had said in the event of delays he could be notified and should be able to get an extension to the end of 2021.

Mr. Bills reported that crack-sealing was not done last year, and there were not sufficient funds this fiscal year, but it could be done this summer; that old reflective signage needs replacement; and routine road maintenance, roadside mowing should be done for safe Brookline roads; that mowing should be completed by July 4th; that the over-rail mower would be \$3,400 per week requires a reservation; that the wheeled excavator could be rented for the stone and digging work, with the brush hog attachment to do the mowing as well; that the rent would be about \$7,000 per month, compared to the mowing tractor at \$3,400 a week, about half the rental; that there was about one week of mowing; that the brush hog attachment would be an additional \$1,000; that much depends on whether the grant comes in before the end of the fiscal year; that another option would be RFP for the grant work.

Mr. Jones noted that hiring out work had not been planned when discussing grants; that it was not known if GMP would move what they needed to move; that the rest of the work associated with that project might be done anyway.

Mr. Bills explained that the trees must be done before ditching and stone ditch-lining; that GMP has to do the trees on the power line, and their plan was to remove the lines and put in new poles after tree removal; that GMP has been too busy under the pandemic emergency to keep to their schedule.

There was discussion. Mr. Bills had done some of the stone lining near the Inner Fire driveway and could do the culvert and ditch at that location; and could probably find the equipment if GMP comes through. There was discussion of the salt & sand shed project.

Ms. Maggio thanked Mr. Bills.

Communications

Email

- Treasurer

Regular Mail

- Letter from Michael Bills

Pay Orders

Accounts Payable

Ms. Maggio moved to approve Accounts Payable Warrant #2021-12, dated March 17, 2021, in the amount of \$253,158.65. Second by Mr. Jones. All in Favor.

Payroll

Ms. Maggio moved to approve Payroll Warrant #2021-11, dated March 17, 2021, in the amount of \$2,373.09. Second by Mr. Mello. All in Favor.

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Set agenda for the next meeting

- Letter of support for WHPA
- LEMP

Adjournment

Ms. Maggio moved to Adjourn. Second by Mr. Mello. All in favor.
The meeting was Adjourned at 8:27 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Peter Barus, Recorder, March 18, 2021