

## **BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING**

**April 12, 2021**

A virtual meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order by Chairman Alicia Cannon at 7:00 PM, using Zoom Video Communication (Video Conferencing App). Board Members Present: Cannon, Athanas, Melia, Ampagoomian, and Collins. Also Present: Adam D. Gaudette, Town Manager.

Chairman Cannon asked all attendees to mute their microphones unless they are speaking or wish to speak. Inappropriate comments and/or disruptive behavior will result in immediate dismissal.

**Chairman Cannon read the following aloud:** Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order concerning imposition on strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, meetings of the Northbridge Board of Selectmen will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES: February 8, 2021.** A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to approve the February 8, 2021 meeting minutes as presented with the readings omitted. Vote yes/Unanimous.

### **PUBLIC HEARING/None**

**APPOINTMENTS: By the Board of Selectmen: Mary Contino, Board of Registrars.** Town Manager Gaudette explained that with Ms. Contino being a Registrar she is unable to serve another position. Given that information Ms. Contino chose to stay with the Board of Registrars. Selectman Athanas asked why those who serve as a Registrar not able to serve on anything else. Town Manager Gaudette guessed that since they handle elections that would be the only thing he can think of. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Collins to appoint Mary Contino to the Board of Registrars as a Democrat designee. Vote yes/Unanimous.

**RESIGNATIONS: Mary Contino, Cultural Council.** A motion/Mr. Athanas, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to accept the resignation of Mary Contino from the Cultural Council. Vote yes/Unanimous.

### **CITIZENS' COMMENTS/INPUT/None**

**Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce/Request for a One-Day Weekday Entertainment License for the BVCC Home & Community Expo on Saturday, July 17, 2021. Present: Jeannie Hebert, President & CEO, BVCC & Liz O'Neil, Director of Programs, Events & Membership, BVCC.** Ms. Hebert explained that they planned to follow all current COVID guidelines for this event. She added that they currently do not have many entertainers signed up so they plan to use the auditorium as it is air-conditioned. Selectman Ampagoomian asked about the current occupancy regulations and how they will regulate the number of attendees. Ms. Hebert stated that they are working with the Board of Health and are hoping for larger capacity limits by July, but plan to adhere to whatever the guidelines are. She added that they will be looking to add some outdoor options as well. A motion/Mr. Collins, seconded/Mr. Melia to approve a One-Day Weekday Entertainment License for the BVCC Home & Community Expo for Saturday, July 17, 2021. Vote yes/Unanimous.

**Spring Annual Town Meeting [Tuesday, May 4, 2021] – Vote positions on all warrant articles.**

**ARTICLE 1: (Board of Selectmen).** This article is for prior year bills from the previous fiscal year and requires approval by Town Meeting. Town Manager Gaudette stated there are two bills of a prior year, for streetlights and the second for IT invoices that came in after July 1, 2020. **ARTICLE 2: (Board of Selectmen).** To amend and balance the current budget and make any necessary adjustments. Town Manager Gaudette stated that the snow and ice, trade school, liability insurance and inter-department transfers that will need to be adjusted. **ARTICLE 3: (Finance Committee).** Town Manager Gaudette explained this article is for the upcoming fiscal year budget. **ARTICLE 4: (Board of Selectmen).** Sewer Enterprise Operation of the Department of Public Works for FY 2022. **ARTICLE 5: (Board of Selectmen).** Water Enterprise Operation of the Department of Public Works for FY 2022. **ARTICLE 6: (Board of Selectmen).** Approval to spend Chapter 90 funds. **ARTICLE 7: (Board of Selectmen).** Authorizes the Treasurer/Collector to enter into a compensating balance agreement or agreements for FY 2022. **ARTICLE 8: (Board of Selectmen).** Housekeeping article to set the spending limits for the Town's revolving funds. **ARTICLE 9: (Board of Selectmen).** Pine Grove Cemetery Trust to fund operations of the Pine Grove Cemetery for FY 2022. **ARTICLE 10: (Community Preservation Committee).** Town Manager Gaudette explained that this article allows the CPC to spend money earned through 1% taxes, which is also matched by the State for community preservation projects in the categories of Historic Resources, Community Housing, Open Space & Recreation, Budgeted Reserves, and other expenses. **ARTICLE 11: (Community Preservation Committee).** Town Manager Gaudette explained that this article allows the CPC to spend money earned through 1% taxes, which is also matched by the State for the implementation of the Community Preservation Act. **ARTICLE 12: (Board of Health).** Immediate Response Action Plan submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection for activities at the Quaker Street Landfill, which allows the town to hire a contractor to test and study those wells. **ARTICLE 13: (Board of Selectmen).** Sewer Enterprise Capital Article. **ARTICLE 14: (Board of Selectmen).** Town Manager Gaudette explained that this article allows funds received from solar farm PILOT agreements to be spent on smaller Town building projects. Selectman Athanas asked about the HVAC project - if it was for the entire floor. Town Manager Gaudette explained that it would be just the office space. **ARTICLE 15: (Board of Selectmen).** Receipts Account to be expended under the direction of the Fire Chief. **ARTICLE 16: (Board of Selectmen).** Town Manager Gaudette explained that the funding for this article comes from surplus funds related to Pine Grove Cemetery and will be used for cemetery maintenance projects. **ARTICLE 17: (Board of Selectmen).** Capital plan projects. **ARTICLE 18: (School Committee).** Capital projects for the School including removal of the modular classrooms, student IT system and cameras at the Middle School. Selectman Collins asked if \$125,000 was to demolish the modular classrooms at NES. Ms. McKinstry stated that is the number and they also need a number for the schematic repairs as there is a portion of the lot that belongs to the church. **ARTICLE 19: (Board of Selectmen).** Town Manager Gaudette explained that this is to allow the use of electronic voting clickers at Town Meeting. **ARTICLE 20: (School Committee).** Authorization to transfer the custody, care and control of the Northbridge Elementary School building from the Northbridge School Committee to the Board of Selectmen. Selectman Ampagoomian asked if we had a timeframe on this. Town Manager Gaudette replied that as soon as there is a vote the School Committee would need to have a meeting to approve the transfer to the Board of Selectmen. Town Manager Gaudette explained that in the capital plan there are funds designated for the study and possibly an RFQ for sale. **ARTICLE 21: (Conservation Commission).** The Conservation Commission is looking to create a fund that would allow them to spend on different projects in Town. Selectman Ampagoomian asked if the Board would receive details on what the Commission would be spending the money on. Town Manager Gaudette noted that there is a memo in the booklet, which states that the establishment of the fund would enable to Commission to receive donations from the public and utilize them for the uses identified in MGL Chapter 40 Section 8C and if the funds are not sufficient the Commission may request that the Town transfer monies into the fund at a future meeting. Town Accountant Mr. Vaidya explained that once they have the funds there is no further approval needed to spend the monies unless it was for eminent domain. **ARTICLE 22: (Finance Committee).** This articles is to transfer funds from the undesignated fund balance to the Stabilization Fund. A motion/Mr. Collins, seconded/Mr. Melia

to support articles 1 through 22 of the Spring Annual Town Meeting Warrant of May 4, 2021. Vote yes/Unanimous.

**Spring Annual Town Election [Tuesday, May 18, 2021]- Vote to sign election warrant.** A motion/Mr. Collins, seconded/Mr. Melia to sign the Spring Annual Town Election warrant. Vote yes/Unanimous.

**Northbridge Public Schools Update – Superintendent Amy McKinstry.** Ms. McKinstry stated the students are back to school full-time, which began with grades K-4 last week and grades 5-12 started today. She said that they were aiming for a full re-opening prior to April vacation to reassess things. The Superintendent mentioned that things have gone smoothly except for a few hiccups on timing for drop-offs but they were able to work it out. Currently, 90% of students are back in the building and 10% chose to stay remote for the remainder of the school year. Ms. McKinstry advised that the students are seated 3 feet apart and sit in the same seat each day, lockers are not in use, the bathrooms are monitored, and all classrooms are outfitted with an air purifier and plexiglass dividers. Students sit 6 feet apart at lunch. Ms. McKinstry announced that they received 1400 antigen tests for the district and nursing staff has been trained on administering those as well as conducting rapid testing at the schools, which they have been using to identify any student or staff that are infected. She thanked Ann Labonte, Public Health Nurse, and Jeanne Gniadek, Board of Health Administrator for putting together the vaccination clinic and assisting in getting the staff vaccinated. Ms. McKinstry reported that the Northbridge Rams football team is currently 4-0 and will be playing Friday night at Lasell Field and the School band will be playing and the cheerleaders will also be in attendance. The football games are currently live-streamed through YouTube. Spring sports will begin April 26<sup>th</sup> and run to June 30<sup>th</sup>. Supt. McKinstry added that they are in the process of adding a new District Strategic Plan, which outlines their mission, vision, and strategic goals for the next 3 years and is used for decision making, budgeting, staffing and programing. The new school building is underway and still on schedule; all furniture has been purchased and the technology has been selected. The working group is working on the development of their purchase list. The master schedule will be discussed over spring break. Ms. McKinstry added that if any members of the Board or Finance Committee are interested in participating in a building tour to let her know and they can make that happen. Selectman Melia asked if those students who are remote have a deadline to come back to in-person learning. Ms. McKinstry answered that they can stay remote for the remainder of the school year, which was allowed for by the Commissioner. She added that most of the students who are remote have done well so far. Selectman Melia asked if there have been many students not reporting to their online classes. Ms. McKinstry replied that they did have some occur at the High School and Middle School but it wasn't a huge problem and the staff has been great in communicating with the parents on any issues. Officer Dejordy has also been a great resource to know and to remind the students to get back on. Selectman Melia asked how the School budget is this year with the pandemic and saving on transportation costs but spending over in technology. Ms. McKinstry stated that they have seen savings on utilities since no one was using the buildings. There was also a savings by not having to pay substitutes, as well as savings with out of district transportation. She noted that they also received a lot of grant funds that were used towards PPE and technology. Selectman Athanas asked when the school year ends. Ms. McKinstry replied that the last day is June 15<sup>th</sup>. He also asked if the students are falling behind in education. She responded that it has been a nation-wide issue but feels that our teachers from the very beginning did not drop expectations and taught as if it were a regular school year keeping in mind there may be issues at home. The Superintendent then stated that they will also need to look at the curriculum for next year to adjust to meet the needs of the kids. Selectman Ampagoomian asked how they handled those students who may have had emotional distress. Ms. McKinstry explained that the staff is amazing at building relationships with students and a lot of information and resources was sent to parents and students. She further explained that they also added emotional learning strategies into the curriculum daily, held free breakfast and lunch with remote pick-up days, delivering food to students. Ms. McKinstry also added that the food pantry has been busy and the community support has been amazing.

**Parking at Pine Grove Cemetery during Lasell Field sports games.** Town Manager Gaudette explained that with the High School sports being back and spectators being limited the Town received complaints of fans parking in the cemetery driveway to watch the games. He stated that there was good conversation with the school staff to help with this issue. Capacity limits were able to increase, along with set details on social distancing at the entrance have seemed to help prevent spectators from watching the game from the cemetery. Town Manager Gaudette stated that we have not received any further complaints. Ms. McKinstry added that they have not received any complaints either.

**TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT: 1) Key Meetings Attended:** Monday, March 22, 2021 – Attended the Board of Selectmen Meeting via zoom. Tuesday, March 23, 2021 – Attended an MMA Fiscal Policy Committee Meeting via Zoom. Tuesday, March 23, 2021 – Attended the Lt Governor's Managers Meeting via Zoom. Wednesday, March 24, 2021 – Attended a regional Town Managers' Meeting via Zoom. Thursday, March 25, 2021 – Attended a meeting with Mass Police Chiefs Association and MMA on training funding in the State budget. Friday, March 26, 2021 – Attended a virtual review meeting for the Fire Station Architect RFQ. Tuesday, March 30, 2021 – Met with Chief Warchol to discuss the Chief replacement process. Wednesday, March 31, 2021 – Held in-person negotiations with the Northbridge Police Association. Wednesday, March 31, 2021 – Attended the Finance Committee Meeting. Thursday, April 1, 2021 – Held in-person Firefighters Association negotiations. Thursday, April 1, 2021 – Attended the BPCC meeting to conduct Fire Station Project Architect interviews. Tuesday, April 6, 2021 – Attended the Lt Governor's Zoom Call for Managers. Tuesday, April 6, 2021 – Attended a Manages/Chiefs zoom meeting regarding MPTC funding in the State budget. Thursday, April 8, 2021 – Conference Call with Tradition Energy regarding natural gas pricing. Thursday, April 8, 2021 – Conference Zoom call with Balmer Project Team. **2) Balmer School Building Project:** Project construction by Fontaine Brothers continues with precautionary measures in place per State construction guidelines for construction projects moving forward during the pandemic. The OPM is working on punch lists as the project will approach substantial completion over the next couple months. The Town Manager participated in a conference call on Thursday, April 8<sup>th</sup> with the project team regarding fencing issues. **3) Lasell Field Turf Project:** The project is essentially complete except for several punch-list items that won't be completed until the spring (loam and seed). The GC Green Acres provided close-out documents for the Town this week. The track installer is going to repair a piece of damaged track and we are working on the repair to one of the light fixtures. **4) Fire Station Project:** The BPCC interviewed 3 finalists for the project architect last week on April 1<sup>st</sup>, Kaestle Boos, Dore & Whittier, and TGAS. After several hours of interviews, the BPCC voted for TGAS. The Town Manager and the OPM are currently negotiating an agreement for design services. **5) FY2022 Budget & Town Meeting Warrant:** The Warrant closed on March 5, 2021. There are 22 articles consisting of housekeeping, budget, and capital needs. The Finance Committee completed their Budget process having met with department heads and School Departments as well as having their Public Meeting for the Omnibus Budget for FY2022. They have voted their positions for the Town Meeting Booklet which is being prepared for the printers. Post Cards have been prepared as per the Bylaws. The Board of Selectmen will vote on their positions this Monday, April 12<sup>th</sup>. The Annual Town Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 4, 2021. The Town Manager will work with staff over the next several months on safety protocols. Selectman Collins suggested that there should not be anyone behind the Town Moderator for the setup. Town Manager Gaudette stated that there will be meetings prior to and is taking note of that suggestion. Selectman Athanas asked what the overage was for the snow and ice budget. Town Manager Gaudette replied that two hundred and eighty-two thousand currently. Selectman Athanas asked what the balance at Pine Grove Cemetery. Town Manager Gaudette explained that we still have over three hundred thousand in the reserve account, and the money we are using for projects will come from the left-over funds from the budget.

**SELECTMEN'S CONCERNS: Selectman Ampagoomian 1)** asked if the meetings would be held in person soon. Town Manager Gaudette responded that he has had conversations with other Town Manager's and as restrictions are released, we will start to open. He also stated that one of the biggest

concerns is having town staff vaccinated.

**ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA/None**

**CORRESPONDENCE/None**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION/None**

Chairman Cannon announced that the next meeting is scheduled for April 26, 2021

A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mrs. Collins to adjourn the public meeting. Vote yes/  
Ampagoomian, Athanas, Cannon, Collins, and Melia.

**Meeting Adjourned: 7:57 PM**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Russell D. Collins, Clerk**

/mjc

**LIST OF DOCUMENTATION**

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING - OPEN SESSION**

**April 12, 2021**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

- I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A. February 8, 2021**  
-Copy of February 8, 2021 meeting minutes
- II. PUBLIC HEARING**
- III. APPOINTMENTS: B. By the Board of Selectmen: Mary Contino, Board of Registrars/No documentation**  
  
**RESIGNATIONS: C. Mary Contino, Cultural Council**  
-Copy of letter of resignation
- IV. CITIZENS' COMMENTS/INPUT/None**
- V. DECISIONS:**
  - D. Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce/Request for a One-Day Weekday Entertainment License for the BVCC Home & Community Expo on Saturday, July 17, 2021/Present: Jeannie Hebert, President & CEO, BVCC & Liz O'Neil, Director of Programs, Events & Membership, BVCC**  
- Copy of one day weekday entertainment application  
-Copy of REAP attestation  
-Copy of Workers' Compensation Insurance Affidavit
  - E. Spring Annual Town Meeting [Tuesday, May 4, 2021] – Vote positions on all warrant articles**  
-Copy of draft town meeting warrant
  - F. Spring Annual Town Election [Tuesday, May 18, 2021]- Vote to sign election warrant**  
-Copy of Spring Annual Town Election Warrant
- VI. DISCUSSIONS**
  - G. Northbridge Public Schools Update – Superintendent Amy McKinstry/No documentation**
  - H. Parking at Pine Grove Cemetery during Lasell Field games/No documentation**
- VII. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**  
-Copy of Town Manager Report
- VIII. SELECTMEN'S CONCERNS/No documentation**
- IX. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA/None**
- X. CORRESPONDENCE/None**
- XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION/None**