

BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING

June 27, 2022

JOINT MEETING WITH THE TRUSTEES OF SOLDIERS' MEMORIALS

A joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen and Trustees of Soldiers' Memorials was called to order by Chairman Ampagoomian at 7:00 PM, Northbridge Town Hall, 7 Main Street, Whitinsville, MA. Board Members Present: Ampagoomian, Collins and Melia. Trustees Members Present: Chairman Jason Ball, Ariel Lopez, Tom Farley, and Richard Trier. Also Present: Adam D. Gaudette, Town Manager. Selectman Cannon and Selectman Paulhus were absent and it is duly noted.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by those present.

REORGANIZATION OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN: 1) Town Manager asks for Nominations for Chairman. The Town Manager asked for nominations for Chairman of the Board of Selectmen. A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to nominate Russell Collins for Chairman. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins and Melia. Selectman Melia thanked Mr. Ampagoomian for serving as Chairman and complimented him on a job well done. **2) Chairman asks for Nominations for Vice-Chairman.** Chairman Collins asked for nominations for Vice-Chairman. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Collins to nominate Selectman Melia for Vice-Chairman. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins and Melia. **3) Chairman asks for Nominations for Clerk.** Chairman Collins asked for nominations for Clerk. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to nominate Selectman Brian Paulhus for Clerk. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins and Melia.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: June 15, 2022 [Special Meeting]. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to approve the June 15, 2022 [Special Meeting] minutes as presented with the readings omitted. Vote yes/Ampagoomian and Melia. Abstain: Selectman Collins.

PUBLIC HEARING: 7:05 PM - Massachusetts Electric Company dba National Grid and Verizon New England, Inc. [Petition for Joint Pole Location: Install new pole 5-50 on Overlook Street between existing pole 5 and pole 6 for service upgrade at 10-20 Overlook Street. New wire size needed, too heavy to be mid spanned as it currently is. [Plan No: 30555151, Dated: May 9, 2022]. Present: Albert Galvin, National Grid. Chairman Collins read aloud the public hearing notice. A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to open the public hearing. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins and Melia. Mr. Galvin explained that this is a customer service upgrade to 400 Amps, which requires a heavier duty cable and pole support. There were no comments from those present. A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to close the public hearing. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins and Melia. A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to approve the petition to Install new pole 5-50 on Overlook Street between existing pole 5 and pole 6 for service upgrade at 10-20 Overlook Street per Plan No: 30555151, Dated: May 9, 2022. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins and Melia.

Joint Appointment By the Board of Selectmen and Trustees of Soldiers' Memorials: James Gallagher, Trustees of Soldiers Memorials [Non-Veteran] / Present: Jason Ball (Chair), Ariel Lopez, Tom Farley and Richard Trier. Mr. Ball stated the Trustees recommend James Gallagher be jointly appointed to the Trustees of Soldiers' Memorials as a non-veteran designee until the next Town Election in May 2023. Mr. Ball explained that Mr. Gallagher had been on the Board for approximately 10 years and held the position of treasurer. A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to appoint James Gallagher to the Trustees of Soldiers' Memorials as a Non-Veteran designee. Vote yes/Ampagoomian,

Collins, Melia, Ball, Lopez, Farley, and Trier.

By the Board of Selectmen: 2022 Annual Reappointments/Vote to reappoint [per the list enclosed in agenda packet]. A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to approve the 2022 Annual Reappointments by the Board of Selectmen as indicated on the list provided in the agenda packet. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins and Melia.

By The Town Manager: 1) David Pickart, Conservation Agent/Vote to affirm. Town Manager Gaudette explained that Mr. Pickart has been working as a part-time Conservation Agent for several years now under an agreement that was worked out between the Upton Town Manager and himself. Recently, we were able to fund the position on a full-time basis. Ms. Carroll, Conservation Commission member, pointed out that having Mr. Pickart has been very helpful to assist and guide the Commission. Mr. Pickart thanked all the individuals who helped move this forward. He stated he has enjoyed working for both towns, but it was difficult to split his time between both communities. He is looking forward to focusing on Northbridge and he is excited to take on new initiatives. A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to affirm the Town Manager's appointment of David Pickart as the Town's full-time Conservation Agent. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins and Melia.

2) 2022 Annual Reappointments/Vote to affirm [per the list enclosed in agenda packet]. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to affirm the Town Manager's 2022 Annual Reappointments as indicated on the list provided in the agenda packet. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins and Melia.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS/INPUT/None

Fall Annual Town Meeting (October 25, 2022) / Vote to close the warrant on Friday, August 26, 2022 at 12:00 Noon. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to close the warrant on Friday, August 26, 2022 at 12:00 Noon. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins and Melia.

Jean Mistretta/Request to place 50 flags in Memorial Park (Field of Flags) to commemorate Northbridge residents who were killed in action. Ms. Mistretta requested permission to erect a field of flags as an annual and ongoing celebration for the citizens of Northbridge who gave their lives in service to our country. She explained that she would like to place 50 American flags around the perimeter of the Town Common. The size of each flag is 3' x 5' and made of nylon. Each flag will fly from a 10-foot pole and be spaced 5-6 feet apart. Ms. Mistretta is proposing to fly the flags during the period of May 19th/20th to July 5th/6th, which will recognize and celebrate Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Juneteenth, and Independence Day. Then the flags will be removed and placed back in Memorial Park from September 1st/2nd until November 12th/13th, which will recognize and celebrate Victory over Japan Day, Labor Day, Patriot Day, Columbus Day and Veterans Day. Ms. Mistretta explained that the pole kit comes with a 20-inch spike, which will need to be put into the ground, which will require assistance from the DPW. She added that the source of funding comes from Unibank and the FINE Group. Extra flags will also be ordered in case any get damaged. Selectman Ampagoomian/1) asked if she had seen or received a list of concerns from the DPW and Ms. Mistretta responded she had not. 2) He also asked if she had contacted the Trustees of Soldiers Memorials to discuss this proposal with them and she responded she had not. Selectman Melia /1) stated it is a great idea, but he is apprehensive due to the concerns of the DPW Director, some of which include the diminished ability to properly maintain the park (difficult to mow around each flagpole) and vandalism. 2) He then suggested the Field of Flags be set up in Pine Grove Cemetery instead. Mr. Ball, Chairman of the Trustees of Soldiers Memorials, agreed that it is a great idea, but he is also concerned about the possibility of vandalism at that location. Chief Labrie noted that his biggest concern is vandalism as well but suggested that if the Board moves forward with the Field of Flags at Memorial Park, that they keep them in the mulch areas to avoid having to mow around them. Chairman Collins suggested erecting the flags on the Town Hall lawn and further suggested inviting the DPW Director, who is currently on

vacation, to the July 18th meeting to discuss which location would work best. Ariel Lopez, member of the Trustees of Soldiers' Memorials, questioned who was in charge of maintenance at Pine Grove Cemetery, and the Board responded the Department of Public Works. He then asked if that location would be an issue to mow. Town Manager Gaudette replied that the area Mr. Melia suggested will involve some upkeep as it is a large grassy area. At the conclusion of the discussion, the Board took no action and tabled the item until the next Selectmen's meeting.

Pam Waterson/Request to use Memorial Park for a Yoga class. Ms. Waterson explained that she is a yoga teacher looking to use Memorial Park to teach classes on consecutive Tuesdays, from midway through July until September. Classes would begin around 6 PM and run for about an hour to an hour and a half. Selectman Melia noted that it is a Memorial Park and queried the board on whether this would be an appropriate use. Selectman Ampagoomian noted that we have allowed Village Congregational Church to use Memorial Park for their Harvest Festival, as well as concerts in the past. A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to grant permission to Ms. Waterson to use Memorial Park for yoga classes as noted above. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins and Melia.

Ambulance Fund (Write off of uncollectible accounts) / Vote to approve. Town Accountant Neil Vaidya noted that there is currently about \$926,817.39 of uncollectible accounts in the ambulance fund and it has been over a decade since the town has written off these accounts. The last time it was done was around 2011, when the town was looking into getting a third-party collector. He explained the reason for uncollectible accounts happens when there is a call for ambulance services our vendor sends a bill but there are items they cannot collect on since Medicare only covers so much of the cost of ambulance services. Mr. Vaidya stated that they are looking to go that route again to aid in the collection of these accounts. Selectman Melia requested more information such as the number of calls for service, what is charged out, what comes in and what is not received. He noted he would also like to see the percentage rate from the vendor that collects for us. Town Manager Gaudette asked if Mr. Vaidya could explain the process in terms of what we can do in order to have the bills paid. Mr. Gaudette gave an example of Real Estate taxes, and when they are not paid there is a demand notice and furthermore a lien, court, etc. Mr. Vaidya explained that with the ambulance run bills they don't have the ability to lien people by law. The only action the town could take would be to take the individuals with outstanding amounts to small claims court, but then we would be fronting money to take them to court. Selectman Melia asked if it would be better to have an annual write off figure, where Mr. Vaidya provides the amount of ambulance runs, the amount charged, vs the amount received. Selectman Melia expressed concern with writing off an amount that large. Selectman Collins asked why we would pay a second company to come in, when the first company is already doing the work to collect what they can. Mr. Vaidya explained that we would only pay them if we collected, which they would receive a percentage of what was collected. Town Manager Gaudette sought clarification as to whether this was an auditing issue or monetary. Mr. Vaidya confirmed it is an auditing issue, which was recommended by the auditors to investigate it and if it is uncollectible to write it off. The Board decided to take no action on this item and to table it until the August 22, 2022 Board of Selectmen's meeting.

Town-owned land (Providence Rd.)/Present: Henry Lane, Attorney. Atty. Lane explained that his client owns approximately 72 acres of land on Providence Road, which circles around a piece of Town-owned property. He requested the parcel of land be sold to his client since it has no use to the town. However, in order to do that, it would need to be designated as surplus land with no immediate need for the town to use the land. Pending that decision there would be an appraisal process, town meeting authorization to dispose of it, and then sold at public auction. The process leaves no guarantee for his clients to receive the land but it still makes sense to try for a joint development. Atty. Lane explained that the land is zoned Industrial, and they would be looking at a commercial element such as a restaurant or small retail, warehousing, and/or potentially multifamily housing. He noted that the land in question has the potential of providing access to the ball fields and parking. Selectman Melia asked what they would do with the land, since they will be asked by the public. Mr. Lane explained that it would be similar to what was done with the Walmart parcel,

where they made a commitment to the town that they would balance the site with both retail and industrial use. Mr. Lane explained that it was difficult to solicit developers to a site where they aren't sure if they are going to acquire that portion of the land yet and they can't control who has an interest in it. Mr. Lane explained that if the town decides to put the land up for bid, the bids can contain conditions. Town Manager Gaudette pointed out that there was a town meeting regarding the rezoning of this land, but it was withdrawn, he sought clarification on the thought process there as the Board was not a part of that discussion. Atty. Lane responded that they did not own the property, but had an agreement to acquire it and they did not do the environmental work on issues and topographical planning that they since have done. They now know the topography and where the wetlands are for potential development. Town Manager Gaudette asked why they wouldn't go for the zoning change. Mr. Lane replied that have a draft with a roadway pattern that loops around nicely, but if it is a dead end, it does not allow for the flexibility that the loop would. They are not able to freeze those items, and even if there were two separate developers, it allows the roadways to interlock, whereas the way it is now they are not able to do much with the town owning that piece of property. Selectman Ampagoomian asked if the study that was completed on the land survey showed any bounds or structures. Mr. Lane was not aware that any were found but he would be happy to ask the wetlands scientist that completed the survey. Selectman Ampagoomian noted that there is a stone cellar on that property not far from the culverts and then asked what the brown lines represented on the map that was provided. Town Manger Gaudette noted that the lines mark the land that was previously harvested for wood that has since become solar panel farms. Bill Renaud, one of the property owners and resident of Grafton, noted there are culverts under the highway. Selectman Melia felt that this topic should be discussed when there is a full Board present. Town Manager Gaudette asked if they have any schematics of buildings or suggested uses that could be provided to the Board so they have more information on the use, rather than just the road layout. Mr. Lane explained that they have developed various scenarios, but the clients are reluctant to make that information public for competitive reasons and they do not want to misrepresent their intent. The use they anticipate are restaurants, small retail, warehousing component and potential residential. Town Manager Gaudette requested he bring something to the Board with the planned structures and label the potential for each of the buildings.

Fire Station Strategic Plan/Present: Chief David White and Joe Pozzo, CPSM (via zoom) – *Deferred to July 18th*

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT: June 13, 2022 – June 24, 2022. 1) **Key Meetings Attended:** Monday, June 13, 2022 – Conference Call with Joel Seely (OPM) regarding the ADA report for the new Balmer School. Monday, June 13, 2022 – Attended the Board of Selectmen Meeting. Tuesday, June 14, 2022 – Attended the weekly Fire Station Project construction meeting. Wednesday, June 15, 2022 – Coordinated the agenda items for the BPCC Meeting. Monday, June 20, 2022 – Holiday to commemorate Juneteenth. Tuesday, June 21, 2022 – Conference calls regarding the ADA Study findings at the new Balmer School Project. Tuesday, June 21, 2022 – Zoom call with Abacus, the architect for the NES Reuse Study. Wednesday, June 22, 2022 – Met with new Upton Town Manager, Joe Laydon, also a former Northbridge Finance Committee member. Thursday, June 23, 2022 – Attended the weekly Fire Station Project Construction Meeting. Thursday, June 23, 2022 – Participated in a GAP Energy Grant call for the WWTP. Thursday, June 23, 2022 – Met with Heather Elster from the Community Center and Bonnie Coombs from BVNHCC to discuss the ZAP cleanup effort. Miscellaneous Calls/Visits with Staff and Board Members. 2) **Fire Station Project:** A weekly construction meeting was held with the GC and site contractor this past week on Thursday, June 23rd. The GC is still mobilizing and is preparing to begin site work. The design/project team is working to develop a groundbreaking ceremony on Thursday afternoon, July 7th at 6 PM. 3) **Northbridge Elementary School Reuse Study:** The architect team from Abacus met with the BPCC last week on Wednesday, June 15, 2022 to hear the first presentation on the project. The next step is to develop a public participation process as well as do a site survey and DEP Phase I study. 4) **Fire Department Strategic Plan:** The Fire Chief along with Joe Pozzo, the consultant from CPSM, will be at the Selectmen Meeting this Monday to present the Plan. 5) **Fire Department Radio Communications**

Study: Chief White and Chief Labrie are working with the firm CTA on the project which is on-going. **6) American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA):** Now that the recommended Funding Project Plan has been approved, projects are able to move forward. The Town Manager is putting together contracts with the non-profits and departments who will need to coordinate necessary procurements. The Town has finalized agreements with Blackstone Valley Education Hub and Family Continuity and is developing agreements for the Whittin Community Center projects. **7) Linwood Basketball Courts Project:** The Town Manager has met with Jamie L from DPW, Mike Proto from Parks and Rec, and Jon Charwick from Activitas, who will be the design engineer and OPM for the project. Next step will be to get the site surveyor on site.

SELECTMEN'S CONCERNS: **Selectman Melia 1)** questioned why some Boards and Committees are still meeting virtually as he has received some complaints. He asked if there was anything Town Manager Gaudette could do to get these meetings back in-person. Selectman Ampagoomian agreed. Town Manager Gaudette explained that he could send a letter on behalf of the Board, but technically under the Governor's order they are allowed to meet virtually. Justine Carroll, Chairman of the Conservation Commission, was present and noted that the Commission has been discussing what they feel comfortable doing, as some of them are in a more vulnerable population and expressed they are not comfortable coming back to in-person meetings. Ms. Carroll did note that they have seen more participation in the remote meetings than they have in person, but she plans to express the Selectmen's thoughts to the Conservation Commission. **Selectman Ampagoomian 1)** requested that the 250th Anniversary Committee get in touch with the Cable Studio to have them record the parade. Town Manager Gaudette replied that he would reach out to the members on the recording of the parade as well as advertising.

ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA/None
CORRESPONDENCE/None
EXECUTIVE SESSION

A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to adjourn the public meeting. Vote yes/Board members: Ampagoomian, Collins and Melia.

Meeting Adjourned: 8:34 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Russell D. Collins, Clerk

/mjc

LIST OF DOCUMENTATION

BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING - OPEN SESSION

June 27, 2022

JOINT MEETING WITH THE TRUSTEES OF SOLDIERS MEMORIALS

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

REORGANIZATION OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN: 1) Town Manager asks for Nominations for Chairman. – No documentation

2) Chairman asks for Nominations for Vice-Chairman – No documentation

3) Chairman asks for Nominations for Clerk – No documentation

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A. June 15, 2022 [Special Meeting]

-Copy of June 15, 2022 meeting minutes

II. PUBLIC HEARING: B. 7:05 PM - Massachusetts Electric Company dba National Grid and Verizon New England, Inc. [Petition for Joint Pole Location: Install new pole 5-50 on Overlook Street between existing pole 5 and pole 6 for service upgrade at 10-20 Overlook Street. New wire size needed, too heavy to be mid spanned as it currently is. [Plan No: 30555151, Dated: May 9, 2022]. Present: Albert Galvin, National Grid

-Copy of public hearing notice

-Copy of petition for joint or identical pole locations

-Copy of National Grid request form

-Copy of National Grid map/layout

-Copy of notice to abutters

-Copy of request for abutters

-Copy of abutters list

-Copy of memorandum signing off from the DPW Director

III. APPOINTMENTS: C. Joint Appointment By the Board of Selectmen and Trustees of Soldiers' Memorials: James Gallagher, Trustees of Soldiers Memorials [Non-Veteran] / Present: Jason Ball (Chair), Ariel Lopez, Tom Farley and Richard Trier

-Copy of email recommendation to appoint James Gallagher to the Trustees of Soldiers' Memorials

D. By the Board of Selectmen: 2022 Annual Reappointments/Vote to reappoint [per the list enclosed in agenda packet]

-Copy of listing of Annual Appointments by the Board of Selectmen

-Copy of memo requesting attendance records

-Copy of email requesting attendance records

-Copy of attendance records from the Board of Health, BPCC, Cable Advisory Commission, Conservation Commission, Council on Aging, Disability Commission, Historical Commission

and the Playground and Recreation

**E. By The Town Manager: 1) David Pickart, Conservation Agent/Vote to affirm
-Copy of appointment letter**

**2) 2022 Annual Reappointments/Vote to affirm [per the list enclosed in agenda packet]
-Copy of listing of Town Manager Annual Reappointments**

IV. CITIZENS' COMMENTS/INPUT/None

V. DECISIONS

**F. Fall Annual Town Meeting (October 25, 2022) / Vote to close the warrant on Friday,
August 26, 2022 at 12:00 Noon/No documentation**

**G. Jean Mistretta/Request to place 50 flags in Memorial Park (Field of Flags) to
commemorate Northbridge residents who were killed in action
-Copy of letter requesting the Field of Flags
-Copy of images of other towns who have approved the Field of Flags
-Copy of memorandum from the Interim DPW Director regarding the Field of Flags**

**H. Pam Waterson/Request to use Memorial Park for a Yoga class
-Copy of Memorial Park Request Form
-Copy of Hold Harmless Agreement
-Copy of Certificate of Liability Insurance**

**I. Ambulance Fund (Write off of uncollectible accounts) / Vote to approve
-Copy of Credit summary for the Ambulance Funds**

VI. DISCUSSIONS

**J. Town-owned land (Providence Rd.)/Present: Henry Lane, Attorney
-Copy of map/layout of the property
-Copy of Chapter 9: Real Property Dispositions**

**K. Fire Station Strategic Plan/Present: Chief David White and Joe Pozzo, CPSM (via
zoom) – *Deferred to July 18th*
-Copy of the Strategic Plan presentation**

VII. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

**L. June 13, 2022 – June 24, 2022
-Copy of report from June 13, 2022 – June 24, 2022**

VIII. SELECTMEN'S CONCERNS/No documentation

IX. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA/None

X. CORRESPONDENCE/None

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION/None