

BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING

September 25, 2023

A meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order by Vice Chairman Paulhus at 7:00 PM, Northbridge Town Hall, 7 Main Street, Whitinsville, MA. Board Members Present: Ampagoomian, Melia and Paulhus. Chairman Collins and Selectman Begin are absent and it is duly noted. **Also Present:** Town Manager Adam D. Gaudette.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by those present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: August 14, 2023 [Exec. Sess.]. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to approve but not release the August 14, 2023 executive session minutes with the readings omitted. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Melia and Paulhus.

Vice Chairman Paulhus announced that since it was not yet 7:05 PM they would move ahead to the appointments portion of the agenda.

APPOINTMENTS/By the Board of Selectmen: Paula Lea, Cultural Council / Present: Christine Johnson. Ms. Johnson noted that with this appointment the Council would have a full board. She stated that Ms. Lea is an excellent fit for this council. Ms. Lea feels that arts are important and felt this was a great place to volunteer her time. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to appoint Paula Lea to the Cultural Council. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Melia and Paulhus.

The Board resumed the order of the agenda and moved to the public hearing.

PUBLIC HEARING – 7:05 PM/Massachusetts Electric Company d/b/a National Grid to install 2-3” underground conduits from existing jointly owned Pole 2 across the street to new secondary handhole on property located at 34 Chipper Hill Road, Northbridge per Plan #30834642 dated August 29, 2023/Present: Jeffrey Silva, National Grid. Vice Chairman Paulhus read aloud the public hearing notice. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to open the public hearing. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Melia and Paulhus. Mr. Silva began and noted that the road opening permit was completed by the home owner, who installed the conduits, they were then inspected by National Grid, and they will take over ownership once it is completed and the petition is cleared. Vice Chairman Paulhus asked if there were any abutters present. There being no further comment, a motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to close the public hearing. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Melia, and Paulhus. A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to approve the petition from Massachusetts Electric Company d/b/a National Grid to install 2-3” underground conduits from existing jointly owned Pole 2 across the street to new secondary handhole on property located at 34 Chipper Hill Road, Northbridge, per Plan #30834642 dated August 29, 2023. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Melia and Paulhus.

APPOINTMENTS/By the Town Manager: 1) Heather Wade, Interim Library Director. Ms. Sasseville explained that she will soon be taking her maternity leave and Ms. Wade, the current Youth Services Librarian, will be in charge while she is away. She added that Ms. Wade has been working at the Library for the last three years and has done an amazing job. Ms. Wade stated that she loves what she does and is looking forward to stepping up to this opportunity to keep the Library moving forward in Ms. Sasseville’s absence. A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to affirm the Town Manager’s appointment of Heather Wade as the Interim Library Director. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Melia and Paulhus. **2) Rose Yulfo, Junior Library Asst. Present: Rebecca Sasseville, Library Director.** Ms. Sasseville stated that this position has been vacant for two months now and feels Ms. Yulfo will be a great fit. Ms. Yulfo stated that she loves reading, has a passion for literature and looks forward to this

opportunity. A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to affirm the Town Manager's appointment of Rose Yulfo as a Junior Library Assistant. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Melia and Paulhus.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS/INPUT/None

Central New England Collectible Authority dba Northbridge Coin & Gold, 68 Church Street, Whitinsville [Robin McDonald, Mgr.] / Application for a Junk Dealer's License/Present: Robin McDonald. Mr. McDonald was also present and stated he and his wife work together in this business and they have been participating in trade shows for about 12 years. With the space on Church Street recently opening up they felt the next step would be to open a retail store. Selectman Melia asked about the bookkeeping regulations that need to be made available to the Police. Mr. McDonald stated that they will have an open registry, require a license, and inform the seller that they are required to hold their materials for 30 days. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to approve the application for a Junk Dealer's license to Central New England Collectible Authority dba Northbridge Coin & Gold. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Melia and Paulhus.

Our Lady of The Valley School/Request to post a lawn sign on the Rockdale Common to advertise their Trick or Trot 5K, Saturday, October 21, 2023. A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to approve the above request to post a lawn sign on the Rockdale Common to advertise their Trick or Trot 5K event on Saturday, October 21, 2023. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Melia and Paulhus.

Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce/Request for an entertainment license for the Home & Community EXPO on March 16, 2024 at the Northbridge High School/Present: Jeannie Hebert, President & CEO. Ms. Hebert explained that they are planning on having the EXPO again this year at the High School Field House, and they are applying for an entertainment license for the event. A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to approve the application for an entertainment license for the Home & Community EXPO on March 16, 2024 at the Northbridge High School. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Melia and Paulhus.

Northbridge Police Association/Request to hold a Holiday Tree Lighting and Parade Event on November 25, 2023. 1) Request to use Rockdale Common from 3 PM to 4 PM; 2) Request to use Memorial Park from 4 PM – 6 PM; and 3) Request to close Church Street from Park Street to Main Street 4 PM - 6 PM. A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to approve the above requests to use the Rockdale Common from 3 PM to 4 PM, to use Memorial Park from 4 PM – 6 PM and to close Church Street from Park Street to Main Street 4 PM - 6 PM for the Holiday Tree Lighting and Parade Events on November 25, 2023. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Melia and Paulhus.

Ambulance Fund/Vote to write off uncollectible accounts. Present: Sharon Emerick, Finance Director/Town Accountant and David White, Fire Chief. Chief White noted that this will be the same process as last year, which they agreed it would be best to come back annually to avoid the large write off. He explained that this year they would be looking to write off \$289,133.65, which has all gone through collection and has not been received. A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to write off \$289,133.65 under the uncollectible accounts for the ambulance fund. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Melia and Paulhus.

Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP)/Vote to adopt. Present: David White, Fire Chief and Kevin Filchak, MEMA. Mr. Filchak was not able to attend the meeting and in his place is Richard LaTour, Assistant Director of Operations for MEMA. Chief White noted that he has been working on this plan since he became Chief and the plan is finally completed and in order to get it to the State, it needs the approval of the Board of Selectmen. The plan is for if there is an emergency in town whether it be a fire, or weather related, this plan gives the town a template to follow. A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr.

Ampagoomian to adopt the Local Emergency Operations Plan. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Melia and Paulhus.

Housing Production Plan/Vote to Adopt. Present: Lori Tanner, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (Consultant); Becky Rushford, Planning Board Chair & Gary Bechtholdt, Town Planner. Mr. Bechtholdt stated that they have a presentation similar to what they had done previously. After hosting a survey and holding many public forums, the Planning Board has approved the Housing Production Plan and is recommending that the Board of Selectmen do the same. The Board is required to approve it in order for it to move forward to the State for their review. At the State level they will make sure it has all the required components and once approved it will be valid for five years. If the town creates affordable housing from there, the town will become certified and the town will retain more local control for 40B Comprehensive Permits. Currently, we are under the 10% requirement for subsidized housing inventory, so a developer can come in and not be held to the zoning and wetland bylaws and propose a large-scale residential development. This plan will identify potential locations for affordable housing and opportunities to create affordable housing. Ms. Tanner noted that the plan does include recommendations and is required to state that the town is committing to certain actions, but there is no follow-up to it, more so it is an intention. She also noted that with the current status of the town there is not that much, since the town is smaller and there is already a good amount of affordable housing. Ms. Tanner also reviewed the low-income ranges/affordable housing and the five requirements of the plan, the first being to participate in regional collaborations addressing housing development. The second requirement is a statement of characteristics of proposed residential or mixed-use developments. The third is to identify specific areas where the community will modify regulations. The fourth would be to encourage comprehensive permit applications. And the fifth would be issuing RFP's to develop SHI-eligible housing. Selectman Ampagoomian asked about in-law apartments and if the town has a bylaw to accept them. Mr. Bechtholdt stated he does not think the bylaw recognizes those and he knows the Building Inspector gets inquiries often. Selectman Ampagoomian asked if the town approved a bylaw to accept them then what type of impact would that have on the 10% affordable housing requirement. Mr. Bechtholdt stated that it would provide affordable housing for residents. Selectman Melia asked if approved does it give the state authority to move migrants to town without any say like what happened in Sutton. Mr. Bechtholdt stated that it does not and its unrelated to that situation. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to adopt the Housing Production Plan as presented. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Melia and Paulhus.

Pine Grove Cemetery Deed (Dana Scully)/Vote to approve the sale of Lot No. 7, Walnut Ave [North]. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to approve the sale of Lot No. 7, Walnut Ave [North] to Dana Scully. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Melia and Paulhus.

Safety Committee Minutes (July 19, 2023)/Vote to accept the recommendations. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to accept the recommendations of the July 19, 2023 Safety Committee meeting minutes. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Melia and Paulhus.

Conservation Commission and Planning Board Project Updates: 1) **Castle Hill Farm.** Mr. Pickart announced that the Castle Hill area officially opened this past Friday, and there were about 10 people in attendance. Prior to the official opening, there were about 50 individuals from Omni Point Technologies and Access TCA working on the site. He thanked them greatly for their efforts. The kiosk mapping out the trails was purchased using CPC funds, which has been installed; they built 1.1 miles of new trails, one boardwalk is almost completed, which is 80 feet long, and materials for two bridges over streams. 2) **Rockdale Pocket Park.** In 2023, the Planning Department applied through DHCD for flooding that occurred in 2011/2012, specifically the Rockdale area. Initially we received \$6,000 in disaster recovery funds for the Rockdale Youth Center relocation project out of the flood plain. The State provided us with \$1.6 million dollars for that project, which involved the rehab of the former Saint Peter's School building

and the demolition of the former Rockdale Youth Center on Route 122 - located across from Beane's Lane - and buyout the remaining mortgage for that property, which allowed the Town to raise it. That property was then conveyed to the town with the understanding that a new building could not be built and nor could a parking lot be built there as it is in the flood plain. The money received from the State was not enough to put in a park. In 2019, the Planning Board identified an opportunity in working with a developer, and they provided \$50,000 towards the design and construction of the pocket park. ARPA funds were also earmarked for the project. To date, the property has been surveyed and an architect hired to help design a park. Mr. Dryden, Senior Project Manager at Allen Engineering, was present to discuss the design scheme. He stated that the area they are looking to improve is about 2,500 square feet, which is because the foundation from the youth center still exists. Mr. Dryden noted that the top goal is to keep it simple and within budget. The space will be used primarily for passive recreation, for people to get out of the summer heat, provide small areas for people to congregate, benches and some fencing for safety and light poles. Selectman Ampagoomian voiced concerns of trash, maintenance, security and parking and asked if they received feedback from the residents in that area. Mr. Bechtholdt stated that they did not receive a negative comment and abutters that attended the meeting were very happy to see something going in there. Mr. Dryden noted that there are trash receptacles; they also selected materials that are durable and low maintenance. He explained that the site isn't a large enough site to attract people to drive too it, but more so a spot for people in the neighborhood. Selectman Melia added that Memorial Park closes at 9 PM and suggested we look to set the same regulation for this pocket park. Selectman Melia asked what the cost of the pocket park is. Mr. Bechtholdt responded that they have a seventy-five-thousand-dollar budget, but also have other opportunities for other funding if they come in over budget. **3) Mumford Riverwalk Project.** ARPA funds and funds from a developer were secured for the payment in lieu of Stone Hill. Bids were received for the construction and are within the established budget, which is a relief considering the rise in construction costs. Work is anticipated to begin in the Fall. Selectman Ampagoomian asked if the proposed bridge would be handicapped accessible. Mr. Pickart replied that the trail leading to and from the bridge is not ADA compliant, but it is flat. Selectman Ampagoomian asked if the signage on Linwood Avenue would be redone. Mr. Bechtholdt stated that the Conservation Commission is looking to update and keep the educational signage. **4) Benson Road Town Land.** The Conservation Commission is looking to have the two parcels placed under the Conservation Commission's ownership. In total it has 36.7 acres with one acre carved out for development of a single-family house lot. This way the town can recoup some of the lost tax revenue. In order for that to happen an ANR plan will need to be completed. **5) Other/Present: David Pickart, Conservation Agent & Gary Bechtholdt, Town Planner.** Selectman Ampagoomian noted that he was approached by a resident who was concerned about the Mumford River and the algae growth and asked what the plan is to remediate it. Mr. Pickart replied that water quality is a huge issue. He further explained that he teamed up with all the towns within the watershed of the Mumford River and received a \$210,000 grant from the State to come up with a plan to improve water quality in the Mumford. He is also looking into funding for an aerial mapping program to easily track the spread of the aquatic plants and have an MVP grant to do stormwater retrofits upstream in the Whitins Pond and Carpenter Reservoir watersheds, which feed into that section of the Mumford. They are also looking into remediations for Riley Pond and Arcade Pond.

RFP Response for 193 Main Street (Fire Station Headquarters Building & Property)/Present: David Michaud, Old New England Construction, Inc. Atty. Thomas Wickstrom was present as well and introduced Mr. Michaud, Owner and Mr. Nitschke, Architect. Mr. Wickstrom stated that the Board put out an RFP for the redevelopment of the Fire Station and they would provide a presentation of their plans for the future of this building. Mr. Michaud stated that it is a great structure, but it does need a lot of work. They would be looking to keep the building as it is, clean it up, fix the masonry, install new windows doors, roof, sprinklers, etc. The first floor would be a restaurant/brewery, the second floor would be vehicle storage and the third floor would be office space. The basement level could be used for a contractor to store equipment. With the work that needs to be completed, it would be about a year and

half out. Town Manager Gaudette explained that with some of the Selectmen missing they would look to continue to an upcoming meeting to discuss details and make a decision.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT/None

SELECTMEN'S CONCERNS: Selectman Paulhus asked for an update on the Linwood Courts project. Town Manager Gaudette explained that the base coat is down but it needs to be cured before the finishing coat can be applied. He noted they are hoping for the end of October for completion.

ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA/None

CORRESPONDENCE/None

EXECUTIVE SESSION/None

Vice Chairman Paulhus noted that the next meeting is scheduled for October 2, 2023.

A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to adjourn the public meeting. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Melia and Paulhus.

Meeting Adjourned: 8:49 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Begin, Clerk

/mjc

LIST OF DOCUMENTATION

BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING - OPEN SESSION

September 25, 2023

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

- I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A. August 14, 2023 [Exec. Sess.]/Not released until approved by Town Counsel**
- II. PUBLIC HEARING – B. 7:05 PM/Massachusetts Electric Company d/b/a National Grid to install 2-3” underground conduits from existing jointly owned Pole 2 across the street to new secondary handhole on property located at 34 Chipper Hill Road, Northbridge per Plan #30834642 dated August 29, 2023/Present: Jeffrey Silva, National Grid**
-Copy of public hearing notice
-Copy of National Grid petition
-Copy of memo requesting abutters
-Copy of abutters listing
-Copy of approval from the DPW Director
- III. APPOINTMENTS:**
C. By the Board of Selectmen: Paula Lea, Cultural Council / Present: Christine Johnson
-Copy of Talent Bank Application

D. By the Town Manager: 1) Heather Wade, Interim Library Director
-Copy of appointment letter

2) Rose Yulfo, Library Asst. Present: Rebecca Sasseville, Library Director
-Copy of appointment letter
-Copy of job description
-Copy of cover letter
-Copy resume
-Copy of application
- IV. CITIZENS' COMMENTS/INPUT/None**
- V. DECISIONS:**
E. Central New England Collectible Authority dba Northbridge Coin & Gold, 68 Church Street, Whitinsville [Robin McDonald, Mgr.]/Request for a Junk Dealers License/Present: Robin McDonald
-Copy of application for a Junk Dealers License
-Copy of Revenue Enforcement and Protection attestation
-Copy of Workers Compensation Insurance Affidavit
-Copy of business certificate application
-Copy of Certificate of Organization

F. Our Lady of The Valley School/Request to post a lawn sign on the Rockdale Common to advertise their Trick or Trot 5K, Saturday, October 21, 2023
-Copy of email request

G. Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce/Request for an entertainment license for the Home & Community EXPO on March 16, 2024 at the Northbridge High School/Present: Jeannie Hebert, President & CEO

- Copy of application for a one-day entertainment license
- Copy of Revenue Enforcement and Protection attestation
- Copy of Workers Compensation Insurance Affidavit
- Copy of certificate of insurance

H. Northbridge Police Association – Holiday Tree Lighting and Parade Event [November 25, 2023] / 1) Request to use Rockdale Common from 3 PM to 4 PM; 2) Request to use Memorial Park from 4 PM – 6 PM; and 3) Request to close Church Street from Park Street to Main Street 4 PM - 6 PM

- Copy of request form for Memorial Park
- Copy of request form for Rockdale Common
- Copy of application for a one-day entertainment license
- Copy of approval email from the Chief of Police and DPW Director to close Church Street

I. Ambulance Fund/Vote to write off uncollectible accounts. Present: Sharon Emerick, Finance Director/Town Accountant and David White, Fire Chief /No documentation

J. Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP)/Vote to adopt. Present: David White, Fire Chief and Kevin Filchak, MEMA

- Copy of draft Emergency Operations Plan

K. Housing Production Plan/Vote to Adopt. Present: Lori Tanner, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (Consultant); Becky Rushford, Planning Board Chair & Gary Bechtholdt, Town Planner/No documentation

L. Pine Grove Cemetery Deed - Dana Scully/Vote to approve the sale of Lot No. 7, Walnut Ave [North]

- Copy of Pine Grove cemetery deed

M. Safety Committee Minutes (July 19, 2023)/Vote to accept the recommendations

- Copy of July 19, 2023 Safety Committee meeting minutes

VI. DISCUSSIONS:

N. Conservation Commission and Planning Board Project Updates: 1) Castle Hill Farm

- Copy of overall map
- Copy of Land Progress Report

2) Rockdale Pocket Park

- Copy of layout

3) Mumford River Walk Project/No documentation

4) Benson Road Town Land

- Copy of memorandum
- Copy of map/layout

5) Other/Present: David Pickart, Conservation Agent & Gary Bechtholdt, Town Planner/No documentation

O. RFP Response for 193 Main Street (Fire Station Headquarters Building & Property)/Present: David Michaud, Old New England Construction, Inc.

- Copy of layout of potential uses
- Copy of Proposal

- VII. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT/None**
- VIII. SELECTMEN'S CONCERNS/No documentation**
- IX. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA/None**
- X. CORRESPONDENCE/None**
- XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION/None**