

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

**July 18, 2022**

A meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order by Chairman Collins at 7:00 PM, Northbridge Town Hall, 7 Main Street, Whitinsville, MA. Board Members Present: Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus. Also Present: Adam D. Gaudette, Town Manager.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by those present.

Chairman Collins noted that this past weekend the Town celebrated its 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, to which he thanked the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Board members Alicia Cannon, Brian Paulhus, Maria Paulhus, David Potty, Leonard Smith, Anthony Genga, Kristen Genga, staff of the Department of Public Works, Fire Department and Police Department. He also thanked all the volunteers who assisted. Selectman Paulhus stated that it was an honor to be on the Committee and to work with the great individuals who dedicated their time and effort in planning the event. Selectman Paulhus thanked the businesses that supported the celebration and especially Unibank for their efforts with the parade and the fireworks.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES/None**

### **PUBLIC HEARING/None**

**RESIGNATIONS: 1) Premsai Nagabhyrava, Regional Epidemiologist, Board of Health.** A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to accept the letter of resignation from Premsai Nagabhyrava and send a thank you letter. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus.

**2) Alicia Cannon, Board of Selectmen.** A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to accept the letter of resignation from Alicia Cannon and to send a thank you letter. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus.

**APPOINTMENTS/By the Board of Selectmen: 1) Election Officers: Democrat, Republican, and Unenrolled/Vote to appoint.** A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to appoint the Election Officers (Democrat, Republican and Unenrolled) per the list provided by the Town Clerk's Office in the agenda packet. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus.

**2) Bylaw Review Committee/Vote to appoint a Selectmen's Rep.** A motion/Mr. Collins, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to appoint Chairman Collins as the Selectmen's Representative to the Bylaw Review Committee. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus.

**3) School Building Committee / Vote to appoint a Selectmen's Rep.** A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to appoint Selectman Paulhus as the Selectmen's Representative to the School Building Committee. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus.

**4) Whitinsville Downtown Crossroads Historic District Commission/a.) Jamie Pohlman [American Institute of Architects position], and b.) Ellen Scheible [Board of Realtors covering Northbridge position].** Ms. Pohlman stated that she enjoys the architecture and history of this town and felt it was time to be involved in her community and felt this committee would be a great fit. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to appoint Jamie Pohlman to the slot designated for the American Institute of Architects and to appoint Ellen Scheible (who could not be present) to the slot designated for the Board of Realtors. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus.

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

**Request to place 50 flags on the Town Hall lawn (Field of Flags) to commemorate Northbridge residents who were killed in action / Present: Jean Mistretta.** Ms. Mistretta noted that she was here to amend the proposal she presented at the prior Selectmen's meeting on June 27, 2022. She is requesting to change the location for the Field of Flags to the Town Hall lawn but the size and number of the flags would remain the same. The timeline would be amended to a week around Memorial Day and a week around Veterans Day. Ariel Lopez, member of the Trustees of Soldiers' Memorials, advised the Board that they met last week and proposed the flags be placed up and down Church Street on the lights, which would minimize vandalism. Mr. Luchini noted that he would like to review the Trustees proposal before making a recommendation. Selectman Paulhus noted that there are 50 flags, but not enough lights going down Church Street. Mr. Luchini stated that he did not believe there are 50 poles. Mr. Melia mentioned that the flags hanging from the lights poles was not the visualization that Ms. Mistretta had in mind and the point is to have all 50 flags together. Ms. Mistretta remarked that it would be beautiful, but it would not have the same impact as an open "field" area. There was discussion about adding two flags to each pole using a flagpole attachment that could clamp on to the current light posts. Mr. Luchini was not aware of this attachment and had not seen them. He pointed out that Church Street is narrow and there is a lot of truck traffic traveling down the road, which may cause damage to the flags. He also indicated that he has seen the Field of Flags in other towns. A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to approve Ms. Mistretta's request to place 50 flags on the Town Hall lawn (Field of Flags) for a week around Memorial Day and a week around Veterans Day to commemorate Northbridge residents who were killed in action. The nylon flags are to be 3' x 5' and will fly from a ten-foot pole and placed 5-6 feet apart. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus.

**Update on the VOTES Act/Present: Linda Zywień, Town Clerk.** Mrs. Zywień explained that the Legislature recently passed the VOTES Act, which made permanent, things that were put into place during the pandemic. She explained there are two main categories, 1) voting by mail and 2) early voting in person. Going forward, voting by mail will be permanent for all State Primaries and State Elections. The Secretary of the Commonwealth will be required to mail out applications. Local elections are required to offer early voting by mail unless the Board decides to opt out of that option. Early voting is also required for all State Primaries and State Elections. Ms. Zywień stated to do early voting for local elections you need to opt in. She also advised the Board of a minor change that allows the Town Clerk to get anyone to work the polls as an officer if they are running short or having a hard time finding workers within three weeks of the election, poll workers are not required to be appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Beginning January 1<sup>st</sup>, the option to opt out of becoming a voter on Registry of Motor Vehicle transactions will no longer be available. Mrs. Zywień explained the process for hiring Police Details for elections has always been the responsibility of the Town Clerk, who makes the request to the Chief of Police. Now, a new regulation has put the Board of Selectmen in charge of coordinating and hiring the Police Detail. With that, she said the Board could vote to assign the Chief of Police to hire the Police detail for elections. Selectman Melia asked about the process to request a ballot by mail. Mrs. Zywień explained that they are required to include a vote by mail application to new voters and they also have a link on their website to make a written request, or residents can make a written request for a mail-in ballot as long as it has a signature. An individual can also request a ballot for a family member. Selectman Paulhus asked who determines when the ballots are due. Mrs. Zywień replied that the State determines the due date. For local elections, State Elections and Primaries they are due back by election day. For general elections, a ballot needs to have a postmark date of the election day and needs to be received within three days in order for it to count. Selectman Ampagoomian questioned how we are preventing fraud. He gave an example that a household member requests a mail in ballot for a family member and asked how we know that someone else didn't fill it out. Mrs. Zywień replied that ballots are mailed as requested and every voter is required to complete their ballot and insert it in an envelope that they sign under penalty of perjury that this is their ballot. They also have the ability to match signatures. She also noted that on the day of the election they have a list that shows if a ballot has been

mailed, whether or not it's been received back, or received. If a person were to return their mail-in ballot by hand on election day it is recorded as received and brought down to the polling place. Chairman Collins asked if the State has given us any additional funds for the cost of election workers. Mrs. Zywiec commented that in the past the Division of Local Mandates had asked communities to provide numbers on how much money they have spent in order to comply with the mandates and they do give money back to the Towns.

**Whitin Community Center “Cars in the Park Event”, Saturday, August 20, 2022 from 10 AM – 4 PM/1) Request to hang a banner over Church Street from July 24, 2022 to August 6, 2022 to advertise the annual Cars in the Park event, and 2) request for a one-day weekday entertainment license for their annual Cars in the Park event.** A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Paulhus to approve the Whitin Community Center's request to hang a banner over Church Street from July 24, 2022 to August 6, 2022 to advertise the annual Cars in the Park event, and approve their request for a one-day weekday entertainment license for their annual Cars in the Park event Saturday, August 20, 2022 from 10 AM – 4 PM.

**Northbridge Fire Department Strategic Plan/Present: Fire Chief David White and Joe Pozzo, CPSM (via zoom).** Mr. Pozzo first gave a background on Center for Public Safety Management and the services they provide. He then turned the presentation over to Ms. Randa Matusiak who reviewed the Strategic Plan for the Town of Northbridge Fire Department. She explained that the strategic plan provides a roadmap for the Department including staffing, budget planning, as well as current and future programs, for 3 to 5 years. The plan development consists of Administrative and Operational Gap Analysis, a S.W.O.T. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), stakeholders' meetings, updating the mission, vision and values and developed 6 primary strategic goals and 29 planning objectives. Ms. Matusiak reviewed the updated mission, goals and objectives that came out of the development plan. Chief White stated that they have already moved forward with a lot of the objectives, all of which include a full-time Deputy Fire Chief, an increase in hours for the Administrative Assistant. Chief noted that they have applied for a SAFER Grant (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) to hire four more firefighters. The current SAFER program covers 100% over the next three years, which will give us time to figure out how to budget for the extra hires. One of the midterm goals is to hire a Fire Training Officer as well as a full time EMS Officer, which would give the department a 9-member crew. Chief White reported that the department has had an increase in the number of Call Firefighters, from 18 at the time of this study to 22 currently, with two additional new hires awaiting training. He explained that they are currently working to develop a 10 to 15 year replacement plan for apparatus. Chief also advised the board that they have made changes to their training, by adding new and improved training that encompasses all the needs for Insurance Service Office (ISO), but also Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and officer training. The new training software has been purchased with FY'23 funds. For the health and wellbeing of all personnel, officers went through the Employee Assistance Program, which provided them with the resources to detect work and non-work-related challenges that staff may be experiencing. Chief noted that the extra staffing will also help reduce the burnout rate. He stated that he is in the process of finishing the Local Emergency Preparedness Plan and has established a Succession Planning Program to avoid hiring gaps. They have developed a strong program to become an officer, which allows for an officer-in-training to fill in for an Officer that is off and gives the acting officer practical experience. Chief White explained that they continue to educate the public through the SAFE Program, which is currently run by a firefighter, and the funding is provided by a grant from the State. Other programs include community outreach, such as CPR, first aid and he would like to get a certification team involved. They are also looking to start a cadet program to recruit firefighters. Selectman Ampagoomian asked how we compare to surrounding towns. Mr. Pozzo stated that they are involved in two other projects in Massachusetts and a lot of the weaknesses they see are on the Insurance Service Office. In comparison, Northbridge is no worse than other agencies and they are a very dedicated and competent Department. Chairman Ampagoomian asked if Chief White could explain Class III. Chief White explained that the ISO rates all Fire Departments on classes, the highest of which is class I, which is very difficult. We are currently a class IV and very close to becoming class III. Most rural areas

are class IX or VIII. The better the class the better insurance rate you get. Selectman Paulhus asked if the new fire station would assist in getting some of the issues addressed. Chief White explained that they have lots of training avenues built into the building but they do not have a burn building so they will still use Milford. Selectman Paulhus also asked if the Deputy Chief position was comparable to what surrounding towns have. Chief White responded that the Towns of Uxbridge, Westborough, and Hopkinton have a full-time Deputy Chief, Mendon has a call Chief and Douglas has a full-time Assistant Chief. Selectman Melia asked if Chief White would elaborate on the staffing of 10 personnel a day. Chief White explained that under the National Fire Protection Association they set a standard that Fire Departments should have 10 people assembled at a fire. Chairman Collins asked if all the fire personnel were also paramedics. Chief White stated that they will all be paramedics as they have several in paramedic school, but someone coming on may not be and would need training. Selectman Collins questioned the difference between and District Chief and a Deputy Chief. Chief White explained that they used to have District Chiefs and when they got called to a fire, all the chiefs would surround the building to help communicate, since radios were not as advanced as they are now. That is now being phased out. Chairman Collins asked who would be conducting the exit interviews. Chief White stated that he would be doing the exit interviews and explained that it is something new to him and has just started to get into it.

**Review DRAFT Town of Northbridge ADA Plan / Present: Connor Robichaud, CMRPC, James Mazik, AICP Consulting Services, and Michael Kennedy, Center for Living and Working.** Mr. Robichaud began and introduced himself, Mr. Mazik, and Mr. Kennedy. Mr. Mazik briefly reviewed the ADA plan study and issues they found. Mr. Kennedy reviewed the requirements for a municipality such as designation of an ADA Coordinator, adoption and distribution of public notices on ADA Policies and Procedures, adoption of an ADA Grievance Procedure, modify, update and maintain policies and procedures, provide reasonable accommodations, maintain and upkeep accessible features, and provide auxiliary aids. One requirement is to establish a Disability Commission, which Northbridge has done. Mr. Kennedy recommended adding information to the Disability Commission page, such as the ADA Coordinator, along with procedures and notices. He also recommended the adoption of a Grievance Procedure and to post it on the website and in town buildings. Another recommendation is to update the Town's Employment Application to use the term disability in place of handicap. He also pointed out that 7 out of the 14 job descriptions that were reviewed regularly listed a requirement to walk/stand under physical requirements even though the paragraph starts with minimal physical requirements. Mr. Kennedy stated that there were direct violations that were observed including accessible routes of travel that were not maintained during winter months, interior and exterior doors with excessive operating force and closing too fast, missing designation signage, and protective equipment. Mr. Kennedy continued outlining the remaining recommendations from the plan. Mr. Mazik reviewed the transition plan and noted that there are detailed descriptions of the obstacle, along with images, the federal regulation, the state regulation, the action to be taken, the priority level and cost estimate. He also mentioned there are tolerances that are allowed depending on the violation, but slopes and range of dimensions, such as railings do not have tolerances. Mr. Robichaud mentioned that the plan is meant to be a guide so the Town can chip away at the noncompliance items. He also added that there are grant opportunities. Selectman Ampagoomian questioned how we go about the historical buildings, which require us to follow codes set forth by the State. Mr. Mazik replied that there are exceptions on historic properties, which would depend on the item. Selectman Ampagoomian asked about the guy wires that are installed by National Grid. Mr. Mazik noted that they need to make sure they follow the guidelines. Selectman Ampagoomian asked about trash bins. Mr. Mazik stated that they do see that everywhere and that is up to the Board if they would like to tighten that up. He added that having an ADA plan you are likely to receive better federal protection as long as you are working toward fixing the items that need to be updated. Mr. Kennedy concluded by stating that if they have any questions after the final report is submitted, they are welcome to reach out to use them as a resource.

**TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT/None**

**SELECTMEN'S CONCERNS:** Selectman Ampagoomian 1) asked when Carr Street will be worked on. Mr. Luchini replied that it is on the list to be repaired this year and they are waiting for permitting to be filed and approved before moving ahead. He noted that it will be done this year. 2) asked if there is a schedule of the road work to be completed on the website. Mr. Luchini expressed that because it is a revolving schedule, they do not have a detailed listing on the website.

**ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA/None**

**CORRESPONDENCE/None**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION/None**

Selectman Melia reminded everyone that the next meeting is scheduled for August 22, 2022.

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

**Meeting Adjourned: 9:55 PM**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Brian Paulhus, Clerk**

/mjc

## **LIST OF DOCUMENTATION**

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

**July 18, 2022**

#### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

##### **I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES/None**

##### **II. PUBLIC HEARING/None**

##### **III. APPOINTMENTS/B. RESIGNATION: 1) Premsai Nagabhyrava, Regional Epidemiologist, Board of Health.**

**-Copy of letter of resignation**

**2) Alicia Cannon, Board of Selectmen/No documentation**

**A. By the Board of Selectmen: 1) Election Officers: Democrat, Republican, and Unenrolled/Vote to appoint.**

**-Copy of listing of election officers**

**2) Bylaw Review Committee/Vote to appoint a Selectmen's Rep./No documentation**

**3) School Building Committee / Vote to appoint a Selectmen's Rep./No documentation**

**4) Whitinsville Downtown Crossroads Historic District Commission/ a.) Jamie Pohlman [American Institute of Architects] b.) Ellen Scheible [Board of Realtors covering Northbridge] /Unable to attend.**

**-Copy of memo regarding the WDCHDC**

**-Copy of district members**

**-Copy of Talent Bank form for Jamie Pohlman**

**-Copy of resume for Ellen Scheible**

**-Copy of Talent Bank form for Ellen Scheible**

##### **IV. CITIZENS' COMMENTS/INPUT**

##### **V. DECISIONS**

**C. Request to place 50 flags on the Town Hall lawn (Field of Flags) to commemorate Northbridge residents who were killed in action / Present: Jean Mistretta.**

**-Copy of letter requesting to place 50 flags on Town Hall**

##### **VI. DISCUSSIONS**

**D. Update on the VOTES Act/Present: Linda Zywień, Town Clerk/No documentation**

**E. Whittin Community Center "Cars in the Park Event", Saturday, August 20, 2022 from 10 AM – 4 PM/1) Request to hang a banner over Church Street from July 24, 2022 to August 6, 2022 to advertise the annual Cars in the Park event, and 2) request for a one-day weekday entertainment license for their annual Cars in the Park event.**

**-Copy of email requesting to hang a banner**

**-Copy of weekday entertainment application**

**-Copy of license routing slip**

**F. Northbridge Fire Department Strategic Plan/Present: Fire Chief David White and Joe Pozzo, CPSM (via zoom).**

**-Copy of the Fire Department Strategic Plan**

**G. Review DRAFT Town of Northbridge ADA Plan / Present: Connor Robichaud, Regional Project Coordinator.**

**-Copy of Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan**

**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**