

BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING
November 9, 2020

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

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by those present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: 1) **October 19, 2020 [Exec. Sess.].** A motion/Mr. Athanas, seconded/Mr. Melia to approve but not release the October 19, 2020 Executive Session minutes. Vote yes/Unanimous. 2) **October 27, 2020 [FATM].** A motion/Mr. Athanas, seconded/Mr. Melia to approve the October 27, 2020 minutes as presented with the readings omitted. Vote yes/Unanimous.

PUBLIC HEARING - 7:05 PM: FY'21 Tax Rate Classification Hearing/Present: Robert Fitzgerald, Principal Assessor. Chairman Cannon read aloud the public hearing. A motion/Mr. Collins, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to open the public hearing. Roll call vote: Mr. Melia/Yes, Mr. Collins/Yes, Mr. Ampagoomian/Yes, Mr. Athanas/Yes and Mrs. Cannon/Yes. Mr. Fitzgerald advised that the Board has 3 options for setting the FY'21 tax rate. 1) The first option is to have a single rate, which spreads the tax burden among all classes of property; 2) The second option is to select a residential exemption; and 3) the third option is to select a small commercial exemption. Mr. Fitzgerald explained that the breakdown comes from last year's levy limit plus 2.5%, new growth number, which is the new construction in town, and debt exclusions. This year the new growth is \$317,186 and the debt exclusion is \$2,058,750. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that this year the estimated tax rate will be \$14.50, which is an increase of .66 cents. As is customary, the Board of Assessors recommends the single tax rate option. No residents were present for questions. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Athanas to close the public hearing. Roll call vote: Mr. Melia/Yes, Mr. Collins/Yes, Mr. Athanas/Yes, Mr. Ampagoomian/Yes and Mrs. Cannon/Yes. By maintaining a single tax rate, the Board of Selectmen is not required to take any vote as there are no changes being made.

APPOINTMENTS/By the Board of Selectmen/Vote to appoint: Damian Planas-Merced, Zoning Board of Appeals [applicant is currently an Associate member]. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Collins to appoint Damian Planas-Merced to the Zoning Board of Appeals as a regular member. Vote yes/Unanimous. **By the Town Manager/Vote to affirm: 1) Sean McDevitt, Student Police Officer.** Chief Warchol explained that there are 2 openings on the Police Department due to the resignation of 2 officers. He said the Police Department completed a selection process to fill the vacancies. Both candidates were chosen from the Reserve Part Time Officers listing, and both have been worked for the Northbridge Police Department since 2018. Chief Warchol recommends Sean McDevitt and Benjamin O'Donnell be appointed as Student Police Officers with a tentative appointment date of February 28, 2021, which is the first day of the police academy. He added the appointments are contingent upon the conditions noted in their appointment letters. Mr. McDevitt thanked Chief Warchol for the opportunity and noted that he grew up in Sutton but has lived in Northbridge for 3 years. He stated he is currently a full-time dispatcher for Northbridge, which has been a great experience for him, and he has learned a lot about the department. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Collins to affirm the Town Manager's appointment of Sean McDevitt as a Student Police Officer with the contingencies provided by Chief Warchol. Vote yes/Unanimous. 2) **Benjamin O'Donnell, Student Police Officer.** Mr. O'Donnell stated that he grew up in Northbridge, graduated from Assumption College, and began working part time for the Northbridge Police Department. He added that he is looking forward to the opportunity to work for and support the Town of Northbridge. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Collins to affirm the Town Manager's

appointment of Benjamin O'Donnell as a Student Police Officer with the contingencies provided by Chief Warchol. Vote yes/Unanimous.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS/INPUT/None

Hannah Drive Conveyance /Vote to accept (authorized at the Fall Town Meeting of October 27, 2020).

A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to accept the conveyance of Hannah Drive. Vote yes/Unanimous.

Winter Parking Ban [December 1, 2020 to April 1, 2021]/Vote to approve. A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Athanas to approve the Winter Parking ban for the period of December 1, 2020 to April 1, 2021, from 1:00 AM to 6:00 AM, [to be extended if necessary] as requested by the Northbridge Police Department. Vote yes/Unanimous.

2021 Selectmen's Meeting Schedule/Vote to approve. A motion/Mr. Athanas, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to approve the 2021 Selectmen's Meeting Schedule. Vote yes/Unanimous.

2021 Holiday Schedule/Vote to approve. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to approve the 2021 Holiday Schedule. Vote yes/Unanimous.

Safety Committee Minutes [September 9, 2020]/Vote to accept the recommendations. Town Manager Gaudette stated that these minutes include one recommendation, which will be brought up for reconsideration at the next Safety Committee meeting thus the minutes will be revised and then voted on at a later date.

Carpenter Road Causeway / Signage. Town Manager Gaudette explained that we had received a phone call from a resident in that area with complaints of trash and asked if the town could put up "No Littering" signage. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Athanas to have the Highway Department erect "No Littering" signage in the Carpenter Road Causeway area. Vote yes/Unanimous.

Electricity Aggregation Program Update/Stefano Loretto, Good Energy. Mr. Loretto explained this program began in January of 2016 and has since grown to include 25 communities. He stated that there is a new supply contract with Constellation Energy beginning on January 1, 2021 and will continue through December 2023 at a fixed rate of .1047 per kWh. He said residents do not need to take any action as all National Grid accounts are automatically switched over to the new supplier. With the new agreement, Mr. Loretto mentioned there are 2 new options available: one is for 50% renewable energy will cost .12244 per kWh and the second is for 100% renewable energy that will cost .14019 per kWh. For more information go to <https://masscea.com/northbridge/> or call Good Energy at 844 – MASSCEA (627-7232) or email support_MA@goodenergy.com. Selectman Melia asked what happens when a new resident moves into town. Mr. Loretto replied that they obtain the new accounts from National Grid on a monthly basis and compare it to those that previously left the program and those folks are sent an opt-out letter. New accounts can call and opt into the program to bypass the waiting period. Mr. Loretto stated they will send out a renewal letter in December informing residents of the new program, rate, and options, which will also state no action is required. Selectman Ampagoomian asked if anyone has brought up the increase in transmission fees charged by National Grid since this program first began. Mr. Loretto responded that unfortunately, under the deregulation law from 1997, which falls under M.G.L Chapter 164, it separates the delivery and transmission of the utility from the supply portion meaning the transmission and delivery cannot be changed and must go through the local utility.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT: Town Manager Gaudette thanked those that came out for the Fall Annual Town meeting and expressed that it is very important meeting for our business. He also addressed the high volume of calls about additional restrictions and changes to the current restrictions. He mentioned

that the Balmer School Project has been moving along and is still on target and reported that the Lasell Field project is almost complete adding that National Grid will be on site tomorrow to approve everything and bring back power to the field. Mr. Gaudette updated the Board on the Fire Station project and advertising for the Request for Qualifications for an Owners Project Manager. He then stated that the budget process will begin after Thanksgiving.

SELECTMEN'S CONCERNS: Selectman Cannon informed the Board that a resident reached out regarding the Governor's COVID restrictions and after a lengthy conversation she suggested the resident reach out to local and state officials.

ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA/None

CORRESPONDENCE/None

EXECUTIVE SESSION/None

Chairman Cannon announced that the next meeting will be held November 23, 2020.

A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mrs. Athanas to adjourn the public meeting. Vote yes/Unanimous.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:51 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Russell D. Collins, Clerk

/mjc

LIST OF DOCUMENTATION

BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING - OPEN SESSION

November 9, 2020

- I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A. 1) October 19, 2020 [Exec. Sess.]**
-Copy of October 19, 2020 Executive Session minutes [documentation removed as the minutes have not been released]
- 2) October 27, 2020 [FATM]**
-Copy of October 27, 2020 [FATM] minutes
- II. PUBLIC HEARING – B. 7:05 PM: FY'21 Tax Rate Classification Hearing/Present: Robert Fitzgerald, Principal Assessor**
-Copy of tax classification hearing notice for FY'21
-Copy of letter from the Board of Assessors regarding the classification hearing
-Copy of FY'21 tax rate breakdown
-Copy of FY'21 tax rate valuation by class
-Copy of FY'21 tax rate shift options
-Copy of FY'20 tax rates of surrounding towns
- III. APPOINTMENTS/By the Board of Selectmen: C. Damian Planas-Merced, Zoning Board of Appeals [applicant is currently Associate member]/No documentation**
- By the Town Manager: D. 1) Sean McDevitt, Student Police Officer**
-Copy of letter from the Chief of Police regarding the appointment of two full time officers
-Copy of resume & references
2) Benjamin O'Donnell, Student Police Officer
-Copy of resume
- IV. CITIZENS' COMMENTS/INPUT/None**
- V. DECISIONS:**
- D. Hannah Drive Conveyance /Vote to accept (authorized at the Fall Town Meeting of October 27, 2020)**
-Copy of Quitclaim Deed
- E. Winter Parking Ban [December 1, 2020 to April 1, 2021]/Vote to approve**
-Copy of memo listing the streets on the parking ban
- F. 2021 Selectmen's Meeting Schedule/Vote to approve**
-Copy of 2021 Selectmen's Meeting Schedule
- G. 2021 Holiday Schedule/Vote to approve**
-Copy of 2021 Holiday Schedule
- H. Safety Committee Minutes [September 9, 2020]/Vote to accept the recommendations**
-Copy of September 9, 2020 Safety Committee meeting minutes
- I. Carpenter Road Causeway Signage - No documentation**

- VI. DISCUSSIONS**
 - J. Electricity Aggregation Update/Stefano Loretto, Good Energy**
 - Copy of Community Electricity Aggregation Update presentation
- VII. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT/No documentation**
- VIII. SELECTMEN'S CONCERNS/No documentation**
- IX. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA/None**
- X. CORRESPONDENCE/None**
- XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION/None**