

BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING
September 14, 2020

A virtual meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order by Chairman Alicia Cannon at 7:01 PM, using Zoom Video Communication (Video Conferencing App) at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86823340118?pwd=VDc2SW5iKzFUK2VVdEQ5RlVCsGVtQT09>

Meeting ID: 868 2334 0118; **Passcode:** 149205; **Dial by phone:** 1-646-558-8656. Board Members Present: Cannon, Ampagoomian, Athanas, Melia, 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 would 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 10, 2020. A motion/Mr. Athanas, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to approve the February 10, 2020 minutes as presented with the readings omitted. Vote yes/Melia, Athanas, Ampagoomian, and Cannon. Abstain/Mr. Collins.

PUBLIC HEARING: 7:05PM – Massachusetts Electric Company dba National Grid and Verizon New England/Petition #25436839 for the installation of anchor and 11 new jointly-owned poles located from 10 Puddon Street through 175 Puddon Street, Northbridge: P0-50, P1-50, P2-50, P3-50, P5-50, P6-50, P7-50, P8-50, P10, P11, and P12. Present: Al Gavin, Design Engineer, National Grid and Brian Thumpayil, Assist. Project Manager, Syncarpha Capital, LLC. Chairman Cannon read the public hearing notice aloud. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to open the public hearing. Vote yes/Unanimous. Mr. Gavin began and advised the purpose of the new pole locations is for the solar projects on Puddon Street. He said the cables and poles will be upgraded from single-phase to three-phase power, which will require heavier wire and several intermediate poles as shown on the map included in the agenda packet. He added that the intermediate poles and anchors will help maintain pole stability. Selectman Melia asked for clarification on the location (Quaker Street to the solar farms) as well as the number of new poles. Mr. Gavin responded the location was correct and the number of new poles is 11. Selectman Ampagoomian inquired about double poles. Mr. Gavin noted that Verizon is responsible for removing old poles so it is possible that there may be some double poles until Verizon removes them at a later date. Robert Smith, 139 Puddon Street, asked if Pole #7, which has a streetlight and transformer, will remain where it is, and Mr. Gavin answered yes but added that the transformer will be moved to new Pole #7-50. He was not sure whether the streetlight will stay on Pole #7 or be moved to new Pole #7-50 and mentioned the plans did not show that any streetlights were being removed. He did say however, it might be possible the light will be moved to the new pole. Lastly, Mr. Smith informed the Board there is a tree removal that will take place at new Pole #7-50. Mr. Gavin stated the plans do note the Forestry Department will be doing some major tree trimming along this location to make room to do the work so there is not any interference with the cables. They typically trim back branches unless a tree is impeding the work that needs to be done. Mr. Smith thanked everyone. There being no further questions, comments, or concerns, a motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Collins to close the public hearing. Vote yes/Unanimous. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Athanas to approve National Grid's petition #25436839 for the installation of anchor and 11 new jointly-owned poles located from 10 Puddon Street through 175 Puddon Street,

Northbridge: P0-50, P1-50, P2-50, P3-50, P5-50, P6-50, P7-50, P8-50, P10, P11, and P12 as indicated on the map in the Selectmen's agenda packet. Vote yes/Unanimous.

APPOINTMENTS/By the Town Manager: Linda Zywień, Town Clerk/Vote to Affirm. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Collins to affirm the Town Manager's appointment of Linda Zywień to the position of Town Clerk. Vote yes/Unanimous.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS/INPUT – None.

D & Ng Inc. dba King Jade Restaurant, 1229 Providence Road/Request for temporary expansion of outdoor seating until November 1, 2020/Present: Nathan Ng, Manager. Mr. Ng is requesting 3 outdoor tables 6' apart to accommodate approximately 12 people. He said the seating plan he submitted meets the current COVID outdoor seating guidelines. Mr. Collins spoke in favor of the request. Mr. Athanas asked if the landlord's approval was needed and it was determined that it is needed. The Town Manager advised the Select Board to approve the request subject to the landlord's approval and the submission of a revised seating plan showing the proper dimensions of the outdoor area. There being no further discussion, a motion/at Mr. Collins, seconded/Mr. Melia to approve King Jade's request for a temporary expansion for outdoor seating until November 1, 2020. Vote yes/Unanimous.

Whitin Community Center/Request to change the date on their weekday Entertainment License (previously approved on March 9th), from Saturday, May 2, 2020 to Saturday, April 21, 2021 for the Whitin Community Center's Gala Event. A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Athanas to approve the Whitin Community Center's request to change the date on their weekday Entertainment License from May 2, 2020 to April 21, 2021 as noted above. Vote yes/Unanimous.

Shop Small 01588/Request to hang a banner across Church Street from November 22, 2020 to December 6, 2020 to advertise the Shop Small Passport event from November 28, 2020 to December 5, 2020. A motion/Mr. Collins, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to approve Shop Small 01588's request to hang a banner across Church Street from November 22, 2020 to December 6, 2020 to advertise the Shop Small Passport event from November 28, 2020 to December 5, 2020 as noted above. Vote yes/Unanimous.

Hannah Drive [Carpenter Estates Subdivision] / Vote to layout Hannah Drive as a public way. Present: Gary Bechtholdt, Town Planner. Mr. Gaudette advised this is part of the process to approve a public way. He mentioned the Board voted their intent to layout this road at their last meeting. Since then, the Planning Board has completed their review and recommends the Select Board vote to layout the road as a public way, which would allow us to go to town meeting to vote and formally accept Hannah Drive as a public way and become the responsibility of the town. Mr. Bechtholdt said the Planning Board met last week and they also met with the residents and developer specific to the subdivision noting there is a small punch list of items that need to be completed but that does not preclude the Select Board from voting to layout the road this evening. Selectman Collins asked about the punch list of items and if they are major items or small stuff. Mr. Bechtholdt said it was small stuff like planting street trees (outside of the layout) and a couple of items the developer has to address, but nothing related to the layout of the road. He also pointed out that the Planning Board is scheduled to vote their recommendation on the warrant article on September 22nd, so the developer has until that date to finish the punch list. Selectman Athanas asked if the bond was still intact and Mr. Bechtholdt responded it is and it will be held over until the street trees are planted, which must be guaranteed for 2 years. He also indicated that the developer and DPW are working with National Grid to get the streetlight on Carpenter Road installed. There being no further discussion, a motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to layout Hannah Drive [Carpenter Estates Subdivision] as a public way. Vote yes/Unanimous.

Safety Committee Meeting Minutes (Present: James Shuris, Chairman, Safety Comm.)/1 August 5,

2020. The Town Manager began and reviewed the process for approving Safety Committee minutes. He said the Safety Committee is an Advisory Board who meets once a month to vote on any issues/items requiring their attention be it from Town Departments, residents or businesses. At the following meeting, the Safety Committee will vote to approve the draft minutes. Next, the final minutes are sent to the Select Board for their approval. Mr. Gaudette added that there are several items in the August 5th minutes requiring the Board's approval and he will let Chairman Shuris review them. He also noted the September 9th minutes are in *draft* form as they have not been approved by the Safety Committee, but the Board can still discuss them. Selectman Melia spoke and stated he had no issues with the August 5th minutes, however, he did have an issue with a couple of things in the September 9th draft minutes and suggested it was probably a communication error. As such, Mr. Melia will talk with those involved about the specific items prior to the approval of the draft minutes by the Safety Committee. Selectman Athanas inquired about the removal of barriers at the Shining Rock Trailhead and if the DPW was going to do it. Mr. Luchini responded that the DPW installed them and would be happy to remove them if that is what the Safety Committee wants, however, he said that particular topic is still in the discussion stage. There being no further questions or comments, a motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Athanas to accept the recommendations of the Safety Committee as outlined in the minutes of August 5, 2020. Vote yes/Unanimous. **2) September 9, 2020 (Draft).** The Board did not take a vote as these minutes were still in draft form.

Fall Annual Town Meeting [October 27, 2020]/Vote to sign warrant upon completion and final review by Town Counsel. The Town Manager did a quick review of the 5 warrant articles. He mentioned 2 of them were housekeeping articles (#1 - budget transfers and #2 - prior year bills); Article #3 is for a street acceptance; and #4 (discontinue a portion of Piedmont St.) and #5 (a 25-year PILOT agreement for a solar project) are petition articles. He also advised that the petitioners will be present at the Finance Committee's public hearing on September 23rd so the Board will have more information when it's time to vote their positions on the warrant articles. Selectman Melia asked about Article 4. Mr. Gaudette responded that it has to do with the unconstructed portion of Piedmont Street that exists only on "paper" and is situated between 2 house lots. The petition is to discontinue the unconstructed portion of the street so the owner or potential purchaser can have it annexed into the neighboring house lots. Mr. Ampagoomian added that he believed John Berkowicz to be the owner of the 2 house lots. He then asked about Article #5 and stated he thought the Zoning Board had voted against the McQuade's Lane solar project. Town Manager Gaudette advised the project went before the ZBA for a special permit and it was denied. It is currently under appeal, so it was remanded back to the ZBA for another review. He clarified that the warrant article is only for the tax structure so if the project is ever approved/built, then the tax structure would go into effect. A motion/Mr. Melia seconded/Mr. Collins to sign the FATM warrant upon completion and final review by Town Counsel. Vote yes/Unanimous.

Town Manager's Goals for 2021. Mr. Gaudette thanked the Selectmen for their input in establishing his goals for 2021. He stated that Chairman Cannon and he reviewed and discussed the submissions and came up with the final 4. Continuing, he discussed each major goal as well as the finer details of each goal: **1) Budget Preparation; 2) Fire Station Building Project; 3) Process to replace the retiring Chief of Police; and 4) Roadway Infrastructure – Planning, Design, and Construction.** A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Collins to approve the 2021 Town Manager goals as presented. Vote yes/Unanimous.

Town Manager's Annual Review. The Town Manager thanked the Board for taking the time to complete his evaluation. He said he takes note of all comments and strives to make sure he understands what the Board expects of him and his office and reiterated that all comments and suggestions are very important.

Public Meetings Format. The Town Manager spoke about the format for public meetings, which are now virtual due to the pandemic. He mentioned that at the last Selectmen's meeting, Selectman Melia asked when the Board could return to in-person meetings. As a result, he reached out to about 20 of his peers to see what they are doing meeting-wise and found there were all different variations. He found that some are

holding socially distanced meetings where everyone is spaced 6' apart. Some are doing only virtual meetings. Others use a hybrid approach where the Board Members, Town Manager, and those required to be present for agenda items are meeting in person, but the audience is remote, etc. Mr. Gaudette said it is up to the Board if they want to institute a different process but there would probably have to make some technological changes. Selectman Ampagoomian noted that he prefers in-person meetings and suggested using the Great Hall where there is plenty of room for social distancing. Mr. Gaudette reminded him that the acoustics are terrible up there as is the cold in the winter and the heat in the summer. Selectman Athanas voiced his choice as wanting to remain virtual (Zoom) until the vaccine is available in order to keep everyone safe. He would be very hesitant to meet in-person mainly due to his wife's job and not jeopardizing getting her ill. Selectman Melia reiterated that he would like to get back to in-person meetings as soon as possible whether it's just the Selectmen and everyone else joins remote or a hybrid model of some sort. He is not a fan of Zoom but said it's better than nothing. Selectman Collins doesn't mind Zoom and suggested they wait a few more meetings to see how things go and then maybe discuss/decide what format the Board will use. The Town Manager added that he is hesitant due to the fact that if the Select Board goes back to in-person meetings, they are in fact opening it up to all other Boards/Committees to do the same and then it gets hard to police with all different people showing up for meetings, etc. He also pointed out that flu season is upon us (as may a resurgence of the CORONA virus) so it may be better to wait it out and see how things go but he will do whatever the Board wants. Chairman Cannon said she prefers face-to-face meetings; however, she is so used to video-conferencing she has grown accustomed to looking at people on camera and feels the Board does see the majority of folks who have business to conduct before the Board.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT: **1) Lasell Field Turf Project/Update:** Mr. Gaudette advised this project is about 95% complete. The bleachers are being installed but the delivery and installation of the press box has been delayed due to the pandemic, which caused the required state review process to be delayed as well. There is also a punch list of items to be completed. **2) Fire Station Project:** The Town Manager reported that he intends to provide frequent updates as this project moves along. **3) Balmer School Project:** The Town Manager said this project is moving forward as planned.

SELECTMEN'S CONCERNS: **Selectman Ampagoomian/1)** Asked about streets in the downtown area of Rockdale and whether that area is on the list of streets to be paved. Mr. Luchini said it won't be done this year, but he will inspect the area for future consideration. **2)** Mentioned the traffic lights at Plummer's Corner, which was also brought up at a recent Safety Committee meeting. He doesn't want the Town to lose sight of this issue. **3)** Requested Mr. Shuris (DPW Director), as Tree Warden, to look at the nut tree on Puddon Street that has to come down for a pole location to verify whether it is or isn't a public shade tree. **4)** Asked the Town Manager about possibly deeding the parcel of land in Pine Grove Cemetery where the Armenian Memorial monument will be located to protect it from being taken by someone as a possible burial plot. The TM said he will look into it and work with Peter Bedigian (Armenian Church) and DPW Management on it. **Selectman Melia/1)** Pleased to see the Town is working on a Cyber Incident Response Plan. **2)** Attended the recent "Defend not Defund the Police" rally at the Town Common and thanked Yvette Ayotte for organizing the rally. **Selectman Collins** reported that the traffic patterns near the Christian School on Linwood Avenue are disastrous and stressed something has to be done about it. Mr. Gaudette advised that the town is actively pursuing improvements on Linwood Avenue. He added that he is working with DPW Management, a consultant, and the 3 schools on Linwood Avenue looking at traffic patterns. He also informed the Board they recently applied for and awarded a \$135,000 Shared Streets Grant from the Dept. of Transportation that will allow them to make traffic improvements in the Linwood Avenue area. Mr. Gaudette further mentioned they are drafting a Complete Streets application that will provide up to \$400,000 in funding and possibly some matching funds for infrastructure improvements on Linwood Avenue to help with traffic flow. The Town Manager plans to email the Complete Streets Plan and the Shared Streets Application to Board members. **Chairman Cannon/1)** Reminded everyone the School Building Committee Meeting is tomorrow night and if anyone is interested, they may attend via

Zoom. 2) Announced the Meals on Wheels program through the Northbridge Senior Center is in dire need of volunteers. It involves approximately 1.5 hours per week delivering meals to homebound seniors. Those interested in volunteering may reach out to Bill at the Senior Center at 508-234-2002.

ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA/None

CORRESPONDENCE/None

EXECUTIVE SESSION/None

Chairman Cannon announced the next Selectmen's meeting is scheduled for Monday, September 28, 2020 at 7:00PM . There being no further business before the board, a motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to adjourn the public meeting. Vote yes/Unanimous.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:36 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Russell D. Collins, Clerk

/mjc

LIST OF DOCUMENTATION

BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING - OPEN SESSION

September 14, 2020

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. 1. February 10, 2020

-Copy of the February 10, 2020 minutes

II. PUBLIC HEARING: B. 7:05PM – Massachusetts Electric Company dba National Grid and Verizon New England/Petition # 25436839 for the installation of anchor and new poles on Puddon Street - located at 10-175 Puddon Street, Northbridge/Present: Al Gavin, National Grid and Brian Thumpayil, Assist. Project Manager, Syncarpha Capital, LLC

-Copy of Public Hearing Notice

-Copy of email from August 27, 2020 and August 29, 2020 from M. Ciaramitaro asking DPW to review the Pole Location and advise of any issues/concerns. Mr. Shuris' response declaring there were no concerns.

-Copy of Nation Grid's letter dated July 1, 2020 requesting a joint pole location

-Copy of Petition for Joint Pole Location on Puddon Street, Northbridge, dated July 1, 2020

-Copy of Order for Joint Pole Location

-Copy of Petition Sketch for Plan No. 25436839 (3 pages)

III. APPOINTMENTS

C. By the Town Manager: Linda Zywiec, Town Clerk/Vote to Affirm

-No Documentation

IV. CITIZENS' COMMENTS/INPUT/None

V. DECISIONS

D. D & Ng Inc. dba King Jade Resturaunt, 1229 Providence Road/Request for temporary expansion of outdoor seating until November 1, 2020/Present: Nathan Ng, Manager

-Copy of Application for Temporary Expansion of Outdoor Dining

-Copy of sketch showing the outdoor area

-Copy of Smartsheet showing departmental comments/responses

E. Whitin Community Center/Request to change the date on their weekday Entertainment License (previously approved on March 9th), from Saturday, May 2, 2020 to Saturday, April 21, 2021 for the Whitin Community Center's Gala Event

-Copy of Application for a One-Day Weekday Entertainment License

-Copy of Workers Comp Affidavit signed by Heather Elster

- Copy of Smartsheet showing departmental comments/responses

F. Shop Small 01588/Request to hang a banner across Church Street from November 22, 2020 to December 6, 2020 to advertise the Shop Small Passport event from November 28, 2020 to December 5, 2020

-Copy of email from Christine Guanipa dated September 8, 2020 requesting permission to hang a banner across Church Street to advertise the Shop Small event

G. Hannah Drive [Carpenter Estates Subdivision] / Vote to layout Hannah Drive as a public way

- Copy of the Planning Board's Public Hearing Notice
- Copy of letter to BOS Chairman Cannon dated September 8, 2020 regarding the Planning Board's recommendation to layout Hannah Drive
- Copy of Hannah Drive Road Acceptance Plan prepared by Turning Point Engineering (7pages)
- Copy of Quitclaim Deed

H. Safety Committee Meeting Minutes [August 5, 2020 and September 9, 2020] /Present: James Shuris, Chairman, Safety Comm.

- Copy of August 5, 2020 Safety Committee minutes
- Copy of September 9, 2020 Safety Committee minutes

I. Fall Annual Town Meeting [October 27, 2020]/Vote to sign warrant upon completion and final review by Town Counsel

- Copy of Draft Fall Annual Town Meeting Warrant (Version 3, dated September 3, 2020)

J. Town Manager's Goals for 2021

- Copy of draft 2021 goals

VI. DISCUSSIONS

K. Town Manager's Annual Review

- Copy of the Town Manager's Cumulative Performance Evaluation by the Selectmen for the period of August 2019-August 2020

L. Public Meetings Format

- No Documentation

VII. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- No Documentation

VIII. SELECTMEN'S CONCERNS/None

IX. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA/None

X. CORRESPONDENCE/None

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION/None