

Board of Selectmen

Date of Meeting: Monday, January 18th, 2024

Time: 6:30 PM – 7:32 PM

Members Present: Chair Jamie Underwood, Selectmen Matt Mecum and Seth Ridinger; April Steward, Town Administrator; Town Counsel Stephen Madaus, and Alison Kennedy, Administrative Assistant to the Board

The meeting commenced at 6:30 PM.

Financial Warrants were signed in agreement.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Approval of meeting minutes: 12/18/23:**

*Seth Ridinger made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from 12/18/23 as presented, Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Town Administrator’s Report:**

***Feasibility Study Committee:*** The FSC is scheduled to meet on 1/25/2024.

***Building Commissioner:*** I am requesting to have a Board member designated to meet with me and discuss the Building Inspector position and next steps.

***MMA Conference:*** Ali and I will be in attendance this weekend at the Mass Municipal Association Annual Conference in Boston, Friday through Saturday.

***Procurement License Training***: Ali began day one of the procurement license training today. There are three days to each session with a test at the end of each session. This week will complete the first leg of her obtaining her procurement license.

***Budget Meetings:*** Berlin’s Select Board and FinCom have expressed interest in holding a few joint meetings with representatives from the Berlin and Boylston FinComs, Select Boards and Town Administration to discuss the BBRSD budget. Please advise which member of the board would like to attend these meetings. I am reaching out to the Finance Committee for a representative as well.

***BES Roof:*** On Saturday during the rain event, I received an email from the BBRSD Chair expressing frustration over the elementary school roof leaking. The last significant rainstorm before this weekend, Bob and I were both called down to look at the situation. The next day Bob went up on the roof with the subcontractor who had made repairs to the roof over the summer, and they identified issues along the seams on the roof and where roofing materials meet the windows above the library area at the school. The subcontractor was going to be working with the school’s facility tech to move forward with repairing identified areas that are leaking. From what I am told, it is difficult to get it tight on the first try and may take several attempts to find and isolate all the problem areas and get them rectified. One problem seems to be not being consistent with the same company coming back to do the repairs. Without knowing what the previous repair has been, some areas are “being repaired” multiple times while other areas are leaking. Bob and Dan have been in communication as they deal with this ongoing issue.

Matt reached out to Northbridge Partners and they put him in touch with a person who they use for roofing; new and old and to inspect. The person is expecting his call. Northbridge stated they would pay for that inspection and give a full report of what they recommend is wrong, help prepare the bid package and help us with any state and federal incentives.

***Department Meetings:*** I have met with almost all the departments and requested the information from them in regard to hours worked in the office, hours need on the office, are view of their job descriptions, and to identify any programs that could increase efficiency in their offices. The information should be back for the board to look at by January 29th.

**Fire Chief Report to the BoS:**

**Month # of 911 calls**

January 60

February 53

March 60

April 75

May 76

June 62

July 72

August 61

September 68

October 84

November 65

December 78

**Total 814**

Most of the above emergency calls for service require more than one apparatus to respond, so the total fire department response numbers for 2023 was 2232. The attached graph shows a breakdown of calls per month, for your reference.

The fire department continues to be staffed with three groups of two people who work from 7:00 am to 11:00 pm seven days a week. The overnight hours are covered by a combination of on-call firefighters and full-time staff members who come in on a recall basis when there are calls. An analysis of run times for the year showed a marked difference between the 7:00 am – 11:00 pm period and the 11:00 pm – 7:00 am time periods. The average response time for all calls, both fire and EMS, between the hours of 7:00 am – 11:00 pm was five minutes. By comparison, the average response time for all calls between the hours of 11:00 pm and 7:00 am was eighteen minutes. These response numbers were for calls in town only and did not consider any mutual aid calls. The data shows a clear benefit to having full-time staffing and to expand this staffing from 16 hour to 24-hour coverage.

The fire department was fortunate to receive several state and federal grants in 2023, including a FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant in the amount of $179,857 for the purchase of twenty sets of self-contained breathing apparatus equipment. This grant was used to replace equipment that was no longer NFPA compliant. Smaller grants were used to purchase some equipment and electronic equipment for the new engine that is expected to be delivered in the spring of 2024.

The department was also very fortunate to be part of the community-wide public safety communications upgrade. The department has all new mobile and portable radios with much improved coverage range and with the added ability for interoperable communications with not only other town agencies but also with all our mutual aid partners. With the addition of a third tower in 2024, the department should be very close to having 100% coverage within the community and in all neighboring communities.

The department had one full-time personnel change in 2023 as Firefighter/EMT Niccole Chiasson took a full-time job with another local fire department. FF/EMT Chiasson’s full-time position was filled by Lt. Michael O’Sullivan. Lt. O’Sullivan moved from his role as an on-call firefighter/EMT to his full-time position at the end of 2023. Firefighter/EMT Chiasson remained in the department as a per diem employee. The fire department added five additional on-call employees in 2023, although several other on-call employees moved on to other jobs.

**Chief of Police Report to BoS:**

December Breakdown:

o 3 Accidents

o 15 Criminal Summons/Arrests

o Conducted 32 Investigations

o Conducted 260 Motor Vehicle Stops

o Dispatch Processed 42 Emergency 911 Calls

o Total Activity was 3,054 calls.

· Received a $5,000 donation from MD Landscaping Construction

· Received a $450 donation from Worcester Pistol and Rifle Range

· Received a $5,000 donation from LEI for their ongoing support of the motorcycle.

* Officers and detectives initiated a drug case in Boylston that led to the successful execution of a search warrant and arrests in Worcester.
* Officers participated in National Wreaths Across America Day
* Toys for Tot’s and Stuff a Cruiser was a success.
  + Would like to recognize Dispatch Schiavone and Det. Ryel for once again leading this.
* We have interviewed 4 applicants for part-time dispatch.
  + Det. Ryel is conducting the background checks

**Highway Superintendent Report to the BoS:**

* Install plow markers around town
* Finish installing snow fencing
* Mark all drains in roadway
* Check beaver activities (very slow)
* Heavy rain and windstorm (12/18)
* 2 employees were out with COVID week of 12/18
* Clean up debris from storm
* Work on water issues on lower Stiles and upper Stiles
* Clean basins on North Sewall St and Clearview
* Shovel swale on Rt 140 above the H-Intersection (drainage)
* Re-Grade edge of road for drainage at Linden and Oak Hill
* Prep Plow Equipment
* Equipment maintenance and repairs
* Plowed road 4 times
* Treated roads 8 times
* Would like the BoS to consider reopening the “H” both ways with the restrictions of NO left turn to go south on RT 140 out of the “H”.
  + Seeing some odd things regarding traffic.

Matt asked if we have engaged engineering firms for Route 140/Sewall and Steve stated he will make a point to meet with Paul to finalize what they need to do, as well as meet with April so they can bid out for Chapter 90 stuff within the next month or so.

**Review and Discussion on Class and Comp Study:**

April provided the board with the 60% class and comp study and asked the board for permission to meet with the Finance Committee to work on it. The board agreed to have April discuss the class and comp study with FinCom.

**Discuss Library staffing request. Vote to approve proposed job title and job description changes:** Move to 01/26/24 meeting.

**Dog waste amendment discussion:** Move to 01/26/24 meeting.

**Receive RFP proposals for Wireless Communications and vote to award contract:**

We received two proposals: Wireless Edge and SBA Communications. Wireless Edge’s lease is significantly higher than SBA and they included a one-time bonus rent in year one for $125,000. April advised the board it would be in the town’s best interest to go with Wireless Edge for the RFP. Seth added he liked that Wireless Edge specializes in towers on town owned/government property. Seth asked for confirmation if we are absolutely certain that Wireless Edge is okay if they need to construct a new tower on site and April responded yes.

*Matt Mecum made a motion to award the Wireless Communications contract to Wireless Edge and allow the Town Administrator to complete the agreement, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Discussion on water issues at Longley Hill/Lower Stiles Rd:**

Highway Superintendent Steve Mero stated he met with Jeff Walsh from Conservation Commission and walked the area. Steve and his crew cleaned out the debris from the area. and discovered an outfall on Upper Styles Road that had been buried for many years and rectified that. The developer previously moved a pile of debris to gain access to do testing. Steve and his crew rebuilt the debris dam 30 feet inward and dug a swale so that the water goes to the brook. He added that when the developer wants to extend and put his access to that parcel, he’s going to have to include that outfall in the right of way, probably a manhole, and then get it piped over to the brook. Jamie suggested getting the Conservation Commission to force the developer to finish the list of items he is still responsible for.

Steve stated a there has been a proposal to have a meeting regarding extending the right of way to the developer’s parcel. Stephen suggested putting in writing what they would like the developer to do from that meeting so the developer cannot say he wasn’t aware. Discussion continued regarding next steps with the developer and Town Planner, Paul Dell’Aquila and Town Counsel Stephen Madaus addressed the board on the process they could take. The board agreed to have Attorney Madaus prepare a letter to the developer and review it at the next meeting.

**Discussion on Complete Streets:**

Town Planner, Paul Dell’Aquila received some correspondence from CMRPC altering the town to the Complete Streets program that Boylston is not currently apart of. The program is a state program that’s tiered. You go through an initial phase which then makes you eligible for a planning grant, which once you do the planning grant, makes you eligible for construction funds. The first step is to have someone from the town attend the training and then you are eligible to work through your regional planning agency or private consultant. In Boylston, it could be looking at pedestrian infrastructure, such as improvements to the Sewell/Route 140 corridor. Other areas of improvement could be sidewalks or bike lanes. Paul brought this before the board, so discussions can be had to formally apply for something. The Board agreed that Paul should be the person to go for the certification, and or see if his past certification is still valid.

*Matt Mecum made a motion to appoint Paul Dell’Aquila, Town Planner, as Boylston’s Complete Streets representative. Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Vote to approve IRS 2024 Standard Mileage Rate of $0.67 per mile driven for business use.**

*Matt Mecum made the motion to approve the IRS 2024 standard mileage rate of $0.67 per mile driven for business use. Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Vote to approve a donation of $5,000 from Matt Davidian: towards the renovation at the Police Department:**

*Seth Ridinger made a motion to approve a donation of $5,000 from Matt Davidian towards the renovation at the Police Department, Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Vote to approve a donation of $450.00 from the Worcester Pistol and Rifle Range; purchase of supplies related to the armory or firearms:**

*Seth Ridinger made a motion to approve a donation of $450.00 from the Worcester Pistol and Rifle Range, purchase of supplies related to the armory or firearms. Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Vote to approve a donation of $5,000 from LEI for their ongoing support of the motorcycle for the Police Department:**

*Matt Mecum made a motion to approve a donation of $5,000 from LEI for their ongoing support of the motorcycle for the Police Department. Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Review and approve BoS Annual Report:**

*Matt Mecum made a motion to review and approve BoS Annual Report, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**To review and approve License Agreement Emergency Wireless Communication System for Emergency Services:**

Matt Mecum read an email from Attorney McCay regarding the subject: This site on the agenda is an agreement with Davidian Farms for co-location of town emergency services equipment on a pre-existing town on the Northborough Property. This is part of the new EMS communication system and is intended to take place of the proposed tower at Styles Road site. Our hope is the new site resolves the issues in that litigation.

*Matt Mecum made a motion to approve License Agreement Emergency Wireless Communication System for Emergency Services and approve the Town Administrator to sign, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Vote to approve Deb Fuller as Interim Commissioner for Cemetery Commission:**

*Seth Ridinger made a motion to approve Deb Fuller as the Interim Commissioner for Cemetery Commission, Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Vote to use the three new Image Cast ICP2 voting tabulators in all 2024 elections. Serial Numbers VAL23100069-004, VAL23100072-004, VAL23250018-04:**

*Matt Mecum made a motion to use the three new Image Cast ICP2 voting tabulators in all 2024 elections. Serial Numbers VAL23100069-004, VAL23100072-004, VAL23250018-04, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Vote to re-affirm Town Hall, 221 Main Street, as Boylston’s official polling location for both Election Day and Early In-Person Voting:**

*Matt Mecum made a motion to Vote to re-affirm Town Hall, 221 Main Street, as Boylston’s official polling location for both Election Day and Early In-Person Voting, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Vote to re-affirm the Boylston Town House, 599 Main Street, as Boylston’s alternate polling location for both Election Day and Early In-Person Voting:**

*Matt Mecum made a motion to re-affirm the Boylston Town House, 599 Main Street, as Boylston’s alternate polling location for both Election Day and Early In-Person Voting, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Vote to re-affirm Boylston’s Town Election Voting Hours as 12 Noon to 8 P.M:**

*Matt Mecum made a motion to re-affirm Boylston’s Town Election Voting Hours as 12 Noon to 8 P.M, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Vote to confirm that Boylston is not opting in to In-Person Early Voting for the May 13th Annual Town Election or any other municipal elections that may be held during the 2024 calendar year:**

*Matt Mecum made a motion to confirm that Boylston is not opting in to In-Person Early Voting for the May 13th Annual Town Election or any other municipal elections that may be held during the 2024 calendar year, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Vote to confirm that Boylston is offering Mail-In Voting for the May 13th Annual Town Election and any other municipal elections that may be held during the 2024 calendar year:**

*Matt Mecum made a motion to confirm that Boylston is offering Mail-In Voting for the May 13th Annual Town Election and any other municipal elections that may be held during the 2024 calendar year, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Selectmen’s Miscellaneous: (topics submitted by individual Board members)**

* Seth:
  + Financial Policies Committee: Will be presenting 5 financial policies to the BoS at the 01/29/24 meeting.
  + Capital Planning Policy: Create a Capital Planning Committee
    - Financial Policies Committee is asking what the BoS would envision this committee to look like. Add it to the next meeting to discuss.
    - Financial Policies Committee would like to reach out to the school department as well regarding the Capital Planning Committee.

**Future Agenda Items:** (topics to be proposed for discussion at future meetings)

* + Capital Planning Committee discussion

**Citizens’ comments:** *(Except in unforeseen or emergency circumstances, any matter presented for consideration of the Board by a member of the public shall neither be acted upon, nor a decision made the night of the presentation. A scheduled time on a future agenda may be necessary, at the Board’s discretion.)*

* + No citizens comments

*At 7:32 PM, Matt Mecum made a motion to go into* ***EXECUTIVE SESSION*** *(closed to the public):*

***Per MGL c.30A, §21, (2):***  *To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel or contract negotiations with non-union personnel, if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body and the chair so declares – Highway Superintendent*

***Per MGL c.30A, §21 (3):****To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining – Boylston Professional Firefighters IAFF Local 5324, if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body and the chair so declares.*

***Per MGL c.30A, §21, (2):****To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel or contract negotiations with non-union personnel, if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body and the chair so declares– Police Chief*

*Not to return to open session. Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.*

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Kennedy, Administrative Assistant to the Board of Selectmen and TA

**Meeting Materials**

Agenda On File in The Board of Selectmen’s Office

Sign In Sheet On File in The Board of Selectmen’s Office

Department Head Reports On File in The Board of Selectmen’s Office

Annual BOS Roll Call Votes List On File in The Board of Selectmen’s Office

Wireless Communications RFPs On File in The Board of Selectmen’s Office

Deborah Fuller VTS Form On File in The Board of Selectmen’s Office

Complete Streets Documents On File in The Board of Selectmen’s Office