

**TOWN OF WINCHENDON  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING  
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2020 6:30 P.M.  
Town Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Auditorium  
109 Front Street, Winchendon, Mass.**

Present:

Audrey LaBrie, Chairwoman  
Barbara Anderson, Vice-Chairman  
Amy Salter  
Rick Ward  
Mike Barbaro

Keith R. Hickey, Town Manager  
Linda Daigle, Executive Assistant  
Lindsay Kuchta, Recording Secretary  
Taylor Tower, Administrative Assistant

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List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- North County Pop Warner Application for Voluntary Toll Booth/Boot Drive (filed)
- Town Manager MEMO Dated February 20, 2020 Re: Recommendation to Award Transfer to Poland and Streeter Schools (filed)
- Presentation of Final Report Addressing Current Condition of Town Sidewalks, Crosswalks and Curb Ramps (PROW) (filed)
- Discharge of Betterment Lien - 425 West Street (filed)
- Draft Board of Selectmen/ Town Manager Goals and Objectives Fiscal 2020 (filed)
- Report of the Town Manager (attached)
- Minutes approved:
  - Monday, February 10, 2020 Regular Meeting

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*LaBrie called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.*

No one announced she was audio recording the meeting this evening.

**1. SELECTMEN'S COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Ward reminded everyone that it is not too late to take out papers for the Town Election. There is one three year term available for the Board of Selectmen, two three year terms for the School Committee, one two year unexpired term for the School Committee, and two three year terms for the Board of Health. Only thirty-six signatures are required to and papers need to be submitted by March 16<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m.

Anderson stated she would like to bring to everyone's attention that Planning Director Tracy Murphy has been working with Miranda Jennings at The Winchendon School on "Growing Places", a new organization called change makers that is mainly student lived. They talk about healthy foods and how to obtain and make these foods and good choices. The group will be meeting again this month.

1.1. Early Voting Hours- LaBrie reminded all that early voting for the Presidential primary will be held the week of March 3<sup>rd</sup> during regular business hours in the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room.

LaBrie then noted tonight is the last meeting for Lindsay Kuchta. She has been a great asset to the Board and the Town Manager's Office and will be greatly missed. She wished Kuchta the best as she moves on and thanked her very much.

LaBrie introduced and welcomed Taylor Tower, who will be filling Kuchta's position. She noted she is looking forward to getting to know Ms. Tower and said they will have a lot of fun together.

There were no further Selectmen's Comments.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:** There were no Public Comments.

**3. PUBLIC HEARINGS:** There were no Public Hearings.

**4. APPOINTMENTS/RESIGNATIONS:**

4.1. Conservation Commission Resignation – Tony George- LaBrie noted Mr. George resigned as he moved out of town. She thanked him for many years of being active with the town and other various boards and commissions he has worked on.

*Barbaro moved the Board of Selectmen accept the resignation of Tony George from the Conservation Commission and thanked him for his years of service, seconded by Anderson.*

LaBrie asked if there was any further discussion, to which none was heard.

*With a vote of all aye, the motion carried.*

**5. PERMIT/LICENSE APPLICATIONS:**

5.1. Voluntary Toll Booth/Boot Drive for May 9th – North County Pop Warner- LaBrie invited Ryan Bergeron to come forward on behalf of the application. Mr. Bergeron noted he has been president of North County Pop Warner for two years. They are applying for a boot drive to be held on May 9<sup>th</sup>, with a rain date of May 16<sup>th</sup>. Funds raised would go towards funding players who may not be able to afford it.

It was noted the Board does not approve rain dates but if they wished to reapply, they can.

Ward asked how many kids in the program were from Winchendon to which Mr. Bergeron replied 55 out of 88 kids are from Winchendon.

Anderson thought the Boot Drive should be held in a different month as there was one Boot Drive already scheduled for May.

After further discussion, the following motion was made.

*Barbaro moved the Board of Selectmen approve the Voluntary Toll Booth/Boot Drive for Sat., May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020, from 9:00am to 12:00pm; seconded by Salter. With a vote of Anderson no and all others aye the motion carried 4-1.*

**6. BOARDS/COMMISSIONS/COMMITTEES/DEPARTMENT:** There were no Boards, Commissions, Committees, or Department matters before the Board this evening.

**7. NEW BUSINESS:**

*Barbaro moved for a two minute recess, seconded by Anderson. With a vote of all aye, the Board entered recess at 6:40 p.m.*

The Board reconvened at 6:42 p.m.

7.1. Streeter and Poland School Request for Proposals Award- Hickey, by way of getting everyone up to speed, noted there was a warrant article at the Fall Town Meeting to give the Board of Selectmen the authority to sell the Poland and Streeter Schools for the purpose of low income veteran housing. The warrant article was approved. Moving forward, Hickey stated he has worked with Legal Counsel to put together an RFP to be advertised locally and on other websites. There was a month long period for people to submit applications. Two applications were submitted, both very different, and were reviewed by Planning and Development

Director Tracy Murphy, Selectman Rick Ward, and himself. We met with each of the groups individually and asked them what their timelines and financing looked like. Each applicant was required to deposit a minimum of \$5,000, which both has done.

Hickey then provided a short presentation showcasing the proposed plans from both applicants.

The first applicant presented was Cougar Capital who planned on renovating both of the schools, keeping the current footprint, and to have twenty-four both one and two room apartments. ADA compliant housing would only be available on the first floor as there is no plan to install an elevator.

The second applicant presented was Montachusett Veterans Outreach Center (MVOC). Their proposal is much different as they would be adding to the two buildings and connecting them in the center. There are plans for an elevator and they would be constructing forty-four single unit apartments. The building would also have a few common areas.

Cougar Capital is looking to work with a budget of \$2.5 million and would take somewhere between two and three years to complete the project. MVOC is primarily relying on federal grant funds and will take somewhere around three years to complete the project. They anticipate a budget of \$21,505,615. Hickey continued, after discussing the pros and cons of each proposal, it was decided to recommend the MVOC proposal be approved.

LaBrie thanked Ward, Murphy and Hickey for their time spent on reviewing the applications. She then noted she had a few questions and invited Cougar Capital to come forward. Ryan Fleming, Dan Botwinik and Robert Batchelder came forward. LaBrie asked what their plans were for the green space on the property to which Mr. Botwinik replied they didn't have a chance to work on landscape for their proposal, but it would be something similar to what MVOC has in their presentation, something visually appealing. Additionally, Mr. Botwinik clarified that it would take about a year from award to complete the project not two or three years. LaBrie then asked how they would handle the baseball field in the corner of the lot to which Mr. Botwinik replied they would be flexible.

LaBrie asked how Cougar Capital's rental fees would compare to MVOC's low income designation to which Hickey replied when a conversation was had with Mr. Botwinik and one of his partners last week, it was noted that the intention was to allow some property to below income and other portions would be market rent. It did seem to be a bit of a moving target, how they were going to determine rent and make a presentation for financing. It seems there was still work to be done.

Mr. Batchelder noted that the buildings would be leased and run through a rehabilitation program for veterans. Mr. Fleming can elaborate more on that. Mr. Fleming noted the program is called DAV; veterans are given housing for two years, but are required to go to school or take on an apprenticeship. LaBrie asked again what would be rented for low income and what would be rented at market value to which Mr. Fleming replied if they leased to DAV all of the rent would be income based.

Salter noted she sees other projects Cougar Capital has worked on, and asked if any are low income or veterans housing, to which Mr. Botwinik replied they have done some other low income projects as well as some historic building renovations, which this one falls under. Salter then asked once the projects are complete who typically manages the properties to which Mr. Botwinik replied typically they do manage the properties but this specific one they would be imparting DAV to manage it for the population they wish to serve.

Anderson asked what happens at the end of the two year period for those involved in the DAV program, to which Mr. Fleming replied in the two years the veterans are in the program, they will be receiving a degree and will be given the tools to live outside of low income housing.

Cougar Capital was thanked for their time, and MVOC was asked to come forward.

Charlie Murphy, President of MVOC, and Lisa Kozol, and Dorrie Clark, architects for the project, came forward.

Anderson noted the proposal shows forty-four single unit apartments, and asked if MVOC felt there is a need for any two bedroom units. Mr. Murphy noted most of the tenants like to be by themselves and that is why they are headed this direction; they have also found that there is more of a need for single unit apartments.

Ward asked MVOC if they could tell the Board about their success rate in getting grants to which Ms. Kozol replied she and her company have done hundreds of units using tax credit and historic tax credit equity; included in the presentation is their excellent track record. They have assembled a team and have ensured the design meets the standards of the funds they will be applying for.

Salter asked who would manage the building once the project is completed and where does the money go. Mr. Murphy replied MVOC will own and manage the property and there will be a number of case managers on site to work with the veterans as well. As mentioned, there will also be transportation services.

Anderson asked if housing would be available to both male and female tenants to which Mr. Murphy replied yes, the plan would be to use one side for female tenants and the other for male tenants.

Barbaro noted all the units will be ADA compliant as there will be elevator access to all floors. Mr. Murphy noted they anticipate their veterans to live with them until they move on.

Anderson asked if two bedroom apartments are available for those who need it to which Mr. Murphy replied they are not opposed if there is a call for two bedroom apartments as it can be done, but they are doing single bedroom apartments as that's what they see the need for.

Hickey stated that obviously MVOC manages other properties in the area, and asked if there are any properties that offer two bedroom housing to which Mr. Murphy replied they have four two bedroom units. They do not have any families living with them, two veterans are single and of the other two units recently purchased one is occupied by a veteran with a young daughter. Hickey then stated he asked that question if there was a family that wanted to be moved into MVOC housing it may not be located in Winchendon but it could be in the properties in the area that they manage; these properties would be better suited for a family.

Ms. Clark noted their team has done projects with multi bedroom units, there is a market for it sometimes and it may be here. It is viable to do, but the challenges here is the bearings are older and limits how large the units can be with correct sizing. If we chose to add larger units it would decrease the amount of units we are able to produce by a good amount.

LaBrie thanked MVOC, and then asked if there was anyone from the public who wished to come forward and comment on what is being discussed this evening.

Arthur Savoy came forward and noted he is part of the MVOC program. He continued, stating they have a lot of veterans in the community and there is a shortage of housing for those veterans. There's currently veterans housing for women in town, as well as group homes, and MVOC does a great job with them. They encourage the veterans to seek counseling and to stay sober. When the Poland and Streeter Schools closed down as outreach centers, he had to start going to Gardner for assistance; it would be a wonderful opportunity for himself as well as many others to have this back in town.

Tina Santos came forward and asked MVOC if the field behind the buildings would be accessible to the public as she has a Babe Ruth softball league that uses that field. Ms. Clark replied that the field actually isn't part of the job site; it only goes to the end of the parking area shown at the line of trees. She continued, noting they were very careful to avoid it and have thought of making a walking path through that area.

Mike Beleta came forward and noted that when the DAV facility in Gardner was first opened he was one of the first residents who lived there for just over three years with his wife and daughter. He went to Mount Wachusett Community College as part of the program, is now a home owner, and works for DAV as a national service officer. Once a Veteran completes their education, DAV will provide a list of services in the community such as the participants own house or apartment. If the program did end up in Winchendon, they would offer peer service, clinical services on site as well as a full range of other services. He felt it was important to speak about DAV as he has experienced it and noted his full support of Cougar Capital.

Anderson asked Mr. Beleta if there were other people with young families in a similar situation to his in this area to which he replied yes. In this community, along with Gardner and Templeton, there are a high number of veterans in need of housing. He knows that there is a higher number out there if we look at the term Veterans more broadly.

Barbaro thanked both of the groups.

After further discussion a motion was made.

*Barbaro moved the Board of Selectmen award the sale of the Streeter and Poland Schools to the Montachusett Veterans Outreach Center to develop the property into a low income, long term veterans housing as presented this evening and authorize the Town Manager to sign all of the necessary paperwork, based on bigger commitment they are willing to put into the community, and thank them for all the time they had talking about a twenty-one plus million dollar investment that we are gearing towards, seconded by Ward.*

LaBrie asked if there was any further discussion, to which none was heard

*By a vote of Anderson no and all others aye the motion carried 4-1.*

7.2. Presentation of Final Report Addressing Current Condition of Town Sidewalks, Crosswalks and Curb Ramps (The Public Right of Way-PROW)- Planning and Development Director Tracy Murphy came forward and introduced George Snow, Principal Transportation Planner from Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) and Bill Scarpati, Senior Project Manager from Stantec, who were in attendance this evening to make the presentation.

Mr. Snow stated the PROW provides a plan for people with disabilities. In 2018, MRPC surveyed the region to inquire about ADA plans in the communities. In 2019, a consultant was hired to assist them after a competitive bid process.

Mr. Scarpati noted tonight there is a four point agenda that he will go through and take any questions or comments. He continued with a presentation, stating accessibility is not only for attending a meeting by elevator; the material being presented tonight also requires the identified ADA coordinator to help coordinate compliance between the employer and the employee, as well as address grievances if one should want to file a discriminatory complaint.

Mr. Scarpati covered different topics that require the Town to upgrade the sidewalks to ensure they are ADA compliant. He noted the MAAB has the right to issue violations and enforce fines if something is not correct. It was noted that 15% of the ramps in town are compliant according to ADA standards, meaning 85% are not for various reasons. With a cost of approximately \$695,000 in repairs, it was recommended by a town formed committee that \$85,000 annually be dedicated to correcting twenty-two to twenty- eight ramps annually over the course of nine years, starting with those of highest priority.

Murphy noted the committee consisted of Art Amenta, Lorraine Fortugno, and herself.

Hickey stated, to give the Board a sense of funding, in 2019 the DPW had \$100,000 to use for sidewalk construction; \$85,000 of those funds were spent. Without having a remaining project the remaining funds could go towards, the DPW applied for a grant for an additional \$200,000 from the Robinson-Broadhurst Foundation. Grant award results will not be available until May. The DPW is certainly aware of the conditions of the sidewalks. He continued, noting both he and Murphy have spoken with Winchendon Public Schools Superintendent Joan Landers about "Safe Ways to School," another grant opportunity to get funds to upgrade sidewalks and help make them ADA compliant. We are doing what we can. To the point that Barbaro made, all crosswalks within the construction zone on Central Street will be repaired and replaced and brought up to standard. We have a long way to go but the DPW has tried to get creative in ways of obtaining funds. We are continuing to work with the school superintendent to get more grant opportunities. He appreciates the ADA committees' suggestion on nine years, and welcomes their fundraising capabilities to help make this feasible in nine years.

Barbaro noted we only get \$450,000 for road work a year, and taking the necessary funds to complete this out of that budget would help nothing get done. We have previously been presented with a \$65,000,000 cost to bring the Town's streets back up to code, and the tax base cannot absorb that kind of hit on a nine year plan; a lot will be alleviated with the reconstruction of Central Street.

Murphy replied that is exactly why this was done last summer and we haven't brought it before the Board until this point. There was no way to ask to put aside this money; after going back and forth with Mr. Scarpati and MRPC, it was decided that nine years would be the time frame. This plan will become useful as we can substantiate the need for grants. There is no way she believes the town can put that money aside, and your point is well taken.

LaBrie noted that no motion is required.

Mr. Scarpati noted a lot of the issues could be easy fixes and realignment. The requirements that are not being met by many of the crosswalks and sidewalks have been the rule of the land for thirty years; Winchendon is not alone. He understands many roads haven't been paved in forty years, but when you resurface you have to do major things to bring the ramps into compliance. He reiterated they are here to let us know that it is the law and there are people out there with auditing plans. He stated the Town should be sure to do their due diligence, and reinforced the Town's liability is more the ramp back log rather the sidewalk back log. The Town's needs a reasonable schedule to get this into compliance.

Town resident Tina Santos came forward and noted we live in New England, the roads move from frost heaves and such with winter. She then asked how we keep track of ramps not matching to which Mr. Snow replied it has to be inventoried.

After further discussion, LaBrie thanked Murphy, Mr. Scarpati and Mr. Snow for coming this evening.

- 7.3. Sewer Betterment Lien Release - 425 West. St.- LaBrie noted the lien that was put in place in 1999 has been paid in full.

***Barbaro moved the Board of Selectmen approve the Discharge of Betterment Lien for Walter and Honorine Whitney, 425 West Street, seconded by Anderson.***

LaBrie asked if there was any further discussion, none was heard.

***By a vote of all aye the motion carried.***

- 7.4. Discussion on ReadMe File Procedure- LaBrie noted correspondence has been entered into a spreadsheet but has not been utilized. Anderson noted she prefers the file in paper.

Ward stated he does not see a need for it. He feels well informed via email and the drop box. After looking through the file in the office he did not see anything he felt he needed to know.

Salter noted if we were to continue doing it she would like it in the drop box to which Kuchta replied it currently is in the drop box.

Barbaro stated the file can be redundant as they receive a lot of information via email already.

LaBrie agreed, and stated that with what is being said anything addressed to the Board should be available to the Board. She is fine with keeping the file process as it is.

## **8. OLD BUSINESS:**

- 8.1. Establishment of 2020 Town Manager Goals and Objectives- LaBrie noted the Town Manager Goals and Objectives were brought back before the Board tonight in track changes mode so what has been adjusted can be reviewed.

LaBrie gave the Board a moment to review the changes. After discussion the Board decided there were more adjustments to be made, specifically with the wording of some of the goals.

Salter then noted she had asked for Hickey's vision for goals and objectives to which Hickey stated he basically had just minor wordsmith changes and reviewed them with the Board. He noted he would like to have the trust of the tax payers continuing to improve communication giving taxpayers a sense that both sides are working together rather than battling. He will continue to work with the school and the Superintendent to address issues that impact both the school and town, and showing a united front to the public. He hopes to include a level of trust in the residents and the local government. He noted the goals and objectives can be tweaked based on the comments heard this evening.

Additionally, Hickey noted one thing Selectwoman Salter recognized was the title in the Goals and Objectives that state July 1st to June 30<sup>th</sup>; he would rather it be a calendar year as his evaluation is in November. It is more of a timing thing and more appropriate if everyone is okay with that. The Board agreed.

## **9. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT:** Hickey noted early voting started today and will take place through Thursday, February 27<sup>th</sup> during regular business hours.

### **1. Financial Updates-**

- a. There are no financial updates this week.

### **2. Personnel Updates-**

- a. There are no personnel updates this week.

### **3. Project Updates-**

- a. The Fire Station subcommittee met and discussed a number of changes to the plan brought forward at the Fall Town Meeting. Those suggested changes have been shared with the architect who will modify the original plan and submit a revised budget to the subcommittee in the near future.
- b. I spoke with representatives from Tighe and Bond about the Senior Center repairs. I have asked for a total project budget for Phase I and II. I expect the information by the end of February.

Hickey added that he has been made aware the Board is leaning towards making repairs to the current Senior Center rather than building a new one. He noted the estimates they had for repairs did not include the costs for a project OPM; he has asked for more solid numbers that can be brought back for the warrant article for consideration and discussion. Anderson asked if this was brought before the Capital Planning Committee to which Barbaro replied yes, the numbers were brought before them. Hickey reiterated the only numbers not presented were that of a project OPM.

**4. Miscellaneous Updates –**

- a. Planning staff and I spoke to legal counsel regarding the establishment of an agreement between the Town and Mabardy for the mandated closure of the Mabardy landfill. The Board of Selectmen is the authorized body to enter into an agreement of this kind. I will be working with Mabardy and legal counsel to create an agreement for the Board's consideration.

Anderson noted some of the residents are very upset about this, to which Hickey replied he understands but it is State mandated that this landfill be taken care of. He respects the disturbance that will occur for a long period of time but we will work together to make it as palatable as we can to meet the State criteria.

Hickey then noted he is waiting on transportation costs as the school has gone to bid for transportation.

**10. MINUTES:**

- 10.1 Monday, February 10, 2020 Regular Meeting/Joint Meeting with Finance Com. and CPC- Barbaro moved Board of Selectmen approve the Board of Selectmen amended Minutes of Monday, February 10, 2020, seconded by Ward.

LaBrie asked if there was any discussion to which none was heard.

*With a vote of all aye the motion carried.*

**11. COMMUNICATIONS:** It was noted the next scheduled meeting will be held on March 9, 2020.

**12. AGENDA ITEMS:** There were no agenda items discussed this evening.

**13. EXECUTIVE SESSION:** There was no Executive Session held this evening.

**14. ADJOURNMENT:**

*Barbaro moved to adjourn, seconded by Ward. With a vote of all aye the meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.*

Respectfully Submitted,

*Lindsay Kuchta*

Lindsay Kuchta  
Recording Secretary