

speaking on it during their October 12, 2023 meeting. Melissa had updated the work plan for the project. Vicky went over the tasks completed on the work plan so far. The calendar will be revised as needed. The next public informational meeting was to be held on October 18, 2023.

APPROVE SPECIAL TOWN MEETING WARNING FOR NOVEMBER 1

The special town meeting floor vote to increase the Selectboard to five members needed to be warned. Bill motioned to approve the official warning for the November 1st Special Town Meeting. Dave seconded. Motion passed 2-0.

Bill will be penning a FPF post about the board's decision to put this vote forward describing why they think it's necessary and how the vote will be conducted. It will also be posted on the website. Since Lee was not continuing his term and Dave's term is up, there is the potential for four open positions if the vote is successful. This could potentially leave a lot of uncontested races, which Bill discussed.

PLANNING & STAFFING FOR NOVEMBER 1st MEETINGS

We needed people for running zoom, putting out chairs etc. Nanette, Vicky, and the board discussed the organization of both the Special Town Meeting to potentially increase the number of members on the Selectboard and the Public Hearing for the Wastewater Bond Vote. The Public Hearing needs to start at 7:00 p.m. and gives a logical end time to the Special Town Meeting. The board discussed how to recess the Special Town Meeting in the event the vote runs close to the 7:00 p.m. time.

Gordon suggested that for the Public Hearing the Planning Commission be on the floor and not on the stage. They have found this more comfortable in the past and they can be closer to the audience. Bill agreed, but also thinks the Planning Commission and the Selectboard should be in a central location.

Seth wanted a discussion with Ed Chase, Town Moderator, on how to work with the moderation and Zoom option. How is Ed going to recognize Zoom people in the process. Vicky thought that Ed would take cues from the Zoom Moderator. Bill suggested doing an equal number of questions from the live audience and Zoom back and forth. Seth suggested disabling Zoom chat as it can be challenging to moderate. It's best if people raise their hands and speak either in person or via Zoom. Disabling chat also eliminates the idea that if you put something in chat, you're going to get an answer.

Bill thinks the last piece of the puzzle is making sure the Zoom Moderator is as unbiased towards the project as possible so that the public feels things are fair. Lori Johnson and Barb Peck spoke in support of non-biased Zoom Moderators. Barb Peck mentioned she was working with Ed Chase on speaking longer than 30 seconds at a time as a non-supporter of the project. Mo Reilly asked for Barb Peck's intentions of that comment and wanted to know if Barb was planning her own presentation. Barb responded that this would all be determined by Robert's Rules. Mo asked if the information Barb is investigating would be shared with the town. Bill stopped the exchange. Ed Chase has been moderator for three decades and we need to go with his best discretion. Seth Jensen was present. He remembers some very contentious town meetings in the past and he remembers being pretty clear on how the person running the mic felt about these things but never questioning the integrity of that person. Bill knows we are in for a long Public Hearing and he's counting on Ed to make sure everybody gets their chance with the mic and on Zoom. Pat Haller was present. He wanted everybody to be cognizant that the school employees need to clean up after the Public Hearing and they need to know this may draw out. Seth mentioned that Robert's Rules has rules about impertinent personal statements and a process to challenge those if they are made. Folks

should try and focus on the issues at hand. Barb said she has never insinuated anything that is a negative personal opinion towards anybody except what she thinks about the project. She would appreciate Seth not insinuating that she'd bring a personal opinion into it. Seth explained that his comment was not directed by Barb. Her stating Seth by name is however in direct violation of the rules of the Selectboard. Mo commented to Barb that her questions are not about people's opinions, she was simply trying to understand how the meeting would be run as this is her first meeting of this kind. Dave reiterated that the Selectboard has gone out of their way to say neutral and transparent, and they will make the decision on who moderates Zoom. The residents will have to take them at their word that they are trying to make this as fair as possible.

CORRESPONDENCE

Dave Lavallee had written in. Dave thought that it was very typical for a municipal wastewater system to have mandatory connections and wondered why it wasn't pursued. He felt the OEM and cost should be bore by the people in the connection area. Early on, the board was advised to not make connection mandatory because they don't want to force people to connect. Dave Lavallee felt that the decision to not make it mandatory was because the town was worried forcing connection would make the issue not pass. Bill responded that Dave is welcome to vote on it any way that he desires. Lee had also responded to Dave in writing. Pat Haller was present and mentioned that two years ago when the Outreach Committee began asking potential users about their perceptions of the projects, the first question of each potential user was if it was to be mandatory because they didn't want anybody telling them what to do. The Outreach Committee then suggested to the town that mandatory connection would be detrimental. Dave Baczewski was still for voluntary connection. He doesn't want anybody with a functioning septic system to be forced to connect. If the town voted yes and mandated connections in the service area, it would force people's hands. The board has been trying to take the most "Westford" approach which they determined was voluntary connection. Bill believes choosing to go mandatory would have been very unpopular.

The board had gotten a series of correspondence about email exchanges private citizens had between each other regarding FPF posts. Some of these were shared with the board with the request the board stop these exchanges and while Bill thought people could word their thoughts differently, the board cannot try and control private citizens. One of the emails was about the speech of residents that held positions on town boards. Lee had responded that they cannot take away the freedom of speech for the people that may be on boards as those people are also welcome to their personal opinions. Bill reminded those on town boards and commission to be conscientious in how we communicated, even in our private lives. Dave was grateful for Lee's responses and agreed with them. Dave thinks email can get easy to say things that you wouldn't say face to face. Barb Peck agreed there was freedom of speech, but that if somebody took an oath from the town there is a gray area between acting as an individual or a public role. In her opinion what has been said about her goes way over that. Seth had been told by a resident that in the door to door campaign against the Wastewater Project his name was mentioned specifically to private residents, and he doesn't think that's okay. He's not sent negative emails to anybody, and he'd never go knocking on a door for or against something other than potentially national political candidates.. That's not the sort of behavior he expects in Westford. He also has many negative correspondences he'd rather not describe publicly.

Essex CHIPS sent correspondence about a film that they will be showing.

The Westford Common Hall had put a sign on their property in support of the Wastewater Project. There had then been an email correspondence complaining about the signage and questioning its legality. Harmony determined that the sign does not violate any sign ordinances and can remain in place. The Westford Common Hall is also a private non-profit and the sign placement was a unanimous decision by their board which also has a fiduciary responsibility to maintain that building. Supporting the Wastewater is part of that for them. Bill was not in favor of the placement of the sign.

Ben Bornstein was present; we had gotten the MERP mini grant.

Bill gave an update on the staff meeting that had happened Wednesday 9/27. They'd found another road crew member. They've interviewed five people for the Town Administrator role out of a pool of 12 people and have now narrowed down to two top candidates. They'd also taken on Carl Rodgers as a municipal consultant to help train a new town administrator. He'll start at 10/5.

COMMUNICATION

Bill's communication about the Special Town Meeting to increase the board to five members.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE AND PAYROLL WARRANTS

The board reviewed and signed the accounts payable and payroll warrants.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Dave motioned to go into executive session at 7:54 p.m. for personnel and invite Vicky Ross to the session. Bill Seconded. Motion passed 2-0. The board and Vicky reviewed and discussed matters related to two incumbent staff members, reviewed, and discussed next steps in the Town Administrator recruiting process and reviewed and discussed next steps in the Road Crew Foreman recruiting process.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Cleary, Chair
Selectboard

Callie Hamdy
Minute Clerk

GUEST LIST

Nanette Rogers
Vicky Ross
Deb Jorshick
Pat Haller
Kim Guidry

Selectboard Meeting
September 28, 2023
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Ira Allen
Joe Franz
Sheila Franz
Dave Lavallee
Gordon Gebauer
Lori Johnson
Harmony Cism
Mo Reilly
Barb Peck
Ben Bornstein
Carol Winfield
Seth Jensen

**TOWN OF WESTFORD HIGHWAY DEPT.
ROAD SCHEDULE
September 15, 2023 – September 28, 2023**

Work to be done.

- Grade roads when possible.

- Haul in winter sand.
- Add gravel to a section of Osgood Hill Road and a section of Phelps Road.
- Change a culvert on Osgood Hill Road.

Work completed.

- Hauled in winter sand.
- Graded a section of Woods Hollow Road, a section of Old Stage Road, the hill on Osgood, Common Road, and a section of Brookside Road.
- Cleaned under the guard rails on Woods Hollow Road.
- The roller was installed on the grader.
- Had some work done on the 2014 Western Star.
- Added Gravel to a section of Phelps Road for Grants in Aid. (\$27,000.00 grant) and a section of Osgood Hill Road.
- Changed a culvert on Osgood Hill Road.
- Replaced some signs.

Approved at the ____9/28/2023_____ Selectboard Meeting