

**TOWN OF NEWBURY
SELECT BOARD**

MINUTES

DATE: November 14, 2023

PRESENT: **Select Board:** Chair Alicia Greco; Geof Walker; Dana Packer; Vice Chair Bill DiMaio; Clerk Leslie Matthews

Finance Committee: Chair Erica Jacobsen; Richard Keys; Patrick Heffernan; Vanessa Rossi

Staff:

Tracy Blais, Town Administrator
Julie O'Brien, Executive Administrator
Martha Taylor, Town Planner
Patty Fisher, Police Chief
Jason DiScipio, Principal Assessor

Speakers:

Maureen Lynch, Whittier Tech Superintendent

Call to Order:

At 7:00 p.m. Chair Alicia Greco called the meeting to order with a salute to the flag

Motion: D. Packer moved to open the meeting, seconded G. Walker and voted unanimously

Discussion: None

Public Comment

Linda Sarno, 2 Johnson Lane, Byfield, business teacher at Whittier Tech. Discussed the importance of Whittier and the trades industry. Stated clear it is there are facility issues and expressed the value Whittier Tech brings to community. Mentioned the expensive of college and how Trade training provides another career path way to success. Agrees cost of new school high but fears will only get higher over time

Paul DeBenedictis, 1 Rear Central Street, Byfield, has lived for 20 years in the town. Collision Repair instructor at Whittier. Feels the new building is the fiscally responsible thing for Newbury to do. If new school does not pass the District is required to do a legally required code update. District has received approximately 165 million from the MSBA. Stated he has learned the School Committee has been asked to have a Town to Town, city to city vote as opposed to a District vote and securing a debt exclusion in all eleven towns and cities. This would have to pass unanimously which would be 22 separate approvals. This would not allow project to move forward. Whittier is 50 years old and systems have reached useful life. Requested the Select Board to please support this project

Travis Madden, 185 Orchard Street, Byfield, Math teacher at Whittier. Stated has family members who graduated from Whittier and are employed in different trades. Community in need of trade and service workers.

Whittier Tech produces these professionals to fill these roles. The Whittier facility in need of serious repair. Provided example of his classroom temperature of 85 degrees and is not an actual classroom but was a lounge area. Talked about the savings of a new school as opposed to code upgrade. A new building will cost less than renovating and will be less disruptive to the students learning environment. Asked the Select Board and residents to support the project.

Bud Kelly, 24 School Street, stated has no affiliation to Whittier. Mentioned his Mom was at one time on the school committee. He stated he employs Whittier graduates. Stated trades are suffering and Whittier offers students a chance to get started in the trades.

Board and Committee Reports

Report of Chair Greco:

Signed PR24-08, Julie O'Brien

Signed PR24-09, Julie O'Brien

Signed PR24-08, Select Board

Grants, Gifts & Donations

(Chapter 44: Section 53A Grants and gifts; acceptance and expenditure)

COA Donation, Alba Gouldthorpe, \$30.00

Motion: B. DiMaio moved to accept the donation seconded, L. Matthews

Discussion: None

Vote: Voted unanimously to accept

New Business:

Request for Public Property Use - Newburyport Choral Society, banner, Nov. 25th - Dec. 10th

Motion: L. Matthews moved to approve the public property request seconded, G. Walker

Discussion: M. Taylor provided a few details regarding the concert

Vote: Voted unanimously to approve

Request for Public Property Use - Congregational Church Fair, banner, Nov. 15th - Nov. 24th

Motion: G. Walker moved to approve the public property request seconded, B. DiMaio

Discussion: None

Vote: Voted unanimously to approve

Appointments:

- Municipal Vulnerability Task Force - David Evans - June 2024
- Deputy Emergency Management Director - David Evans - June 2025

- Forest Warden - David Evans - June 2026

Motion: G. Walker moved to approve the appointments as read and listed seconded B. DiMaio

Discussion: None

Vote: Voted unanimously to approve

New Business License - Katie Smith, Total Eclipse Tattoo, 65 Newburyport Tpk., Newbury, Body Art

Motion: G. Walker moved to approve the new business license seconded, L. Matthews

Discussion: Katie Smith addressed the Board and answered questions

Vote: Voted unanimously to approve

Change of Manager - Plum Island Blue

Motion: B. DiMaio moved to accept the application for change of manager seconded, G. Walker

Discussion: Joseph Keefe with Lark Hotels addressed the Board and answered questions regarding manager change request

Vote: Voted unanimously to accept

Public Hearings: 7:15 p.m. Tax Classification

Motion: B. DiMaio moved to open the Public Hearing seconded, D. Packer

Vote: Voted unanimously

Discussion: L. Matthews read the legal ad. Jason DiScipio, Principal Assessor, addressed the Board and answered questions

Motion: B. DiMaio moved to retain the uniform tax rate for fiscal year 2024, with a residential factor of 1, seconded G. Walker and voted unanimously

B. DiMaio moved no open space discount seconded G. Walker and voted unanimously

B. DiMaio moved no residential exemption seconded, G. Walker and voted unanimously

B. DiMaio moved no small commercial exemption seconded, G. Walker and voted unanimously

Whittier Presentation - Maureen Lynch

A video was played to start the presentation. Maureen Lynch, Whittier Superintendent, introduced various Whittier personnel in attendance, a slide show was presented and Maureen entertained questions from the Select Board

Bob Hardy, Whittier Facility Maintenance, assisted with the slide show section regarding existing conditions

The Select Board members inquired about such items as sizing of the new proposed building; meeting the needs of special needs students; the method of the assessment for each city/town; mentioned the need for a funding mechanism; value engineering; whether the school would remain open during construction

The Finance Committee spoke about tax impacts; debt exclusion; additional ongoing operating costs; project awareness for all the communities effected; January voting date.

A. Greco read to the Select Board a draft letter proposed by Amesbury to send to Whittier School Committee chair and Whittier Superintendent from 10 of the 11 effect communities

Motion: G. Walker moved to table the letter seconded, D. Packer

Discussion: Discussion ensued

Motion: G. Walker moved to withdraw his motion to table seconded, B. DiMaio and voted unanimously

Motion: G. Walker moved to have Select Board chair sign the letter, seconded, B. DiMaio

Discussion: Discussion ensued

Vote: L. Matthews, D. Packer, B. DiMaio opposed; A. Greco, G. Walker abstained. Motion fails

Pink House Information

A.Greco read the correspondence from Valerie Coolidge with Senator Tarr's office regarding a Pink House conversation at PITA Hall on Monday, November 20th at 10:30 a.m.

A.Greco read a letter she proposed to submit to Senators Markey and Warren, Representative Moulton and US Fish &Wildlife in regards to the significance of the Pink House

Discussion: A. Greco invited Rochelle Joseph Save the Pink House president, to addressed the Board and answer questions

Motion: G. Walker moved to endorse sending the Pink House letter to Markey/Moulton/Warren/US Fish&wildlife seconded, B. DiMaio

Vote: A. Greco, G. Walker, B. DiMaio in favor; L. Matthews; D. Packer opposed
Motion passes

Liquor License Fees

The Board reviewed a spread sheet in the packet that included surrounding communities annual liquor license fees as well as Newbury's current annual liquor license fees. It was noted the fees have not changed in at least 20 years.

Motion: G. Walker moved to increase All Alcohol annual license fees from \$1,000 to \$1,200; Malt and Wine annual license fees increase from \$700 to \$800; Malt and Wine Club annual license fees increase from \$400 to \$450 seconded, D. Packer

Discussion: None

Vote: Voted unanimously

Motion: B. DiMaio moved to create a cordial malt wine category and set the annual liquor license fee as \$450 seconded, G. Walker

Discussion: None

Vote: Voted unanimously

Town Administrators Report

Newbury Elementary School Update

- Insurer MIIA has approved our claim
- Ceiling damage in the auditorium will be addressed

Fire Department

- Now have our full complement of Firefighters 6 Full time firefighters

Small Bridge Program

- Grant application for the bridge on River Street over the Parker River has been approved
ARPA Fund Requests

Library Playground

- DPW Director, James Sarette, has requested \$17,600 in ARPA Funds to replace the playground equipment that is now 30 years old
- Purchasing new equipment is less expensive than replacing the failed platform which will cost \$18,714.23 for the replacement parts
- The DPW staff would remove the old playground and install the new one

Motion: B. DiMaio moved to use \$17,600 in ARPA funds to replace playground equipment at the library
Seconded, L. Matthew

Discussion: None

Vote: Voted unanimously

IT Director

- Revising the initial request for \$150,000 for Fiber Project
- IT Director will be providing a presentation at a Select Board meeting

John Guilfoil

The administration is now working with John Guilfoil of JGPR to help us strengthen our community communications and ensure that the Town Hall is a trusted source of accurate information for our residents

- The town has had a relationship with JGPR for approximately the past 7 years
- Looking forward to collaborating with them on getting fact based information out in a timely manner

Discussion: Discussion ensued

Free Cash Certification

- The FY 2023 books have been closed and the Department of Revenue has certified our Free Cash \$3,466,324
- Made up primarily of last year's unexpended Free Cash (\$2.2M)

- As the Select Board considers a permanent location for our municipal operations, we will need to look closely at our committed reserves and how you would like to see them allocated in the future

COA Van has arrived

- Select Board invited for a ride on 11/21 at 3pm
- Van was purchased with federal, state and local funds and we want to thank our legislative delegations and the Friends of the Newbury COA

Resignation

- I also have some very sad news to share with you this evening as I have accepted the resignation of Julie O'Brien who will be leaving us as of November 30th
- It was always a pleasure working with Julie, you will be missed by many and I do hope our paths cross again

Old Business

Update regarding the Veterans Tax Abatement project

Discussion: D. Packer provided information to the Board. Stated on Friday the Governor submitted The Hero Act which is a great advocacy for Veterans. Discussed bills that were being moved forward at State level for an act increasing the property tax exemption for disabled veterans. Stated the Town of Newbury did on our own. Gave recognition to Senator Tarr and Representative Kassner for supporting the Veteran's. D. Packer stated he will keep advocating.

VSO Hire Update

D. Packer reported that Steve Bohn, from Seth Moultons office has assumed the VSO position at Eastern Essex District Veteran's Service. D. Packer stated he will reach out to Mr. Bohn to attend a Select Board Meeting.

D.Packer also reported representatives from Veteran's Northeast Outreach Center attended Veteran's luncheon. They are located in Haverhill and provided services such as homelessness and food insecurity assistance.

B. DiMaio mentioned Steve Bohn had already stopped by the COA. Brought up a recent State House hearing regarding Bills 3503 and S2310. Testimony was requested. Bill provided his testimony and gave Dana a copy. Bill stated he hoped someone from Eastern Essex Veteran's sent in testimony also.

Correspondence

A. Greco read a letter from Comcast regarding changes to service

Meeting Updates

L. Matthews mentioned during the October DCC meeting both Triton, Whittier and NES were discussed

A.Greco mentioned meeting with the alternative assessment group. Agreed not the right time to discuss an alternative assessment and will put aside for now

M. Taylor inquired if the Select Board could attend a joint meeting with the Planning Board on Wednesday, December 6th at 7:00 p.m. in the Hearing Room, regarding MBTA communities multifamily zoning

Review of Meeting Minutes

Draft Meeting Minutes 10.10.23

Motion: B. DiMaio moved to approve the minutes seconded, G.Walker

Discussion: None

Vote: Voted unanimously to approve

Draft Meeting Minutes 10.17.23

Motion: L. Matthews moved to approve the minutes seconded, B. DiMaio

Discussion: None

Vote: Voted unanimously to approve

Warrants

RfdSep2023

VW2408

VW2408A

PRVW24-07

PRVW24-08

VW2409

PRVW2409

PR24-09

RfdOct20

Motion: L. Matthews moved to sign the Warrants seconded, D. Packer

Discussion: None

Vote: Voted unanimously to sign

Executive Session: None

None

Adjourn

Motion: At 10:35 p.m. G. Walker moved to adjourn, seconded, B. DiMaio

Discussion: None

Vote: Voted unanimously

Respectfully submitted,

Julie O'Brien

Executive Administrator