



Town of Bellingham

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

10 Mechanic Street

Bellingham, Massachusetts 02019

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January 23, 2023

The Selectboard meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Chairman Don Martinis. All Board members were in attendance and participating in the Arcand Meeting Room. Also actively participating in the meeting was Town Administrator Denis Fraine and Administrative Assistant Hilarie Allie. This meeting was accessible to the public either in-person or via the Zoom online option.

Appointment of the DPW Assistant Director

Mr. Fraine stated Meghan Condon has 16 years of experience with the Town of Wellesley and has her degree in Civil Engineering. She has a tremendous background in water but found she was at a standstill in her current position and could advance up a lot faster in Bellingham. Jesse stated they had the opportunity to interview Meghan a few times and stated she was very experienced with the water department being that her current position in Wellesley is the Assistant Superintendent of the water department. She has experience working with PFAS issues as well as grant writing. Mrs. Cornell-Smith stated every one of her references gave outstanding comments. At this time Mr. Fraine was asking for the Board's ratification of his appointment of Meghan Condon to the DPW Assistant Director.

On a Grant/McNulty motion the Board unanimously voted 5-0 to ratify the appointment of Meghan Condon as the DPW Assistant Director to be effective in 30 days.

MBTA Overlay District Committee Discussion

Mr. Fraine stated that the Town had submitted their action plan for the MBTA Overlay District to the Department of Housing and Community Development and part of that plan was to form a committee to identify a multifamily zoning district with a minimum of 50 acres suitable for no less than 750 units (15 units per acre). Mr. Fraine stated he had been contacted by several property owners who would be interested in developing their land for this purpose. He stated the committee would ideally be made up of five members including a Selectboard member, Planning Board Member, Conservation Member, Zoning Board Member as well as a citizen at large. He stated he would also be actively participating in meetings as would Town Planner Jim Kupfer. The Board agreed Sahan Sahin would represent the Selectboard and that Mr. Martinis would reach out to the chairs of the other boards to have them nominate a representative. They would like to have their first meeting no later than a date in March. Mr. Martinis stated the Board would like this process to be as transparent as possible and agreed that they would be taking their time with this decision as the action plan states that no decision will be made until the Fall Town Meeting in November 2024.

On a McNulty/Connor motion the Board unanimously voted 5-0 to award contract 2023-BFSP, Bellingham Fire Station Painting to low bidder MG Painting Contractors, LLC of Blackstone, MA.

On a Sahin/Grant motion the Board unanimously voted 5-0 to approve the December capital improvement, sewer, stormwater, trash and water abatement charges in the amount of \$26,633.62.

Gifts/Grants

On a Connor/McNulty motion the Board unanimously voted 5-0 to accept the gifts and grants as listed herein, with said expenditures to be under the direction of the parties noted.

Fund#	Amount	From	For/Purpose	Spending Authority
2706	\$80,573	DOER (Department of Energy Resources)	LED Lighting for South/DiPietro Elementary School	School Superintendent

On a Grant/McNulty motion the Board unanimously voted 5-0 to approve the January 9, 2023, minutes as submitted.

On a Connor/Grant motion the Board unanimously voted 5-0 to approve the Bellingham Youth Baseball Common Victualler license from April 1st – November 30th – fee waived.

Public Hearing

Paula Stuart, of Community Opportunities Group, Inc. explained that the purpose of the public hearing was twofold: 1) to report on progress with the Massachusetts FY 2021 CDBG grant which is now underway, and 2) to discuss and obtain public comments regarding the possibility of the Town submitting an application for funding from the Department of Housing and Community Development FY 2022-2023 grant to address local community development needs.

First, in regard to the current FY 2021 grant, she explained that two activities had been funded, the first, a continuation of the long-standing Housing Rehabilitation Program which assists low- and moderate- income Bellingham homeowners to make repairs to their properties. She explained that the program staff had already completed construction on two properties and a number of others were being processed. She said that demand for the program remained strong with a waiting list longer than the number of units that could be completed with existing funding.

The second activity funded by the FY 2021 grant will be to make accessibility improvements to Harpin Street, including installing handicapped ramps, repairing sidewalks and other barriers to disabled and wheelchair bound residents. The project is currently out to bid, with bids due back on February 2, 2023. It is expected that construction will begin in April, as soon as weather conditions permit.

Next, Ms. Stuart explained that, due to delays caused by COVID during the last two years, the grant application cycle for MCDBG funds had been skewed. To return to the normal schedule, which has an application deadline in early March, the state had decided to

combine two grant funding years. This would allow Bellingham to apply for up to \$1.35 million dollars, as opposed to the one-year limit of \$800,000 that usually applied.

She referred those present to the handout that explained eligible activities under the MCDBG grant and the requirement that any construction activities meet the Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principals.

The purpose of the public hearing, she explained, was to obtain public comments on potential activities to be funded. She explained that preliminary discussions with Town staff had identified two potential activities: a continuation of the housing rehabilitation program, and accessibility improvements around Blackstone fields to remove barriers and improve access to disabled adults, especially those who are wheelchair bound, in order to be able to enjoy the recreational facilities, watch ballgames, etc.

This led to an exchange between Town Administrator Denis Fraine and the Selectboard regarding the proposed improvements and need for them, noting that this work was contained in the Town's Master Plan, the ADA Transition Plan and the Conservation and Recreation Plan. The grant opportunity would allow the Town to proceed with these repairs and improvements if funded.

Ms. Stuart explained that residents who wanted to comment on the grant application or other potential community development needs could do so by submitting comments to the Town Administrator up to Friday at noon, either by mail or email.

There being no additional questions or comments, on a Connor/Grant motion the Board unanimously voted 5-0 to adjourn the public hearing.

Old Business

Mrs. Grant stated that she had done a lot of thinking since the last meeting and would like to see the Selectboard as a whole be more active in the school's budget process by sitting down with the School Committee and going through their budget line by line. She also feels that it is important for the Selectboard to have more of a say in the budget number that is given to the school by becoming more involved at the beginning of the entire budget process. Mr. Martinis stated he had a discussion with Mike Reed, Chairman of the School Committee, Peter Marano, Superintendent, as well as Mary MacKinnon the Town CFO and understands a lot more clearly now how their budget works. Mrs. Grant stated it would have been beneficial if that discussion would have been had with the entire Board. Mr. Connor once again stated he had concerns with rubber stamping what is presented to them as opposed to being more comfortable and having an active say in the number that is given to the school. Mr. Fraine stated he will be presenting the Selectboard a balanced budget next week and it will be up to the Selectboard as to whether or not they want to look more closely at the number given to the schools. The discussion was tabled and would be discussed again before the budget process begins again next year.

New Business

Mrs. Allie stated the application period for the annual appointments to various Boards and Committees had begun and all the open positions along with applications could be found on the Town website.

Litter control Discussion

Mr. Hall, 24 year resident of High Street, presented before the Board and stated he recently sent an email to Mr. Martinis after witnessing an increasing amount of litter on his street. He stated he has lived on High Street for the past 24 years and the litter problem has gotten out of control and is unacceptable. He stated it has gotten significantly worse over the past 2-3 years. He stated there is no denying there is a problem and it's not going away and has come before the Board this evening to see what the Town could do about it. Mr. Martinis stated prior to this correspondence he has had many conversations with Mr. Fraine and Mr. O'Connell, Planning Board Chairman, with regards to the litter problem in Town. He stated the Planning Board has started asking for beautification funds from these larger projects to help with the litter problem. Mr. Hall asked if the Town could possibly hire a company periodically to pick up the trash. Mr. Fraine stated a possible option could be to have the individuals who mow the retention ponds in the summer also pick up trash on designated streets once a week. Mr. Hall said he is happy to help in any way possible and Mrs. McNulty said she would work with Mr. Hall as well to see what could be done.

On a McNulty/Sahin motion, the Board unanimously voted 5-0 to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Hilarie J. Allie".

Hilarie J. Allie
Administrative Assistant