



Town of Bellingham

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

10 Mechanic Street

Bellingham, Massachusetts 02019

Tel: 508-657-2800 * 508-966-4425

January 25, 2021

The Selectboard meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Chairman Michael Connor. Board members were participating in the Arcand meeting room with the exception of Mr. Spencer and Mrs. McNulty who were participating via Zoom technology. Also actively participating in the meeting was Town Administrator Denis Fraine and Administrative Assistant Hilarie Allie. The remote meeting was being monitored by Jim Kupfer, Town Planner and Zoning Officer. It was determined by Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place that no in-person attendance of any member of the public would be permitted at this meeting. This meeting was accessible to the public via the Zoom online option.

Larry Sposato – Town Clerk

Mr. Sposato came before the Board to speak to them about the possibility of combining two precincts. This would save money on police detail and poll workers and at the same time free up a voting machine to allow for a spare. In a two state election year the approximate savings would be \$2,400 and in a four state election year the cost savings would be roughly \$4,800. Mr. Sposato will have a better idea of his options once the results of the 2020 Federal Census are released this spring. Currently the Town of Bellingham has 2 Congressional Districts and when the Town's Congressional District was split the State split Precinct 4 by adding a 4A and then combined 4A with district 5 and added those precincts to the other Congressional District. Pending the outcome of the census, Mr. Sposato is hoping to eliminate 4A by adding it to precinct 5 if the congressional split remains the same or by combining 4A back into 4 if the Town goes back to just one congressional split. He will follow up with the Board once the census results are in.

Mr. Sposato stated he would like to combine the May Election Warrant with the May Town Meeting Warrant. This will streamline the process allowing for just one posted warrant plus it will save on constable fees.

Mr. Sposato also updated the Board on the Town Election time table. He stated papers may be pulled starting February 16 and would need to be returned with applicable signatures no later than March 16th. Last day to register to vote will be April 15th. The election will take place May 4th from 12-8PM in the HS gymnasium. There will most likely be a mail in component that will be at the discretion of the Town Clerk. Current regulations are in place until March 31st.

Mr. DiMartino requested the Board approve deficit spending for snow and ice based on the current budget forecasted for FY21.

On a Grant/Spencer motion, the Board unanimously voted 5-0 to authorize the Town to deficit spend for snow and ice removal for Fiscal Year 2021 as per Mass General Law, Chapter 44 Section 31D.

Mr. DiMartino stated the plans for the Town Center project have been approved by MassDOT and the next step is to proceed with the Easement Acquisitions. The goal is to bid out and award sometime in March or early April and construction will start right away. This Order of the Taking is the final step. It has been approved and authorized at Town Meeting and all the agreements have been signed by the property owners.

On a Spencer/Martinis motion, the Board unanimously voted 5-0 to accept the Order of the Taking as presented by Mr. DiMartino. Under discussion, Mrs. Grant asked how the easements would be paid. Mr. Fraine stated a portion was appropriated at Town Meeting and the other portion would be funded from a private partnership for the project.

On a Martinis/Spencer motion, the Board unanimously voted 5-0 to authorize the Chairman and two Board members to sign the Traffic Signal Agreement with MassDOT granting permission to perform the construction at the Town Center.

On a Grant/Spencer motion, the Board unanimously voted 5-0 to approve the Common Victualler licenses of Lao Thai Café 52 Pulaski Blvd and Veg M Restaurant 799 South Main Street.

On a Spencer/Martinis motion, the Board unanimously voted 5-0 to set the ABCC 2021 Seasonal Population Increased Resident estimate by 500.

On a Martinis/McNulty motion, the Board unanimously voted 5-0 to amend the Officers and Directors of Outback Steakhouse as requested.

On a Grant/Martinis motion, the Board unanimously voted 5-0 to open the Warrant for the Annual Town meeting with a closing date of February 26th at noon.

Abatement Request – 73 Lakeview Ave

Mrs. Grant stated the Board had received an abatement request from a concerned neighbor on behalf of the property owner at 73 Lakeview Ave for penalties assessed on their water bills. It was brought to the Board's attention that there was actually two owners listed on the property. That combined with the history of payments resulted in the decision that no action would be taken on this abatement request.

On a Martinis/Grant motion, the Board unanimously voted to take NO ACTION on the abatement request at 73 Lakeview Ave.

On a Martinis/Grant motion the Board unanimously voted 4-0 with Mr. Spencer abstaining to approve the December 21st minutes as submitted.

On a Martinis/Grant motion, the Board unanimously voted 5-0 to accept the generous donation from Rocky's ACE Hardware to support materials, supplies, and/or programs

for the Animal Control department, said funds to be under direction of the Animal Control Officer.

On a Grant/Spencer motion, the Board unanimously voted 5-0 to abate the capital improvement, stormwater, trash and water charges for the month of December in the amount of \$536.43.

Mr. Connor asked for an update on the open positions for the various boards and committees. Mrs. Allie stated a notice was posted on the Town website the 1st week in January and 3 new applications had been received. Also, all incumbent forms were sent to the individuals with expiring terms and many had been returned. It was discussed with the Chairman that any necessary interviews would be scheduled during the February 22nd and March 1st meetings and all appointments would be made March 15th. The Board members approved of this procedure.

Town Administrator's Report

Mr. Fraine stated the Budget Workshop will take place Saturday February 20th from 9AM – 12PM. The Board will invite various department heads to present their budget and the public is welcome to watch via a Zoom link. Mrs. MacKinnon stated all departments were asked to level fund their budgets and she expects to hear the State's first draft of their budget sometime this week.

Mr. Fraine stated the Governor announced the State's plan for the vaccination roll out and all the details will be available to the residents on the Town website.

New Business

Mr. Connor stated he had received a letter from William O'Donnell's office regarding the Community Preservation Act and asked how receipt of these potential funds would be deposited. Mr. Fraine stated the letter shows the amount that could be received if the Community Preservation Act were to be adopted by our community. As a result, the Town would then impose a surcharge of not more than 3% of the tax levy against real property and be limited to what the fund could be spent on.

Mr. Spencer stated he would like the Board to consider refunding the Alcohol Fees charged to the restaurants for the 2021 renewals as long as they were in good standing and in compliance with the Town. Mr. Connor asked Mrs. MacKinnon what information she would need in order to make a recommendation and would also like to know the financial impact. Mr. Martinis was concerned this might open up Pandora's Box to other businesses in Town looking for refunds. Mr. Connor suggested this be placed on the February 22nd meeting to allow the finance office ample time to look at the impact this would have before making a recommendation.

Mr. Fraine requested an executive session to discuss a proposal relative to the purchase of some land. All members of the Board were polled with all voting in the affirmative.

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On a Grant/McNulty motion, the Board unanimously voted 5-0 to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 PM with no further business to be discussed at the conclusion of the executive session

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Hilarie J. Allie', with a stylized, flowing script.

Hilarie J. Allie
Administrative Assistant