



# Town of Bellingham

## BOARD OF SELECTMEN

10 Mechanic Street

Bellingham, Massachusetts 02019

Tel: 508-966-5800 \* Fax: 508-966-4425

June 26, 2023

The Selectboard meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM in the Arcand Meeting Room by Chairman Michael Connor. Actively participating in the meeting were the following Board members: Mr. Connor, Mrs. Grant, Mr. Sahin and Mr. Hennessy. Also actively participating in the meeting was Interim Town Administrator Beth Cornell-Smith and Administrative Assistant Hilarie Allie. This meeting was accessible to the public either in-person or via the Zoom online option.

### Fire Chief Pinning Ceremony – William Miller

Mr. Connor announced that Fire Chief William Miller was formally sworn into his new position as Fire Chief by the Town Clerk on Thursday June 15<sup>th</sup> and invited him and his wife to the front of the room to do the official pinning. Mr. Connor welcomed Chief Miller to the Town of Bellingham and his friends and family celebrated with applause and pictures.

### Bid Award

On a Sahin/Grant motion the Board voted to award Contract 2023-WMIV, Water Main Improvements Various Streets to the low bidder Celco Construction Corp., of Pembroke, MA for a total of \$1,082,769.75.

Mr. Connor announced the annual Senior Center cookout will take place on Thursday August 24<sup>th</sup> and anyone interested in attending should call the Senior Center for more details.

Mr. Connor stated that \$50,000 has been earmarked by Senator Rebecca Rausch's office for playground upgrades at the Bellingham Town Common. He stated the state budget has not been finalized so this earmark is still going through the process.

Mr. Connor stated executive session minutes would be available for the Board's review during the next few weeks and on July 17<sup>th</sup> the Board will vote to approve and release or approve and not release a list that will be presented by Mrs. Allie.

Mrs. Grant asked that the Board discuss Remote Meeting Rules per 940 Code of Regulation 29.10(2). Mrs. Grant stated she would like the Board to consider putting parameters on individuals zooming into their meeting. She would like the Board to consider asking these individuals to state their full name on the screen and show their face if they wish to participate. The Board agreed this would be a good idea and would ask KP Law for legal advice regarding setting these parameters.

Mrs. Grant asked if a Code Red could go out alerting residents to all the details of the upcoming Special Election. Mr. Sposato stated he would take care of it.

Public Hearing - On the application of Edward Moore d/b/a Bellingham Auto Sales to transfer the Class II Used Car Dealer's License from 206-208 Mechanic Street to proposed address of 6 Blackstone Street.

Mr. Connor opened the public hearing and welcomed Mr. Moore, owner of Bellingham Auto Sales. Mr. Moore stated he specializes in antique classics and most of his sales are made online. He sold his property at the corner of Route 140 and Maple Street and would like to transfer his Class II license to his home address where he has the space and facility to store and repair vehicles. He stated he will be giving up his Class I and Class III licenses. Mr. Connor asked him about the property he had just sold. Mr. Moore stated it is 10 1/2 acres of land and he chose not to lease it out and commercial real estate is just not moving right now. He decided the best option was industrial as it brings in a lot of taxes and doesn't impact the school system. Mr. Connor asked him where the vehicle with the two front ends was relocated and Mr. Moore stated it is in Wrentham at the Mustang Farm and another of his vehicles is at a museum in Nashville, TN.

Mr. Connor asked if there were any comments or questions from the audience. Mr. Aicardi stated the new location is also business zoned and quite a few of the other Class II licenses in Town operate primarily with online sales.

There were further comments or questions.

On a Grant/Hennessy motion the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to close the Public Hearing.

On a Grant/Hennessy motion the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to approve the transfer of the Class II Used Car Dealer's License for Bellingham Auto Sales from 206-208 Mechanic Street to the new address of 6 Blackstone Street.

Veteran's Service Officer – Art Campbell

Mrs. Cornell-Smith stated it was Mr. Fraine's idea for a while to expand the Town's Veteran's Services. She stated Mrs. Ana Milot currently works 10 1/2 hours per week and by adding Mr. Campbell to the staff the Town will be able to offer additional hours. Mr. Art Campbell stated he is a Marine Core Veteran and a member of the Vietnam Veterans of America. He stated he is a certified Veteran's Agent (VSO) with the State (helping Veteran's obtain needs based benefits) as well as a Nationally Accredited VSO (helping Veteran's when seeking compensation or pension for grave or cemetery benefits from the VA). He stated he is currently working with the Town of Millville but as long as the hours do not overlap there would be no conflict of interest.

Mrs. Cornell-Smith stated she will be working with Mr. Campbell to establish office hours. She further stated Mr. Hennessy has been anxious to remove himself from the administrative position and this will allow that change to happen. Mrs. Cornell-Smith stated she would be looking for the Board to appoint Mr. Campbell as an additional Veteran's Service Officer effective July 1<sup>st</sup> and asked that Mr. Hennessy stay on until June 30<sup>th</sup> to close out the books.

Mrs. Grant asked if this would bring the Town into compliance and Mr. Campbell stated the Town of Bellingham is not part of a district so full time for a Town with residents of 12,000 or greater has never been defined. Mrs. Cornell-Smith stated full time in Bellingham is considered 20 or more hours so these new office hours will meet that requirement.

Mr. Connor thanked Mr. Hennessy for what he has done for the Town up to this point and stated the Town appreciates how he advocates for the Veterans.

Mr. Hennessy asked Mr. Campbell how familiar he was with On Base. Mr. Campbell stated he is familiar with it and has working knowledge of it. Mr. Hennessy also asked Mr. Campbell his thoughts on outreach. He stated he goes to New Hope in Worcester once a month, he would like to work on the programs for Veteran's Day, July 4<sup>th</sup> and Memorial Day. He would also like to work with a coffee shop to sponsor Veteran's coffee once a week and finally he would like to work with a local food pantry. It was suggested that he work with Mr. Jim Hastings on some of these ideas.

On a Grant/Sahin motion the Board voted 3-0-1 with Mr. Hennessy abstaining to recommend adding Mr. Art Campbell as an additional Veteran's Service Officer for the Town of Bellingham.

Mr. Connor stated he would like to do quarterly pinning ceremonies for the police and fire department.

Mr. Hennessy asked Mrs. Cornell-Smith why it was 10 days before the Selectboard was notified that there had been a security breach. Mrs. Cornell-Smith stated that they were under the advisement of the Town's attorneys and confirmed that there was never a breach of any kind. Mr. Hennessy stated he asked a department head about the situation and was lied to about it and wanted that to go on record.

#### Housing Authority

Mr. Connor stated that the Housing Authority has a vacancy since Mr. Hall decided to step down and it has been advised by KP Law that the Selectboard and Housing Authority should have had a joint meeting within 30 days to replace this individual. When this does not happen, the Selectboard has full authority to find a replacement. Mr. Connor stated since this was not known at the time he would like to offer to have a joint meeting with the Housing Authority to find a replacement for Mr. Hall. This replacement would serve until the next Town election in May of 2024 and then would have to run again to fill the remainder of Mr. Hall's term which is 2025. Mrs. Allie will work with the Housing Authority to schedule a joint meeting to appoint a replacement.

#### Human Resources Director Report

Mrs. Cornell-Smith stated that she was looking to make some changes in various departments due to upcoming retirements and changes in the Town. One of these changes will require a vote of the Board.

She stated in the Assessor's office the plans are to change the Assessment Technician position in the ASFME union to the title of Administrative Assistant. This position is 37.5 hours and in addition they will look to hire a full time Assistant Tax Assessor.

She stated she would like to hire an Administrative Assistant for the Planning/Zoning/Conservation department to help the Assistant Town Planner with clerical work as this work is being performed by Senior Tax Work Off helpers. This position would be roughly 28-30 hours.

Mr. Aicardi stated the importance of getting the Assessor's office organized as the Tax Assessor's office is where the new growth in Town is captured which is ultimately put on the tax rolls.

Mrs. Cornell-Smith stated the Treasurer Collector will be leaving June 30<sup>th</sup> and the Assistant Treasurer Collector will be moved leaving an open position in that office to be filled.

Mr. Connor asked what the financial impact will be from all of these changes and Mrs. Cornell-Smith stated once approved by the Board she will be able to start negotiations but most of the changes she proposed are rearranging and have already been budgeted for with the exception of the additional position in the assessor's office.

On a Grant/Hennessy motion the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to approve the additional position as presented by the Director of Human Resources.

Mrs. Cornell-Smith stated she has researched professional consulting firms to assist with the hiring process of a Town Administrator and CFO and possibly Town Planner and has reached an agreement with Community Paradigm. She stated they have worked with many municipalities (70% of the Towns in Massachusetts who have used an outside consulting firm) and feels confident with their approach. They hire professionals who are familiar with these particular roles to screen the candidates and then submit the top 3-5 candidates who will be interviewed. She stated they will not only advertise and accept applications but will also recruit candidates if need be. She stated Community Paradigm will meet with each member of the Board as well as the department heads to learn about the Town and to find out exactly what is wanted in a candidate. Mrs. Cornell-Smith stated this is exactly the same process they used to hire the Fire Chief and she feels it is what is best for the Town. Mrs. Grant stated she likes this process as it completely eliminates the politics and offers complete transparency while still giving the Board final say in who is hired. Mr. Connor stated he was a part of the meeting with Community Paradigm and stated the hiring process takes about 16 weeks including obtaining background information about the Town and speaking with the employees, posting the position, vetting the candidates, and then conducting the interview process which will take place at a Selectboard meeting. The Selectboard will be able to participate and ask follow up questions and then vote for the best candidate. Mr. Connor stated in addition he was informed that typically sitting Town Administrators have clauses that require them to give their current town 60-90 days' notice. Given that and the entire hiring process a new Town Administrator wouldn't start until earliest, January 1, 2024. Mr. Connor does not feel the Town has the luxury of waiting. The total cost for the process will be under \$10,000. Mr. Connor allowed questions from the audience. Mr. McLaughlin asked about the geographics and Mrs. Cornell-Smith stated it will be advertised with MMA (Massachusetts Municipal Association) and the candidate will have to have a strong understanding of the Massachusetts General Laws. Mr. Sahin suggested we "hit the brakes" as we still have a Town Administrator and he feels that the citizens of the Town should play a bigger role in hiring a Town Administrator. Mrs. Cornell-Smith thanked him for his opinion but stated this was how Mr. Fraine wanted to handle the situation and she will be hiring this firm to help with the hiring process. Mr. Bissonnette stated he agreed with hiring an outside consulting firm to hire the next Town Administrator as it is a very specific job that citizens don't know much about. Mr. Hennessy asked if this firm

had already signed a contract and Mrs. Cornell-Smith stated she had already signed an agreement with them.

Finally, Mrs. Cornell-Smith stated the custodian at the library is retiring and the job was posted and interviews were conducted by Ms. Rivard and the Library Trustees and they are asking that the Board support the recommendation of hiring Mr. Bradley Deluca. The position is an AFSME position with contracted hours of 30 hours per week. There will be some overlap in the position to help with the training.

On a Grant/Hennessy motion the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to approve the recommendation of hiring Bradley Deluca as the new Library custodian.

#### Town Administrator Report

Mrs. Cornell-Smith stated there were concerns with the condition of the playground at Silver Lake. She met with Mr. Riedle and Mr. Harrington to work on those issues. Passes for Silver Lake can still be bought in person at the DPW. They are also looking at buying some blue pads to make Silver Lake more ADA compliant.

There is a retirement party for Chief Daigle on Friday July 14<sup>th</sup> and tickets can be purchased at the Police Station.

There was a great turnout at Chief Gentile's retirement party and Rep Soter was the Master of Ceremony and did a great job.

Pride Fest was a huge success with over 40 vendors and the committee is already planning festivities for next year.

Mrs. Cornell-Smith stated every few years members of all boards and committees as well as employees must take a Conflict of Interest exam. She will be sending out the paperwork and the exam can be taken online.

She stated the South Main Street TIP project is almost an entire season ahead of schedule and the Town Center project is moving along quickly and set to be paved July 10<sup>th</sup>.

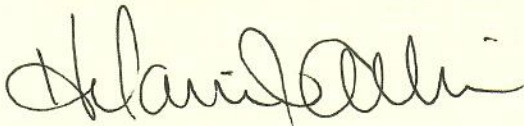
Mr. Aicardi added that the area in front of Dominos is being cleaned up and landscaped and if anyone had any ideas of what they would like to see done should contact him.

Mrs. Odabashian asked what was going on in front of the Middle School. Mrs. Grant explained that it is a storm water basin that was required by the State but the contractor worked with the Middle School to turn it into a rain garden and will serve as a learning tool for students.

Mrs. Cornell-Smith requested an executive session to discuss salary negotiations for the changes she spoke of earlier in the meeting. All members of the Board were polled and all voted in the affirmative.

On a Grant/Hennessy motion, the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 PM with no further business to be discussed at the conclusion of the executive session.

Respectfully submitted,



Hilarie J. Allie  
Administrative Assistant