



Town of Bellingham

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

10 Mechanic Street

Bellingham, Massachusetts 02019

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

November 6, 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, Mr. Sahin, Mr. Hennessy and Mrs. Odabashian. 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, via the Zoom online option or ABMI Cable TV.

Public Hearing – the application of Om Hilltop Farms Inc d/b/a Hilltop Farms, Wahab Minhas, Mgr. for the transfer of the Package Store Wines & Malt Beverages License, transfer of the Exterior Redemption Vending Machines License, the pledge of license and the pledge of inventory from Hilltop Farms Inc. Premises located at 201 Pulaski Blvd.

Mr. Connor opened the public hearing, and, on an Odabashian/Hennessy motion, the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to move the public hearing a little further into the evening.

Fire Department Pinning Ceremony

Fire Chief Miller explained he would be recognizing two promotions within the department as well as a new hire to the Bellingham Fire Department. Fire Chief Miller recognized Andrew Calzone to the new rank of Permanent Lieutenant and Zackary Spencer to the new rank of Permanent Lieutenant. Both individuals were pinned by family members. Fire Chief Miller introduced Connor Veins as a new member of the department and stated he is a turnkey employee as he comes to the department as a certified firefighter and certified paramedic. Mr. Sposato, Town Clerk, swore in Mr. Veins and he was then pinned by his family member.

Police Department Pinning Ceremony

Police Chief Fitzgerald explained he would be recognizing three new police officers to the Town of Bellingham, two recently graduated from the academy and one a seasoned officer from UMass Boston. Police Chief Fitzgerald introduced Kelcey Kelly, Robert Larson & Michael Chenard. Mr. Sposato, Town Clerk, swore them in and the officers were pinned by family members.

Public Hearing Continued

Mr. Connor welcomed Mr. Tom Traux representing attorney for Om Hilltop Farms Inc. alongside Wahab Minhas, proposed licensed manager for Hilltop Farms and joining the meeting via Zoom was Ms. Falguniben Patel, President, Treasurer and Secretary of the Corporation. Attorney Traux stated Rockland Trust would be financing and they require a pledge of license as well as inventory for collateral of the loan. Attorney Traux stated Ms. Patel has 6 years of experience and owns two other stores and Mr. Minhas currently manages a gas station. Both individuals are TIP Certified. The business will continue with

the same hours, layout and employees. Mrs. Odabashian thanked Mr. Stephen Gurwitz, current owner, for his years of dedication to this business and the Town.

There were further comments or questions from the Board or the audience.

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

On a Hennessy/Odabashian motion the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to approve the transfer of the Package Store Wines & Malt Beverages License, the transfer of the Exterior Redemption Vending Machines License, the pledge of license and the pledge of inventory from Hilltop Farms Inc. to Om Hilltop Farms Inc d/b/a Hilltop Farms, Wahab Minhas, Mgr.

One Day Beer & Wine Permit Request

Sue Grady of the Bellingham Business Association stated the BBA would be hosting their annual Taste of Bellingham event on Wednesday November 8th at FW Webb and local liquor stores would be serving alcohol at this event. Mrs. Allie confirmed that they had turned in all the required paperwork which included the application and certificate of liability insurance.

On a Hennessy/Sahin motion the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to grant a One Day Alcohol Permit (fee waived) to the Bellingham Business Association for Wednesday November 8, 2023 from 6PM – 9PM at FW Webb 37 South Maple Street.

Capital Items Requests

Mr. Connor explained that the Board would need to take an official vote on the Capital Items that were presented to them a few weeks ago. He explained these requests have also been heard by the Finance Committee as well as the Capital Improvements Committee. He stated the Capital Items Requests that are being presented total \$3,747,846 but he would like to suggest the Board approve the request of the School Department for an additional lawn mower totaling \$49,999 bringing the total Capital Items request to \$3,797,855. Mr. Hennessy agreed with Mr. Connor's recommendation stating that the department maintains all of Blackstone Street, not just the school grounds. Mr. Connor additionally pointed out that the Town is recommending its largest amendment to Article One in the Town's history as new growth came in well above expected. He stated this will allow for some of these Capital Requests.

On a Connor/Odabashian motion the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to raise the Capital Items request however procedurally appropriate on the floor at the Fall Town Meeting to the amount of \$3,797,855 which includes the cost of an additional lawn mower for \$49,999.

Fire Department – Acceptance of MGL Chapter 32 Section 3(2)(g)

Chief Miller presented before the Board a request for the acceptance of language covered under MGL Chapter 32 Section 3(2)(g). The Chief stated that this would put those hired as paramedics only into group 4 retirement which mirrors that of a firefighter.

On a Hennessy/Odabashian motion, the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to accept the language of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 32 Section 3(2)(g).

Formation of a Traffic Committee

Mr. Jesse Riedle, DPW Director, presented before the Board with a request to approve a proposed Traffic Committee. He stated the purpose of this committee would be to respond to resident requests for the addition, removal or modification of street signs, crosswalks, guardrails or other traffic related devices. He stated the committee would meet quarterly to discuss these requests and then make their recommendations to the Selectboard for final approval. The committee will be made up of the following individuals: a Selectboard member, Town Administrator (or designee), Public safety Officer, Public Works representative and a Planning Board member. Mr. Riedle asked that the Selectboard name a representative of this committee. Mr. Sahin volunteered to do so, and the members agreed.

On a Hennessy/Sahin motion the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to approve the Traffic Committee.

Backflow Device Failed Notice Modification

Mr. Riedle stated that the DPW is looking to modify the 3rd notice that would go out to residents in the event that their backflow device failed inspection. This third notice would notify residents of a public hearing before the Selectboard alerting them that their water supply will be shut off if the device is not fixed. Mr. Riedle stated the goal is to protect the water supply and not shut off the water.

On a Hennessy/Odabashian motion the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to approve the notification process for backflow devices.

DPW Building Committee

Mrs. Cornell-Smith stated the DPW Building Committee is currently an ad-hoc committee and the committee would now like to be recognized as a formal committee so they can approve plans.

On a Hennessy/Odabashian motion the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to recognize the DPW Building Committee as a formal committee.

Mrs. Cornell-Smith stated the Building Committee would like a representative from the Selectboard to be a part of the committee and Mrs. Ann Odabashian volunteered and the Board agreed.

Mr. Reidle stated they have received the bids for the construction of the DPW Building and they are currently doing a background check and receiving references on the low bidder.

Abatements

On an Odabashian/Sahin motion the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to approve the August capital improvement, sewer, stormwater, trash and water abatement charges in the amount of \$1,390.38.

On an Odabashian/Sahin motion the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to approve the September capital improvement, sewer, stormwater, trash and water abatement charges in the amount of \$1,600.89.

Executive Session Minutes

Mr. Connor stated that Mrs. Allie has provided the Board with a list of executive session minutes that require approval and are ready for release. Please see attached list.

On an Odabashian/Hennessy motion the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to approve the executive session minutes as provided.

On an Odabashian/Sahin motion the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to approve the October 2nd, October 16th, October 23rd and October 24th minutes as submitted.

Charter Changes – Vote

Mr. Martinis provided a general summary of the changes that had been made to the Charter. The proposed changes can be found on the Town's website.

On an Odabashian/Connor motion to move the changes to the Charter as proposed by the Charter and Bylaw Review Committee, the Board voted as follows:

Mr. Connor – aye

Mrs. Odabashian – aye

Mr. Sahin – nay

Mr. Hennessy – nay

The vote resulted in a 2-2 vote and therefore the changes were not recommended by the Selectboard.

Under discussion, Mr. Hennessy expressed concern with the removal of the Parks Commission. It was explained to him that the Parks Commission does not provide the upkeep to the parks in Town. Additionally, Mr. Hennessy was concerned with the language added by KP Law that allowed the Town Administrator to delegate portions of his/her authority.

Town Administrator Discussion

Mr. Connor stated that he would like to propose that Mr. Denis Fraine return as acting Interim Town Administrator for approximately 20-25 hours per week and night time meetings as needed. He stated if the Board started the search for a new Town Administrator right now it would be unlikely that candidates would apply during budget season. Mr. Sahin stated that perhaps they could use Mr. Fraine's input in next steps and when to start the recruitment process again. The Board agreed to have that discussion on another night.

On a Hennessy/Odabashian motion the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to reinstate Mr. Denis Fraine as interim Town Administrator in an advisory capacity.

Mrs. Cornell-Smith stated she will work out the details of his contract and Mrs. Odabashian recognized her for all her hard work she has done over the past 7 months.

Upcoming Calendar Events

Mr. Connor stated the Tax Classification Hearing would take place on Monday November 20th and that the annual license renewals would take place at both meetings in December. The Board originally planned to hold a meeting on December 11th to do an enterprise fund review, but the Board may not have results they need by then to do the review.

Old Business

Mrs. Cornell-Smith stated she was working on gathering the results from the Senior Tax Work Off program and would like to discuss them in December.

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New Business

Mr. Hennessy shared the events and plans for Veteran's Day.


Town Administrator Report

Mrs. Cornell-Smith stated she would be holding an Open Meeting Law review with KP Law on Wednesday December 6th at 6:30PM. She is recommending all boards and committees attend and at the very least the chairman and vice chairman of these boards and committees.

She stated budget season is starting and an email will be going out to alert department heads when the budget module is open for use.

On an Odabashian/Hennessy motion, the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hilarie J. Allie". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Hilarie" being more prominent than the last name "Allie".

Hilarie J. Allie
Administrative Assistant

EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES

Approve the Following Minutes and Ready to Release

May 8, 2023

September 18, 2023

October 16, 2023

Note:

- March 19, 2018 and July 13, 2020 Executive Session Minutes have been previously approved but are not ready for release.
- June 26, 2023 and July 17, 2023 Executive Session Minutes are still in process.