Town of Dunstable Select Board
Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, November 12, 2024

In attendance: Chair Leah Basbanes, Vice Chair Kieran Meehan, Select Board Member Ron Mikol, Town Administrator Jason Silva; Police Chief Erik Hoar; Executive Assistant Sue Fayne

The meeting was called to order at 5 PM by Chair Basbanes.

Public Comment

Joan Simmons inquired about the status of the SERVPRO truck seen outside and the current situation in the building. Chair Basbanes explained that they were cleaning up after a failed pump caused a leak, resulting in damage to the building. TA Silva added that the pump was being replaced the following day and that SERVPRO had been measuring moisture levels in the ceiling and carpet areas. He mentioned that demo work was scheduled for Friday, both upstairs and downstairs. A discussion ensued about the extent of the damage, including the need to replace the ceiling and potentially the carpet due to the nature of the water damage, with Member Mikol noting that the water damage was particularly problematic due to the quality of the water. They also praised the insurance company, MIIA, for their handling of previous water damage incidents.

Approval of Meeting Minutes from 10/22/2024

There was no discussion on this agenda item.

Jingle Fest Town Hall Lighting Request

Jon Hughes presented a request for the JingleFest Committee to adorn Town Hall with winter holiday themed lighting and decorations and to have a "lighting" at their event, which is scheduled for December 7th. They have plans for mid-way, participation of surrounding businesses, Wickham & Willaby and the Farmhouse Café, and the high school band is also expected to participate. It was mentioned that more lights had been added this year, including lighting on Common Street.

A discussion took place regarding fundraising activities during the event. It was clarified that a raffle permit would be required for any fundraising efforts, which could be obtained from the Town Hall for a $10 fee.

On a **motion** by Member Mikol and **seconded** by Vice Chair Meehan, it was **voted to approve** the Winter Town Hall Outside Lighting and Décor proposed by Jon Hughes, to be installed in November and to be uninstalled after the New Year. **The vote was unanimous.**

Route 113 Speed Limit Results

Chair Basbanes introduced the topic, mentioning that Mr. Flynn had previously expressed concerns about speeding in the area where the speed limit changes from 45 to 35 mph on Route 113. The police department had placed a speed trailer to capture data in both directions.
The data collected showed that as time went on, there seemed to be more compliance with the speed limit. It was noted that some vehicles were coming from the area of the General Store, which might affect speeds. Chief Hoar mentioned that they had expected to collect data for the time that the speed

trailer was out, however it only collected data for an hour each day. If necessary, the police can redeploy it to capture data for a longer period of time. A discussion took place about the possibility of raising or lowering the speed limit. It was mentioned that the Department of Transportation (DOT) would need to be consulted for any potential changes.

Personnel Policy

Chair Basbanes introduced the updated personnel policy and the group highlighted and discussed three changes requested from the previous review:

- Page 9: The use, sale, possession or being under the influence of alcohol or legal or illegal drugs that may impair the ability to safety and effectively perform job duties while on duty is prohibited unless the employee discloses the prescription in advance to the Town Administrator
- Page 12: added When working remotely, employees are prohibited from performing any paid or volunteer work for any employer or organization other than the Town of Dunstable.
- Page 12: reworded Employees who are unable to work during the weather event due to a loss of power, internet connectivity, or other issues related to the weather event, shall be paid without loss of a vacation or personal day. In all other circumstances, employees whose duties can be done remotely must use vacation or personal time to be paid if they choose not to work.

TA Silva confirmed that the policy had been reviewed by legal counsel and incorporated feedback from a working group of employees. He suggested implementing the policy at the start of the calendar year to allow time for review and acknowledgment by employees.
A discussion ensued about the number of employees affected by the policy and the comparison of benefits to surrounding towns. It was noted that Dunstable had been at the bottom in almost every category compared to neighboring municipalities.

On a **motion** by Member Mikol and **seconded** by Vice Chair Meehan, it was **voted** to approve the updated personnel policies, as presented, dated October 25, 2024, to be implemented by January 1, 2025. The vote was unanimous.

Special Town Meeting Review & Article Recommendations

The Select Board & TA Silva reviewed the Warrant Articles for the Special Town Meeting, scheduled for Monday, November 18, 2024:

- Article 1: Unpaid Bills for FY 24
  - The board took no position on this article.
- Article 2: Cell Tower on Water Tank
  - The board supports this article. They discussed the need for a presentation at the town meeting to address potential questions about the impact on water rates and the benefits of the project.
- Article 3: High Street Property Conservation Restriction
  - The board supports this article, noting it was essentially a housekeeping measure to satisfy state requirements for previously awarded funding.
- Article 4: Acceptance of Donation of Land at 19 Lowell Street
  - The board supports this article. They briefly discussed the timeline for the town's use of the garage on the property and the need for renovations.
- Article 5: Capital Improvement Stabilization Fund

- The board supports this article. They discussed the process for creating and using the stabilization fund, noting it would require a two-thirds vote at town meeting to both create and use the fund.

- Article 6: Update Open Space and Recreation Plan
  - The board supports this article. Chair Basbanes explained the importance of updating this plan for grant eligibility and described its contents.
- Article 7: Construction of Tennis Court at Larter Field
  - The board supports this article. They noted that this was to cover additional costs beyond the original estimate for the project.
- Article 8: Amendment to Departmental Revolving Fund Bylaw
  - The board supports this article. Chair Basbanes explained that this amendment would allow for more flexibility in using funds for recreation purposes.
- Article 9: Proposition 2 1/2 Override Request Bylaw
  - The board decided to take no position on this article. They discussed the advisory nature of the proposed article and its potential impact on future override votes.
- Article 10: Electronic Voting at Town Meetings
  - The board opposed this article. They discussed concerns about the cost of implementing electronic voting, potential technical issues, and the value of traditional voting methods in town meetings.

On a motion by Member Mikol and seconded by Vice Chair Meehan, it was voted to take the following positions on the warrant articles for the Special Town Meeting being held on Monday, November 18, 2024:

Article 1: No position
Articles 2 – 8: Recommend support of these articles
Articles 9: No Position
Article10: Does not support this article.

The vote was unanimous.

ARPA Reallocation

TA Silva presented proposed reallocations of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The main allocations were for addressing issues at the highway department and replacing the boiler pump in the Town Hall.
TA Silva reminded the board that these funds need to be spent or committed by the end of the calendar year.

On a motion by Member Mikol and seconded by Vice Chair Meehan, it was voted to approve the reallocation of ARPA funds as presented. The vote was unanimous.

Contract for Union Building Exterior Restoration Architectural Services

Chair Basbanes presented the results of the Union Building Committee's review of four architectural firms for the exterior restoration project. The committee ranked all four firms either Advantageous or Highly Advantageous, and the committee’s overall recommendation was Gienapp Architects based on their interview performance, project understanding, and ability to meet the project timeline. It was

noted that all four firms were highly qualified, but Gienapp stood out in their presentation and readiness to begin the project.
The board discussed the qualifications of the firms and the selection process. They also clarified that the contract would be for design services only, with a budget not to exceed $100,000.

On a motion by Member Mikol and seconded by Vice Chair Meehan, it was voted to authorize the Town Administrator to request a fee proposal from and begin contract negotiations with Gienapp Architects, as recommended by the Designer Selection Committee, for architectural services for the exterior restoration of the Union Building. The vote was unanimous.

Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated By the Chair

Select Board Member Mikol acknowledged the recent promotion of Mike Gavin, a non-civil service firefighter for Dunstable, to captain in the Boston Fire Department. The board expressed appreciation for Gavin's years of service to Dunstable and congratulated him on this significant accomplishment.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:49PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sue Fayne
Executive Assistant