Town of Dunstable Select Board
Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, December 03, 2024

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

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

Tax Rate Hearing

Chair Leah Basbanes opened the tax rate hearing. Vicki Tidman of the Assessors office presented information on the tax classification. She noted that residential properties make up about 96% of the tax base in Dunstable, making a split tax rate impractical. She recommended maintaining a single tax rate for all property classes.

Board member Kieran Meehan asked if there were any comments, to which there were none.

On a **motion** by Member Mikol and **seconded** by Vice Chair Meehan, it was **voted to approve** to establish a single rate residential factor of 1. **The vote was unanimous.**

Public Hearing for Section 15 Off Premise Liquor License Application for Mirabelle Farm, LLC 11 Pleasant Street

Chair Leah Basbanes opened the public hearing for the liquor license application from Mirabelle Farm LLC at 11 Pleasant Street.

Board member Kieran Meehan asked about the proposed hours of operation, suggesting they consider staying open later on holidays like Memorial Day. The applicants indicated they planned to have shortened hours on Sundays but were open to having the full 11 AM to 7 PM hours approved for all 7 days to allow flexibility.

Jason Silva noted that the applicants had been through the process and done their due diligence, with all departments signing off. He mentioned there were still a few outstanding items but they were ready to move forward.

A member of the public asked about the status of the traffic study that was previously discussed. The applicants confirmed that a traffic memo had been completed, though they did not yet have the physical document. They stated the traffic engineer had conducted a site survey and would be emailing the information shortly.

On a **motion** by Member Mikol and **seconded** by Vice Chair Meehan, it was **voted to approve** to approve the application, as presented, from Mirabelle Farm, LLC at 11 Pleasant Street, for a Section 15 – Off Premise All Alcohol License, Manager Amanda Shannon, with hours of operation from 11 AM to 7

PM, Monday through Sunday subject to approval from the ABCC, receipt of all applicable sign-offs and permits, all fees paid, and CORI approval.. **The vote was unanimous.**

Public Comment

There were no comments from the public.

Approval of Meeting Minutes from 10/22/24 and 11/12/24

The meeting minutes were accepted as submitted.

On a **motion** by Member Mikol and **seconded** by Vice Chair Meehan, it was **voted to approve** to approve the meeting minutes from October 22, 2024 and November 12, 2024. **The vote was unanimous.**

Board/Committee Resignations: Library Trustee & Land Use Committee

The board discussed resignations received from John Callahan from the Library Trustees and Erica Flynn from the Land Use Committee. The board is grateful for their service to the town and thank them.

On a **motion** by Member Mikol and **seconded** by Vice Chair Meehan, it was **voted to request** the Select Board's office publicize the committee and board vacancies on the Land Use Committee and Board of Library Trustees on the Town website and social media, and also request the Board of Library Trustees consider candidates and make a recommendation to the Select Board to fill their vacancy. **The vote was unanimous.**

Auto Dealer License Inquiry

Jason Silva and Sue Fayne presented information on creating a process for auto dealer license applications, as the town did not previously have one in place. They modeled the application and process after other towns with a licensing process that is similar to that of applying for a Liquor License.

The board discussed zoning considerations, as there had been an inquiry about potentially opening a used car dealership near the town center. Jason Silva clarified that the process would involve getting signoffs from various town departments before coming to the Select Board.

Some residents expressed concerns about having a used car lot in the town center area. The board also discussed the history of zoning changes for the property in question.

On a **motion** by Member Mikol and **seconded** by Vice Chair Meehan, in accordance with Chapter 140 of Massachusetts General Laws, Section 57-59 it was **voted to approve** the auto dealer licensing process, materials, requirements, and applications as presented, and approve an annual license fee of $200. The vote was unanimous.

Trail Loop Contract

Jason Silva provided an update on the Town Center Trail Loop project. He explained that while they did not receive the MassTrails grant they had hoped for, they were exploring ways to use the $20,000 approved at Town Meeting to advance the project and make it more competitive for future grant rounds. He presented a proposed contract with the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) to conduct a feasibility study and preliminary stakeholder outreach.

On a **motion** by Member Mikol and **seconded** by Vice Chair Meehan, it was **voted to award** a professional services contract to the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments for a Feasibility Study and Preliminary Stakeholder Outreach for the Town Center Trail Loop project in the amount of $20,000 and authorize the Chair to sign the contract on behalf of the Board. **The vote was unanimous.**

Contract for Union Building Exterior Restoration Designer Services

Jason Silva presented information on the designer services contract for the Union Building exterior restoration project. He noted that they had received proposals not to exceed $100,000, meeting their requirements. The Design Selection Committee interviewed and ranked the firms who submitted proposals, and ranked Gienapp Architects highest of the proposals received.

On a **motion** by Member Mikol and **seconded** by Vice Chair Meehan, it was **voted to award** a contract for architectural services to Gienapp Architects in the amount of $100,000 to design the exterior restoration of the Union Building and authorize the Chair to sign the contract on behalf of the Board. **The vote was unanimous.**

Climate Action Group Update on State Climate Leaders Program

Ken Gordon from the Climate Action Working Group in Groton presented information on the State Climate Leaders Program. He explained that the program is an extension of the Green Communities program, shifting focus from energy efficiency to carbon footprint reduction.

Key points discussed included:

- The program aims to eliminate the use of fossil fuels in municipal operations
- Requirements include being a Green Community in good standing, having a local advisory body on sustainability issues, and committing to a net-zero carbon emissions goal by 2050
- The program requires consideration of decarbonization options during major renovations
- Adoption of a specialized building code is required, which may increase costs for new construction using fossil fuels
- The program opens up additional funding opportunities, with $60 million recently made available

The board discussed potential implications for the town and school district, including possibilities for future building projects and energy upgrades. They also discussed the process for adopting the required stretch code and whether it would require town meeting approval.

Jason Silva noted that the town's energy reduction plan from 2019 needs updating, and they are working on securing a shared sustainability manager position with neighboring towns through a regional grant.

The board expressed interest in learning more about the program and potentially pursuing it in the future.

ARPA Reallocation

Town Administrator Jason Silva presented the need to spend or commit the balance of ARPA funds by the end of the calendar year. He requested board approval for the town administrator to approve

expenditures or commit remaining balances within listed categories. Silva provided a brief overview of the current expenditures and potential adjustments:

- ARPA reporting and compliance costs were accurate
- $20,000 task order for MS4 stormwater permit
- Completed work on natural gas space heater at the highway department
- Completed work on boiler circulation pump
- Maintenance service contract costs

Board member Kieran Meehan expressed interest in finding a way to use ARPA funds to acknowledge town employees, possibly through gift cards, especially considering recent infrastructure issues in town buildings. The board discussed the challenges of providing bonuses or gifts to municipal employees.

On a **motion** by Member Mikol and **seconded** by Vice Chair Meehan, it was **voted to authorize** the Town Administrator to approve expenditures and/or commit the remaining balance of ARPA funds in the amount of $43,997.08 for the following purposes:

- ARPA Reporting and Compliance
- MS4 Stormwater Permit
- General IT/website upgrade
- Vital Records
- Fire Reporting System Upgrade and/or fire truck repairs
- Town Hall Boiler Maintenance contract
- Town Hall Boiler Circulation Pump
- Natural Gas Space Heater - Highway

The vote was unanimous.

Anne Paquin of Neighbor to Neighbor Recognition

The board recognized Anne Paquin for her 30+ years of service publishing the Neighbor to Neighbor newsletter. Board members expressed their appreciation for her role in fostering communication within Dunstable by providing residents with local news, updates, and advertisements. They presented her with a certificate of appreciation signed by the board.

Anne mentioned that there were several interested parties in continuing the newsletter, and she was working to ensure its continuation in a similar format. She also noted that she would be keeping the website up for now and that past issues would be available at the library and town offices as a historical record.

Town Administrator's Report

Jason Silva briefly mentioned his report, stating there was a lot of work happening and encouraged board members to review it and email him with any questions. He highlighted an upcoming hearing on December 12th with the Historical Commission for a property at 473 High Street.

Section V(E): Community Outreach of Town Administrator's Contract

The board discussed the community outreach stipend in the Town Administrator's contract and the work that Town Administrator Jason Silva is doing with community outreach.

On a **motion** by Member Mikol and **seconded** by Vice Chair Meehan, it was **voted to approve** the payment of the Community Outreach stipend in the amount of $2,500 to the Town Administrator for FY25 in accordance with Section V(E): Community Outreach of Town Administrator's contract. **The vote was unanimous.**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sue Fayne
Executive Assistant