

BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING

January 22, 2024

A meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order by Chairman Collins at 6:30 PM, Northbridge Town Hall, 7 Main Street, Whitinsville, MA. Board Members Present: Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus. Selectman Begin was absent and it is duly noted. **Also Present:** Town Manager Adam D. Gaudette.

Chairman Collins announced that the Board would be going into Executive Session and declared that having an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the body.

A motion/Mr. Melia, seconded/Mr. Ampagoomian to go into Executive Session **under MGL Chapter 30A, section 21(a)(3)** for the following purpose: To discuss strategy with respect to litigation, Whitinsville Water Company rate increase petition to the Department of Public Utilities, DPU no. 23-64; and to reconvene in open session. Roll Call Vote: Selectman Ampagoomian/Yes, Selectman Melia/Yes, Selectman Paulhus/Yes, and Chairman Collins/Yes.

Open Session Adjourned: 6:31 PM

Executive Session Convened: 6:32 PM

Executive Session Adjourned: 6:55 PM

Open Session Reconvened: 7:00 PM

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by those present.

Senator Ryan Fattman and Representative David Muradian/1) STATE BUDGET UPDATE. Representative Muradian began and stated that the Governor's budget will be coming out Wednesday so the update will not be the exact numbers but what they are looking at currently is \$8.7 billion toward local aid in the proposed budget. The House does their version of the operational budget come April and the Senate will do their version come May. Rep. Muradian noted that the difficult nature of it is they are touting no tax increases, but there are initiatives that give local options to raise taxes. He also said that Northbridge received an additional \$246,834 that was redistributed in grant funding towards Chapter 90. The Governor's most recent actions included cuts, which both he and Senator Fattman will review, but plan to fight to do all that they can to bring more local aid and earmarks back to their communities. Senator Fattman reiterated that the State is experiencing financial challenges and said the governor announced ten days ago that there will be emergency 9C cuts, which we have not seen happen in a very long time in the Commonwealth. Senator Fattman informed the board that with the current budget, he and Rep. Muradian worked hard in partnering with the Chamber of Commerce to support some of the local businesses. The hope was to offset costs and to make business easier in the Commonwealth, especially with the rising costs, inflation and increases in the cost of living. Unfortunately, that number was cut in half for this year's budget, which is a real consequence and what we are experiencing right now. Currently, revenues are coming up short and we are looking at a shortfall between \$750 million and a \$1 billion more than what was projected. Senator Fattman added that they did pass tax relief and highlighted the main aspects of the bill. Estate tax is now doubled from \$1 billion, which makes it more fair and more competitive, increased the childcare tax credit and increased the ability for the local level to increase the property tax deductions. Senator Fattman announced that they had the opportunity to send citations to 2 young men from the local Boy Scout troop, and congratulated them on their hard work. Selectman Ampagoomian voiced concern for the governor's proposal to allocate \$32 million for electric school buses. Selectman Paulhus noted the increase in

expenditures, housing programs and migrant housing funding that go to certain towns and towns like Northbridge are left out of those or could face cuts because we don't receive those programs. He followed up asking if this would be something that continues and we will continue to see bigger gaps in our funds. Senator Fattman responded and stated that it is concerning as it is on the Federal Government and immigration policy on the southern border. He further explained that this was changed in October of 2022, when they expanded the asylum program, which used to be two or three nations in the Caribbean and South America that qualified and essentially most all nations now qualify with 30,000 people per month are allowed acceptance to come into the US and at least 100,000 on a waiting list for the last two years. Since 1983, Massachusetts has been the only state with a Right to Shelter law, which once was only for Massachusetts residents and is now expanded to everyone. He explained they have worked to try to put residency requirements in, which has unfortunately fallen on deaf ears. Selectman Collins asked about the gas tax that gets taken out for roads and bridges and if anyone has thought about the increase in electric cars that obviously do not need gas and what will happen when that money is no longer being funded. Senator Fattman added that there is a tax on underground storage tanks as well as a trust fund that is supposed to be deposited into yearly and every year the legislature takes the money out and puts it in the general fund. He noted that it is a problem, but we are far away from having an all-electric fleet. Senator Fattman mentioned Northbridge resident, George Warren, who was a huge advocate for getting the replica Liberty Bell reopened to the public. He mentioned that he did a wonderful job. Representative Muradian added that it has been a long time coming. He also commended Town Manager Gaudette, stating that any questions from the Selectmen or residents are brought to their attention and he does a great job advocating for the Town.

2) Discussion about banning the sale of nips (mini liquor bottles). Representative Muradian stated that House Bill #767 and a corresponding Senate Bill #570 for this purpose. Public hearings were held in June and the house bill has not gone any further, but the senate bill was reported favorably to Senate Ways and Means. Selectman Melia noted that a resident approached him and suggested that the town create a bylaw to ban the nips. He explained that he approached a couple of package stores and was told that banning the nips would hurt them financially if this were to go through. He then said this type of thing should be done at the State level.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: August 14, 2023. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Paulhus to approve the August 14, 2023 minutes as presented with the readings omitted. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus. **September 11, 2023.** A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/ Mr. Paulhus to approve the September 11, 2023 minutes as presented with the readings omitted. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins, and Paulhus. Abstain: Melia.

Chairman Collins announced that they are going to move appointments before the public hearings.

APPOINTMENTS/By the Board of Selectmen: Conservation Commission - Marcella Regal / Vote to appoint - Present: David Pickart, Conservation Agent. Mr. Pickart stated that Ms. Regal has attended a couple of meetings a would be a great asset to the committee. He noted that she lived in Grafton before moving to Northbridge, has volunteered a lot of time and she is particularly interested in the trails at Plummers Landing. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to appoint Ms. Marcella Regal to the Conservation Commission. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus.

WRTA Advisory Board - Kelly Bol, Senior Center Director / Vote to appoint. Ms. Bol requested to be appointed to the Advisory Board of the WRTA since it is something she deals with on a daily basis in her realm of work. She feels it is important for her voice and the requests of the elderly to be heard by the WRTA. She explained that transportation is a struggle especially for seniors and they are finding that those needs are not being met, and yet the WRTA buses can be seen with low ridership. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to appoint Ms. Bol to the WRTA Advisory Board. Vote

yes/Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus.

RESIGNATIONS: Steven Nye, Building, Planning & Construction Comm. (Resignation) / Vote to accept. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to accept his letter of resignation and send a letter of thanks. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus.

The meeting resumed back to the posted order.

PUBLIC HEARING / 7:05 PM – Request to transfer the Farmer Series Pouring Permit, non-alcoholic Common Victualler License, and Weekday Entertainment Licenses from Purgatory Beer Company, LLC [Kevin Mulvehill, Mgr.], 670 Linwood Ave., Bldg. C., Whitinsville, MA to Murder Hill LLC [Adrienne Roesch, Mgr.] at the same location. Chairman Collins read aloud the public hearing notice. A motion/Mr. Paulhus, seconded/Mr. Melia to open the public hearing. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus. Mr. Ben Roesch and his wife Ms. Adrienne Roesch were present. Mr. Roesch explained that the name comes from the property near their house because of the crows that reside there. A group of crows is called a murder and the property is all hillside. They had decided when they had their own business the name would be Murder Hill. Selectman Ampagoomian reminded them with their entertainment license to be cognitive of their neighbors. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to close the public hearing. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to approve the transfer of the Farmer Series Pouring Permit, non-alcoholic Common Victualler License, and Weekday Entertainment Licenses from Purgatory Beer Company, LLC [Kevin Mulvehill, Mgr.], 670 Linwood Ave., Bldg. C., Whitinsville, MA to Murder Hill LLC [Adrienne Roesch, Mgr.]. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus.

PUBLIC MEETING: FY 2024 Community Development Block Grant Program: Announcement of CDBG funding opportunities. Community input and public comments are welcome. Present: Wayne Darragh, Community Opportunities Group. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to open the public meeting. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus. Mr. Darragh distributed a handout to attendees. A copy of the handout is attached to these minutes with information about the grant program, eligible activities and progress on the current CDBG grant. Mr. Darragh explained that he is here tonight to begin discussion about the town's next Community Development Block Grant application. He stated that the application is due on March 25, 2024, and there will be another public hearing between now and then. Mr. Darragh pointed out that tonight's meeting is for public outreach and that a mailer was sent out to residents to inform them of the opportunity for public input. He mentioned that they have done some preliminary formulation of the approach they would like to take with this grant application and is considering doing some infrastructure work and some housing rehab work. The Slum and Blight inventories that were completed include certain roads that are considered to be in fair or poor condition and would be eligible for CBDG funds for repairs. In addition, Mr. Darragh noted that they would be looking at Church Avenue as it is a fairly major road and is in poor condition. He indicated that the estimate for the entire length of Church Avenue came in over \$3 million dollars, which makes it impossible to cover the entire cost with the grant alone. The most the town can request in this round is \$950,000 dollars, so in order to complete the entire road, we will need to take a phased approach to it. Doing that would require the designer and the DPW to come up with a breakdown of the project in 3 to 4 phases as well as submitting grant applications each year. DPW Director Jamie Luchini explained that he and the Town Planner, Mr. Bechtholdt felt this was a good approach to taking care of the infrastructure at that location, specifically the water and sewer lines, half of which was put in around 1920 and the other half in the 1950's. It is a major undertaking, but with the grant opportunity they felt it was a good opportunity to upgrade the infrastructure. Mr. Luchini added that fortunately the road substructure is laid out in two sections, which allows them to do the project in phases. Mr. Darragh acknowledged that there are other projects that can be done such as handicapped accessibility and housing rehab. They are flexible with projects but there are certain national objectives that need to be met in order to get funding. Those objectives include assistance to low/moderate

income (LMI) individuals or the prevention or elimination of slums or blight. The roadway project is considered addressing the prevention or elimination of slums or blight because of the condition of the road. Mr. Darragh feels that it would be a very competitive project and they have seen a lot more communities competing for infrastructure funds due to the difficulty of the housing rehab programs. Selectman Paulhus asked about the cost and how the pricing can change over the years and gave the example that pricing goes up the second year and the grant funds are used up with the project not being completed, and asked if this is a concern or a risk. Mr. Darragh replied that it is a concern, especially now that Northbridge is a competitive community and no longer guaranteed funding so every year we are required to go out and apply each year and compete for those funds. He also noted that in the most recent funding round all of the applications were funded, and the State is not getting as many applications as they have in years' past. He also noted that it is not a reason to change the approach. Town Manager Gaudette added that every year the town tries to put money aside for a road project so there may be a time when you need to take that money to be used towards this project if needed. Chairman Collins opened the discussion to any residents that were present. Troy Anderson, resident, asked if the project would have anything to do with housing. Mr. Darragh explained the town can seek funding for multiple activities and noted that the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities had increased the maximum amount a town could receive from \$800K to \$950K. Chairman Collins asked Mr. Darragh's opinion about moving forward with an application that included both housing rehabilitation and Church Avenue. Mr. Darragh responded an application that included a small housing rehabilitation program, say 3 to 4 units, would not only impact the amount of funding available for the reconstruction of Church Avenue but it would also require a bigger administrative budget which would further limit the funding available for Church Avenue. In his opinion, the impact of such a small rehab program was not worth the tradeoff. He suggested the Town consider going all in on Church Avenue with this application in order to complete as much of the project as possible in Phase 1 then consider adding housing rehab to future applications when the costs of future phases may be less. Resident Cynthia Vlasaty requested handicapped parking on Church Street. Chairman Collins informed her that this project is for Church Avenue not Church Street, but her request could be handled by the Safety Committee. Mr. Darragh announced that there is no motion for tonight's meeting, more so for public comment, and the next meeting, February 26, 2024, will be the official public hearing. At that meeting, he will have a more detailed budget and what the application will look like. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to close the public hearing. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS/INPUT/None

Spring Annual Town Meeting [May 7, 2024] / Vote to close the warrant on Friday, March 15, 2024 at 12 Noon. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to close the Spring Annual Town Meeting warrant on Friday, March 15, 2024 and 12 Noon. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus.

Annual Town Election [May 21, 2024] / Vote to give notice to the Town Clerk to place vacancies from elected boards on the Town Election Warrant. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to give notice to the Town Clerk to place vacancies from elected boards on the Town Election Warrant. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus.

Conservation Commission Fund / Vote to accept monetary donation in the amount of \$50 from Dennis and Barbara McNamee. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to accept the monetary donation in the amount of \$50 for the Conservation Commission from Dennis and Barbara McNamee. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus.

Safety Committee Minutes [September 20, 2023] / Vote to accept the recommendations. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to accept the recommendations of the Safety Committee as outlined in the minutes of September 20, 2023. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus.

Pine Grove Cemetery Deed (Timothy and Jacquelyn Heffernan, Lot 66 Fir Ave South, double burial lot)/Vote to approve the sale. A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Melia to approve the sale of Lot 66 Fir Ave. South to Timothy and Jacquelyn Heffernan. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT/None

SELECTMEN'S CONCERNS: Selectman Ampagoomian asked if the tree trimming that was completed on Mendon Road is National Grid work or town. DPW Director Jamie Luchini replied that it is National Grid and noted that they have been doing a lot of work getting a lot of trees and trimming taken care of.

ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA: Proposal for the Northbridge Elementary School Project. Town Manager Gaudette noted that proposals were due last week and they will be scheduling an interview with the proposer on February 26th.

CORRESPONDENCE/None

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Under MGL Chapter 30A, section 21(a)(3) for the following purpose: To discuss strategy with respect to litigation, Whitinsville Water Company rate increase petition to the Department of Public Utilities, DPU no. 23-64.

Chairman Collins announced that the next meeting is scheduled for February 12, 2024.

A motion/Mr. Ampagoomian, seconded/Mr. Paulhus to adjourn the public meeting. Vote yes/Ampagoomian, Collins, Melia and Paulhus.

Meeting Adjourned: 8:03 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Begin, Clerk

/mjc

LIST OF DOCUMENTATION

BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING - OPEN SESSION

January 22, 2024

EXECUTIVE SESSION - 6:30 PM

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Senator Ryan Fattman and Representative David Muradian/1) STATE BUDGET UPDATE and 2) Discussion about banning the sale of nips (mini liquor bottles)

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. 1) August 14, 2023

-Copy of August 14, 2023 minutes

2) September 11, 2023

-Copy of September 11, 2023 minutes

II. PUBLIC HEARING / 7:05 PM – B. Request to transfer the Farmer Series Pouring Permit, non-alcoholic Common Victualler License, and Weekday Entertainment Licenses from Purgatory Beer Company, LLC [Kevin Mulvehill, Mgr.], 670 Linwood Ave., Bldg. C., Whitinsville, MA to Murder Hill LLC [Adrienne Roesch, Mgr.] at the same location.

-Copy of receipt for payment of license

-Copy of application for Transfer of License

-Copy of Certificate of good standing

-Copy of Certificate of Compliance

-Copy of Corporate vote

-Copy of Articles of Organization

-Copy of Lease agreement

-Copy of Guaranty of Lease agreement

-Copy of layout

-Copy of public hearing notice

-Copy of Purchase and Sale Agreement

-Copy of Revenue Enforcement and Protection Attestation

-Copy of Workers' Compensation Affidavit

-Copy of Certificate of Liability Insurance

-Copy of Tips certifications

-Copy of Common Victualler application

-Copy of entertainment application

PUBLIC MEETING:

C. FY 2024 Community Development Block Grant Program: Announcement of CDBG funding opportunities. Community input and public comments are welcome. Present: Wayne Darragh, Community Opportunities Group

-Copy of CDBG Funding Opportunity presentation

-Copy of Construction cost estimate

III. APPOINTMENTS/By the Board of Selectmen:

D. 1) Conservation Commission - Marcella Regal / Vote to appoint - Present: David Pickart,

Conservation Agent

- Copy of memorandum of new member appointment
- Copy of Talen Bank form for Marcella Regal

2) WRTA Advisory Board - Kelly Bol, Senior Center Director / Vote to appoint/No documentation

RESIGNATIONS: E. Steven Nye, Building, Planning & Construction Comm. (Resignation) / Vote to accept
-Copy of letter of resignation

IV. CITIZENS' COMMENTS/INPUT

V. DECISIONS

F. Spring Annual Town Meeting [May 7, 2024] / 1) Vote to close the warrant on Friday, March 15, 2024 at 12 Noon/No documentation

G. Annual Town Election [May 21, 2024] / Vote to give notice to the Town Clerk to place vacancies from elected boards on the Town Election Warrant
-Copy of memo with vacancies to be placed on the ballot

H. Conservation Commission Fund / Vote to accept monetary donation in the amount of \$50 from Dennis and Barbara McNamee
-Copy of memo for donations

I. Safety Committee Minutes [September 20, 2023] / Vote to accept the recommendations
-Copy of Safety Committee minutes from September 20, 2023

J. Pine Grove Cemetery Deed: Timothy and Jacquelyn Heffernan (66 Fir Ave South, double burial lot)/Vote to approve the sale
-Copy of Pine Grove Cemetery deed

VI. DISCUSSIONS/None

VII. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT/None

VIII. SELECTMEN'S CONCERNS/No documentation

IX. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA/No documentation

X. CORRESPONDENCE/None

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION: K. Under MGL Chapter 30A, section 21(a)(3) for the following purpose: To discuss strategy with respect to litigation, Whitinsville Water Company rate increase petition to the Department of Public Utilities, DPU no. 23-64/Documentation not released until approved by Town Counsel