

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT BOS MEETING

TOWN OF WESTBROOK, CONNECTICUT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, January 24, 2019
Multi-Media Room
Mulvey Municipal Center

CALL TO ORDER

First Selectman Bishop called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. In attendance included First Selectman Bishop, Selectman Hall, Selectwoman Labbadia, John Riggio, Director of Public Works, Marilyn Ozols, Chairman Planning, Heidi Wallace, Inland Wetland Official, Kim Bratz, Tax Collector, Kim Riggio, Administrative Assistant, Sonia Marino, Director of Health, David Maiden, Building Official, Paul Connelly, BOF Chairman, Tony Cozza, BOF, Joel Maynard, Attorney Wells, Town Counselor, Rich Annino, Director of Park & Rec., Carol Hess, Assistant Finance Director, Donna Castracane, Director of Finance, Tony Marino, Zoning Chairman, Tom Eliot, Land Trust, Ken Butterworth, IT, Joan Angelini, Town Clerk and Chris Ehlert, Energy Chairman.

Mr. Bishop made a motion to add to the agenda a status report on the Connectivity Grant and the Open Space Grant application. Mr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

REPORT FROM INTERVIEWS WITH LAND USE STAFF

To address concerns in the Land Use Office, First Selectman Bishop and Attorney Wells conducted interviews of all Land Use staff. Attorney Wells was present during staff interviews, not in his official capacity as Town Attorney, but because of his history with the Town and familiarity with Land Use Departments in Westbrook and other municipalities and thus ensure objectivity. Staff members were encouraged to be candid during said interviews.

Mr. Bishop, prior to staff interviews, initiated a meeting with all Land Use staff with Attorney Jiran informing them of the interviews and further encouraging staff to come prepared to be candid about issues and; most importantly, to make recommendations for any perceived improvements.

Attorney Wells commented on common themes reported by Land Use staff including turn-over rate, unresolved issues, the lack of training, the lack of lines of responsibility, non-uniform use of the Municipality software program and on-going issues with customer/front desk service and telephone protocols. Much of the discord between individuals appears to be a product of the on-going unresolved issues.

Attorney Wells recommended that Westbrook hire a full-time Administrative Assistant for the Land Use department; comparable in standing to the full-time Administrative Assistant in the Building/Health Department. Their dual duties would include the development of training protocols for all Administrative Assistants in the Land Use Department, the coordination of all activities in the office, the scheduling of weekly staff meetings, the development of front counter protocols in order to provide customer service to Westbrook taxpayers.

Attorney Wells further recommended an evaluation assessing the need a new part-time Asst. ZEO position including Planning, ZBA, and grant writing duties. All new job descriptions would be reviewed by the Union and Attorney Jiran, Labor Counselor. As previously discussed, Administrative Assistants are hired by the BOS and the Asst. ZEO is hired by the Zoning Commission.

Ms. Ozols, Chairman Planning Commission and Mr. Marino, Chairman Zoning Commission requested that they also be consulted when determining the staffing needs of the Land Use Department.

DISCUSSION ON STAFFING IN LAND USE

Mr. Knapp reported that the Land Use office (Zoning, Planning and Inland Wetland) is understaffed. He stressed the need for a full-time Assistant ZEO and a part-time Land Use Tech. with appropriate knowledge to assist him with statutory requirements and deadlines rather than a full-time Administrative Assistant.

The BOS briefly discussed the difficulties in finding an Asst. ZEO candidate with the necessary training and expertise. Mr. Knapp was willing to send an individual for training as necessary.

Mr. Marino reported that grant writing and administration is a different skill set than that of an Asst. ZEO.

Mr. Ehlert, Chairman Energy Committee, suggested that a Committee be formed to identify and address the on-going issues in the Land Use Department. He volunteered to Chair such a committee. Mr. Bishop responded that the issues in Land Use have been identified and are being addressed and there is no need for a Committee.

Mr. Hall emphasized the importance of teamwork and the need for consistent supervision in the Land Use Department. He reported that as previously clarified by Attorney Jiran; the First Selectman has the authority to administer the day to day operations in the Land Use Department. Chairman Ozols and Chairman Marino agreed that the day to day supervision of the Land Use staff is the responsibility of the First Selectman. The Chairs supported weekly staff meetings lead by the First Selectman.

Mr. Bishop will schedule weekly (mandatory) Land Use staff meetings and report to the BOS at the 2/12/19 BOS meeting.

Mr. Knapp, in collaboration with the Land Use Chairmen, will develop a revised job description for an Asst. ZEO to include ZBA responsibilities, administrative responsibilities and counter responsibilities. Any changes to the job description must be approved by the Union.

The BOS agreed that if a full-time Asst. ZEO is hired, they could not support an additional full-time Administrative Assistant and/or full-time Land Use Tech but may support a part-time Administrative Asst. and/or Land Use Tech.

The revised Asst. ZEO job description and potential financial implications of same will be discussed further by the BOS at the 2/12/19 Regular BOS meeting. The BOF will be consulted regarding funding for positions. The BOS will determine the appropriate time to post the position(s).

UPDATE AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON SALE OF TAX LIENS – 88 Pond Meadow Road

Attorney Wells provided an update on the process for the assignment of municipal tax liens. At the 11/8/18 Town Meeting, the Town approved an Ordinance relative to the “Assignment of Municipal Tax Liens”. If recommended by the Tax Collector, approved by the BOS and BOF, any assignment of tax liens must also be approved at a Town Meeting.

Attorney Wells updated the BOS on an offer to purchase the Municipal Tax Liens on the 88 Pond Meadow Road property. Pond Meadow Road, LLC has offered \$65,161.53 to purchase the liens. Ms. Bratz, Tax Collector, reported that the figure offered is the amount owed by the current owner of the property, including interest.

Ms. Bratz, Tax Collector, per the Westbrook Code of Ordinances, has recommended that the BOS and BOF assign said liens to the third party in return for payment as outlined above by Attorney Wells.

Any future project at the property must go through the appropriate Zoning and Land Use protocols. Ms. Marino, Director of Health, reported that there is currently an active order at the property due to the mosquito breeding ground as a result of the many tires located on the property.

Mr. Maynard suggested that the property be placed for tax sale. Ms. Bratz clarified that the BOS is considering an assignment of tax liens, not a public auction for the property.

Mr. Hall made a motion to table discussion on the sale of tax liens at 88 Pond Meadow Road. Mr. Bishop seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION ON BOUNDARY AGREEMENT

The BOS, per statute, referred to the Westbrook Planning Commission for their consideration, a boundary line agreement relative to Tract 46, Meadow Point Road/Big Creek, Lot Line Adjustment. The Planning Commission, at their 1/14/19 meeting, reviewed the materials and found the lot-line adjustment consistent with the Westbrook Plan of Conservation and Development. Tom Elliott, Land Trust, provided additional background information to the BOS. All documentation has also been reviewed by Attorney Wells.

Mr. Bishop made a motion to approve the lot-line adjustment as presented and forward to a Town Meeting for further action. Mr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

AWARD OF FIELDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

As previously reported, the Town recently went out to bid for field maintenance for both the school and Town properties. The 2 bids received were opened on 12/17/18. Mr. Riggio, Director of Public Works, reviewed the bids received from Tower Landscaping and Diamond Landscaping. He recommends that Diamond Landscaping be awarded the contract (the “season” runs from March to December). Mr. Riggio has completed reference checks on Diamond Landscaping. The figures offered by Diamond Landscaping match Greenscapes’ (the prior contractor) pricing. Mr. Riggio reported that Diamond Landscaping is confident in the figures included in their bid.

Mr. Hall made a motion to approve the Fields Maintenance Contract with Diamond Landscaping in the amount of \$162,500 per year and to authorize First Selectman Bishop to sign same. Ms. Labbadia seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

STATUS OF CONNECTIVITY GRANT

Mr. Hall made a motion to accept the “Letter of Commitment” relative to the Connectivity Grant in the amount of \$200,000, forward to the BOF and Town Meeting for further action and authorize First Selectman Bishop to sign all appropriate documents. Ms. Labbadia seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

ACCEPTANCE OF DTC CONTRACT – Engineering - Connectivity Grant

A copy of the draft DTC contract relative to the engineering work associated with the Connectivity Grant was included in the BOS packet. The draft contract has been reviewed by Attorney Wells.

Mr. Knapp, Planning, Zoning and Development Coordinator, reported that the BOF has approved the \$25,000 for this work through the Capital Budget process.

Mr. Hall made a motion to authorize First Selectman Bishop to sign contract with DTC contingent upon the Town Meeting’s acceptance of the Connectivity Grant and Attorney Wells’ review of the final contract. Ms. Labbadia seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

STATUS OF OPEN SPACE GRANT APPLICATION – Toby Hill Phase 8

Ms. Wallace, Inland Wetland Official, updated the BOS on the status of the Open Space Grant application relative to the Toby Hill Phase 8 property. The grant application calls for a signed contract between the Town and the property owner. The grant application is due on 2/7/19.

Attorney Wells developed the contract and reported that the contract is subject to the receipt of the Open Space Grant and approval by all appropriate boards and a Town Meeting.

Mr. Hall made a motion to authorize the First Selectman to sign the contract as presented. Ms. Labbadia seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

SET DATE FOR TOWN MEETING

Mr. Bishop made a motion to schedule a Town Meeting on 2/12/19 @ 7:00 p.m. Mr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

APPOINTMENT/REAPPOINTMENTS/RESIGNATIONS

Mr. Bishop made a motion to re-appoint Sid Holbrook to a 3 year term on the WPCC. Mr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hall made a motion to re-appoint Scott Brainard to a 3 year term on the WPCC. Ms. Labbadia seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bishop made a motion to re-appoint Sonia Marino as the Town of Westbrook Director of Health for a 4 year term beginning January 6, 2019. Mr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

APPROPRIATIONS/CONTINGENCY TRANSFERS

Mr. Bishop reported that Mr. Knapp, Planning, Zoning and Development Coordinator, was assigned additional responsibilities in November 2018. Given these additional responsibilities it was recommended that Mr. Knapp’s salary be increased to \$72,000 per year (his current salary is \$70,000), retroactive to 11/26/18.

Mr. Bishop made a motion to increase the salary of Mr. Knapp, Planning, Zoning and Development Coordinator, to \$72,000 per year, retroactive to 11/26/18 and to forward the recommendation to the BOF for further action. Mr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Riggio reported that a used, 2013-14 mini excavator has become available for purchase. The Public Works Department currently rents this machine regularly to accommodate the needs of the department. The used machine has been tested and is in excellent condition.

Mr. Bishop made a motion to approve the purchase of the mini excavator in the amount of \$44,000 as presented and forward to the BOF and Town Meeting for further action. Mr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hall made a motion to forward to the Town Meeting funding in the amount of \$369,000 from the Fund Balance for the Lynn Road Bridge project. Ms. Labbadia seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

UPDATE FROM ENERGY COMMITTEE

Mr. Ehlert, Energy Chairman, reported:

- Bill Fish is finalizing the order of the LED streetlights (the order was delayed due to the contractor). It is anticipated that installation will begin in March.
 - Mr. Riggio reported that Public Works has been receiving calls regarding streetlights that are out. The delay in the project has had an effect on funding available to address the calls received in the Public Works Department. Mr. Ehlert directed Mr. Riggio to address the streetlights that he has received calls on to date.
- The Virtual Net Metering documents have been signed by the First Selectman. The next step is the development of the PPA (Power Purchase Agreement) with the developer of the solar array.
- There is a need for coordination of energy projects relative to the School Building Committee.
- Mr. Fish is discussing with PURA the mechanism for payments to Westbrook from Eversource for the use of power on town owned cobra head fixtures.

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED FY 19/20 OPERATING BUDGET

Budget binders were distributed to the BOS by Ms. Castracane, Director of Finance.

The first BOS budget workshop meeting is scheduled 1/29/19.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Hall made a motion to approve the minutes from the 1/8/19 BOS meeting. Mr. Bishop seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

FIRST SELETMANS REPORT

At the 1/23/19 RiverCOG meeting, area First Selectmen met with Legislators at the Capitol. The Selectmen discussed various items with Legislators including teacher pensions and unfunded mandates. Mr. Bishop is currently an officer (Treasurer) of RiverCOG.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hall made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m. Mr. Bishop seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski
Administrative Assistant

Attest,

Noel Bishop
First Selectman