

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES

AUGUST 21, 2023, AT 6:00PM

LEICESTER TOWN HALL, LEICESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01524

Chair Rick Antanavica, Vice Chair Dianna Provencher, Selectman John Bujak, Selectman Kevin Menard, Town Administrator David Genereux, and Assistant Town Administrator Justine Caggiano were in attendance. Chairman Antanavica opened the meeting at 6:03 PM.

ATTENDANCE:

Chair Rick Antanavica	Present
Vice Chair Dianna Provencher	Present
Kevin Menard	Present
John Bujak	Present

ADMINISTRATORS:

David Genereux, Town Administrator	Present
Justine Caggiano, ATA	Present

082123-1 - Change of Manager, Leicester Country Club – Chuck Bois

Mr. Genereux informed the Board that the application was in the packet and was in order. Mr. Bois informed the Board that his family had been part owners of the Club for the past 12 years, and he was looking to take over the management duties of the club. The Club would be open for the next couple of months, and then close until April. Ms. Provencher asked what the hours would be when the Club reopened. Mr. Bois stated that they hours would be the same as they are currently, as business tails off in November and is slow at the start of the season in April. Mr. Antanavica asked about opening the hall back up for functions. Mr. Bois replied that there still wasn't much demand, and looking at the overhead, they were going to stick with golf for awhile. Ms. Provencher made the motion to approve the change of manager. Seconded by Mr. Bujak, the motion carried 4-0-0.

082123-6 – Public Comment Period

Mr. Antanavica asked if the ARPA Grant Review Committee was on the agenda. Mr. Genereux replied that they were not, and any discussion could fall under Public Comment. With that, Mr. Antanavica moved the item on the agenda.

Paul Fontaine and Cheryl Cooney of the ARPA Grant Review Committee addressed the Board. Mr. Fontaine thanked the Board for assembling the Committee and informed them that they had assembled a list of grant receipts. They wanted to get the recommendations into the Board's hands as soon as possible so that the review of the recipients by the Board could begin. Mr. Fontaine passed out packages with the SRPA Grant Review Committee's recommendations to the Mr. Genereux. Members of the Board then thanked the Committee for its work.

Mr. Fontaine addressed the Board on other topics. He passed out pictures of the entrance coming into Town that had been redone by Everlast Nursery. A second picture showed that the Route 56 entrance

to Town needs works, so Mr. Fontaine has reached out to the Transfer Station that operates there. The third picture was of the new sign on the Common that was carved by Linda Colby. Mr. Fontaine thanked Mr. Bujak for providing the flowers for the Common sign.

082123-1b Changes to the Table of Uses regarding the Central Business District (Zoning Bylaws)

Mr. Antanavica passed out copies of the current zoning bylaws. Mr. Antanavica stated that there is a lot of talk of the Town not being business friendly, and that business need a special permit just to locate here. Mr. Antanavica stated that he would like to hear from Chair and Vice Chair of the Planning Board to hear if there could be some recommendations to make changes at Fall Town Meeting. Jim Reinke, Vice Chair of the Planning Board stepped to the podium to ask what changes the Board had in mind. Mr. Genereux stated locations in the central business, and potentially the general business district, largely require a special permit from the Planning Board. Mr. Genereux asked about the thought process with the Central Business and General Business zoning, as the Planning Board has been working with the Table of Uses for many years. He stated that despite the Town has worked extensively with incoming businesses, there is still the perception that the Town is interfering with business all over social media.

Mr. Reinke stated that the bylaws before his time, but most bylaws come to fruition because many folks see a reason for oversight. The Central Business District runs through Route 56 and Route 9. Least restrictive setbacks out of entire town. He stated that it a challenge to improve the Central Business District, because it exists on a four-lane highway. There are issues with speed and traffic lights. Based on the traffic, there is no reason to stop in Leicester.

Mr. Reinke passed out maps of Spencer, East Brookfield, and Ware, noting that all of Route 9 in those times allowed for on street parking, and with turning lanes, slowed traffic down. This would be a major hurdle. Special permits provide for oversight and deliberation for safety concerns. Safety is first, and then there is the best concerns for the town. Other opportunities to grow businesses.

Mr. Reinke passed out a map of the Leicester Drive in. He stated that the design of a combination of residential units and retail would be beneficial. He compared a potential development there to Shrewsbury Edgemere crossing in Shrewsbury, noting that the parcel is currently not zoned for the residential component. Providing affordable housing would also help with the MBTA zoning issue. He stated changes to the Central Business District would not affect revenue. Real growth- tax revenue makes big stuff happen. The challenge is to pull away from special permitting process.

Mr. Reinke stated that homes are not a growth pattern, as they bring costs to the Town, while businesses stand alone. He would like to see a gas station on Route 56/Stafford Street for a large-scale gas station to service the trucks in businesses on Route 56.

Mr. Antanavica stated that there is so much on social media beating up on all of us. All come together and get it going. The auction for the Victorians is on the 20th—small shops on first floor. How are we going to do that? Mr. Reinke stated the biggest challenge is parking. Municipal and street parking would be needed on Old Main Street. Mr. Reinke stated that we need to drill down on the growth potential of Route 9 West.

Mr. Bujak stated that he moved into Leicester early 2000's. The gas station and the Burger King is the first step since Walmart. The current locations for trucks to gas up is Worcester or Sturbridge. He stated that this calls for changes to the Strategic plan. He stressed that we need safety, economic development and appearance. This isn't going to change overnight. Mr. Bujak asked who was left on economic development. Mr. Genereux explained that there are not currently many members on the group, because of the challenges they face. If they cannot recruit or work with a business, the meetings become repetitive with no goal to be realized.

Mr. Reinke stated that there had been a lot of talent on the Committee in the past. Membership of the Selectboard would be great to keep things moving and having direction. The group worked on a flyer for the past five years, because there was no direction. The Walmart parcel has not developed because they have no competition. The more that grows on Route 9, the better the growth will be. Mr. Menard stated that we talked about this a year ago and would be happy to sit on that. Josh, the Planning Board Chair stated that he would be happy to serve as well.

Mr. Genereux stated that there should be short term goals and long-term goals. Rezoning for drive in could be done in short time, but further work would require MassDOT, which is not a short-term process. Mr. Reinke stated that it needed to be driven forward and have membership of the Board.

Ms. Provencher stated that MassDOT for Route 9 would be hard. The best time to do something with the drive in. don't just wait on something do something. Nothing has changed in 18 years. No one wants anything in their back yard. don't grow this town the town will die.

Mr. Reinke stated that the Planning Board works to come to a common ground, usually by having the business provide a fence or vegetation barrier. Can't be stagnant. Mr. Antanavica stated that we would discuss how to set it up at next meeting. Justine should be a part of it too.

Joshua Campbell, Chair of the Planning Board, stated trifold brochures need professional support, and there is currently no funding for the Economic Development Committee. We need to leverage with realtors who are already selling those properties, because we lack the ability to present professional brochures. It would be an investment with a big return. Mr. Bujack stated that he had worked with big box retailers as to who we could be more enticing for them to be there. He cited Amazon in Charlton as an example of investment made within the community.

Bill Robert, a resident, stated that there are areas that the town should open eyes to, such Route 56 north and the Old Leicester airport. He stated the land under runway on Route 56 for sale, which could be commercial development. Old mills on Stafford street. A condemned home near the center of Town has a vacant lot next to it. The center of Spencer CVS is bringing people there. He stated that we need to reconfigure Main Street.

Peter Cusulato stated that the Town should tap in to Mass Econ resources to talk to businesses, and help communities develop and advertise properties. He stated that public/private partnerships are part of mainstream development. He also stated that he believes the design of Route 9 was approved by the Town through MassDOT. He suggested that the Town move forward with MassDOT as soon as possible, because it will take years to get the road changed.

082123-2a - Petrini & Associates – Town Counsel

Mr. Genereux introduced Chris Petrini, of Petrini and Associates, explaining that his firm was hired by the Town five years ago on the recommendation of Joe Cove, who was the Town's previous Town Counsel upon Attorney Cove's retirement. Mr. Petrini stated that he dealt with the Fire Station construction issue when he started, back in 2018, and obtained a good settlement in that matter. He stated that he felt that he had a good relationship with the Board, the Town Administrator and the Department Heads. He stated that although the appointment was up on June 30th, the firm remained in place until they were either renewed or replaced, and he stated his desire to continue working for the Town. Mr. Antanavica stated that the firm has been responsive with a couple of glitches, that have since been straightened out. Ms. Provencher made the motion to renew the appointment for another year. Seconded by Mr. Bujak, the motion carried 4-0-0.

082123-2b Appointment – Bryan Webb – Full Time (40 Hours per week) Paramedic

Mr. Genereux stated that Mr. Webb had declined the position, so no vote was necessary.

082123-2c Appointment - Brittany Sheroff, Per-Diem Paramedic

Mr. Genereux introduced Ms. Sheroff. She addressed the Board, stating that she is new to the area. She recently bought a house in Spencer. She stated that her boyfriend works at Rutland Fire and she has a passion for helping people. She concluded by saying that she is excited to be part of Leicester EMS crew. A motion was made by Ms. Provencher to appoint Ms. Sheroff to Leicester EMS as a per diem paramedic. Seconded by Mr. Menard, the motion passed 4-0-0.

082123-2d Appointment - Taylor Fiege, Per-Diem Advanced EMT

Mr. Genereux stated that as Mr. Fiege was not in attendance, his appointment would be moved to the next meeting.

082123-2e Reappointment – Dwayne Amos - Alternate Building Inspector

Mr. Genereux explained that this appointment was to cover the Building Inspections Department when the Building Inspector was on Vacation. Mr. Bujak asked if this was a paid position. Mr. Genereux stated that he is paid by the inspection. A motion was made by Ms. Provencher to appoint Mr. Amos as Alternate Building Inspector. Seconded by Mr. Menard, the motion passed 4-0-0.

082123-2f Resignation – Linda Berisha – Town Assessor

Mr. Genereux explained that Ms. Berisha had resigned her position, with her last day being September 11th. She is moving to another position east of Worcester. A motion was made by Ms. Provencher to accept Ms. Berisha's resignation. Seconded by Mr. Menard, the motion passed 4-0-0.

082123-2g Appointment – Josh Senior – Truck Driver/Laborer

Mr. Genereux stated that DPW interviews were held with a number of candidates and recommended that Mr. Senior be hired for the position. Mr. Senior addressed the Board, stating that he liked the commute and the position. Mr. Bujak asked Mr. Genereux if Mr. Senior's position as a member of Parks and Rec would affect his ability to hold the position. Mr. Genereux stated there was no issue. Mr. Antanavica asked if he had his CDL. Mr. Senior replied that he did not have one currently, but that he would obtain it in 6 months. He also stated that he would be willing to obtain his hoisting license as well. A motion was made by Ms. Provencher to appoint Mr. Senior as a Truck Driver/Laborer for the DPW, pending passing his license and physical. Seconded by Mr. Menard, the motion passed 4-0-0.

082123-5a Town Administrator's Report

Mr. Genereux gave the report, which included reporting on purchasing the new ambulance, interest in permitting software, bids for which are due on August 31st. Further discussion involved a shipping container being converted to a residence, and a noise complaint regarding a fan at Vangarden. He stated there was also a hydrant issue on Marshall Street. Mr. Bujak asked about the status of hydrant repairs. Mr. Genereux stated he would report on that at the next meeting. Mr. Genereux described the FY25 budget process at a department head meeting. He stated that we have advertised for a Principal Assessor, an administrative assistant to the Planning Department, and an EMS Director. Mr. Genereux stated that Ms. Caggiano was meeting with department heads to assess needs. Mr. Genereux stated that three candidates for Planner were interviewed, with one to be discussed later. Mr. Genereux also discussed a meeting with Representative McGovern regarding the shelters, with the hope that we could get grant money for parking lots and playground equipment. Mr. Bujak stated that he would like to have further discussions regarding the EMS Director position. He believes with a vacancy requires additional deliberation going forward.

Regarding Town buildings, Mr. Genereux stated the first floor of Borger was going to be open, with the only item remaining being the railings on one side, as required by the Building Inspector. Mr. Genereux further stated that the Victorians are virtually empty. Mr. Bujak asked for further information as to where the Victorian properties were being advertised. Mr. Genereux reported that Barrett Hall was open and in use, and that the kitchens were going into Hampshire and Berkshire, and that the first lease payment had been received for \$125,000. Mr. Bujak asked for the budget for the \$150,000 in capital upgrades. Up to this point, Mr. Genereux reported that there was a balance of \$114, 152.50 available. Mr. Genereux explained that the highest cost was plumbing and electrical. At this point, he said, there was a lot of room, but we have to get occupancy. Mr. Genereux stated that he would send the Board the costs spreadsheet.

Mr. Menard asked if there were any quotes from Automated Logic regarding the heating systems in the Campus Center. Mr. Genereux stated he would check with Kris Lauzon. Mr. Menard stated that he would like to be involved with the systems, as he knows how they operate.

Mr. Genereux reported that the Police Canopy bid is just about ready to be put out to bid, with a closing date of September 21st. The Memorial School RFP is under review and will be out shortly. Mr. Genereux confirmed that Leicester Housing Authority is not interested in it. Mr. Genereux stated that Head Start is interested in leasing a portion of Winslow Ave for a program for children at a cost of \$35,000 plus utility costs. There would also be a benefit for Head Start working IEPs on incoming students, which would be a benefit to the schools. Anticipated move in date would be October 1.

Mr. Genereux detailed the grants applied for in the Economic Development/Grant Report, including grants through Walmart, a police drone report, a fire utility vehicle, and others. He stated that we also received grant funding for culvert replacement and improvements to Bark Park. We are working on a tool lending program, and ADA self-evaluation, and the online permitting grant. Mr. Bujak requested that Sam provide the grant spreadsheet.

082123-5d Board Reports

Ms. Provencher reported that she was receiving reports of trees leaning on power lines, due to saturated tree roots. She stated that she understands peoples concerns, but she is not the Tree Warden. She advised residents to look at the trees themselves and offer guidance on what to look for. Mr. Antanavica stated that a member of DPW was going to class for Tree Warden. Mr. Bujak asked about the increase in state aid. He about segregating those funds. Mr. Genereux explained that the additional aid would be used to offset tax increases when the budget is finalized. Mr. Bujak also requested a discussion regarding a special election for the current vacant Select Board seat. Mr. Antanavica stated that it would be on next week's agenda. Mr. Antanavica offered thanks to the DPW Director, Town Administrator and the Building Inspector for working to get the first floor of Borger open.

082123-6 Public Comment Period (2)

Mr. Antanavica allowed a second public comment period. Peter Cusolito spoke about the July 17 Board meeting which disbanded the Former Becker Advisory Committee (FBAC). He stated that he did not agree with the action, though it was Board the prerogative of the Board to do. He stated that he found the comments made to be blatantly false and defamatory. He stated that the Board member stated that it was time for the Board to take back the project, and that FBAC had slowed the process down, and didn't keep the Board informed. Mr. Cusolito stated that there were a number of projects that were coordinated to be done at the same time, which cost the Town money because they were not properly coordinated. He further stated that the RFQ for design services got few responses because of the five-month timeline to do the services as proposed made it impossible. He stated that if the RFQ had been released last summer they would have had more time to assess it. He further stated FBAC had noting to do with the sale of the colonials. He said for someone to stand up and blame an ad hoc committee for their failure to lead is a disgrace and they need to be called out on it, whether they are still here or not. It was a disgrace to the committee and a disgrace to the Town.

Bill Robert requested a status of the hot box. Mr. Genereux stated it had been ordered. Mr. Genereux explained that since COVID, supply chains have been disrupted. Mr. Antanavica stated that there are ambulances sitting idle while parts are on order. Mr. Robert also was concerned about the growth on the roads.

08212023-7 Civic Announcements

Mr. Antanavica made the following civic announcements:

- a. Concerts on the Common - August 23 – The Otters (Rock n Roll)
- b. WooSox Leicester Take-Over – August 31st at Polar Park
- c. Townwide Yard Sale (Leicester Tree Lighting Committee)
- d. Public Safety Night – September 19, 2023 (4:00 – 7:00 PM)

Mr. Genereux also stated there would be a second open house at CMHA on August 31st.

08212023-8a Donation

Mr. Antanavica announced a \$500 Donation from Ruth Kaminski to the K9 donation account. A motion was made by Mr. Bujak to accept the donation. Seconded by Ms. Provencher, the motion passed 4-0-0.

08212023-8b Harvest Fair Food Judge – Select Board Member

Mr. Bujak volunteered to be the Harvest Fair Food Judge.

082223-03 EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 8:07, Mr. Bujak motioned that the Board enter into Executive Session to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel; pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21(a)(2) – Town Planner; to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel; pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21(a)(2) and M.G.L. c. 30A, §21(a)(3)– ARPA funding for first responders –Police, Fire, and EMS and other personnel; to consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21(a)(6) if the chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body – 77 S Main Street, stating the Board would reconvenes in open session at the conclusion of the session. Seconded by Ms. Provencher, the Board voted by roll call 4-0-0.

At 9:40, the Board reconvened in open session.

082123-04a Contract Vote and Appointment - Kristen Jacobsen - Town Planner

Mr. Genereux introduced Ms. Jacobson to the Board. Ms. Jacobson stated that she had experience working in the Ware Planning Department and was looking forward to working for the Town of Leicester. A motion was made by Ms. Provencher to accept Ms. Jacobson's contract and appoint her as Town Planner. Seconded by Mr. Menard, the motion passed 4-0-0.

At 9:45, Ms. Provencher made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Mr. Bujak, the motion carried 4-0-0.

