

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 20, 2024 AT 6:00PM
LEICESTER TOWN HALL, LEICESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01524

Chair Rick Antanavica, Vice Chair Dianna Provencher, Selectman Kevin Menard, Selectman John Bujak, Town Administrator David Genereux, and Grants Manager, Samantha Chatterton were in attendance.

ATTENDANCE:

Chair Rick Antanavica Present

Vice Chair Dianna Provencher Present

Kevin Menard Present

John Bujak Present

ADMINISTRATORS:

David Genereux, Town Administrator

CALL TO ORDER

Select Board Chair Antanavica opened the meeting at 6:00 PM and read the veterans prayer.

CALL TO ORDER/OPENING
VETERANS POEM

Mr. Antanavica recited the Veteran's Prayer.

1. SCHEDULED ITEMS

a. 6:05 Valley Gas – Set hours for alcohol sales

Mr. Genereux clarified the hours for liquor sales had not been listed in the paperwork for the initial application.

Ms. Laura Bitar stated the liquor sales will be from 8 AM until 9 PM, if they closed earlier that would be the exception. She stated her business was Vallet Mart, 200 Main St., Cherry Valley.

Mr. Bujak made a motion to set the hours for liquor for Valley Mart from 8 AM to 9 PM Monday through Saturday. Seconded by Ms. Provencher. Motion passes 5-0

Mr. Bujak amended his motion to state it would include all alcohol sales. Seconded by Ms. Provencher. Motion passes 5-0

b. 6:10 Appointments

Mr. Genereux stated Mr. Dupuis and Ms. Dube would be introducing the candidates to the board.

- i) **Kaitlyn Gilman, EMT Basic** - Ms. Dube stated Ms. Gilman had a strong interest in the department and would be a good fit on the existing team.
- ii) **Ethan Santiago, EMT Paramedic**- Ms. Dube stated he was away on shift at Providence Fire and could not make the meeting.
- iii) **Paul Rekos, Paramedic** –Ms. Dube stated he was away with family and could not attend the appointment.

Ms. Provencher made a motion to approve Ms. Gilman. Seconded by Mr. Menard. Motion passes 5-0-0.

Mr. Antanavica stated they could appoint Mr. Santiago and Mr. Rekos during the meeting. Motion to approve both made by Mr. Bujak. Seconded by Ms. Provencher. Motion passes (5-0-0)

- iv) Benjamin Cohen, Fire

Mr. Dupuis stated Mr. Cohen was not present at the meeting as he was covering a shift. Mr. Dupuis requested to appoint him this evening and do a pinning ceremony at a later time.

Mr. Bujak asked about the program and graduation and the exposure to the town if appointments were made without the candidate present.

Mr. Dupuis stated previously the candidates did not have to go through the board.

Mr. Genereux stated the onboarding process in the office remains the same and the appointments would still go in front of the board.

Mr. Bujak clarified they would still appoint at the meeting and the candidates would not have to be present at the podium.

Mr. Dupuis stated he was only looking to make the process more efficient.

Mr. Bujak made a motion to approve Benjamin Cohen to the Fire Department. Seconded by Ms. Provencher. Motion passes 5-0-0.

Ms. Provencher asked how to word the motion to change the process in recruiting on-call firefighters. **She made a motion to change the process to bring them in front of the board after the recruit completes the academy and to present in front of the board for a pinning ceremony. Seconded by Mr. Bujak. Motion passes 5-0-0.**

- v) Bark Park: Britnie Cournoyer

Mr. Genereux stated he reached out to Ms. Cournoyer but had not heard back from her. **Passed over.**

2. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Mr. David LeBeouf introduced himself as a state representative for the 17th Worcester District, precincts 2 and 4 for Leicester. He thanked the Select Board and town staff for the aid that was provided

to the fire victims in his district on Wyman Street. He stated they were struggling to find locations due the housing crisis and the shortage of apartments in the city to house the victims of the fire. The Leicester Senior Center provided a safe place for them to stay so the children could go to school the following day and parents to work. He stated fires have been an issue in his district in recent weeks and praised the kindness shown during those tragedies.

Mr. Bujak stated he was glad Leicester could step up and help in their time of need. He said he was happy as a town they could come together. He asked Mr. LeBeouf about the cherry sheet which was not overly helpful to Leicester for the FY25 budget cycle particularly the charter school assessment which is the equivalent to three teachers in the school. He asked about the special education line which was unpromising for the last year's budget.

Mr. LeBeouf clarified a new charter school in Worcester which was met with opposition at the state level despite the Board of Education's approval. He stated the individual pushing the pro charter school movement would be retiring in March and the school funding formula has a stipulation of an inflation cap, meaning less money is being invested in the states funding formula because of inflation.

Ms. Provencher stated many people were not happy with the cherry sheet and no one was expecting the charter schools to get that much funding in one lump sum while other schools struggled. She stated the senior center received a thank you letter for the assistance from the Red Cross establishing a friendship and partnership with the Town of Leicester. She thanked the volunteers and employees who made the help possible to prepare for the fire victims. On behalf of the Select Board she thanked everyone for the help.

Mr. Antanavica asked Mr. LeBeouf when he could get Leicester more money in the budget.

Mr. LeBeouf responded there was a rainy-day fund that had ample funding and the ways and means committee would hold various meetings about aspects of the budget. He vowed to provide the date for the public safety budget discussion.

Mr. Antanavica asked about the cannabis money and where it went/what it was being utilized for.

Mr. LeBeouf stated the Cannabis Control Committee had been encountering legal issues in recent days. He stated the host agreements are no longer accepted but the state revenue remains.

Mr. Antanavica stated there was plenty of money that was obtained from that on the state level and inquired where all of the money was going.

Mr. LeBeouf stated they were waiting on the legal issues to work themselves out before making legislation although the state was encouraging more transparency.

Mr. Antanavica inquired about the rainy day fund and the amount in there and why the governor speaks about raising taxes when there is 7 billion dollars in the rainy day fund.

Mr. LeBeouf stated they have not yet had deliberations on the raising taxes at the local level and the ways and means committee would have to discuss the rainy day fund while looking at the revenue from the millionaire's tax for education and transportation. He stated education was difficult because it was early ed and higher ed specific.

Mr. Antanavica asked about the chapter 90 formula and asked about pushing electric cars when they will be losing the gas tax.

Mr. LeBeouf stated these were topics that needed to be further discussed at the state level as the transition to green vehicles occurred. He stated next Tuesday on the 27th, his office hours would be help from 6 PM to 7:30 PM at the library.

The board thanked Mr. LeBeouf for his time and for attending the meeting.

3. CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Provencher stated the senior center would be closed the following week, Monday through Friday, the last week of February for work on the furnace.

Mr. Genereux clarified they were putting in the heat pump. He stated one side was complete but this work was to finish the other side and the project was funded by a Green Communities grant.

Mr. Antanavica commented about an arrest that occurred in Rochdale Park in which four guns were seized. He commended police and EMS/fire for their work and putting their lives on the line.

Ms. Provencher thanked the first responders including the animal control officer for their work at the senior center for the fire victims.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

- a. Sign Presidential Primary warrant.

Tuesday the fifth of March from 7 AM to 8 PM at town hall. He stated he believes in person voting would be allowed on the 29th.

Ms. Provencher made the motion to approve signing the warrant. Seconded by Mr. Bujak (5-0-0)

- b. Sign Central Mass Law Enforcement Council agreement.

Mr. Ken Antanavica stated the agreement had been in place for 20 years and the latest copy was a revision of it. He said the agreement has allowed them to request mutual aid in trying times and perform details in other towns. He stated the K9 was part of the response team as well as the drone program and it allowed Leicester to assist other communities and for other towns to assist Leicester during situations. He stated it was \$1250 a year and was typically paid out the police budget.

Mr. Bujak made a motion to approve the agreement. Seconded by Ms. Provencher. (5-0-0)

- c. Approve Hybrid and Field Demonstration Grants Project Facilitator position.

Mr. Genereux stated two grants were received by the senior center and a programming position was created by this funding. It would be a temporary position to work with seniors, for example training seniors on technology and provide outreach services. He stated he wanted the board to be aware before an advertisement for the position were to be posted.

He stated the Town Administrator's office would handle the financial reporting and the office would process the payables.

Mr. Bujak asked about the funding for the position.

Mr. Genereux stated the role was funded by grant monies and would not impact the general fund.

Mr. Bujak asked about if outreach was an aspect of the role.

Mr. Genereux stated it would be but the focal point of the outreach would be related to technology assistance.

Mr. Bujak stated he thought it was a great idea and he would like to see the resources provided to the town's senior population.

Ms. Provencher stated there were a lot of programs made available to Leicester seniors that the residents may not know about.

Mr. Bujak made a motion to approve the position. Seconded by Mr. Menard. (4-1-0) Ms. Provencher abstained.

Mr. Antanavica asked who would be doing the hiring.

Mr. Genereux stated the senior center would be doing the interviewing and would recommend candidates to the Select Board.

d. Set meeting dates for Board discussion of FY 2025 budget (February 27th, March 5th)

Mr. Genereux stated the previously discussed Saturday meetings did not work as he was contacted by various people who could not make it. He suggested moving it to the following two Tuesdays to work better for everyone including staff and volunteers. He asked the board if they had the time available to make that work.

Mr. Bujak stated the dates would work for him and the rest of the board agreed they could attend as well.

Ms. Pam LaFleur, Town Clerk, clarified the last days to register to vote and the schedule to vote could be found online.

5. 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 G.L. c. 30A, § 21 (2) - Town Administrator Office Staff

Mr. Bujak stated the board would not reconvene in open session.

**Mr. Bujak made a motion to enter into executive session. Seconded by Ms. Provencher. Roll call vote.
5-0-0.**

ADJOURN