

**SELECT BOARD
MINUTES
January 17, 2023 (Session I)
Town Hall, 17 Main Street and via ZOOM**

Members present: Michael-Ray Jeffreys, Chairman; Tom Alonzo, Vice Chairman; Lou Franco, Clerk; Todd Dwyer, Heather Sroka

Also Present: Heather Lemieux, Town Manager; Police Chief Tom Gammel, Officer George Tibbetts, Christopher Ruth

Chairman Jeffreys called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. He asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. He announced in accordance with the requirements of the Open Meeting Law, please be advised that this meeting is being recorded and broadcast live over the Lunenburg public access channel and Facebook Live and it will be uploaded to the Lunenburg public access YouTube channel within 24 hours after the meeting.

The agenda lists all the topics which may be discussed at this meeting and are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair. Votes may be taken as a result of these discussions. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by the Open Meeting Law.

PUBLIC COMMENT: There was none at this time.

APPOINTMENTS:

- **Ratification of the Town Manager's Appointment of Full Time Police Officer-George Tibbetts**

Chief Gammel stated on Friday, January 6th, we conducted interviews for the full-time police officer position. Upon completion of that interview we had a top candidate; Reserve Officer George "Trey" Tibbetts. According to the panel Officer Tibbetts scored a perfect score, 135 points out of 135 points. Officer Tibbetts has been a Lunenburg Reserve Officer since October 2022 and completed his Field Training Officer (FTO) requirements in a relatively short period of time. Tibbetts was described by his FTOs as compassionate, professional and demonstrating sound decision making. During his training period he was given the opportunity to cover the front desk, where he performed the duties exceptionally well. Officer Tibbetts has definitely distinguished himself. I would concur with the panel's statement that "George was professional, had an ability to articulate his answers and provide examples relevant to the position and Town. These qualities along with his qualifications and experience, show he is an exceptional candidate. It is my pleasure to recommend Officer Tibbetts as full-time Police Officer.

Officer Tibbetts stated it was great to be back in front of everyone again. Nothing new has changed other than all the training. He learned from the training how important discretion is; it has to be used wisely. He thanked the department for all their support during the training process. The board congratulated him and thanked him for his service.

Motion: T. Alonzo

2nd: H. Sroka

To ratify the Town Manager appointment of Full-time Police officer of George "Trey" Tibbetts

Vote: All in Favor

- **Ratification of the Town Manager's Appointment of Facilities Director-Christopher Ruth**

Ms. Lemieux reported we received 43 applications and of those the Assistant Town Manager and I narrowed it down to 7 candidates with relevant experience and chose the top

4 to interview. Mr. Ruth has his Bachelors of Science in Construction Management from Fitchburg State College and has ten years of experience as a project manager with an overall 16 years of experience in the construction industry. Mr. Ruth has held positions at different companies that progressively led to project management. His last position was the Project Manager for Green Leaf Construction and prior to that he was the Project Manager at Delphi Construction. While at Delphi Construction, he worked on public projects and is familiar with bidding public projects. Mr. Ruth has experience in managing multi-million dollar projects, with his last position managing \$30M in projects. In our assessment during the interview process, his overall strength was his well-rounded knowledge of all aspects of facilities, overseeing multiple, large scale projects, building management systems, contract administration and the importance of building maintenance. His references described him as able to multi-task, a great problem solver, knowledgeable of facilities, and "one of the smartest people they've ever worked with". I am asking you to ratify my appointment tonight.

Mr. Ruth stated he has been involved in construction since he was about 16 years old. He started his career working at Burbank Hospital as a facility/construction manager and worked his way up in all kinds of projects. He grew up in Townsend and has been living in town for about seven years. He is excited to be coming on board and get started. The board welcomed him. When asked what his biggest obstacle or challenges would be coming into the job, Mr. Ruth replied delicately handling issues that people are all fired up about and the buildings; they can be complicated or simple, it's just another problem to figure out and solve. He added keeping everyone happy.

Motion; T. Alonzo

2nd: L. Franco

To ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Chris Ruth as Facilities Director

Vote: All in Favor

The board congratulated Mr. Ruth on his appointment.

CURRENT BUSINESS

1. **Review Liquor License Hearing Materials for the 7:15 PM hearing for an All Alcohol/Restaurant License Application hearing for La Balena LLC, d/b/a La Balena Ristorante, 50 Massachusetts Ave. including license applications for Common Victualler and Weekday/Sunday Entertainment**

There was discussion about the site plan and the outdoor patio area and access. It was also noted the hours of operation were until 1:00 a.m. and the lack of an alcohol serving plan. Question was asked if they would be serving food until 1:00 a.m. Discussion also ensued on the required safety inspection for the license not being completed yet. It was suggested the vote could be contingent on that. The hearing will be later this evening at the Middle/High School Auditorium.

2. **Review Section 3-2 (b), ¶ of the Town Charter and Town Bylaw Chapter 74-1**

Mr. Jeffreys stated this is being discussed relative to conducting an investigation concerning the recent assessment process. Under the Charter, Article 3, §3-2 Select Board, (e)

"Investigations - The select board may make investigations and may authorize the town manager to investigate the affairs of the town and the conduct of any town agency including any doubtful claims against the town. The report of the results of such investigation shall be placed on file in the office of the select board and a report summarizing the results of such investigation shall be printed in the next annual town report." He also noted section (b) Powers and Duties in General - The executive powers of the town shall be vested in the select board which shall be deemed to be the chief executive office of the town. The select board shall have all of the executive powers it is possible for a select board to have and to exercise.

Referring to Chapter 74 (1), he cited, The Selectmen shall exercise a general supervision over all matters affecting the interests or welfare of the town. He stated there appears to be a need to increase staff specifically for the Assessors' office and next week I will be asking the board to authorize and to commit funding to pay for that. If the board authorizes an investigation, there will be a need for some additional support and the board to authorize to commit funds for that. In my opinion this is related to the effects of the pandemic and hyperinflation and what transpired over the last couple years. I do believe it's clear that we can utilize the federal funds that have been provided to us to look into things that are related to the effects of the pandemic on the town and its residents.

The consensus of the board was that they agreed with Mr. Jeffreys' statement.

Approval of January 3, 2023 Minutes

Motion: T. Alonzo

To approve the minutes of January 3, 2023 as presented

2nd: T. Dwyer

Vote: All in Favor

Warrants

The board signed a payroll deduction warrant in the amount of \$850,429.78; an accounts payable warrant in the amount of \$298,119.37 and a payroll warrant in the amount of \$951,144.52.

Committee Reports

Mr. Dwyer reported there is a stormwater task force meeting on Thursday at the Ritter Building at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Jeffreys attended a 3½ hour training at the schools that was conducted by the Police Department, it was very good and it provided a better understanding of their methodologies and processes. The Municipal Building Design Committee met last week with the Building Commissioner to go over their hybrid concept and get a better understanding of code implications. We now need to look at how to reduce costs. Mr. Jeffreys reported he had facilitated a conversation between the booster clubs as a neutral party to identify if a unified booster would be the way to go. There was not universal support for that but they will work on a combined fundraiser that will benefit all student athletes. He noted 48% of the student body plays sports. There is a lot of demand for field space.

Mr. Jeffreys announced there would not be a public comment at the end of this meeting and the board will adjourn and hold another meeting at the Middle/High School Auditorium at 7:10 p.m. this evening to accommodate more seating for residents regarding the recent tax assessments.

Motion: T. Alonzo

To adjourn the meeting

2nd: L. Franco

Vote: All in Favor

The meeting adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Elaine M. Peterson

Executive Assistant to the Town Manager