

Town of Lunenburg
Select Board Meeting Minutes
Town Hall, 17 Main Street and via Zoom
Tuesday January 23, 2024

Members Present: Lou Franco, Tom Alonzo, Caesar Nuzzolo (via Zoom), Renee Emkey (via Zoom)

Also Present: Heather Lemieux, Town Manager

Members Absent: Michael Ray Jeffreys

Public Comment Participants are listed in the minutes

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Vice-Chair Lou Franco called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Vice-Chair Franco informed attendees that the meeting was being recorded and broadcast live and would be uploaded to YouTube after the meeting. He explained that the agenda listed topics that may be discussed, but not all items may be addressed and other items not listed could be brought up as permitted by open meeting law.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Member Nuzzolo noted that he was unable to see the video of the room on Zoom and this was corrected.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Town Manager Lemieux reported the Town Meeting Warrant is now open until March 18th at 4pm for submission of articles to the Select Board office.

The Master Plan Steering Committee currently has their second survey out which can be found on the Town website or on PlanLunenburg.org. Responses to the survey will be accepted until January 25th. The third public meeting, during this engagement process, that will be on February 1st at the Adult Activity Center. There will be 2 identical sessions – one from 4 to 6 pm and the other from 6:30 to 8:30 pm.

There will be an off cycle meeting for the Finance Committee on January 25th at 7 pm to answer school and town budget questions.

There will be 2 Board of Assessor meetings next week – January 29th at 6:30 pm and January 31st at 6:30 pm. Mike Turello, of Vision, who is the Consultant heading the Revaluation project will be attending the meeting to answer questions as the Assessors will be getting the preliminary evaluation data.

Member Franco asked Member Alonzo if the Board of Assessors are on track in understanding that the Select Board would like to see the spreadsheet at the appropriate time. Member Alonzo replied yes and that the 5 year evaluation is a very tight deadline with things getting completed, getting approved by DOR, review by Select Board, printing and mailing the bills on time.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM OTHER BOARDS - none

APPOINTMENTS

Recognition of Police Chief Thomas Gammel as President of the Central MA Chiefs of Police Association – Vice-Chair Franco noted that the Central MA Chiefs of Police Association held their annual installation meeting on December 13, 2023, at the Bull Run Restaurant in Shirley. At that meeting Town Manager Heather Lemieux swore in our Police Chief Thomas Gammel as the incoming President of the CMCOPA. The Association promotes effective development of law enforcement in Central Massachusetts and aids in the education, professional development and welfare of its members, while developing bonds of fraternity, as well as fostering harmonious relations with all public and private agencies concerned with law enforcement in Central Massachusetts. Chief Gammel noted that there are 50-60 municipalities plus 2 or 3 outside of Central Mass. that are represented. Mr. Franco congratulated Chief Gammel on behalf of the Select Board and Town, thanking him for his dedication and service to the Town. He presented Chief Gammel with a Commendation from the Select Board and added that they wish him the very best in his new additional role. Chief Gammel commented that receiving this award was very humbling. He added that the men and women of the Police Department are the heart and soul of the community. He thanked his wife for all her support, as well as his family. Member Alonzo stated he was very proud of what Chief Gammel has done, coming up through the ranks and the teamwork he has fostered. Members Nuzzolo and Emkey congratulated Chief Gammel, thanking him, as well as his department.

INTERVIEWS/APPOINTMENTS/REAPPOINTMENTS/RESIGNATIONS

Conservation Commission vacancy interviews/appointment-term to expire June 30, 2024 – Vice-Chair Franco stated that they have 3 candidates for the vacancy on the Conservation Committee-Sam Welch, Jenny Pewtherer, and Anthony Nicastro. The Select Board will interview each and pick 1 candidate to appoint. He thanked each candidate for stepping forward to volunteer and urged any candidate that is not appointed to consider other Boards or Commissions that interest them. Mr. Franco pointed out that the other candidates could consider becoming an Associate Member for the Conservation Commission, which is not an official appointment.

Anthony Nicastro (88 Whalom Road) – Mr. Nicastro spoke of his love of Lunenburg. He works for a pharmaceutical company located near the wetlands and he deals with state agencies, as well as state regulations. He currently serves on the Architecture Preservation District Commission (APDC) and is currently an Associate Member on Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) for 3 years. Mr. Nicastro mentioned that he had a long conversation with Ms. Wilson (Conservation Chair) about the Board. He is familiar with site walks as an Associate of the ZBA

and understands he cannot be biased when listening to people presenting their cases to the Board. Vice-Chair Franco inquired if Mr. Nicastro would be willing to serve as the Conservation Commission's liaison to the Stormwater Committee and he replied he will do whatever it takes. Mr. Alonzo clarified that it is up to the Conservation Commission to make any appointment for a liaison.

Jenny Pewtherer (10 Sunset Ave.) – stated that she is new to Lunenburg and went before Conservation for a retaining wall issue. After watching some of the Commission's meetings, she decided she would like to apply for the open seat. She is the IT Manager for a construction/landscaping company, so she is familiar with Stormwater as well as fluid prevention plans. Ms. Pewtherer also spoke to Mary Wilson. Member Emkey acknowledged that Ms. Pewtherer was also interested in the Stormwater Task Force and Green Communities. She inquired if Ms. Pewtherer was aware that the Conservation meetings can be quite lengthy and if she was okay with the time commitment. Ms. Pewtherer replied she is very comfortable with the commitment as well as doing site walks and any classes. Member Alonzo asked what the most important charge was for the Commission, and she answered to follow the laws pertaining to protecting the wetlands as well as other aspects of the Commission. Ms. Pewtherer has not served on any town committees but previously volunteered for many school activities. In addition, she would serve on Stormwater if asked and deal with applicants without bias. Member Alonzo suggested waiting until the next meeting to interview Sam Welch (3rd candidate) prior to making a decision. He also asked Bob Pease (Vice-Chair of Conservation Commission), who was present, if the Commission will be providing any guidance on the 3 candidates.

Bob Pease (11 Wintergreen Court), Conservation Commission – stated that he works closely with Mary Wilson but they have not contemplated making any recommendations. He may reconsider doing so, on a personal level. Mr. Pease noted that none of the present Commissioners are willing to serve on the Stormwater Committee and was encouraged to hear someone had experience in stormwater.

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Town Manager Lemieux noted the following board vacancies: Architectural Preservation, Cemetery Commission, Conservation (pending), Council on Aging, Green Communities (1 regular, 1 associate), Open Space and Personnel Committee. She urged any interested candidates to fill out a volunteer application and return it to the Select Board's office.

In addition, Ms. Lemieux stated there are employment openings for digital services/outreach librarian, executive assistant to Town Manager, facilities custodian, heavy equipment operator, land use director, staff young adult librarian, and temporary administrative assessing assistant. Any interested candidates may seek information on the town website under job opportunities to learn how to apply.

The Assessor's board has ratified Lynda McQuaid as the Principal Assessor. She is currently the Principal Assessor in Ayer and has 20 years of residential appraising experience as well as

MAAO certification. Ms. McQuaid's start is dependent on the 45 day clause in her current contract and the Town Manager will keep the Select Board informed about her office start date.

Request for Proposals and Information for Bids –

- Public Safety carpet project was awarded to Atkinson Carpet & Flooring for \$43,790 and expected to be completed by March 18th. It is funded in FY22 Capital plan for \$50,000 and they anticipate a surplus.
- Assistant Town Manager and Town Manager drafted a personal property cyclical for quotes. The Assessors Board reviewed and accepted this on January 22nd. Quotes will be solicited shortly and have historically used a company called RC.

Budget Updates for FY25 – The town's health insurance company MIIA has announced rate range increases for members in FY25 from 2.2% to 9.95%, with an average of 6.6%. Ms. Lemieux reached out to the representative to inquire on lowering the initial estimate of 10% and was informed that the estimate will be lowered to a maximum of 6.6%. Member Alonzo asked what the difference would be to the town and the Town Manager replied 10% would be \$450,000. The new estimate would be almost half.

Energy Broker – The current rate for aggregate accounts is .11868/kw and the contract will expire in November 2024. Ms. Lemieux discussed pricing with Tradition Energy (town's energy broker outside of aggregate) and was told that they can expect lower downside market costs due to the milder weather forecast. She was also informed that if the town comes off, there would be more capacity for residents to join.

Member Franco commented that it was huge that the Principal Assessor role has been filled and appointed, since there are very few people that do this. Member Alonzo inquired about the Unitil rate case in front of the DPU and the Town Manager had no update. He noted the current rate is about \$0.30/kw which is in the top 2% in the country and residents have received high bills despite the mild weather.

OLD BUSINESS

Discussion on Draft Board/Commission Handbook – Member Emkey suggested adding a section on how to set up Zoom meetings. She also commented that when Town By-laws and Mass. General Laws do not agree, it could be helpful to summarize what is appropriate or what applies in that situation. Member Nuzzolo mentioned that a couple of links for pdfs are broken, such as the one under Meetings/Open Meetings. The URL is correct but the link to the pdf does not work. The Town Manager will check the links. Member Alonzo stated that he was fine with all recommended changes, except Chapter 13 on remote meetings and agreed the links need to be working. He urged further discussion on the Remote Meeting policy and emphasized the importance of not using remote participation during Executive Sessions. The video policy is the most important to work on since it was written prior to using Zoom and they need to determine what works best in the interest of the public. Member Franco praised the document as a nice resource for questions and rules. He is still going through the chapters in greater detail.

Review and Discuss bylaws that pertain to the Select Board – will be discussed when there is a full board present.

- **Chapter C. § 3. 1 General Provisions & § 3.2 Select Board**
- **Chapter 305 Board of Selectmen Policies**
- **Chapter 184 Pawnbrokers and Dealers in Metal Article 1 §184-1 Licensing Authority and requirements**
- **Chapter 74 Select Board**
- **Chapter 5 Administration of Government**

CURRENT BUSINESS

1. Authorization for Town Manager to sign revised Nashoba Valley Regional Dispatch Agreement adding Boxborough in place of Townsend. Ms. Lemieux reported the agreement was revised in March and reviewed by the Administrative Board, Operations Committee and sub-finance committee. The revised version was voted on in March with the addition of Boxborough. Townsend left the district last fiscal year to join another regional entity. All 3 committees voted favorably to add Boxborough.

Motion by Tom Alonzo that they authorize the Town Manager to sign the revised Nashoba Valley Regional Dispatch Agreement by adding Boxborough as discussed. Seconded by Lou Franco. Roll Call Vote: Selectman Emkey-aye, Selectman Nuzzolo-aye, Selectman Alonzo-aye and Selectman Franco-aye. (4-0-0)

2. Minutes/Warrants/Action Items –

Regular Session Minutes for September 14, 2023.

The Board reviewed and approved the minutes from September 14, 2023 meeting.

Motion by Tom Alonzo to approve the minutes of September 14, 2023 as written in the Google Drive. Seconded by Lou Franco. Roll Call Vote: Ms. Emkey-aye, Mr. Nuzzolo-aye, Mr. Alonzo-aye and Mr. Franco-aye. (4-0-0)

Warrants

Accounts Payable warrant in the amount of \$765,190.07 was signed by Mr. Franco and Mr. Alonzo. It will require signature by one more Selectman.

Action Items: none

3. Committee Reports

Planning Board: Member Nuzzolo did not have a report but will be contacting the chair of Planning Board for updates.

Stormwater Task Force: Member Emkey reported: met last week and the DPW Director invited a group from Chelmsford to make a presentation on their stormwater utility. Unfortunately, they

were unable to attend but provided information. The next meeting they plan on having CEI attend to give information on what is needed to create a stormwater utility.

School Committee: Member Emkey reported: met last week and the Superintendent presented a slide presentation on the proposed FY25 budget, with proposed cuts, which came in with 3.6% increase. The Committee will meet again January 24th with the primary agenda item being the proposed FY25 budget. The Superintendents presentation is available online.

Board of Assessors: Member Alonzo reported: met yesterday and discussed primarily the ratification of the Principal Assessor.

Finance Committee: Member Alonzo reported: will meet on Thursday.

Economic Development: Member Franco reported: will be meeting on Thursday at 6 pm, pending a quorum.

Council on Aging: Member Franco reported: held a Volunteer Recognition Ceremony that was well attended. He was inspired by the number of volunteers and the hours they worked. If they were paid minimum wage, the cost to the town would be about \$24,000 – that is a lot of volunteering. He added it was nice to see volunteers get recognition.

UPCOMING MEETING/EVENTS SCHEDULE

Select Board will meet on January 30th instead of February 6th. The meeting on February 13th will be to discuss Flat Hill Road and include the invitation to the Trustees. Abutters and interested parties have been notified.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Town Manager Lemieux commented that she was very grateful for Rena Swezey for her service to the town in keeping the Assessor's office running. Rena was the only person in the office due to the assistant being out on medical leave. Member Franco echoed her comments and was grateful for Rena stepping in.

Dave Passios, 56 Whiting St. – reported that he was 1 of 3 representing the town at the MAA, which had record attendance this year. The conference was fantastic and there were great exchanges with others present. He also attended the MIIA Annual Meeting for the announcement of the new insurance rates. Dave spoke to the director who promised to contact Ms. Lemieux about the increase. There was information that federal money the state has been pursuing will be trickling down to towns. The next conference will be January 24 & 25, 2025 at the Seaport Convention Center.

Adjournment

Member Alonzo made a Motion to Adjourn. Seconded by Member Franco. All, aye. Motion passed unanimously (4-0-0)

Respectfully Submitted,

Jane Ranley
Minute Clerk

These Minutes were reviewed and approved by the Select Board on Tuesday, April 8, 2025.

Vice Chair Jeffreys made Motion to Approve minutes from January 23, 2024. Seconded by Member Alonzo. All, aye. Passed unanimously (5-0-0).