

TOWN OF CANTON - BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Regular Hybrid Meeting
Wednesday, May 10, 2023 – 7:00 pm

DRAFT MINUTES

Members Present: First Selectman Robert Bessel, Warren Humphrey, Tim LeGeyt, Stephen Sedor, William Volovski

Also Present: Chief Administrative Officer Robert Skinner, Russell Asklof, Katie Kenney, Dean Martel, Lisa Coggins, Larry Minichiello, Recording Secretary Maureen Griffin

Call to Order: R. Bessel called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- Katie Kenney (Cherry Brook Road) spoke in favor of establishing a Traffic Safety Advisory Committee. She proposes a different name for the committee because having safe streets is important for cyclists and pedestrians as well as drivers. She addressed the possibility of having a blight ordinance and advised taking a cautious approach. We could use existing zoning regulations for these problematic situations and have the Zoning Enforcement Officer address them.
- Lisa Coggins (Daynard Drive) said that she was pleased to see the agenda item for a Traffic Safety Advisory Committee. She agrees that a different name might be beneficial. She reminded the BOS that 90% of the requests during the CIP process were for traffic-related issues and that during the Town Meeting there was overwhelming support to establish a committee. The cost of having the committee is low. She hopes the BOS will recognize the residents that have asked for this committee. She would be happy to volunteer for the committee. She added that Tim Bowman (founder of Bike/Walk Canton) expressed the organization's support for creating this committee.
- Dean Martel (Martel Bus Company) said he wanted to make sure his opinion about the sycamore tree was expressed directly. He has seen inaccurate comments on social media. The tree does not affect school busses. They avoid West Mountain Road because of the road itself. He is happy to speak with people directly if there is any question.
- Larry Minichiello (Maple Street) supports the creation of a Traffic Safety Advisory Committee. It is greatly needed. Many residents are concerned about traffic and speeding. We can utilize their expertise to assist with the project. He has heard that there may be state legislation for towns to form these committees; we could be ahead of the game with this.

PUBLIC HEARING

R. Bessel opened the public hearing. R. Skinner said that two applications were received. He explained that, by statute, the Town has an administrative role in this process. The first application is from FOCUS Center for Autism - \$20,752.50 to be used for a more efficient HVAC system. The second application is from New Horizons - \$112,000 for new energy efficient windows at Cherry Brook Health Center. Both of these organizations have participated in the past, and both have received donations through the program. R. Bessel said these applications must be authorized at a Town Meeting and then be sent to DRS. R. Bessel closed the public hearing.

APPOINTMENTS – There were no appointments.

ADOPTION OF CONSENT AGENDA

Motion: T. LeGeyt moved to adopt the consent agenda.

Seconded by: W. Volovski

The motion passed 4-0-1 (S. Sedor abstained from the vote).

ACTION ITEMS

Review and possibly approve submittal of a grant by the Canton Police Department to the Canton Community Health Fund in the amount of \$3,994 for the purpose of purchasing life vests, rope throw bags, stop the bleed kits, and emergency response carry bags.

Motion: W. Volovski moved to approve submittal of a grant by the Canton Police Department to the Canton Community Health Fund in the amount of \$3,994 for the purpose of purchasing life vests, rope throw bags, stop the bleed kits, and emergency response carry bags.

Seconded by: T. LeGeyt

The motion passed unanimously.

Review and possibly approve the following Neighborhood Assistance Act applications for the May 24, 2023 Town Meeting to vote on authorizing the applications to be submitted to the Department of Revenue Services:

- Application from FOCUS Center for Autism, Inc. for Energy Efficiency Upgrades in the amount of \$20,752.50
- Application from New Horizons, Inc. for Energy Efficient Windows for Cherry Brook Health Care Center in the amount of \$112,000

Motion: S. Sedor moved to approve the following Neighborhood Assistance Act applications for the May 24, 2023 Town Meeting to vote on authorizing the applications to be submitted to the Department of Revenue Services:

- Application from FOCUS Center for Autism, Inc. for Energy Efficiency Upgrades in the amount of \$20,752.50
- Application from New Horizons, Inc. for Energy Efficient Windows for Cherry Brook Health Care Center in the amount of \$112,000

Seconded by: W. Humphrey

The motion passed unanimously.

Review proposal to create a Traffic Safety Advisory Committee.

R. Bessel said that this topic has been raised in many ways over time in these meetings and in other venues. Selectmen discussed possible committee names; the committee's function/roles; whether it should be a permanent or temporary committee; the inclusion of Town staff as non-voting members; and the process to establish and fund the committee. W. Volovski said he thought it was a good idea to have this committee; it must work hand-in-hand with staff. They will be an advisory committee and their input should be taken seriously. W. Humphrey said he supports the committee. There has been a very active group on Case Street and on Maple Avenue, and Lisa Coggins has advocated for safe streets. He hopes it will find patterns/solutions in specific areas that can be applied to the remainder of the Town. T. LeGeyt said this is a good idea for the community because there has been so much concern about traffic issues. S. Sedor agreed that public input has focused on concerns about safety issues. R. Bessel brought up the scope of the work: there are short term and long term goals and milestones. It should probably be a permanent committee. It will involve education, interaction with the state, and will lead to a comprehensive program. R. Skinner pointed out that the Land Use Department is working on a new Complete Streets Policy that will be presented to the BOS in an upcoming meeting. He added that part of the committee's function will be advocacy. It will concentrate on specific areas in Town, but must also consider all areas and set priorities for resource utilization and potential changes. W. Volovski expressed his concern that committee members may experience frustration because ideas may be hard to implement. It will come down to money – funding is needed to make improvements. It may start as a temporary committee and evolve to be a permanent committee. S. Sedor suggested the name be "Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee. Selectmen agreed on this name.

Motion: S. Sedor moved to authorize R. Skinner to redraft the ordinance as a resolution to establish a Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee which will be reviewed at the next BOS meeting.

Seconded by: T. LeGeyt
The motion passed unanimously.

Review proposal to create a Blight Ordinance.

R. Bessel said this issue has come before the BOS many times in many forms. We still have chronic problems, some of which cannot be resolved by P&Z. We don't have any way to address certain situations. T. LeGeyt said that a blight ordinance has been discussed before, and that it was thought to be overreach even if there are specific problems to solve. Even if the Town mandates how private property is to be maintained, it is out of bounds for a Town to manage this. The criteria for an ordinance would be public health/safety/welfare, so the appearance of the property would not fall under this criteria. Terminology would be vague so many judgment calls would have to be made. He can't abide by creating a blight ordinance that would be too wide spread. R. Bessel agrees that the draft language in the sample ordinance was too specific, but there are some egregious, chronic situations that affect neighbors. W. Humphrey pointed out that different standards would be needed for different areas in town. He does not want to see an ordinance that is too detailed; he does not see a Town-wide problem. W. Volovski agreed with R. Bessel because zoning regulations are not a good tool. He has worked in other municipalities in his career and had to enforce town ordinances. We need something for the Zoning Enforcement Officer to use. He recommends creating another draft. S. Sedor said he is not willing to have a blight ordinance. Instituting an ordinance won't change behaviors. There is no need to impose an ordinance on all residents because there are a few specific problem situations. R. Skinner said the draft presented was only a starting point. We can look at different language. R. Bessel suggested that Selectmen view specific properties and keep an open mind to explore what is possible for solutions.

Review proposal to change the Temporary Committee on Sustainable Waste Management to a permanent agency.

R. Bessell said that the committee sees that this is a much longer road than anticipated. There are long-standing issues, and much to be done. He introduced Russell Asklof, committee member. Mr. Asklof reported that they have short term projects they are currently working on. They also have major issues, like bio waste and food waste. They will need to provide education and do trials to find solutions. The time frame will well exceed the two years that were defined. It is in the Town's best interest to extend this to a permanent committee. Selectmen discussed the possibility of adding on two 6-month extensions as an alternative to making it permanent. R. Skinner explained the formal process for each option. W. Volovski asked if they would ever run out of things to do. Mr. Asklof said they would not, unless it becomes a matter of diminishing returns. They make regular reports to the BOS. Selectmen discussed the functions and roles of the committee. R. Bessel pointed out that the situation is evolving—there are new logistics, and many initiatives/components to implement. We need their services for promotion/education/tracking. T. LeGeyt said he is in favor of making this a permanent agency because this is an ongoing, long-term problem in Canton and in Connecticut. W. Volovski pointed out that it is valuable work and that it will support staff efforts. Mr. Asklof said that the only way to gather meaningful data is to have pilot programs. R. Skinner will bring forward an ordinance for the BOS to review, which will start the process to make this a permanent committee.

Review and possibly approve a proposal from the Director of Public Works to modify the transfer station policies to allow residents to deposit metals at the Transfer Station without a permit.

R. Bessel said that the data provided makes the decision very clear. This would benefit both residents and the Town. It could be made effective as of June 1st.

Motion: T. LeGeyt moved to approve a modification to the transfer station policies to allow residents to deposit metals at the Transfer Station without a permit.

Seconded by: W. Volovski

The motion passed unanimously.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CAO, TOWN AGENCIES, OFFICIALS AND/OR OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES AND OFFICIALS.

First Selectman's Report

- R. Bessel gave a reminder that the Canton Hydro Opening event will be held on May 20th. Gates open at 12:30, speeches will be given at 1:00 and tours start at 1:30p.m. States officials will attend.

CAO's Report

- R. Skinner said that the groundbreaking at the Fire Station will be held on Saturday, June 17th at 10:00a.m. Site work will start at the end of June.
- W. Volovski asked for an update on the two boat launches. R. Skinner said they are waiting for DOT about 37 Bridge Street. An RFP went out for the 2nd boat launch—bids will be opened tomorrow.
- W. Volovski asked about West Street Bridge. R. Skinner said it should be open mid-late June.
- T. LeGeyt asked about the Town Attorney's response to his question on CHDC's jurisdiction over DOT for the installation of guardrails on the scenic road in the historic district. R. Skinner said the attorney said they did not have jurisdiction. R. Bessel sent a letter to a DOT head engineer requesting an in-person meeting. They will meet next week. Lisa Seminara also wrote a letter to DOT.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: R. Bessel moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:54p.m.

Seconded by: W. Volovski

The motion passed unanimously.