

TOWN OF CANTON - BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Regular Hybrid Meeting

Wednesday, January 24, 2024 – 7:00 pm

DRAFT MINUTES

Members Present: First Selectman Kevin Witkos, Tim LeGeyt, Stephen Sedor, William Volovski, and Elizabeth Corkum Winsor.

Call to Order: K. Witkos called the meeting to order at 7:17 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Add to the agenda - Under Action Items as item E: Review and possibly approve a resolution authorizing the First Selectman to request that resident Richard Barlow coordinate the creation of a Citizens' Memorial Day Committee to organize and manage the Canton Memorial Day parade.

Motion: W. Volovski moved to add to the agenda - Under Action Items as item E: review and possibly approve a resolution authorizing the First Selectman to request that resident Richard Barlow coordinate the creation of a Citizens' Memorial Day Committee to organize and manage the Canton Memorial Day parade.

Seconded by: T. LeGeyt

The motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

-Tim Bowman (Highwood Road) provided an update on the Town's status as a Bike Friendly Community. They are waiting for the response to their application and he expects that Canton will maintain its bronze status. He explained that the status reflects the Town's efforts to promote bike and pedestrian activity and safety. Bike Walk Canton has documented all of this and goes through the complex process of submitting the application. Ten towns in Connecticut have a status. He previously provided a "report card" to the Traffic & Pedestrian Advisory Committee and he will share this with the BOS. It provides details on the rating structure. He recommended the League of American Bicyclists website as a source of information.

-John Pettini (Overlook Drive) introduced himself as a 21-year Canton resident; he is a physician. He appreciates the nature of the community—its health and activities—Canton has the bike trail, the river, Canton Land Trust, and the bicycling community. He utilizes Mills Pond recreational facilities for tennis and pickle ball. He is here to support Parks & Rec's programs and efforts they are making to improve the courts. The tennis courts need maintenance/repair. K. Witkos suggested that Mr. Pettini attend the Budget Workshop on February 13 to express his concerns and interests. He recommended that others attend this meeting, and that they have one spokesperson to coordinate their messages. Mr. Witkos added that initial estimates for the tennis courts/basketball court repairs are approximately \$500,000.

L. Coggins (Daynard Drive) thanked the BOS for their thoughtful discussion of their goals. She supports recreation efforts – she requests that the Town submit an application to the Land Use Office to rezone 55 Lawton Road from an R3 (vacant land) to an MCPF (dedicated for recreational/municipal use). She commented on a specific concern about in-kind expenses which should be similar to the dog park (for snow plowing and trash removal). She commented on the Brass Lantern Road issue. She asked the BOS to consider referring this to the Traffic Authority and the Land Use Office. This road is in the area of the current Rte. 44 Corridor Study. She researched accidents (since 2015) and found that 8% of accidents are in this .5 mile stretch of Rte. 44. We may need to keep this parcel to provide safety measures for the community.

-Jan Tanner (Bunker Hill Road) commented on Brass Lantern Road because it is part of the CRCOG scope of study. This area is under consideration for the continuation of the bike path into Simsbury. We should not limit our connectivity. She thanked Tim Bowman for his explanation of Bike Walk Canton and their efforts. She said that the Traffic & Pedestrian Safety Advisory

Committee has been introduced to the history and goals of Bike Walk Canton and Bike Friendly Communities. She agreed with L. Coggins that the 55 Lawton Road property should be rezoned as an MCPF property, and that Neil Pade agreed with this designation. K. Witkos asked for any existing schematics or proposals for the bike path extension toward Simsbury. R. Skinner said that a committee and an engineering firm is finalizing details; no path has been determined at this time. -Sarah Faulkner (Dyer Avenue) thanked the BOS for the Annual Meeting and for dedicating the Annual Report to Linda Smith. She is pleased with the BOS Mission Statement but would like to see some mention of natural resources, which are valued by residents. She thanked the BOS for their recent efforts to improve the quality of hybrid meetings. The audio has improved but there are still problems with the OWL system: the number of mics is insufficient, and some groups do not use a podium. It is difficult to hear some presenters/participants. She recommended the use of cameras to help protect the equipment. She recommended that meetings be held at times when most people are able to attend (evenings), and that meetings should be held on Town property. She emphasized that Zoom and hybrid meetings provide transparency; she encourages the use of technology.

APPOINTMENTS – There were no new appointments.

ACTION ITEMS

Review and possibly approve a request to name the Canton Dog Park in honor of Alan Duncan or a former police patrol dog named Blue.

W. Volovski said that he was in favor of naming the park after Alan Duncan and that it might be possible to recognize Blue with a plaque in his honor. K. Witkos said he was impressed with how Mr. Duncan touched the lives of so many and that his gifts drew people to embrace the cause. He overcame many difficulties in the creation of the dog park; it is now known as the best dog park in the area. He appreciated the many accolades and stories presented by residents. Naming the park after Mr. Duncan would show respect and honor him. He will present a sign to Friends of the Canton Dog Park.

Motion: W. Volovski moved to approve that the Canton Dog Park be named in honor of Alan Duncan.

Seconded by: S. Sedor

The motion passed unanimously.

Review and possibly approve an employee survey.

K. Witkos pointed out a correction and the need for a few formatting changes. Selectmen discussed the question about rating the department manager; numeric ratings to go along with qualitative responses; how the results will be analyzed; how often it will be administered; that there will be no indication of employees' departments and that submissions will be anonymous. E. Corkum Winsor emphasized the need to encourage participation even though it is voluntary. R. Skinner has spoken with department directors and will continue conversations to encourage employee participation. They plan to administer the survey annually in February.

Motion: W. Volovski moved to approve the employee survey as amended (to be conducted annually during the month of February).

Seconded by: S. Sedor

The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion regarding the process for discontinuing Brass Lantern Road.

R. Skinner provided background information. This issue was discussed in the past and there was a positive response to discontinuing the road. It is not an active road; maintenance would no longer be necessary. The decision was put on hold while working with developers. He questioned Neil Pade about bike trail concerns and Mr. Pade was not concerned that this decision would affect bike trail extension plans. Selectmen discussed the methods for discontinuation; how the decision is made about the land going to the abutters, potential need for a survey; the impact this decision would have on the bike trail extension; the Rte. 44 Corridor Study that is underway (and when the study results will be reported). R. Skinner said that the process will be to provide a 30-day notice to

abutters; put signage on the road, hold a BOS discussion and vote to hold a Town Meeting. He will discuss further with N. Pade the effect this will have on the bike trail. There is no urgency to this matter. The Corridor Study may result in some recommendations. It is supposed to be completed in July but may take longer. W. Volovski commented that, in the past, he was in favor of discontinuing the road, but now would like to give it time so the bike trail questions can be resolved. K. Witkos tabled this item until November.

Review an ordinance that regulates the presence of dogs at specific Canton recreational facilities and athletic fields.

W. Volovski commented that the draft ordinance was a good first effort; he had no changes. S. Sedor suggested reigning in the definition to differentiate between the fields and the spectator areas. K. Witkos pointed out that some fields could be used by dog owners, if it is off-season. R. Skinner had provided a list of the specific fields in the ordinance. K. Witkos emphasized that this is ordinance is being created to help protect the investment in the fields; it is not “anti-animal”.

Motion: W. Volovski moved to hold a public hearing on the ordinance that regulates the presence of dogs at specific Canton recreational facilities and athletic fields, on February 28, 2024 at 7:00p.m. in Room F at the Canton Community Center.

Seconded by: T. LeGeyt

The motion passed unanimously.

Review and possibly approve a resolution authorizing the First Selectman to request that resident Richard Barlow coordinate the creation of a Citizens’ Memorial Day Committee to organize and manage the Canton Memorial Day parade.

K. Witkos met with Richard Barlow who expressed an interest in coordinating a committee to work on the Memorial Day Parade. It would be a way to bring the parade back to the way it was before the pandemic. R. Skinner commented that parades are often organized by citizen committees. They will be able to make decisions on their own and will report to/inform the BOS. He requested that they submit annual budget needs to him by December. They will be able to do fundraising.

Motion: S. Sedor moved to approve a resolution authorizing the First Selectman to request that resident Richard Barlow coordinate the creation of a Citizens’ Memorial Day Committee to organize and manage the Canton Memorial Day parade.

Seconded by: W. Volovski

The motion passed unanimously.

ADOPTION OF CONSENT AGENDA

Motion: S. Sedor moved to adopt the consent agenda.

Seconded by: T. LeGeyt

The motion passed unanimously.

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

First Selectman’s Report

K. Witkos reported:

- He and R. Skinner met with state representatives to discuss enhanced communications with state departments, and to ask for some legislative statutory changes. They requested a change in PFAS language about remediation expenses. Limited funding is available if remediation is for well contamination. He asked them to draft legislation for public schools that have wells. They asked for a conveyance bill for the Bridge Street property near Collinsville Canoe and Kayak. This will need approval from Town officials.
- R. Skinner spoke with the WPCA Superintendent about the capacity of the sewer plant and the possibility of seeking out other communities due to the large amount of rainfall and surface groundwater. DEEP could mandate that we increase our capacity at the plant, which would be a great expense. This is a way of getting in front of a potential problem.
- There have been bad accidents on Rte. 44 near Mizu 21. We are asking the DOT to put in turn lanes.

- He asked them to put in a bill to mandate the DOT to paint the guardrails on Maple Avenue. The installation of these guardrails has been an issue.
- He appointed E. Corkum Winsor as the chair of the newly constituted Public Safety Subcommittee. An organizational meeting will be set; a meeting schedule will be determined.

CAO Report

R. Skinner reported:

- He provided an update on the high school solar panels. There have been significant issues which include negotiating the agreement for the provider's lease and the rate for power that is transferred to the Town. The Town attorney is working with the provider's attorney. Most issues have been negotiated.
- The Town Benefits Coordinator is leaving in April. This is a full time position. The BOE Payroll Specialist is leaving on February 2nd. The Police Department succeeded in getting a lateral hire (David Kissel, former Torrington Police Officer). He is going through localized training.
- He confirmed that the site of the recent car accidents is part of the area that is being studied; N. Pade provided accident information to the Rte. 44 Corridor Study managers.
- The police department is completing work on the dispatch console area. We had received a grant for a new console. He gave credit to the Police Department and Town staff for a successful project.

ADJOURNMENT: S. Sedor moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 p.m.