

TOWN OF CANTON - BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Regular Hybrid Meeting

Wednesday, February 14, 2024 – 7:00 pm

DRAFT MINUTES

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

Also Present:

Chief Administrative Officer Robert Skinner
Senior & Social Svcs. Director Tonoa Jackson
WPCF Superintendent John Kaminski
Land Use Director Neil Pade
Parks and Recreation Director Taryn Schrager

Building Official Rand Stanley
Fire Marshal Tim Tharau
Library Director Sarah McCusker
Recording Secretary Maureen Griffin

Call to Order: K. Witkos called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- John Pettini (Overlook Drive) spoke about the dual use of the tennis/pickle ball courts and said that he was speaking on behalf of the community and its support for improvements. He believes that Canton is a great community with a commitment to health. He would like to ensure that court maintenance remains on par. The 4 courts at Mills Pond are the only ones available for school use, Parks & Rec, and public recreational use. He said that the interest in pickle ball has exploded. It is a national trend; it will continue to grow. Parks and Rec offers instructional sessions—they are in demand. He thinks this issue deserves the consideration of the BOF and BOS. He asked for advice from the BOS on how best to proceed to support funding court maintenance/repairs.
- Peggy Steinway (Bahre Corner Road) said that she has been active in pickle ball for the past 2 years. It has been a gratifying experience and a great way to meet people of all ages and have personal interactions. She added that it is the Town's responsibility to give free public access to community-building activities. She asks the BOS to consider maintaining the courts.
- Robert Wall (Whirling Dunn) said that he had been going to other towns to participate in pickle ball because of the poor condition of the Mills Ponds courts. He now participates in Canton because of the people involved. He supports court renovations and maintenance.
- Sarah Faulkner (Dyer Avenue) spoke as a member of the BOF. She asks for 5 years of supporting data for any significant request (eg. staffing/stipends). She would like to see data on the effectiveness of Fire Department incentives. This will be a tough year with expenses that cannot be avoided. This will require careful scrutiny. Also, she saw the request for paddleboards in the Parks & Rec meeting minutes. She was not expecting Parks & Rec to be offering paddleboard classes; this competes with Collinsville Canoe & Kayak services. We should not undermine their business. She would like to know more about the plans for this.
- Jan Tanner (Bunker Hill Road) provided an update on the Bike Pump and Skills Park. They have a contract between NEMBA and Pinnacle Trail Design and Construction. The existing site plan will be revised to include the bike park/playground. There is an active donation link on NEMBA's website. Fundraising will begin in March. She said that she noticed that Parks & Rec plans to purchase paddleboards from Amazon. She would like to see them work with local businesses on this purchase.

K. Witkos added to the agenda:

- Review the possibility of implementing traffic cameras to enforce traffic light requirements and speed limits.
- Litigation under Executive Session
- Presentation of Fiscal Year 2024-25 Preliminary Budget for the Water Pollution Control Facility

APPOINTMENTS - None

PRESENTATION OF FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025 PRELIMINARY BUDGET

■ Water Pollution Control Facility

John Kaminski provided a brief department outline. They have 4 licensed wastewater treatment plant operators; they are expecting a retirement soon so they are looking for a new operator. They operate and maintain the facilities, pump station, and sewers. He addressed questions about the qualifications, required certifications and costs for a new operator. R. Skinner explained that the WPCA approves this budget. It is presented to the BOS as a courtesy and for input. The greatest concern is flow levels. If these go over 90% capacity, they must submit a plan to the state. R. Skinner said that we have a plan. A larger issue has to do with development; this impacts our ability to develop properties (eg. the ax factory). J. Kaminski added that this is a widespread issue—the state may not mandate capacity expansion or put a moratorium on development. He said that they are trying to mitigate the flows. He addressed questions about the effects of recent improvements and said that this is difficult to quantify due to huge differences in weather.

■ Community Services

Community Agencies

R. Skinner said there were few changes. There are questions about the Youth Services Bureau which will be addressed with the agency in a future meeting. Three events received \$1,000 each (Memorial Day Parade, Christmas in Collinsville, Halloween Parade). The Health District expense is based on our population.

Library

Sarah McCusker reported that they have 16 staff members; they are open 6 days a week, including evenings and Saturdays. They provide guidance on state/federal regulations for programs (including information on unemployment, taxes, technical help, and health assistance). They provide statistics to the state library for state reports to the federal government. It is a small library but they do very well in terms of services and performance (number of visits per capita, circulation, program participation, collection turnover). They are proud to be part of the community and the community center. R. Skinner said there are small changes in salaries, and publications. He said that programs have increased 88%. They requested a budget increase to support these programs. He would like to support their success in this area. They have a nonprofit that supports them – their support is shown in a donation account which is not reflected in the budget. S. McCusker addressed questions about areas of interest in programs and explained that they try to do most programs with staff. They provide historical lectures, concerts, and children's programs/story times.

Senior/Social Services

Tonia Jackson explained that the department has 3 employees. They provide programs and services to approximately 135 people per week (to seniors and for all ages of people in need of assistance). R. Skinner explained that there is an increase in the cost of the lunch program. It has been a great success in terms of quality and the reliability of the restaurants involved. The Town subsidizes a percentage of the cost, which is increasing from \$10 to \$11 per lunch. The individual pays \$5. Dial-A-Ride went out to bid last year. We receive a state grant for that program. They increased General Assistance from \$3,500 to \$5,000 to provide additional services. T. Jackson addressed questions about qualifying for services/programs, the kinds of assistance provided, and if there are any needs that cannot be met. She explained that people qualify for help if they receive any state or federal assistance. The department works to provide help with food, housing, heat, clothing, gas, and car repairs. They work with the Food Bank, the BOE, and Gifts of Love. They do drives for household cleaning products, and personal care items, and distribute them through the Food Bank. They participate in the School Back Pack program and help people if they run out of SNAP benefits. She said it is difficult to find assistance for someone needing expensive car repairs. It is also difficult to find affordable housing. They will refer people to other agencies. They don't turn anyone away.

Parks and Recreation

Taryn Schrager provided an overview on staff, which includes 50 seasonal employees. They work closely with other Town departments. They provide programs and special events; they produce the Town program guide. They work with local artisans for special classes and have adaptive programming. They manage the schedule for use of rooms/rentals for buildings/fields and pool. The new splash pad will be built soon. They worked to supply AEDs at several locations. R. Skinner said that P&R has a large amount of programming. They requested a wage increase for the Operations Coordinator which is below her peers in the area, based on a salary survey. T. Schrager addressed questions about the splash pad; the track record for AED use; fringe benefits; attendance at special events; their use of a P&R survey as a reference tool; and court use at Mills Pond.

ACTION ITEM

Review a request by the Parks & Recreation Director to spend up to \$4000 from the Special Revenue Fund to purchase inflatable stand-up paddleboards and accessory equipment.

R. Skinner explained the nature of this request as an expansion of P&R activity. T. Schrager said they were considering uses for the new boat ramp and saw this as an opportunity to try a new activity but not to compete with Collinsville Canoe & Kayak (CC&K). They would provide minimal offerings and not make a massive investment without knowing the response. The inflatable boards could be stored in the DPW barn without taking up too much space. They never want to undermine local businesses. W. Volovski asked if CC&K had been notified of the potential program. Ms. Schrager said they were not notified. E. Corkum Winsor recommended having a courtesy conversation. This matter was tabled until the next BOS meeting. T. Schrager will contact CC&K and report to the BOS.

PRESENTATION OF FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025 PRELIMINARY BUDGET

■ Community Planning and Development

Neil Pade provided an overview of the department, the staff, and their responsibilities.

Building Official

N. Pade reported that the Building Official has been very busy in the past year – he has reviewed over \$30M of new construction value, and issued over 1,100 permits. His main concern is public safety. R. Skinner explained that there is now an expense for a vehicle (fuel and maintenance)—the Building Official was given a car last year. Rand Stanley commented that it has been a pleasure working with all Town departments since he started working in this position.

Fire Marshal

Neil Pade introduced Tim Tharau and summarized his role and that of the department. R. Skinner explained the issue about the completion of the Fire Station and the plan to move the Fire Marshall's office from the Town Hall to the Fire Station. The Fire Marshall will get a Fire Department vehicle. Mr. Tharau addressed questions about time spent on fire incidents, the volume of inspections, schedules, and staff responsibilities.

Town Planner

Neil Pade spoke about the role of the Land Use Office and Land Use agencies. Last year they processed 174 land use applications for the various land use commissions. R. Skinner commented that there is \$14,000 in the budget for EDA/Marketing. They will get software to do surveys and engage residents. They will create educational materials, and create interactive zoning maps. Other increases are due salary increases which are on trend. Advertising costs are increasing greatly; there is additional clerk time; and an increase to software support. Overall, there are no significant changes. R. Skinner addressed questions about GIS and the outside contractor that provides related services.

Review by the Town Planner Neil Pade about the role of Land Use and the various Land Use Agencies.

Neil Pade presented information on the core essence and highlights of the Land Use office and agencies. He spoke about their responsibility to the community and expectations of individuals when dealing with their property. Volunteers serve on land use commissions and they are given power over land rights. They must consider legal requirements, fundamental fairness, due process and certain statutory confines. The state has all the power not reserved by the federal government

and a portion of its power is given to municipalities. He showed the enabling statutes for land use. He spoke about the functions of the Planning Commission and the development of the POCD, which is current. He recommended that all Selectmen read the existing POCD. This plan provides an important evaluation that is useful for leadership and for the future of the Town. The Planning Commission also establishes subdivision regulations, and reviews and approves subdivisions. He described the responsibilities of Zoning (permitting for buildings, structures, use of land, housing development, etc.), the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Zoning Enforcement Officer. He explained that the Inland Wetlands and Watercourse Commission has science-based regulations and must match the state model. There are training regimens for each of these agencies.

▪ **Review of Insurance**

R. Skinner said there is a considerable increase in Workers' Comp. It is based on payroll and past history. There is an overall increase of 10.32%. He addressed questions about Property & Casualty Insurance coverage and the deductible, and Unemployment Insurance.

▪ **Review of Employee Benefits**

Increases in medical insurance (8%) and pension (10.9%) are based on actuary recommendations. R. Skinner addressed questions on the nature of the increase for medical insurance, and if there might be savings if we join the state partnership plan.

▪ **Review of the Capital Improvement Plan**

This item was tabled until the next BOS meeting.

Review the possibility of implementing traffic cameras to enforce traffic light requirements and speed limits.

K. Witkos reported that he, E. Corkum Winsor, R. Skinner, and Chief Arciero met with a representative of a company that provides the installation and services for these traffic cameras. They provided a breakdown of all costs. They can help determine the location for cameras and how they are installed. A violation would be a breach of Town ordinance. The Town keeps a percentage of the fine. Chief Arciero would authorize staff to review the recommendations from the service provider. E. Corkum Winsor said that the program is self-funding, there is no cost to the Town. 90% of recommended citations are accepted as real citations. It would benefit the Town and help with the speeding problems and public safety issues. R. Skinner said the consultant would assist with the details of the plan; the Town must adopt an ordinance. K. Witkos asked Selectmen if they would like the next step to be a presentation by this service provider at an upcoming BOS meeting. The members of the Temporary Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Committee would be invited. Selectmen agreed to hold the presentation.

ADOPTION OF CONSENT AGENDA

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

Seconded by: W. Volovski

The motion passed unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion: W. Volovski moved to amend the agenda to include the Executive Session item of pending litigation in the matter of the Town of Canton v. Christopher Lusiani.

Seconded by: T. LeGeyt

The motion passed unanimously.

Motion: S. Sedor moved to enter Executive Session at 9:57 p.m. to discuss pending litigation in the matter of the Town of Canton v. Lusiani pursuant to CGS Section 1-200(6)(a).

Seconded by: W. Volovski

The motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: B Volovski motioned and S. Sedor seconded to adjourn the meeting at 10:28pm. The motion passed unanimously.