

TOWN OF CANTON - BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Regular Hybrid Meeting
Wednesday, August 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: CAO Robert Skinner, Police Chief Chris Arciero, Tom Richardson, Kevin Bradley, Lori Elkins, Laura Williamson, Lisa Coggins, John Pettini, Alan Hanks, Recording Secretary Maureen Griffin.

Call to Order: K. Witkos called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

-Harvey Jassem (East Hill Road) said that he was happy to see that the BOS will be discussing the case of the Town of Canton v. Lusiani. He added that there has been no change in the situation (flooding to properties in the past two years) that has affected his home, his neighbors, and the Town. The Court decision found was that there is an urgent need to address the immediate harm, and that the defendant has clearly violated several of the Town's zoning regulations. There have been no fines or any remediation. He has spoken to the Superior Court Clerk and he asks that the Town move forward with this case and that it not be swept under the rug.

-Barbara Schori (Maple Avenue) commented that the past two days have been a nightmare for speeding on Maple Avenue. Residents have witnessed heavy vehicles going 40mph; a landscaper's vehicle was going 60mph. She asked about police presence, and potential camera use to solve the problem.

-Larry Minichiello (Maple Avenue) said that he supports the use of speed cameras. The police department is not staffed enough to provide speed enforcement officers. Cameras would provide a way to control speeding in our Town. He disagrees with residents who raised issues about privacy, efficacy and legality. We need a support mechanism to provide protection for residents.

-Dan Barnhardt (Allen Place) commented that he thought the BOS made a mistake in not moving forward with the study on repurposing the old firehouse. He added that the Town Meeting got out of hand and he was disappointed that none of the Selectmen spoke up. He was promised decorum but he did not have a chance to speak at the meeting; he was not recognized when he was at the podium.

-Lisa Coggins (Daynard Drive) commented that traffic violations are not just a local problem; they are a national problem. She serves on the Temporary Traffic & Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee and has done research, but spoke as an individual. She asked Selectmen to approve the ordinance for traffic cameras because it would be a great solution for residents, especially Maple Avenue residents. Rte. 565 might serve as a trial area.

-Tom Blatchley (Bart Drive) said that he has sent several submissions about use of traffic cameras. He has not received a rebuttal to his legal/factual analysis on the proposed ordinance. He respectfully disagrees with some comments of other residents made earlier and at previous meetings. He does not think it is appropriate for the BOS to approve the ordinance. He also voiced concerns about the proposed 4-day work week for some Town staff—his reservations are about the impact on the public.

ACTION ITEMS:

Appointment of:

Meredith O'Keefe (D) as a member of the Board of Ethics for a term to expire on June 30, 2027;

Lori Elkins (D) as a member of the Collinsville Historic District Commission for a term to expire on June 30, 2028;

Laura Williamson (U) as an alternate of the Commission on Aging for a term to expire on July 31, 2028;

Lisa Coggins (U) as a member of the Conservation Commission for a term to expire on June 30, 2028;

John Pettini (D) as a member of the Parks & Recreation Commission for a term to expire on July 1, 2025;

Alan Hanks (D) as a member of the Temporary Traffic & Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee for a term to expire on August 3, 2025.

S. Sedor explained that the Appointment Committee met in August to review applications and ensure that all applicants were given an opportunity to serve based on their experience and interests. K. Witkos asked candidates to introduce themselves and comment on their reasons for volunteering. Lori Elkins explained that she lives in Collinsville and had previously lived in another historic town that became overdeveloped. She wants to work to make sure the historic nature of the district is not lost. Lisa Coggins said that she is an advocate for open space and would like to work on the POCD process. John Pettini has an interest in wellness and has been an advocate for Parks and Rec and the court renovation project. He said that he appreciates the process and recognizes the need for Town volunteers. Alan Hanks said that he has moved back to Canton and sees the problems with traffic issues. He would like to contribute to finding solutions.

Motion: S. Sedor moved to appoint all candidates listed as agenda items 3A-3F to the commissions/committees indicated.

Seconded by: W. Volovski

The motion passed unanimously.

R. Skinner swore in all appointees that were in attendance.

Review and possibly approve the creation of an Assistant Emergency Management Director position.

K. Witkos explained that Chief Arciero had the foresight to create this position for Canton—many other communities have someone serving in this position. Chief Arciero said that Kevin Bradley has fulfilled this position as a volunteer for the past eight years without a formal role. He is dedicated, has gone above and beyond expectations in a Public Safety role, and never asked for anything. He is a doer, and he looks toward the future needs of the community. He leads a volunteer CERT Team of 20+ people and is a great talent. He is the right person for the job. Chief Arciero said that he drafted a job description which he submitted to the BOS for review. Selectmen discussed the required state and FEMA certifications; ongoing requirements; and Mr. Bradley's commitment to the community and his success in setting an example and being a good role model. K. Witkos commented that Chief Arciero has laid the groundwork for this and that he would like to accept the Chief's recommendation. K. Bradley thanked the Chief, the Selectmen, and the community for the opportunity to serve in this official capacity.

Motion: E. Corkum Winsor moved to create the position of Assistant Emergency Management Director and appoint Kevin Bradley to the position.

Seconded by: W. Volovski

The motion passed unanimously.

R. Skinner swore in Mr. Bradley.

Review and possibly approve police policy to allow retired Canton Police Officers to work private duty jobs.

Chief Arciero explained that the Town receives a small portion of funds for construction in Town which is used to provide protection at the site. The department cannot always fulfill the role at these private construction sites due to staffing levels and other commitments. Other towns are called in, or it goes unfilled. This means the loss of the administrative fee that would go along with the job. The best way to address this is to open the opportunity to retired officers. This is done in other towns. We have one or two officers who are still state certified, and meet other requirements. K. Witkos pointed out that the Town does not pay for the officers continuing training or other fees—the onus is on the individual who wants to participate. He stated that he supports the Chief's

initiative. Selectmen discussed how long certifications last for officers; whether they serve as back-up for an emergency while they are at a job site; if this is approved by the union; and insurance/Workers' Comp implications. Chief Arciero explained that certifications are good for three years; officers do provide back-up for emergencies when they are working which serves as a force multiplier; and that the union supports this. R. Skinner said that there may be some insurance impact (Workers' Comp coverage). S. Sedor said that he is very much in favor of this. E. Corkum said that a benefit is that retired officers know the community.

Motion: S. Sedor moved to approve the proposed policy that would allow retired Canton police officers to work private duty jobs in the Town of Canton.

Seconded by: T. LeGeyt

The motion passed unanimously.

Review and possibly approve a request from the Acting DPW Director Tom Richardson to fund the purchase of mechanic's tools for the DPW Mechanic to replace the private tools that had been previously used.

Tom Richardson summarized the situation. The Town does not have tools for use in maintaining and repairing Town vehicles. The mechanic has been using his own tools. Mr. Richardson asked for a list of tools that are needed. The extensive list totaled \$19,000; some were to be purchased from Snap Tools and included a lifetime warranty. He recommends that some of the tools be purchased from Snap, but some do not require this investment, so the total will be \$15,000.

K. Witkos said that he was surprised that the Town does not own the tools for this work which has saved the Town thousands of dollars; this is an appropriate expense.

Motion: W. Volovski moved to approve the creation of a CIP account entitled DPW mechanics tools in the amount of \$15,000 to be funded from the undesignated portion of the CIP.

Seconded by: T. LeGeyt

The motion passed unanimously.

Review and possibly approve amending the Building Fee policy from \$14 for every \$1,000 of construction costs to \$15 for every \$1,000 of construction costs.

K. Witkos stated that he likes this suggestion for an amendment to the policy. W. Volovski said that this was discussed at previous BOS meetings; the elimination of the lower tier will help ensure that people will not avoid getting permits for their smaller home projects. This is a minimal change but it has the potential to increase revenues, especially with the potentially large building projects that are expected in the next year or two.

Motion: T. LeGeyt moved to approve a resolution that raises the building fee from \$14 for every \$1,000 of construction costs to \$15 for every \$1,000 of construction costs and eliminates the lower tier of \$28 for the first \$2,000 of construction cost to be effective September 1, 2024.

Seconded by: W. Volovski

The motion passed unanimously.

Review proposal to adopt a four-day work week for certain Town Departments.

R. Skinner provided an overview on the proposed 4-day work week for some Town staff. He said that it was more complicated than expected. All Town departments and staff provided input. Town Hall would be closed on Fridays. This may be an inconvenience for some residents but they will be able to give feedback because there will be a trial period. He emphasized that staff is not working fewer hours because other weekdays will have longer work hours. Town Hall will be open the same number of hours, either by opening earlier or closing later in the day. DPW, the library, the police department, and Parks and Rec will be open the same hours. From the public perspective, it mostly affects Town Hall and Senior/Social Services. Residents have the option of accessing services online. The greatest issues have been in addressing staff holidays, and finance department administration because this requires an individualized schedule for all staff. It is a workable system and offers a benefit to staff. Selectmen discussed the trial period (till end of year); the concerns

about Town Hall being closed on Fridays; the reason for establishing this as a benefit to staff; and the need to inform residents of this change. S. Sedor said that he is averse to having Town Hall closed on Fridays because it is a business day and it may be important for functions such as filing deadlines. K. Witkos emphasized the need for work/life balance and that this is an important benefit because Canton is not the highest paying town in the area, and because several departments are staffed by only one person. This will be reevaluated at end-of-year.

Motion: E. Corkum moved to approve a voluntary four-day workweek schedule consistent with the proposal submitted by the Chief Administrative Officer, with a trial period until end-of-year.

Seconded by: T. LeGeyt

The motion passed 4-1-0.

Review Capital Projects and refer to Board of Finance for further review.

R. Skinner provided an update on the projects. The additional classrooms will be done as a building addition instead of modular classrooms. There was an issue with the installation of the modules. Friar Architects have provided an estimate (\$2,298,409) which is being reviewed by Millennium Builders. Millennium will make their submission on Monday. He presented drawings of the proposed addition. He reported that the CIS roof cost estimate is down to \$410,000 with a 40% reimbursement. The Cafeteria/Kitchen project will not be done. The court renovation project is estimated at \$1.3M. The fire department air packs will be less than the expected \$450,000 (estimated to be \$373,739). K. Witkos explained that there were concerns about the school improvement plan. There is a state school construction grant program, but it takes a year. Classrooms are needed as soon as possible. There may be an opportunity for the grant program after the fact. Selectmen discussed the projects and the need for more funds being dedicated to pavement management. The schools had a dire necessity. BOF established a cap for the bonding amount. Pavement management is always cut when there are other needs. R. Skinner pointed out that pavement management has been at \$600,000 for many years and W. Volovski added that it buys less every year. T. LeGeyt expressed concerns about the classroom addition: he is disappointed with the plan, more restrooms are needed—the facilities are inadequate; the plan is short-sighted. R. Skinner pointed out that the modules would not last very long; the addition provides a long term solution.

Motion: S. Sedor moved to approve the Tennis and Basketball Courts replacement project in the amount of \$1,300,000 and the Canton Volunteer Fire and EMS Department Air Packs replacement in the amount of \$373,739 for referral to the Board of Finance for possible funding.

Seconded by: W. Volovski

The motion passed unanimously.

Motion: S. Sedor moved to approve the following capital projects for referral to the Board of Finance for possible funding: the School Improvement Plan consisting of Cherry Brook School Four Classroom Addition, and the replacement of the slate portion of the Intermediate School Roof in the estimated amount of \$3,287,409.

Seconded by: W. Volovski

The motion passed 4-1-0

K. Witkos provided an update on the Referendum. There is a conflict due to state law changes in early voting. This affects these bonding items being placed on our Referendum in November. We would need to have a Town Meeting within 14 days of the Referendum and before early voting begins. We could schedule a Referendum at another time, or vote on these items at a Town Meeting. R. Skinner pointed out that advocacy rules do not apply if a Town Meeting is held versus a Referendum. R. Skinner will prepare resolutions for review at the 8-28-24 BOS meeting. K. Witkos said that a Town Meeting could be scheduled for 10-17-24, but this will be confirmed.

Review Automated Traffic Enforcement Safety Devices Ordinance and possibly set for public hearing.

K. Witkos said that he recently met with Chief Arciero to discuss this issue and the roll-out of automated systems in CT. They are not being widely accepted in small communities. Mr. Witkos added that he was disappointed with the information that was recently provided by Site Stream. The only current location that would be approved by DOT would be the intersection of Rte. 44 and Dowd Avenue. This is based on crash data, not speed data. The Town does not have control over camera locations even if areas are notorious for red light/speeding violations. Future legislation may lead to changes in the rules. He suggested tabling this to be a matter for the future.

Review proposed modification to the ordinance entitled “Exemption for Farm Buildings; Additional Exemption for Farm Machinery” which modification would increase the exemption for farm buildings and equipment.

R. Skinner said that a request was made by a resident, who is a farmer, for an increased exemption as permitted by statute. He spoke with the Assessor who said that this would not have a significant loss of tax dollars. K. Witkos said that he is willing to hear what the public has to say about this and that he supports it if it helps local farmers.

Motion: W. Volovski moved to hold a Public Hearing on the modified ordinance entitled “Exemption for Farm Buildings; Additional Exemption for Farm Machinery” on August 28, 2024 at 7:00pm in Room F of the Community Center.

Seconded by: T. LeGeyt

The motion passed unanimously.

Reaffirm the appointment of Taryn Schrager as the Interim Chief Administrative Officer effective August 31, 2024.

R. Skinner said that there had been a technical error when the special meeting was held. Residents were not able to join in the meeting to make comments. This is a precautionary measure.

Motion: W. Volovski moved to reaffirm the appointment of Taryn Schrager as the Interim Chief Administrative Officer effective August 31, 2024.

Seconded by: E. Corkum Winsor

The motion passed unanimously.

ADOPTION OF CONSENT AGENDA

Motion: W. Volovski moved to approve the Consent Agenda.

(S. Sedor did not vote on the approval of the 7-10-24 BOS meeting minutes due to his absence.)

Seconded by: E. Corkum Winsor

The motion passed unanimously.

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

-K. Witkos asked about follow-up to a resident’s communication/question on when tax refunds would go out. R. Skinner said that he would look into it.

-He reported that Lisa Coggins tried to hand deliver a letter to the Church of Latter Day Saints about a sidewalk on their property on Lawton Road while she was in Utah.

-He received information about the ax factory. They have received a dam permit and will have a hearing before DEEP. There was a positive article in the Hartford Courant.

-He received an ADA complaint about Dial-A-Ride services. R. Skinner said the will send the BOS the Dial-A-Ride policy. He, and Neil Pade have been working with this individual.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Motion: S. Sedor moved to enter Executive Session at 8:36 p.m. to discuss Contractual negotiations involving The National Association of Government Employees Local R1-198 (DPW Union) pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 1-200(6)(e), and pending litigation in the matter of Town of Canton v. Lusiani, pursuant to CGS Section 1-200(6)(b).

Seconded by: W. Volovski

The motion passed unanimously.