

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES OF MEETING
JANUARY 4, 2022**

Members of the public were not able to physically attend this meeting due to the closing of Town Hall. The meeting was broadcast live on Comcast channel 12 and could also be viewed via live stream at WHCA.tv. It was subsequently broadcast on YouTube.com

In attendance were Chairman F. Kowalski; Clerk Brian J. Bezanson; Member Randolph G. LaMattina; Member Justin R. Evans; and Town Administrator Lincoln Heineman. Vice Chairman Salvucci was absent.

Chairman Kowalski asked everyone in attendance to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. This was followed by a moment of silence dedicated to Mary Plasse, long-time election worker for the Town of Whitman and avid volunteer at the Council on Aging and Whitman Public Library.

Chairman Kowalski announced the meeting is being recorded and broadcast live on Comcast channel 12 and via live stream at WHCA.tv.

Mr. Bezanson **MOVED** to approve bill and payroll warrants. **Second** Mr. LaMattina, **so voted 4-0.**

Mr. Bezanson **MOVED** to accept correspondence in the Read File. **Second** Mr. LaMattina, **so voted 4-0.**

Chairman Kowalski read the following public comment from Shawn Kain into the record:

“I appreciate the thorough discussion and careful action the board has taken over the past couple months. This is going to be another difficult winter and the action steps you have implemented to protect our community has been proactive and effective, thank you.

In addition, over the past couple years the board has made significant progress on developing a comprehensive capital plan, strategic plan and recently adopted financial policy. With this in mind, I believe that it would be helpful to provide updated information about these initiatives at the upcoming Town Meeting. It would also be helpful if the board could make explicit connections between the relevant articles on the warrant and the plans and policy that has been developed. For instance, if the board is going to recommend that the building inspector role transition to a full time position, then, ideally, the public should see where that initiative is reflected on the strategic plan and the long term financial impact it would have on the budget. Similarly, providing information to the public about the DPW building would be logical. Specifically, information about the project within the larger capital plan, a reference to the debt policy, and maybe a connection to the Madden recommendation would provide helpful guidance (i.e. how much money should we use out of stabilization vs. enterprise funds vs. debt exclusion). It may be early in the project to have precise information about these variables, but I believe that

it is helpful for the public to become aware that these variable will be formally considered and, critically, that they fit within the limits and context of a bigger plan.

Our community is in a vulnerable situation and the financial decision we make in the coming months will have a real impact. I have been impressed by the work that has been accomplished by board recently and over the past couple years. I am sharing this message because I believe in that work and I hope that the thorough and proactive plans and policy will guide our decisions and empower us to achieve our common mission.”

*Shawn Kain
31 Forest Street*

Chairman Kowalski announced the Whitman Cultural Council has approved grant funding for more than 30 cultural programs that will take place in Whitman during the upcoming year, a few of which the Board will be voting on this evening.

NEW BUSINESS

Hazard Mitigation Plan

Chairman Kowalski read the Town of Whitman Integrated MVP HMP Plan 2021 Update into the record. Mr. Bezanson **MOVED** to adopt the Town of Whitman Integrated Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness and Hazard Mitigation Plan 2021 Update. **Second Mr. LaMattina, so voted 4-0.**

Mr. LaMattina asked Mr. Heineman to make the Plan available to the public by posting it on the Town’s website.

Resignation: William White

Mr. Bezanson **MOVED** to accept the resignation of William White from the position of Auxiliary/Special Police Officer, effective December 20, 2021. **Second Mr. LaMattina, so voted 4-0.**

Christine Morse: Request to Use Town Hall Auditorium

Mr. Bezanson **MOVED** to approve the request of Christine Morse for permission to use the Town Hall auditorium on Saturday, March 5, 2022, for the purpose of holding a beauty pageant to benefit the Miss Whitman Scholarship Organization, dependent upon the state of the health of the Town at the time of the event. **Second Mr. LaMattina, so voted 4-0.**

Whitman Cultural Council: Request to Hold Various Events

Mr. Bezanson **MOVED** to approve the request of Dawn Byers, on behalf of the Whitman Cultural Council for permission to use the Town Hall auditorium on Sunday, March 13, 2022, for “A Great Day for the Irish” (a singing performance by Ruth Harcovitz); Sunday, April 2, 2022, for “Champagne, Cake and Art”; to bring back the Summer Concert Series on June 2, 9, 16, 23 & 30, 2022; and to hold a Cultural Festival at the Town Park on Saturday, June 25, 2022, dependent upon the state of the health of the Town at the time of the events (with the exception of outdoor events). **Second Mr. LaMattina, so voted 4-0.**

Requests to Hold Tollbooth Fundraisers

Mr. Bezanson **MOVED** to approve the request of the American Legion Post #22 to conduct a Tollbooth Fundraiser on Saturday, April 23, 2022, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., with a rain date of Saturday, May 14, 2022. **Second Mr. LaMattina, so voted 4-0.**

Mr. Bezanson **MOVED** to approve the request of the Whitman Area Toy Drive to hold a Tollbooth Fundraiser on Saturday, September 3, 2022, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. **Second Mr. LaMattina, so voted 4-0.**

Mr. Bezanson **MOVED** to approve the request of the Knights of Columbus to hold a Tollbooth Fundraiser on Saturday, October 8, 2022, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. **Second Mr. LaMattina, so voted 4-0.**

DPW Building Committee: Mission Statement and Appointments to Committee

Mr. Heineman reminded the Board of its previous decision to establish a DPW Building Committee consisting of 10 members and its responsibility to appoint 1 member of the Board of Selectmen and 4 members of the public. To date, Frank Lynam, David LeMay and John Galvin have expressed in writing their desire to be appointed to the committee. The Board of Selectmen wishes to pursue the construction of a new building at the current location and the committee will oversee the procurement of a new building at that location.

Chairman Kowalski asked if the Board of Public Works Commissioners are in agreement with that.

Mr. Heineman stated that he has been unable to reach Chairman Cleary.

Chairman Kowalski advised Mr. Heineman that until he is able to confirm the location with the chairman of the Board of Public Works Commissioners, the Board of Selectmen will hold off on a mission statement. He also announced the remaining vacancy and asked anyone interested to express their interest in writing to Mr. Heineman.

Meeting Schedule

The Board scheduled their next meeting for Tuesday, January 11, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.; and Tuesday, January 18, 2022, at 7:00 p.m.

OLD BUSINESS

Special Town Meeting Warrant

Mr. Heineman advised the Board that Town Counsel made two amendments to the warrant consisting of the identification of the fiscal year and the location of the meeting. Because the ability to hold the meeting in a place not within the geographical limits of the town has expired, the meeting cannot be held at the high school. The meeting will take place in the Town Hall auditorium which can accommodate 200 guests with 6 foot social distancing in place.

Chairman Kowalski noted that if the current COVID conditions remain, it could jeopardize the meeting taking place at that time.

Mr. Heineman agreed and outlined the procedure for postponing the meeting.

Mr. Bezanson **MOVED** to approve the January 31, 2022, special Town Meeting warrant as amended by Town Counsel. **Second Mr. LaMattina, so voted 4-0.**

SCHEDULED EVENTS

6:10 P.M.: Board of Health: COVID-19 Response Measures

Chairman Kowalski welcomed Board of Health Chairperson Danielle Clancy and Health Inspector Dan Kelly. He then noted the Board of Selectmen is aware of the revisions the Board of Health has made to the COVID guidelines; and asked Mrs. Clancy if she preferred the Board support the guidelines or vote to adopt them.

Mrs. Clancy stated that she would not object if the Board chose to adopt the guidelines.

Mr. Lamattina asked that the phrase “must wear a mask” located in the second paragraph of the guidelines be amended to read ‘shall wear a mask.’ Mr. Kelly agreed to make that amendment.

Mr. LaMattina **MOVED** to amend paragraph 2 of the Town of Whitman Quarantine Guidelines to read *“Fully vaccinated employees who have come into close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual do not need to quarantine. However, they **shall** wear a mask for the next 10 days. They should also test on the 5th day of masking. If at any point the employee develops symptoms, they should immediately begin to quarantine and test before returning to work. If the test is negative they can return to work immediately”*; and to adopt said guidelines as amended.

Second Mr. Bezanson, so voted 4-0.

Mrs. Clancy noted the definition of “fully vaccinated” has changed and urged everyone to get vaccinated and to get a booster shot.

Chairman Kowalski asked if the Board of Health will be mandating vaccines for Town employees.

Mrs. Clancy stated that the Board has discussed the issue and will be addressing it again at the January 11th meeting.

A brief discussion took place regarding immunity and those who have had the virus; the time between shots (Pfizer) being reduced to 5 months; and employees who are sick coming to work.

Chairman Kowalski asked Mrs. Clancy to consider a mask mandate at the next Board of Health meeting. Mr. Bezanson noted that recent news reports seem to indicate that other countries hit their peak and then dropped off significantly. Mr. LaMattina agreed. He also agreed to maintain the closure of town owned buildings at least until the Board of Health meets on January 11th, and to mandate mask wearing at all times for employees and others while inside the buildings.

Mr. Evans stated that he was hoping to re-open the buildings next Monday but he is willing to wait until the January 11th Board of Health meeting. He does not want to see this go on any longer than it has to because the library and Council on Aging also provide essential services.

Mr. LaMattina **MOVED** that all Town owned buildings remain open to the public by appointment only at least through January 11, 2022; and effective January 5, 2022, masks must be worn at all times by everyone, including employees, while inside Town owned buildings.

Second Mr. Bezanson, so voted 4-0.

Mrs. Clancy reminded everyone of a clinic scheduled at the Knights of Columbus on January 5th, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and advised that walk-ins are welcome until she runs out of vaccine.

Mr. Heineman opened discussion regarding holding public meetings inside Town Hall while the building is closed to the public. He advised the Board that if meetings are held inside the building, the meeting must be televised live or live streamed on WHCA.tv in order for the public to watch the meeting in real time. Meetings can also be held on Zoom and recorded for placement on YouTube a short time later. Mr. Heineman noted the Board of Appeals is scheduled to meet in the building on January 10th, and it is his recommendation that the building be open for that meeting in order for those affiliated with the public hearings to attend in person.

Chairman Kowalski stated that he is inclined to ask the Zoning Board to postpone the meeting. Following discussion, it was the consensus of the Board to let Mr. Heineman advise the chairman of the Zoning Board of two options – to hold the meeting in the Selectmen’s Meeting Room and have WHCA televise it live, with only interested parties to the scheduled hearings allowed in to the meeting or to postpone the meeting to a future date.

Chairman Kowalski announced that the interviews scheduled to take place this evening for the position of assistant town administrator have been postponed until January 18, 2022, due to the fact that not all members of the board are present this evening.

Before adjourning the meeting, Mr. Bezanson advised Chairman Kowalski that he was notified by Mr. Salvucci that a former DPW superintendent has expressed interest in becoming a member of the DPW Building Committee. Mr. Heineman stated that he was also made aware of this by Mr. Salvucci, however, interested parties are asked to submit their request in writing.

At 6:50 p.m. Mr. Bezanson **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting. **Second** Mr. LaMattina, **so voted 4-0.**

Brian J. Bezanson, Clerk