

Select Board Minutes

Monday, January 23, 2023 - 6:30 PM

Meeting to be held as hybrid with both an in-person and with a remote participation option in accordance with Chapter 107 of the Acts of 2022

Present: Scott C. Wrenn, Sara K. Rufli (remote), Daniel S. Carpenter and Steven Chambers

Also Present: Town Manager Julie A. Jacobson and CFO/Asst. Town Manager Ed Kazanovicz

Chair Scott Wrenn called the meeting to order at 6:31 P.M.

Mr. Wrenn announced that this Open Meeting of the Town of Auburn Select Board was being conducted *both in person and remotely*, consistent with Chapter 107 of the Acts of 2022, which suspends the requirement of the Open Meeting Law to have all meetings in a publicly accessible *physical* location. Further, all members of public bodies are allowed to participate remotely as long as reasonable public access is afforded so that the public can follow along with the deliberations of the meeting.

For the public to join the meeting remotely by telephone, 1-408-650-3123 and Access Code 235-235-861. Or, the public can join via computer at <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/235-235-861>.

All supporting materials that have been provided to members of this body are available on the Town's website. The public is encouraged to follow along using the posted agenda.

The Chair confirmed that members and persons anticipated on the agenda participating remotely were present and could hear him.

- Dan Carpenter - Present
- Sara Rufli - Yes
- Steven Chambers - Present

Please note that this meeting is being recorded by Auburn Cable Television. Each vote taken in this meeting will be conducted by roll call vote.

The Board led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Proclamation for Town Manager

Chair Scott Wrenn read and presented a proclamation to Town Manager Julie A. Jacobson for her many years of public service. Ms. Jacobson will be retiring on January 30, 2023 after 12 years working for the Town of Auburn.

Former Select Board member Doreen Goodrich was present to speak and congratulated Ms. Jacobson on her retirement and acknowledged her work as the first Town Manager in the Town of Auburn.

Chair Scott Wrenn congratulated Ms. Jacobson on her retirement and recognized all the hard work she has put in as Town Manager and for her outstanding service to the Town of Auburn.

Public Comments

Marcia Ofcarcik of 17 Mount View Avenue was in attendance and presented concerns of the residents of the neighborhood about the two double-sided electronic billboards at the Auburn Mall.

Ms. Ofcarcik read a statement signed by residents detailing the issues.

The Town Manager discussed the approval process for the signs and the zoning bylaws approved by the town meeting. She said that public hearings were advertised and held before the installation of the digital signs.

Ms. Ofcarcik said that the lighting from the signs was shining in residents' windows and sounds were affecting their sleep. She asked if the signs could be lowered.

Ms. Jacobson advised that she could speak with the Building Commissioner and see if there were any violations of current bylaws and ask him to check on the lighting.

The Select Board voted to request Town Administration to look into the situation and report back to the Board (Motion made by Mr. Carpenter; motion seconded by Mr. Chambers) roll call vote: Mr. Carpenter, Yes; Mr. Chambers, Yes; Ms. Rufli, Yes; Mr. Wrenn, Yes – passed 4 to 0.

DDIS Director Darlene Coyle announced that a flu clinic will be held on Thursday January 26, 2023 from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM in the Presentation Room at Auburn High School.

Public Hearings/Presentations

Flexcar, LLC - Motor Vehicle Class II and Auto Repair Licenses at 525 Washington Street, Auburn, MA. 6:30 P.M.

At 7:01 P.M. the Select Board voted to open the hearing (Motion made by Mr. Carpenter; motion seconded by Mr. Chambers) roll call vote: Mr. Chambers, Yes; Mr. Carpenter, Yes; Ms. Rufli, Yes; Mr. Wrenn, Yes – passed 4 to 0.

Mr. Jason Pruitt was present on behalf of the applications and he described the business operation that would be at 525 Washington Street in Auburn, MA. as a vehicle subscription service, weekly vehicle subscription without a commitment. Mr. Pruitt said that they are a young company and currently have distribution lots based around Boston and that this Auburn location would be a hub for Flexcar vehicle service and maintenance and to send vehicles to other locations around New England.

The applicant had met with the Development Coordinating Group (DCG) and the group provided the following recommended conditions to be placed on the licenses:

- The applicant shall obtain all necessary permits and inspections from Town Departments, Boards, or Commissions;
- Most notably, the applicant shall meet all Fire and Building Department permitting requirements;

- The applicant shall obtain any necessary approvals of State agencies.

Mr. Dan Largesse of 39 Perry Place asked if this was the same operation as in Boston and Cape Cod for long term leases of boats.

Mr. Pruitt replied that it's a similar concept and most customers use the vehicles for a couple of weeks.

Mr. Chambers asked if there were to be any improvements to the physical property.

Mr. Pruitt replied that there would be some renovation work at the site and aesthetic improvements outside the building, mainly paint and new signs. Also, there would also be security improvements of a new security gate and fencing. He said that they discussed the improvements with the DCG and they'll be submitting minor modifications to the site plan for permits.

The Board voted to close the hearing (Motion made by Mr. Carpenter; motion seconded by Mr. Chambers) roll call vote: Mr. Chambers, Yes; Mr. Carpenter, Yes; Ms. Rufli, Yes; Mr. Wrenn, Yes – passed 4 to 0.

The Select Board voted to approve the licenses, provided that all applicable requirements of the state and town and any of its departments, boards and commissions have been fulfilled. Said licenses are subject to all the conditions stated upon them. Failure to comply with any and all conditions shall invalidate the license and render it null and void, and with conditions of the DCG to be placed on the licenses (Motion made by Mr. Carpenter; motion seconded by Mr. Chambers) roll call vote: Mr. Chambers, Yes; Mr. Carpenter, Yes; Ms. Rufli, Yes; Mr. Wrenn, Yes – passed 4 to 0.

Apple New England LLC (Applebee's Neighborhood Grill & Bar) Change of Manager at 680 Southbridge Street, Auburn, MA.

The Select Board voted to open the public hearing (Motion made by Mr. Carpenter; motion seconded by Mr. Chambers) roll call vote: Mr. Chambers, Yes; Mr. Carpenter, Yes; Ms. Rufli, Yes; Mr. Wrenn, Yes – passed 4 to 0.

Jessica Rooney was participating remotely on behalf of the change of manager on the liquor license.

There were no questions from the Board, Town Administration or the public.

The Police Chief advised via email that he had no comments on the application for a change of manager as the ABCC conducts the CORI checks.

The Select Board voted to close the hearing (Motion made by Mr. Carpenter; motion seconded by Ms. Rufli) roll call vote: Mr. Chambers, Yes; Mr. Carpenter, Yes; Ms. Rufli, Yes; Mr. Wrenn, Yes – passed 4 to 0.

The Select Board voted to approve the change of manager to Jessica Gene Rooney (Motion made by Mr. Carpenter; motion seconded by Mr. Chambers) roll call vote: Mr. Chambers, Yes; Mr. Carpenter, Yes; Ms. Rufli, Yes; Mr. Wrenn, Yes – passed 4 to 0.

Communications – None

Select Board General Items

Vote to Confirm Manager’s Recommendation of Assistant Town Manager/Human Resources Director

Town Manager Julie Jacobson presented the recommendation of Dori A. Vecchio as Assistant Town Manager/Human Resources Director for the Town of Auburn.

Mr. Kazanovicz spoke and recommended that the Board confirm his selection of Ms. Vecchio for the position.

The Select Board voted to confirm the Manager’s recommendation of Dori A. Vecchio as Assistant Town Manager/Human Resources Director (Motion made by Mr. Carpenter; motion seconded by Mr. Chambers) roll call vote: Mr. Carpenter, Yes; Ms. Rufli, Yes; Mr. Chambers, Yes; Mr. Wrenn, Yes – passed 4 to 0.

Vote to Appointment Town Accountant

Town Manager Julie Jacobson presented the recommendation of Karen S. Harnois as Town Accountant. Ed Kazanovicz concurred with the recommendation.

The Select Board voted to appoint Karen S. Harnois as Town Accountant (Motion made by Mr. Chambers; motion seconded by Mr. Carpenter) roll call vote: Mr. Carpenter, Yes; Ms. Rufli, Yes; Mr. Chambers, Yes; Mr. Wrenn, Yes – passed 4 to 0.

Vote to Confirm Manager’s Recommendation of Chief Financial Officer

Town Manager Julie Jacobson presented her and next Town Manager Ed Kazanovicz’ recommendation of Karen S. Harnois as Chief Financial Officer for the Town of Auburn.

Mr. Kazanovicz spoke in agreement with the recommendation.

The Select Board voted to confirm the Manager’s recommendation of Karen S. Harnois as Chief Financial Officer (Motion made by Mr. Chambers; motion seconded by Mr. Carpenter) roll call vote: Mr. Carpenter, Yes; Ms. Rufli, Yes; Mr. Chambers, Yes; Mr. Wrenn, Yes – passed 4 to 0.

Drainlayer License G.H. Excavation, Inc. of Spencer, MA.

The Select Board received the application documents and recommendation of the Sewer Commission.

The Select Board voted to approve the license, provided that all applicable requirements of the state and town and any of its departments, boards and commissions have been fulfilled. Said license is subject to all the conditions stated upon it. Failure to comply with any and all conditions shall invalidate the license and render it null and void (Motion made by Mr.

Carpenter; motion seconded by Mr. Chambers) roll call vote: Mr. Carpenter, Yes; Ms. Rufli, Yes; Mr. Chambers, Yes; Mr. Wrenn, Yes – passed 4 to 0.

Gift Acceptances in Accordance with MGL Chapter 44, Section 53A

There were no items.

Proclamations and Recognitions

There were no items.

Town Manager Items

Vote to approve the Intermunicipal Agreement between the Town of Oxford and the Town of Auburn for the Transportation of Wastewater

The Town Manager summarized the new agreement between the Town of Oxford and Auburn for the transportation of wastewater.

The Select Board voted to approve the Intermunicipal Agreement between the Town of Oxford and the Town of Auburn for the Transportation of Wastewater (Motion made by Mr. Chambers; motion seconded by Mr. Carpenter) roll call vote: roll call vote: Mr. Carpenter, Yes; Ms. Rufli, Yes; Mr. Chambers, Yes; Mr. Wrenn, Yes – passed 4 to 0.

Potential Vote on Premium Pay - ARPA Funds for Municipal Employees

The Town Manager addressed updated information provided to the Board with the addition of retirees. She cautioned that these are estimated numbers for tonight's discussion and that the Administration will continue to review the payroll records to identify any employees that were left out. Board members were in agreement to include Retirees who retired since April 2020 under MGL and worked during the time March 10, 2020 – June 15, 2021.

Mr. Chambers discussed adjustments to the Police and Fire and Ambulance as well as eliminating the Vaccine Booster bonus.

Following the discussion, Mr. Chambers made a motion to use ARPA funds for premium pay with the numbers he stated for each classification as follows: \$3,675.00 for Vaccine Clinics, \$213,390.00 for Police of Fire (\$3,000 each), \$6,000.00 for Inspections, \$37,500 for Ambulance (\$1,500.00 each), \$31,945.00 for all others, and to eliminate the Vaccine Booster bonus. Mr. Carpenter seconded and suggested an amendment for a report back to the Board on the final numbers.

Mr. Chambers agreed to amend his motion; seconded by Mr. Carpenter – roll call vote on amended motion: Mr. Carpenter, Yes; Ms. Rufli, Yes; Mr. Chambers, Yes; Mr. Wrenn, No – passed 3 to 1. Mr. Wrenn advised his no vote was because he had wanted Police and Fire at \$3,500.00.

Fire Chief Stephen Coleman gave an overview of the next three agenda items that he submitted. He further requested that, when the Board considers budget priorities for FY2024 under Item 7f), the members consider the hiring of four members as part of the budget, even if through a staggered process.

Authorization to Apply for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG)

Fire Chief Stephen Coleman explained his request for authorization to apply for this year's Assistance to Firefighters Grant to replace outdated, single band mobile radios that are not P25 compliant with new compliant multi-band equipment. The department is also seeking to replace fourteen (14) single band portable radios with multi-band portables. The total grant request is \$248,672.00 with a 5% match that will come from the Fire/Rescue Department operating budget.

The Select Board voted to authorize filing the application for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) as requested (Motion made by Mr. Carpenter; motion seconded by Mr. Chambers) roll call vote: Mr. Carpenter, Yes; Ms. Rufli, Yes; Mr. Chambers, Yes; Mr. Wrenn, Yes – passed 4 to 0.

Authorization to Apply for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant.

Fire Chief Coleman described his request to apply for a SAFER Grant for eight firefighters. The previous SAFER request was for twelve positions. With the addition of 4 new members the request has been reduced to eight, with the total budget request being \$886,133.28. The grant would cover 100% of the salaries and benefits of the eight positions for three years.

The Board voted to authorize applying for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant (Motion made by Mr. Chambers; motion seconded by Mr. Carpenter) voted in favor 4 to 0.

Discussion on Reauthorization of the Ambulance Impact Shifts through ARPA.

Fire Chief Stephen Coleman explained his request for reauthorization of the ambulance impact shifts through ARPA funds that the Board had approved last March. Deputy Fire Chief Glenn Johnson was in attendance.

Mr. Carpenter spoke in support of \$75,000.00 for three months. Ms. Rufli asked the Fire Chief if 6 months would get the department to the next fiscal year. Chief Coleman replied in the affirmative.

The Select Board voted to re-authorize ARPA funds for Ambulance Impact Shifts for six (6) months (Motion made by Mr. Chambers; motion seconded by Mr. Carpenter) roll call vote: Mr. Carpenter, Yes; Mr. Chambers, Yes; Ms. Rufli, Yes; Mr. Wrenn, Yes – passed 4 to 0.

The Board voted to move forward agenda item 7h) Terms of Development Agreement (Motion made by Mr. Carpenter; motion seconded by Mr. Chambers) roll call vote: Mr. Carpenter, Yes; Mr. Chambers, Yes; Ms. Rufli, Yes; Mr. Wrenn, Yes – passed 4 to 0.

Terms of Development Agreement

James Venincasa was in attendance.

Julie Jacobson presented an update on the Development Agreement and the terms per the following list:

(D) The DEVELOPER agrees to

- i. Extend Waterline to end of Perry Place with the approval of the Auburn Water District
- ii. Provide water services to the edge of pavement for 29,32,39 Perry Place with the approval of the Auburn Water District
- iii. Raise sections of Perry Place to be out of 100-year flood zone in accordance with all applicable regulations and codes
- iv. Pave certain sections of Perry Street in accordance with DPW review and recommendation
- v. Widen Perry Place to 24ft. Any additional impervious area created by the widening would have to comply with stormwater regulations.
- vi. Construct walking trails around the community PROJECT to be used by the public
- vii. Install a playground at the PROJECT to be open to the public
- viii. Provide a landscape plan that will provide screening to the abutters
- ix. Provide a lighting plan for the PROJECT showing lighting to maintain on property that minimizes impact on abutters
- x. Contribute \$20,000.00 (Twenty Thousand Dollars) to the TOWN Donation per year for the first 5 years after full occupancy of the PROJECT to the Town of Auburn to be used for community events.

Mr. Carpenter asked to include sidewalks. Mr. Chambers said that he would like to see an increase in affordable units to 25%.

James Venincasa addressed the issues raised by the members. He also discussed the accommodations they have made to the plan because of comments and concerns expressed by the Fire Department.

Dan Carpenter referenced language that, after a number of years, the affordable units could go away. He said that he would like to see a commitment that they remain for a minimum of 30 years, because the need for affordable housing won't be going away.

The Town Manager noted that it might be difficult because revenues have to cover the cost of development.

The Chair noted that there would be another meeting scheduled regarding the agreement and that the administration was waiting for the attorneys to get back to them with a more polished document.

FY24 Budget Priorities/Guidance

CFO Ed Kazanovicz spoke about the start of the FY24 Budget process and he described the financial factors that could negatively impact the budget this year.

The Board held discussion about priorities and offered comments:

Dan Carpenter proposed keeping salaries competitive enough so as not to lose employees while keeping the budget as low as possible and continuing the practice of not taxing to the full 2.5%, realizing the state of the economy and energy costs.

Steve Chambers asked, if possible, to prioritize road work while not adding too much to the budget and to find more efficiencies in maintenance, like energy programs or other projects.

Sara Rufli expressed agreement with Mr. Carpenter and Mr. Chambers. She said the infrastructure was very important while attempting to keep the budget level.

Mr. Kazanovicz discussed the increased cost just to maintain current levels of services.

Scott Wrenn agreed with all comments and expressed confidence in the Town Management to keep the budget as low as possible given the current fiscal challenges.

Request the Board to Consider and Vote on a Member to Represent the Select Board on a Working Group for the Housing Production Plan Update

Town Manager Julie Jacobson brought forward a letter from the Town Planner regarding the update of the Housing Production Plan. She said that the Town Administration is coordinating a working group to collaborate with Central Mass. Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) to complete the updated Housing Production Plan. She said that Select Board participation would be welcome, and she asked if there was a Board member willing to participate as a part of the working group.

Tabled Items

There were no items.

Select Board Member Items

There were no items.

The Chair asked if there were any questions or edits to the minutes of December 12, 2022. There being none, Chair Scott Wrenn accepted the minutes of December 12, 2022.

The Board voted to adjourn at 8:40 P.M. (Motion made by Mr. Carpenter; motion seconded by Mr. Chambers) roll call vote: Mr. Carpenter, Yes; Ms. Rufli, Yes; Mr. Chambers, Yes; Mr. Wrenn, Yes – passed 4 to 0.

Submitted: Sharon A. Kwiatkowski
Adm. Assistant to the Town Manager

The following documents were part of the Select Board's Meeting of January 23, 2023 and are retained in the Executive Office of the Town Manager:

- January 23, 2023 Agenda
- License Application Documents – Flexcar LLC Motor Vehicle Class II and Auto Repair Licenses at 525 Washington Street, Auburn, MA.; Recommendation of the Development Coordinating Group (DCG) dated January 18, 2023
- Application Documents – Apple New England LLC (Applebee's Neighborhood Grill & Bar) Change of Manager at 680 Southbridge Street, Auburn, MA.; Comments by Police Chief Todd Lemon via email dated January 18, 2023
- Town Manager's Recommendation of Dori A. Vecchio as Assistant Town Manager/Human Resources Director for the Town of Auburn
- Town Manager's Recommendation of Karen S. Harnois as Town Accountant
- Town Manager's Recommendation of Karen S. Harnois as Chief Financial Officer for the Town of Auburn
- Application Documents – Drainlayer License G.H. Excavation, Inc. of Spencer, MA.; Recommendation of Board of Sewer Commissioners dated January 13, 2023
- Proposed Intermunicipal Agreement between the Town of Oxford and the Town of Auburn for the Transportation of Wastewater
- Information from the Town Manager on Premium Pay Numbers – American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds for Municipal Employees
- Information from the Fire Chief on Application for Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG)
- Information from the Fire Chief on Application for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant
- Information from the Fire Chief on Request for Re-authorization of the Ambulance Impact Shifts through ARPA Funds
- Letter from Town Planner dated January 17, 2023 on Housing Production Plan Update
- Minutes of December 12, 2022