

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES

December 7, 2021

REGULAR MEETING

MINUTES – APPROVED JANUARY 4, 2022

In Person

Board of Selectmen Attendance: First Selectman Paula Cofrancesco, Selectman Donald Shea, and Selectman Elizabeth Appel.

Also, in attendance: Finance Director Tom Ellis, Town Counsel Vincent Marino, Town Clerk Will Brinton

Visitors: Carol R. Goldberg, Kathryn R. Sylvester, Pua Ford, Rit Huxley, Bradford Buchta, Donna Shea, Jan Loomis, Rob White and Fred Niven

BOARD OF SELECTMEN – CALL TO ORDER

First Selectman Paula Cofrancesco called the Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen to order at 7:03 p.m. All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Board reviewed the November 16, 2021, meeting minutes and First Selectman Cofrancesco called for a motion to accept the minutes of November 16, 2021. Selectman Shea moved and Selectman Appel seconded. Voting: Cofrancesco, Shea, Appel. **Unanimous Approval.**

DISCUSSION & POSSIBLE ACTION – TAX REFUNDS.

First Selectman Cofrancesco asked for a motion to approve the Tax Refunds for a total of \$1,150.77: Beaulieu, Ryan P. & Nancy J. - \$95.71, Beaulieu, Ryan P. & Nancy J. - \$46.79, JP Morgan Chase Bank NA - \$226.50, Toyota Lease Trust - \$258.81, and Vault Trust - \$522.96. Selectman Shea moved to approve the Tax Refunds and Selectman Appel seconded. Voting: Cofrancesco, Shea, Appel. **Unanimous Approval.**

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION – SUBSTITUTION OF TRUSTEES FOR TOWN OF BETHANY VOLUNTEER FIREMEN’S RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION TRUST (WEBSTER TRUST CO.).

First Selectman Cofrancesco updated the Board on the status of the of the Town of Bethany Volunteer Firemen’s Recruitment and Retention Trust. She informed the Board that the next steps needed to be taken require approving her for the role held by the previous First Selectman, Derrylyn Gorski. Town Counsel, Vincent Marino clarified for the Board, and those present, that the original documents from 2003 will need further review and updates from the Board. Mr. Marino explained that at this time someone needs to be authorized to act and that position was historically held by the First Selectman. Selectman Shea made a motion to remove Derrylyn Gorski and approve First Selectman Cofrancesco to control and manage the plan and remain the signatory, and Selectman Appel seconded. Voting: Cofrancesco, Shea, Appel. **Unanimous Approval.**

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DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION – MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS.

First Selectman Cofrancesco reported to the Board, and those present, the updates from the State regarding May elections. She explained that as of January 1, 2022, all May elections will be moved to November, and a Town vote will be required to keep Bethany elections in May. Town Counsel, Vincent Marino explained that a 2/3s (two thirds) majority would be required of those present at either an annual Town Meeting or Special Meeting would be required to keep elections in May. The Board then discussed an appropriate date and meeting for this item to be added for a Town vote and determined the annual Town Meeting in May 2022 would be best. Those present addressed the importance of educating members of the community regarding the May election schedule in Bethany. First Selectman Cofrancesco added that anyone who wanted to provide information for the Town Bulletin would be welcome and helpful. No action needed.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION – CHARTER/COMMITTEE UPDATE

First Selectman Cofrancesco reminded the Board that the Charter Committee was approved at the November 16, 2021, meeting. Selectman Appel indicated that she had identified a 6th individual and asked for a motion to approve an additional member and to make the Charter Committee three (3) Republicans and three (3) Democrats. Selectman Shea indicated that an odd number of Committee members has historically been more conducive to decision making and voting. It was also reiterated that the Charter Committee is not partisan and has traditionally had five (5) members. The Board and those present discussed the Committee make up, timelines, and possible issues for the Charter to address. Town Counsel, Vincent Marino added anecdotal experience that the meeting structure and required Town meetings dissuade any potential partisanship. Selectman Shea informed the Board that the Charter Committee will be meeting in the coming weeks to begin work and set a regular meeting schedule. For the record, Selectman Appel moved to increase the Charter Committee from five (5) members to six (6) and Selectman Shea seconded. Voting in favor: Appel. Voting against: Cofrancesco, Shea. **Does Not Pass.**

HOPP BROOK/BEACON FALLS DEVELOPMENT - UPDATE.

Town Counsel, Vincent Marino updated the Board on the current status on the Hopp Brook/Beacon Falls development. Mr. Marino communicated that the Beacon Falls Zoning Commission denied the zone change application, however, the text amendment application has been approved with modifications made by the zoning commission. The modifications to the text amendment would limit any development on the environmentally sensitive parcel to the number of 40 units down from 109 units for 40 acres. The modifications would also require sanitary sewers as opposed to septic systems and would require a secondary egress to be established through Miller Road. Mr. Marino will circulate the documentation to the Board for review.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN - UPDATE.

First Selectman Cofrancesco communicated to the Board there was no update at this.

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STATUS OF AIRPORT HANGAR - UPDATE

First Selectman Cofrancesco communicated that 11 refund checks were issued in November and 1 request has been received to date for December. At this time there are still approximately 55 refund letters that have not been returned and the deadline remains December 29, 2021. First Selectman Cofrancesco then noted that the bricks will be returned after the 1st of the year as they are currently in storage and will need to be properly identified – matching purchaser to what is written on the brick.

SIMPSON PROPERTY – UPDATE

Town Counsel, Vincent Marino updated the Board that he has been in contact with the attorney for Audubon, and they will be putting together a project grant for review. Additionally, Mr. Marino spoke with Allison Clark from DEEP, and she indicated that she plans to review the project soon with her surveyor. No action is needed at this time.

TEXTILE RECYCLABLES COLLECTION- UPDATE

First Selectman Cofrancesco informed the Board she heard back from DEEP, and they requested some additional information be added to original letter of interest. First Selectman Cofrancesco revised the letter and resubmitted and is now waiting for updates from DEEP.

REVITALIZATION OF BETHANY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION- UPDATE

First Selectman Cofrancesco communicated that Tom Cavalier has agreed to act as Chair and at this point, she has received 1 (one) additional response. Selectman Appel indicated she anticipates two additional responses based on interest that has been communicated to her. First Selectman Cofrancesco reminded the Board that the deadline for submission is December 17, 2021, and they are looking for 5 members and 2 alternates. Selectman Shea noted that it would be possible to start the Commission with 3 members.

WEBSITE AND IT- UPDATE

First Selectman Cofrancesco communicated to the Board that she continues to be in contact with representatives from SCRCOG for feedback regarding the Meeting Owl Pro, 360-degree camera as a possible IT option for the Town. First Selectman Cofrancesco informed the Board that the Owl is compatible with Zoom and has the possibility to be available for all meetings held at the Town Hall. The Board discussed additional set-up requirements and options that would be needed. Selectmen Shea reminded the Board that while initial costs for equipment would be from ARPA funds, any sustaining costs would have to be approved by the Board of Finance and planned for in the town budget. Additionally, First Selectman Cofrancesco noted that Fran Doba is waiting for an update regarding the status of the fiberoptic replacement from the project manager. The website project is moving along, and all department heads have been asked to review and update content areas and frequently asked questions for their respective departments.

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OTHER ITEMS OF BOS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD

First Selectman Cofrancesco informed the Board that the Tree Warden, Ray Pantalone submitted his letter of resignation effective January 1, 2022. First Selectman Cofrancesco asked for a motion to accept his resignation letter. Selectman Appel moved accept Ray Pantalone's letter of resignation and Selectman Shea seconded. Voting: Cofrancesco, Shea, Appel. **Unanimous Approval.**

Additionally, First Selectman Cofrancesco informed the Board that Finance Director, Tom Ellis has handed in his letter of resignation effective December 31, 2021, to accept a position for the town of Norwalk. Mr. Ellis' last day will be December 29th. First Selectman Cofrancesco asked for a motion to accept his letter of resignation. Selectman Shea moved to accept Tom Ellis' letter of resignation and Selectman Appel seconded. Voting: Cofrancesco, Shea, Appel. **Unanimous Approval.**

Selectman Appel asked to add ARPA funds updates as a standing item to the Regular Meeting agendas. The Board discussed this and decided this item would be added going forward.

PUBLIC COMMENT.

There being no further agenda items for discussion First Selectman Cofrancesco opened the floor for public comment. The following spoke: Rit Huxley and Donna Shea.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:30 p.m. First Selectman Cofrancesco asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Selectman Shea moved to adjourn the regular meeting and was seconded by Selectman Appel. Voting: Cofrancesco, Shea, Appel. **Unanimous Approval.**

Respectfully submitted,



Laura Callery
Town Meeting Clerk