

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
COLUMBIA BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

Tuesday, February 20, 2024

7:00 PM

**Adella G. Urban Administrative Offices Conference Room & Virtual
323 Route 87, Columbia, CT**

Members Present: Steven M. Everett, First Selectman; Judy Ortiz, Deputy First Selectman; William O'Brien, Selectman; Christopher Lent, Selectman; Lisa Napolitano, Selectman.

Also Present: Mark B. Walter, Town Administrator; Beth Lunt, Department of Public Works Manager; Bernadette Derring, Senior Center Director; Ann Dunnack, Sam Hannan, Grant E. Spinner, Frank Federico, Garrett Dukette, Judi Jordan, Dick Szegda.

Also Present Remotely: None.

CALL TO ORDER: S. Everett Called the Meeting to Order at 7:00 PM.

1. **RULES OF CONDUCT FOR HYBRID VIRTUAL MEETING:** S. Everett read the rules of conduct for a hybrid virtual meeting.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
3. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE the Board of Selectmen Agenda as presented. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.
4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**
 - 4.1 **BOS Regular Meeting Minutes for February 6 2024.** S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE the Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting Minutes for February 6, 2024. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.
5. **AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS:** None.
6. **OLD BUSINESS:**
 - 6.1 **2024/2025 Budget Review Workshop**
 - a) **Beckish Senior Center:** B. Derring provided the clients served, cost analysis, and usage statistics for WRTD.
July 1, 2022-June 30, 2022
 - Rides: 206
 - Riders: 20
July 1, 2023 to January 31, 2024
 - Rides: 192
 - Riders: 10

The rides are through the Municipal Grant Program and are utilized for any ride that is outside of the Windham region. The total cost to date is \$3,864. If funds are not used, the funds are allocated to other towns.

The Town of Columbia Transportation program had 1048 rides with 85 riders. B. Derring provided information on the proposed purchase of an ADA compliant rear entry short cut van. She explained that she would like to use the 2023 Section 5310 Grant Program to fund the purchase of the van. The grant provides Federal funding for capital and operating expenses to improve mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities. The grant deadline is 4/2/24. The estimated cost of the vehicle is \$66,605. There is a 20% local match that would leave the cost to the town at \$13,321. The grant can also cover 80% of the cost of the transportation MySeniorCenter software at \$1,200.

B. Derring explained that she will also be applying for the Non-traditional Grant to cover the cost of the decal for the new vehicle, and pedestrian signals such as lights and/or speed bumps in the parking lot. She will also be applying for the Non-traditional Operating Grant to cover the salaries and operating expenses related to the grant program.

S. Everett MOVED to Authorize Bernadette Derring, Senior Center Director to apply for a grant for the possible purchase of a 2024 wheelchair accessible vehicle. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.

b) Department of Public Works: E. Lunt reviewed some highlights from the DPW Operating budget. The biggest increase is in the professional technical line of \$42,575 because of the increase in municipal household waste contract.

E. Lunt reviewed the need of an additional DPW staff member. She explained that DPW currently has a staff of five. One person is working full time at Rec Park from early April through the end of October. June through September one person is on roadside mowing every day of the week. That leaves the crew down to three and with vacations this only provides two staff available. E. Lunt requested another staff member which would allow DPW to get ahead of the game. E. Lunt explained that we have not had much luck hiring or retaining seasonal employees.

E. Lunt reviewed the proposed 5-year Capital Improvement Plan for Culvert Replacement/Repair.

The town approved \$250,000 last month for engineering services on two of the culvert projects that are in dire need. FY 25/26 includes \$180,000 engineering design services for culverts on Edgerton Rd. over Macht Brook and on Chesbro Bridge Rd. FY 26/27 includes \$180,000 engineering design services for culverts on Old Willimantic Rd. and Macht Rd. over Clarks Brook.

The following constructions projects require bonding. The proposed costs are an estimate.

Doubleday Rd. Drainage	\$5 million
Pine Street Culver	\$1.2 million
Thompson Hill Road Culvert	\$1 million
Edgerton Road Culvert	\$750,000
Chesbro Bridge Road Culvert	\$350,000
Old Willimantic Road Culvert	\$250,000
Macht Road Culvert	\$1 million

Discussion ensued about the process of bonding and other funding options.

W. O'Brien asked did these projects come to light due to the recent weather problems or is it something else. B. Lunt said we have known about all the other roads, except for Doubleday Road. Doubleday Rd. came to our attention because of the recent heavy rain events, and we've discovered that the corrugated metal pipes are rotting and the material underneath the pipes are getting washed away. She said Pine Street has washed out three times and Thompson Hill Rd. has washed out twice.

Discussion ensued about putting together a committee that could help address the road and culvert issues.

E. Lunt continued to cover the FY 24/25 DPW Capital Projects.

Road Resurfacing:

Engineering Doubleday Rd. drainage	\$100,000
Rubberized Chip Seal	\$100,000
Beta Group Road Rating Inventory	\$15,000
Painting of Double Yellow Lines	\$14,750
Drainage/Crack Sealing	<u>\$20,000</u>
Total:	\$249,750

E. Lunt explained the Beta Group Road Inventory is an inventories of all the town roads that will evaluate the pavement surface and will give the town an overall picture of the rating of the roads.

Hazardous Tree Removal: Total for FY 24/25 is \$75,000. This has dropped \$25,000 from last year.

Dam Mitigation & Repair: Requesting \$5,000 for maintenance on the dam gate.

DPW Capital Equipment:

Replacement cost of the 2010 Freightliner	\$250,000
F550 Full Trip Plow	\$7,000
F550 Sander	\$5,000
Monroe Full Trip Plow	<u>\$12,000</u>
Total	\$274,000

E. Lunt explained that we have still not received the new dump truck and are projecting that we will not have the truck until October. That will replace the 1999 International. She asked if we could issue a purchase order now for a new truck that will replace a 2010 dump truck, since it is taking over a full year to receive an order.

S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE Elizabeth Lunt, DPW Director to issue a Purchase Order for a new Freight Liner Truck for FY 24/25. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.

6.2 Other Budget Discussions. None.

7. NEW BUSINESS:

7.1 Discussion Regarding Speeding on Columbia Roads. S. Everett said he has received several emails requesting to address the speeding in town. S. Everett reviewed some of the things we have done and some of the things we have evaluated.

We have one state trooper at the cost of \$180,000 per year. We have evaluated adding a second and third state trooper at an additional cost of \$180,000 each. We have also looked into adding a constable to the addition of one state trooper at an outlay cost of \$80,000 to \$90,000 for salary, and an additional \$60,000 for training, uniforms, workman's compensation, and insurance.

Discussion ensued about the use of speed bumps, restricting truck traffic on certain roads and the use of speed cameras.

S. Everett explained that we have asked the Resident State Trooper to sit on the roads that have had complaints of excessing speeding. We received a recent report from Trooper Vivino of 27 stops for traffic violations.

S. Everett explained that we received a grant for a second state trooper to perform traffic stops through the Rural Road Grant and we will be applying for the next grant.

S. Everett opened discussion to the board. C. Lent asked if the cameras could be used on side roads. S. Everett said we would get more information. M. Walter said some of these cameras can be mounted on vehicles and in construction zones.

C. Lent asked about using flashing speed signs. M. Walter said that we had two speed signs that will need repair and then we can deploy them. We have also asked the University of Connecticut T-2 Center Range Riders to come out and take a look at some of our problem areas and give us advice on how we could do traffic calming measures.

Several members of the audience expressed concerns about issues on Old Willimantic Rd.. Discussion involved looking into speed bumps in certain areas, such as the crest of the hill on Old Willimantic. Also, discussion involved the audible ridges or rumble strips.

- 7.2 American Relief Funds-Closeouts and Additional Funding on Projects.** S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE the proposed closeout, reductions, and additions of the listed American Relief Funds projects as of 2/16/24. All funds from the proposed closed out projects will have the balance remaining returned to the American Relief Fund Balance and will be applied to future projects or projects that need additional funding to complete and/or close out the project. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.
- 8. COLUMBIA LAKE / DAM / BEACH:** None.
- 9. APPOINTMENTS / RESIGNATIONS:**
- 9.1 Mary Kay Hyman, Board Clerk, Completion of 6-month Probation.** S. Everett MOVED to remove Mary Kay Hyman from the 6-month probation and place her as a permanent employee. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.
- 9.2 Appointment of Anyka Fegan as Interim Recreation Director.** S. Everett MOVED to APPOINT Anyka Fegan as Interim Recreation Director. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.
- 10. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:**
- 10.1 Friends of Mono Pond Applied for a Grant \$37,500 for the Control of Aquatic Invasive Species.** M. Walter said that the Friends of Mono Pond recently applied for a \$50,000 for the control for aquatic invasive species on Mono Pond. The grant will be to restore and rehabilitate Mono Pond to an earlier, more viable recreational location and educate those that will share in that goal.
- 10.2 Proposed Bill No. 63 – Authorize State of CT to Purchase Camp Laurel.** M. Walter explained that Senator Osten is trying get the state to buy Camp Laurel which is near Mono Pond State Park in Lebanon.
- 11. CORRESPONDENCE:**
- 11.1 The Willimantic Chronicle**
- Library Director wants to connect.
 - Eco Tourism boost for Columbia
- 12. BUDGET:**
- 12.1 Transfers:** S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE the Transfers as presented, totaling \$13,466.00. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.
- 12.2 Refunds:** None
- 13. APPROVE PAYMENT OF BILLS:** S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE the Payment of Bills Totaling \$138,060.92, consisting of 2023-2024 Emergency, 2023-2024 Regular, Credit Card, and Paychex. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.
- 14. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS:** None.
- 15. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:** C. Lent asked about the Sustainable CT program and would like to learn more about the program. J. LaVoie explained that the kick-off meeting on February 29th will have a general overview of what Sustainable CT is and Ace Riker, Public Advocate & Educator for Sustainable CT will talk about the Optimize for Equity portion of Sustainable CT.

16. **EXECUTIVE SESSION: Real estate per State Statutes Section 1-200(6)(D); Pending Litigation per State Statutes Section 1-200(6)(B); Personnel per State Statues Section 1-200(6)(A).** S. Everett MOVED to Enter into Executive Session at 8:47 PM and invite Mark Walter, Town Administrator and Jennifer LaVoie, Executive Administrative Assistant. Exited Executive Session at 9:10 PM with no action taken.
 - 16.1 **Personnel:** No Action Taken.
17. **ADJOURNMENT:** S. Everett MOVED to ADJOURN at 9:11 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Jennifer C. LaVoie