

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
COLUMBIA BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Tuesday, March 19, 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, Ann Dunnack, Mary Roickle.

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 Agenda as presented. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.
4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**
 - 4.1 **BOS Regular Meeting with Budget Workshop Minutes for March 5, 2024.** S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE the Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting Minutes with Budget Workshop for March 5, 2024. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.
5. **AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS:** None.
6. **OLD BUSINESS:**
 - 6.1 **Authorize the creation of the Columbia Garden Club and approval to set up the Columbia Garden Club fund to maintain funds raised through both fundraising by the club and transfers by the Town.** M. Walter said that we would like to give some startup funding for the garden club, and we will need to create a fund for this. The garden club will also be doing fundraising to add to the fund. S. Everett MOVED to AUTHORIZE the creation of a Columbia Garden/Beautification Fund to cover the costs to maintain the Town gardens and public areas. This will be funded through fundraising efforts by the committee and Town Appropriations. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.

S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE the transfer from Contingency of \$2,000 as a start for the funding of the Columbia Garden/Beautification Committee Fund. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.
7. **NEW BUSINESS:**
 - 7.1 **Rec Park Baseball Field Requested Repairs and Maintenance.** M. Walter explained that the drainage effort we did last year to put three curtain drains in the outfield of the little league is working, but unfortunately that drainage all went towards the volleyball/tennis courts and now will need to be fixed. We are making

a retention pond to help address that problem. The town is subcontracting to Mike Olzacki who specializes in baseball fields. The work will involve cutting edges, tilling the infields, and adding more clay. Department of Public Works (DPW) will help in delivering material. Public Works will be over-seeding the outfields and adding mats to cover the seeds to help with germination.

The dugouts in the Pony League field needs repair and upgrades. There are funds in the Rec Park budget to build two new dugouts. The cost for subcontracting the work on the fields will be \$5,000 and DPW will provide in-kind services.

The scoreboard for Little League has been on backorder for little over a year. We were notified that the scoreboard would not be coming in and the contract was cancelled. We now have a scoreboard on order. The cost will be an extra \$4,000. The Lions Club and Little League funded a majority of the scoreboard, and the additional money will be taken out of the Recreation fund.

- 7.2 Discussion Regarding Gate Access and Keys.** M. Walter said we gave out 50 gate keys last year. S. Everett said that we have had some issues with keeping track of people letting in boats that may or may not have been inspected, or may or may not have been registered, or issues with confirming motor size, and cleanliness of the boat. We have also had problems with the gate be left open. He said initially we gave keys out to help the fishermen so they could get access to the lake in the early morning or later in the evening.

W. O'Brien asked what the Lake Management Advisory Commission (LMAC) would like to do. M. Roickle said LMAC has not advised the BOS with any motion yet. She said there has been discussion leaning towards stopping/postponing or canceling the use of gate keys until further notice and some type of solution that would work.

Discussion ensued about hydrilla and its impact/risk to the lake and how that is being monitored by Gate Monitors. Discussion's included narrowing the window of time that people can launch their boats. S. Everett said that he will review the hours and see if there can be revisions made for high traffic times.

M. Roickle said there are two marina owners that have the majority of boats that are put on the lake. Before any boat is put on any Connecticut body of water, the boat must be registered, including horsepower and testing for invasive species. One of the thoughts is that Marine Patrol/Recreation Director could go down to the two marina owners and inspect the boats before they get put into the water.

No decision was made on the gate keys and the BOS will await recommendations from LMAC.

- 7.3 Request from Connecticut Cycling Advancement Program to use Columbia Roads for The Breakaway Benefit on May 18, 2024.** S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE the Request from Connecticut Cycling for The Breakaway Benefit Bike Race through Columbia. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.

7.4 Discussion of supporting LMAC's recommendation for a pilot program in the town beach cove to repair damages to the lake bottom resulting from erosion..

M. Roickle provide the LMAC subcommittee report on the town beach and stormwater pipe drainage/sand migration and erosion into the lakebed. M. Roickle said the objective is to identify immediate and long-term solutions to repair current lakebed erosion damages and minimize future erosion damage due to the increased precipitation, intensity and velocity of stormwater flowing from the Town Beach drainpipe.

M. Roickle provided the background information:

- Historically for decades sand from the town beach has eroded into the lake water and lakebed carried by wind and water currents into the cove area next to the town beach and beyond. Periodically, at times, on an annual basis the sand was collected by the town from the cove area and placed back on the beach.
- In the past 3 years events have exacerbated the migration by significantly increased precipitation in the amount and intensity Of rain caused more sand/sediment to enter the lakebed from the town beach stormwater drainpipe between the beach & 16 Lake Road. It created significant erosion into that cove area section. Less to no collection of sand was returned to the town beach caused a significant increase in the sand accumulation into the adjacent cove area and beyond.
- The Resulting sand migration has created detrimental recreational and environmental impact on the lakebed cove adjacent to the town beach as migrating sand is covering over 150' of the shoreline from the beach to Nuffer Road area times about 20 or more feet from the seawall into the lakebed area. In addition, there is more square footage to be assessed at the next lake drawdown as an area of sand was already underwater from the recent rains and the beginning of the lake refill.

M. Roickle shared the pilot project motion that LMAC would like to present to the BOS.

LMAC advises the Town of Columbia's Board of Selectman to initiate a Pilot Project to meet immediate and long-term needs in the area outlined in the attached map showing significant sediment displacement damage from the stormwater drainpipe, known as the Town Beach Pipe, located at 16 Lake Road in order to:

- Conduct emergency repairs when the lake's water level allows to regrade the sediment displacement damage on the lakebed.
- To evaluate options to repair the Town Beach pipe and/or design and install devices as a Velocity Dissipation Device and/or devices upstream from the lake in order to reduce the water flow velocity during intense rainstorms to minimize the erosion damage into the lake with a goal of installation of

approved device(s) at the next period for construction on the lake after the October 15, 2024, drawdown.

- The Pilot Project will be a collaborative effort of the Town Administrator, the Department of Public Works, IWWC, LMAC and consultants as needed as a Hydrology Engineer, to evaluate best practice approaches to regrade sediment displacement, to design and install approved devices, and to apply town guidelines for construction on the lake. Follow up actions will include milestones analyzing Pilot Project results to assess the value for potential future uses on the lakebed.

Discussion ensued about putting together a subcommittee for both the roads and the lake drainage. Some volunteers have tentatively agreed to be part of the subcommittee.

S. Everett MOVED to create a town subcommittee that will work with the Board of Selectmen and Public Works Director on road drainage issues, erosion issues and recreation areas concerns and advise back to the Board of Selectmen.
MOTION CARRIED 5.0.

8. COLUMBIA LAKE / DAM / BEACH: None.

9. APPOINTMENTS / RESIGNATIONS:

9.1 Resignation of Melissa McKim-Cuevas, Animal Control Officer.

9.2 Re-appointment of Mike Olzacki, Animal Control Officer. S. Everett MOVED to Re-appoint Mike Olzacki as Animal Control Officer. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.

9.3 Re-appointment of Allison Leue, Assistant Animal Control Officer. S. Everett MOVED to Re-appointment of Allison Leue as Assistant Animal Control Officer. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.

9.4 Resignation of Marjorie Golden-Mossberg from CONA.

10. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:

10.1 Early Voting March 26th through March 30th from 10 am - 6 pm, Yeomans Hall. M. Walter said the early voting will be taking place and will be staffed with both parties and a moderator. He said we had to change our vaults with electronic locks and the ballots will be locked in the old vault.

10.2 Tax and Business Incentive Program Ordinance. M. Walter said the Economic Development Committee met and felt the Tax and Business Incentive Program would be a good idea that would help businesses promote growth of the town's tax base, encourage new construction and support business investment in new machinery, equipment and other personal property to expand their operations. and incentivize business investments or expand on their footprint or in machinery. Many surrounding towns have a tax business center program and it's governed by State Stature 12-65b.

Tax and Business Incentive Program			
Graduated Abatement			
Project Value			
Year	\$3,000,000.00	\$500,000.00	\$25,000.00
1	80%	80%	50%
2	70%	70%	50%
3	60%		50%
4	50%		
5	40%		
6	30%		
7	20%		

M. Walter said he will have to do some more research and get back to the BOS for feedback on what they think would be an equitable reduction.

10.3 TextMyGov officially launching the week of April 1, 2024.

10.4 Final Town of Columbia Audit Report for FY 2022-2023.

10.5 Update on Hunt Road Bridge Culvert. M. Walter said the full box culvert is built and the next thing that needs to be completed is weatherproofing the sides, building the wing walls and backfilling and paving. Completion is expected by the end of April.

10.6 Hop River Road Bridge is Closing April 1, 2024. M. Walter said deconstructing of original culvert starts Monday and construction is anticipated to be completed in December.

11. CORRESPONDENCE:

11.1 The Willimantic Chronicle

- **Series of guided hikes in area this month.**

11.2 Calendar of Columbia FY 24/25 Budget Process.

11.3 CT State Trooper Monthly Report for February 2023.

11.4 Letter from Tax Office recognizing Dan Johnson.

11.5 Letter from Registrar of Voters Regarding April 2, 2024 Republican & Democratic Primaries.

11.6 Thank you Letter from Greg & Leslie Brand for DPW Tree Cleanup at 6 Woodward Road.

12. BUDGET:

12.1 Transfers: None.

12.2 Refunds: S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE the Refunds as Presented, Totaling \$1,705.03. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.

13. APPROVE PAYMENT OF BILLS: S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE the Payment of Bills Totaling \$288,742.14, 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: None.

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). None.**
17. **ADJOURNMENT: S. Everett MOVED to ADJOURN at 8:01 PM. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Respectfully submitted by Jennifer C. LaVoie