

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
COLUMBIA BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

Tuesday, April 2, 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; Lisa Napolitano, Selectman.

Members Absent: Chris Lent, Selectman.

Also Present: Mark B. Walter, Town Administrator, Ann Dunnack, Mary Roickle, Justin Reindeau, Henry Beck, Jim Blair, Matt Sternat, Lions Club President; Club, Phyllis Dunn, Mike Scalice, Mike Gnazzo, Chairman of LMAC.

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 with the addition under Appointments and Resignations, 9.4 Appointment of Jacob Plitt as Recreation Director. MOTION CARRIED 4.0.
4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**
 - 4.1 **BOS Regular Meeting Minutes for March 19, 2024.** S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE the Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting Minutes for March 19, 2024. MOTION CARRIED 4.0.
5. **AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS:** Ann Dunnack, 103 Lake Road, attended the meeting of the Hop River Trail Alliance. Provided the map that identifies the signage of Wayfinding Projects. Great prototype for the Airline Trail. At the meeting it was mentioned that the Columbia portion was not well maintained between Lake Rd and Andover and Hop River Road.
6. **OLD BUSINESS:**
 - 6.1 **FY 24/25 Budget Discussion on Amendments to the Proposed Budget.** S. Everett said that at the FiPAC meeting they had asked us to reduce the BOS budget by \$75,000.

S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE the Revised FY 24/25 Proposed Budget with a \$75,000 reduction to the proposed FY 24/25 Town Capital Plan. MOTION CARRIED 4.0.

S. Everett provided the details on the \$75,000 cut. This included \$47,857 from the Henniquin Drainage Project. The original work needed is complete (cross drains replaced) and future work will be evaluated. \$15,000 for Latham Hill Bridge evaluation that will be scheduled in the future with Lebanon, and \$12,143 from the tree removal budget by reducing next year's request of \$75,000.

6.2 Columbia Lake Revised Town Ordinances Update & Next Action Steps.

S. Everett said that Lake Management Advisory Commission (LMAC) have consulted with CT DEEP on the lake ordinances for Article II Vessels on Columbia Lake, Article III Safety Regulations on Columbia Lake, Article IV Conduct At Town Beach Town Ordinance.

Article II Vessels on Columbia Lake

S. Everett asked, under Section 190-7 – Penalties for Offenses, is there an appeal process? S. Everett asked would residents appeal to the Board of Selectmen. H. Beck said they would not go before the BOS, they would appeal in the court, except potentially in situations in where it gives authority for the BOS to make certain decisions.

L. Napolitano asked in Section 190-5A - Limitation of Use of Columbia Lake does anyone lease boats because the language states the operator of the vessel be owned by the resident. M. Gnazzo said there are boat rental services. H. Beck said lease financing is similar to ownership. L. Napolitano asked if people rent kayaks or canoes. H. Beck said that if the BOS were agreeable they could change the language to apply only to “any motorboats” by changing “vessel” to “motorboat”.

L. Napolitano pointed out that Two points noted per 190-I (sticker). Page 4 and top of page 5 (f and g). should be 190-5I.

J. Ortiz asked what would happen if a person cannot pay the penalty fees. H. Beck said that every year a person has to register their boat and have to be in compliance with all laws and if there are any outstanding fees they cannot register their boat.

S. Everett had a question on Section 1905-H “Any vessel exceeding 26 feet in length as listed on its original title, is prohibited to launch on the lake. Vessels exceeding the 26 feet limit prior to November 2, 2023 must possess a valid, posted exemption sticker per Section 190-5”. He said his concern is did we have any vessel on the lake over 26-foot-long last year that had an exemption sticker on it. H. Beck said not last year, this is new going forward. He said this is the grandfathering clause that we talked about in the fall. We talked to CT DEEP, and they wanted us to model it after what they did for Candlewood lake.

J. Ortiz asked how will people know about the ordinances. H. Beck said that the ordinances would be posted on the Recreation Departments bulletin board at the beach and given to each boater as their boats are inspected. He said

LMAC will put together a flyer that will be posted at the Town Hall and on the Town's website.

Article III Safety Regulations on Columbia Lake

S. Everett asked what is the penalty if boats are on the lake after hours. H. Beck said the fine is \$200 and if repeated violations occur the BOS can determine if they choose to, to not allow the boat on the lake for up to a year.

S. Everett asked about 190-4 Restricted and Limited Areas. H. Beck said that this ordinance is what we have currently, the only thing that has changed is the ordinance terms line up with CT DEEP.

J. Ortiz asked if there is a process for Marine Patrol in receiving complaints and how that process works. H. Beck said that Marine Patrol has a telephone number that people can contact them on if they see something that they think should be reported. The number is posted at the beach. M. Roickle said the Columbia lake Association publishes and educates that if they see any issues this would be referred to Marine Patrol.

Article IV Conduct At Town Beach

S. Everett asked about launching a vessel into the lake from any location other than the boat launch. H. Beck said that owners around the lake can launch kayaks and canoes from the shoreline. Potentially some people launch jet skis off their ramps, or small rowboats or Sunfish sailboats from the shoreline, but all of those vessels have to be inspected.

S. Everett asked what keeps someone from launching a boat after hours. H. Beck said there are inspection procedures separate from these ordinances so the BOS could adjust these procedures without having to go through the ordinance process. LMAC will be looking at the issuance of gate keys and there could be amendments to the inspection procedures.

S. Everett said that he had asked about more camera coverage and better cameras at the boat launch.

W. O'Brien said he has some reservations on some of the penalties and the due process of enforcement but foresee legal problems down the road.

S. Everett MOVED to Schedule a Public Hearing concerning the changes in the Town Ordinances for Article II Vessels on Columbia Lake Town Ordinance, Article III Safety Regulations on Columbia Lake, and Article IV Conduct At Town Beach as presented on April 16, 2024 at 6:30 pm. MOTION CARRIED 4.0.

7. NEW BUSINESS:

- 7.1 Approval to use the Balance of the Brand Account to Apply Towards the New Dugouts & Baseball Field Upgrades.** S. Everett said we need some new dugouts and the Brand family generously donated money several years ago that we would like to use for the new dugouts and baseball field upgrades. S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE using the balance of the Brand Funds towards the replacement of the dugouts, as well as baseball field upgrades at the Rec Park Upper Field. MOTION CARRIED 4.0
- 7.2 Memorandum of Agreement for DEMHS Region 4 Homeland Security Grant Program.** S. Everett MOVED to ADOPT the Amendment of Memorandum of Agreement between the State of Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection/Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security and the Town of Columbia. MOTION CARRIED 4.0.
- 7.3 Approval for the placement of a Memorial Bench for Peter & Gertrude Naumec located on the lawn facing the lake at the Murphy House.** S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE Peg Barrea's Request and donation of a memorial bench for Peter & Gertrude Naumec placed in the agreed upon designated area on the lawn facing the lake at the Murphy House. MOTION CARRIED 4.0.
- 7.4 Columbia Lions Club Seeking Permission to Update Landscaping and Lighting around the Town Green Gazebo and around the Town Green Sign.** Matt Sernet, Columbia Lions Club President explained the proposed Lions Club President's project that would involve improving landscaping around the Town Green Gazebo, additional lighting around the gazebo and Town Green sign, and stonewall work.

S. Everett MOVED to allow the Columbia Lions Club to update the landscaping and lighting around the town green gazebo and around the town green sign. MOTION CARRIED 5.0.

8. COLUMBIA LAKE / DAM / BEACH: None.

9. APPOINTMENTS / RESIGNATIONS:

- 9.1 Completion of 6-month probation for Kyle Pelletier, DPW Highway Foreman.** S. Everett MOVED to Remove Kyle Pelletier from the 6-month probation and place him as a full-time employee. MOTION CARRIED 4.0.
- 9.2 Resignation of Brandon MacClean from the Hop River Mills Preserve Committee.**
- 9.3 Appointment of Guy Wanegar to the Hop River Preserve Committee.** S. Everett MOVED to APPOINT Guy Wanegar to the Hop River Preserve Committee. MOTION CARRIED 4.0.
- 9.4 Appointment of Jacob Plitt, Recreation Director.** S. Everett MOVED to APPOINT Jacob Plitt, Recreation Director. MOTION CARRIED 4.0.

10. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:

- 10.1** M. Walter explained that there is a sponsored bill that authorized municipalities to levy a tax on short-term rental facilitators (e.g. Airbnb) in an amount not to exceed 2% of sub operator's income from short-term rental properties during a tax year.

- 10.2 M. Walter said that he had received a letter from a resident thanking the Animal Control Officer for taking care of a raccoon that had distemper.
- 10.3 S. Evertt said that the Connecticut Department of Transportation has gotten back to us about our concern with the s-curve by the lake on Route 87 and apologized for taking so long.
11. **CORRESPONDENCE:**
- 11.1 The Willimantic Chronicle
- Hop River Trail Alliance Public Hearing Set.
 - Discovery Zone in violation of ADA.
 - Bridge construction set to begin.
12. **BUDGET:**
- 12.1 **Transfers:** None.
- 12.2 **Refunds:** S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE Refunds Totaling \$159.28. MOTION CARRIED 4.0.
13. **APPROVE PAYMENT OF BILLS:** S. Everett MOVED to APPROVE the Payment of Bills Totaling \$118,552.33, consisting of 2023/2024 Emergency, 2023/2024 Regular, Credit Card and Paychex. MOTION CARRIED 4.0.
14. **AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS:** None.
15. **BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:** L. Napolitano said with the proposed tax and business incentive program she would like to see it at a flat rate. She said it should be equitable, not regressive. W. O'Brien said there is a senior who does not live on the lake but has a canoe that he would like to store at the lake. He is 80 years old and would have a hard time taken the canoe in and out of the lake. M. Walter asked to have the senior's contact information sent to him, so we can help him out. J. Ortiz said on April 28th the Democratic Town Committee will be honoring Leah Osborn as Democrat of the year at the Columbia Winery.
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 8:11 pm. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully Submitted by Jennifer C. LaVoie