

Memorial Town Hall, One Library Street, Georgetown, MA 01833

Meeting Minutes / January 8, 2024

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BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Memorial Town Hall

7:00PM-General Meeting

Verizon Channel 42/Comcast channel 9

Selectmen Present: *A. Smith, Chair, D. Dawes, R. Bancroft and R. Hoover*

Others Present: *Orlando Pacheco, Town Administrator.
M. Shultz, Administrative Assistant participated on Zoom.*

Zoom: *D. LaMonica on Zoom.*

7:20PM: CALL TO ORDER

Moment of Silence was done by the Board members.

Pledge of Allegiance

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

A. Smith spoke in the upcoming Whittier School vote to be held on January 23rd, 2024. 11-7 hours/ no early voting absentee ballots are available -1/13 any new voters to vote=check voting status on the states website-in person absentee voting, ballot drop off at Town Hall, information out there -Town system. working on vote outcome sheet.

APPOINTMENTS: VACANCY ON THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION.

A. Smith explained that each applicant will be asked questions, start in alphabetical order, then the Board will decide.

Applicant Steve Epstein, 55 West Street, Georgetown, Mass. Referred to his letter he submitted to the Board on his expertise, spoke on due process and how it works, procedures that are supposed to be followed, special treatment, not following the entire process, benefit of an arbitrary Board-gave some examples-follow the process has to be followed, emotional satisfaction of the citizen, way of delivery could be tempered, combative nature,

The following was openly discussed by Board members:

Town politics, Town involvement, has a reputative of being argumentative, combative nature, way of delivery, heated conversations, spoke on perception,

R. Hoover asked Mr. Epstein about a conversation at the previous Annual Town Meeting that took place with the former Police Chief Cudmore.

R. Bancroft accused Mr. Epstein of contacting her soon to be ex-husband's attorney to pump her with information on herself and stated that this is a conflict of interest.

A. Smith asked R. Bancroft to elaborate of what she is accusing Mr. Epstein of.

Ms. Bancroft spoke of details of Mr. Epstein regarding personal information about herself.

A Smith asked Mr. Epstein if this was true, Mr. Epstein stated he was not looking for information he was giving information to an Attorney,

S. Epstein stated he felt he was doing this in the best interest of the Town and believes it is not a conflict of interest and informed the Board that all pleadings in court are public information.

O. Pacheco, Town Administrator spoke on public information is out there, accusations, social media and or conflicts of interest.

S. Epstein confirmed that he has a conflict of interest pertaining to West Street, Georgetown, Mass as he is an abutter to a 16-unit Development waiting to go be built.

S. Epstein questioned who the voting members would be on this vote and if anyone recused themselves from this vote, stated one member has a conflict and has not been voting on Conservation Commission members.

Applicant Laura Repplier. 7 Thurlow Street, Georgetown, Mass spoke on her nine (9) years of previous service as a Conservation Commission member , spoke on her goals to protect the residents and their abutters , has sound experience with the Town's by Laws, wants to support the Commission and be a team player, supports what the Conservation Commission is trying to achieve, spoke of her past time on this Board and how she felt it was not a time of fellowship between the Conservation Commission and the Board of Selectman.

A. Smith asked Ms. Repplier what brings you back to volunteer as a member of the Conservation Commission.

The following was openly discussed by Board members:

Meeting minutes support, Town e-mail only for communications, requested information, past services of volunteering, role of the Conservation Commission, reputation of the Conservation Committee, change to a user-friendly organization, administrative oversight was lacking, the Board of Selectman had received complaints, negative impression industry wide, trying to prevent years of past conflict, work to be done to change the public perception of the committee, spoke on projects will many moving parts.

Deliberation / Questions:

Rebecca Chane, 131 Lakeridge Drive, Georgetown, Mass Chair of the Conservation Commission spoke on her brief conservation with R. Bancroft's husband and his concern with her safety as it relates to Mr. Steve Epstein, this does not sit well, alarming and is concerning.

David Twiss, 19 Lakeshore Drive, Georgetown, Mass, disclosed an optic and moral conflict I had with knowing Orlando Pacheco, Town Administrator when he was applying for his current position with the Town since we have known each other since we had been in sixth grade, Mr. Twiss recently spoke with Selectman Robert Hoover and asked him to announce his personal relationship with Ms. Repplier prior to deliberations and asked him to be transparent.

Mr. John Duff, 6 Spaulding Road, Georgetown, Mass spoke on the Town's by Laws, should be no wiggle room, never afraid to go in front of any committee regarding any rules and expectations, spoke on the resignation of the past Chairman of the Conservation Commission which had to do with antagonism, we don't need that anymore on a Board.

O. Pacheco, Town Administrator spoke on the current Town's by Laws, not black and white, discretion is applied, perception is the Town is giving themselves a break, public projects can do more than the applicants, we should have the highest standards.

Steve Sadler, 7 Hillside Drive, Georgetown, Mass, asked two questions to the Board, spoke on Doug Dawes comments and his perception, facts, pertaining to the Conservation Commission and asked Mr. Dawes for concrete examples about his comments, secondly asked Mr. Epstein on why he did not get re-appointed to the Finance Advisory Board.

D. Dawes replied to Mr. Sadler's questions and suggest he could look up court cases that have brought before the Town.

Mr. Epstein replied he had no idea why he was not re-appointed.

D. Dawes questioned who would be the Boards voting members on the appointment to the Conservation Commission, believes Selectman Bancroft should recuse herself since she is a member of the Conservation Commission.

R. Bancroft responded that according to the state she has been told she can vote to make an appointment to the Conservation Commission while also a member.

R. Hoover addressed D. Twiss concerns regarding his friendship with Laura Repplier, stated no financial issues, feels like no matter how he votes there will be a negative optic, feels comfortable to vote this evening.

R. Hoover to accept a motion to nominate Steve Epstein as a member of the Conservation Commission, seconded by D. Dawes.

Roll call to appoint Steve Epstein -D. LaMonica -No, D. Dawes, -No, R. Bancroft-No.

D. Dawes suggested to say no to both candidates and look for other candidates.

D. Lamonica stated at this time not going to vote on either candidate.

R. Hoover stated when he has spoken to members of the Conservation Commission and they are more positive and believes that the Town and Board can move forward asked what more does the Town want in an applicant.

A. Smith mentioned she had a recent meeting with Rebecca Chane, Chair of the Conservation Commission and that went well, and stated that she would like us to look forward and not back and A. Smith stated she would like to say no to both applicants at this time -new members, new commissioner -we need to look at other options, looking forward and not back.

Motion on the Floor to appoint Steve Epstein -Roll Call -All Board members voted No on this motion.

Motion on the floor to appoint Lauar Repplier -Roll Call -R. Bancroft -Yes, R. Hoover -Yes, A. Smith, D. Dawes and D. LaMonica all voted No to this motion.

R. Hoover questioned the Board members on what they want and stated Ms. Repplier had already stated she was already working to change the Conservation Commission, everything the Board is looking for she is here and willing to work and make the changes.

VOTES BY THE BOARD/APPOINTMENTS:

COA Director Kristen Crockett spoke in surplus property at the Council on Aging such as books, puzzles, old pots & pans, wheelchairs, canes, crutches, kitchen supplies, and misc. medical equipment which she is requested to donate if possible or to throw away if not usable.

R. Bancroft motioned the Board to allow the Council on Aging to surplus miscellaneous items, seconded by R. Hoover. Roll call vote was taken all in favor.

A. Smith mentioned that her house mate is on the list of poll workers.

D. Dawes motioned to approve the list of Poll Workers provided to the Board by Kerri McManus, Town Clerk as presented seconded by R. Hoover. Roll call vote was taken all in favor.

NEW BUSINESS:

Brenda Morrison & Erin Duggan were present and gave an update to the Board on the GYCC programing and funding- Program has been open for five (5) years, a lot of growth in registration, going in the right direction , overview summary was given, past and present events were spoken of, partnering with other groups, making connections, stipends for teachers, vendors being brought in, skiing group, marketing has been taken off their plate, summer programs, information out early, and membership fees.

Mr. Red Kelly, Boston Systems, was present and gave an update to the Board regarding Boston Systems upgrade & future training on Microsoft 365. The following was discussed: Translation program, save the Town money, stored e-mails, disabled e-mails GCC server requires a license which will be assigned to a Board member and or an employee, upgrade will be done after hours and weekends, technical problems can happen, Public Safety will be impacted the most since they are always open, DNS record change, upgrade will not always fix all the problems with some Board and Committees e-mails.

Open Meeting Law Violation-A. Smith, Chair addressed an open meeting violation that was submitted by Kevin Wood, 8 Pine Plain Road, Georgetown, Mass, the complaint filed on December 12, 2023 which was based on an executive session scheduled for December 11, 2023 and states that the agenda did not specifically identify the topics to be discussed and believes past executive session meeting minutes was a secondary reason for this meeting. KP Law responded to this violation dated 12/12/2023.

R. Hoover authorized the response to the Open Meeting Law violation from December 11, 2023, seconded by R. Bancroft. Roll call vote was taken all in favor.

ON-GOING BUSINESS:

Whittier Building Project. -The following was discussed:

A no vote campaign, a fact sheet for residents is being worked on, using data from creditable sources and trying to give information that is accurate and updated, speaking on numbers which keep changing, home rule petition, over ride.

WARRANTS & MEETING MINUTES:

R. Bancroft motioned the Board to approve meeting minutes from December 4, 2023 as presented, seconded by D. Dawes. Roll call vote was taken all in favor.

R. Bancroft motioned the Board to approve the December 11, 2023 meeting minutes as amended seconded by R. Hoover. Roll call vote was taken all in favor.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:

- *MEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant-Grant received in the amount of \$22,500 to update the Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Town is required to have an approved HMP to be able to apply for any funding through the Federal Emergency Management Agency-The grant does requires a match of up to 10% / \$2500.*
- *Perley Electric Vehicle Charging Station -The Perley School now has the Electric Vehicle Charging Station which is now active and ready for use. The charging station was paid for through a grant from MADEP.*

- *Water Department -ADA Ramp was added to the Water Department building-The Whittier Carpentry Program was recognized for their installing this ramp at the entrance on Moulton Street-ADA Self Evaluation Plan.*
- *Green Communities Annual Report –The Green Communities Annual Report is completed and has been submitted to the Department of Energy Resources. The Town will be eligible for future grant rounds as we are working across departments to develop further energy conservation measures.*
- *Georgetown Housing Authority Management Agreement -The Georgetown Housing Authority will now be managed with the Haverhill Housing Authority-The Housing Authority will be hiring a new property manager for the properties on Trestle Way and Jewett Street.*
- *14 Larch St. Acquisition-The Town will soon have an additional unit added to its subsidized housing inventory, the new septic system was completed on December 15th and the property is ready for occupancy-the Town is now waiting for DHLC to review the deed rider and the Housing Trust will set the lottery for sale of the property with a deed restriction.*
- *Fair Share Transportation Funding-The Town will receive \$170,945 from the Fair Share Amendment (Millionaire's Tax) that was dedicated to public education and transportation. The Highway Department has been notified of the award and will develop a plan to use the funding.*
- *MIIA Health Benefits Trust Grant-The Town was notified that our grant application for the Fitness Court was approved, the Town will receive \$20,000 for the purchase and installation of equipment.*
- *4 Pimpernel Circle Unit (Parker River Landing) -The Town had a successful lottery for the unit purchased at 4 Pimpernel Circle. The Property is on the subsidized housing inventory and we have purchased and a sale agreement is in place. A formal closing date has not been set.*

ADJOURNMENT:

R. Bancroft motioned the Board to close the meeting, seconded by R. Hoover. Roll call vote was taken all in favor.

All Board of Selectman Meetings can be viewed on our Town Website at <https://www.georgetownma.gov> - Under the Community TV tab on the left side.

Documents used in the meeting:

Two Volunteer forms/ applications, Meeting minutes from 12/4/2023 & 12/11/2023, TA Report, GYCC Information Packet.

