



Town of Bellingham

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

10 Mechanic Street

Bellingham, Massachusetts 02019

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February 5, 2024

The Selectboard meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM in the Arcand Meeting Room by Chairman Michael Connor. Actively participating in the meeting were the following Board members: Mr. Connor, Mr. Sahin, Mr. Hennessy and Ms. Odabashian. Also actively participating in the meeting was Interim Town Administrator Denis Fraine and Administrative Assistant Hilarie Allie. This meeting was accessible to the public either in-person, via the Zoom online option or ABMI Cable TV.

Public Hearing – on the application of New Frank Corp., d/b/a Bellingham Beer & Wine, Nimaben Patel, Manager, for the transfer of the package store Wines and Malt beverages license from Parimal Patel. Premises located at 20 North Main Street.

Mr. Connor welcomed Kyle Viera representing attorney for New Frank Corp. alongside Ms. Nimaben Patel, proposed licensed manager. Attorney Viera stated Ms. Patel has experience working in a gas station with a liquor license and is TIP Certified as will be all their employees. Attorney Viera stated the new owners will be using an age verification system which they will institute immediately. The business will continue with the same hours and layout.

There were no further comments or questions from the Board or the audience.

On an Odabashian/Hennessy motion the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to close the Public Hearing.

On an Odabashian/Hennessy motion the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to approve the transfer of the Package Store Wines and Malt Beverages License from Parimal Patel to New Frank Corp. with proposed manager Nimaben Patel.

Board of Health Interview

Mr. Connor welcomed Mr. Richard Martinelli before the Board and asked him why he was interested in becoming a member of the Board of Health. Mr. Martinelli stated he was approached by Mr. Forte to help out and he stated he would as long as Mr. Forte showed him the ropes. Mr. Forte stated as a longtime resident and former Selectman Mr. Martinelli would be perfect for the job. Ms. Odabashian agreed with this statement.

Mr. Connor explained to Mr. Martinelli that the Board no longer appoints individuals at the same time as the interviews but thanked him for coming in and stated we would be in touch.

Conservation Commission Interviews

- Don Coelho – Mr. Coelho introduced himself to the Board and stated he has been an environmentalist his entire life and enjoys hiking. He stated his early background includes environmental clean ups and has been an avid outdoor enthusiast his entire life. He stated he retired a few years ago and has more time now to give back to his community. The Board thanked Mr. Coelho for his time this evening and his interest in the Conservation Commission.

- James Clancy – Mr. Clancy introduced himself to the Board and stated he was born and raised in Bellingham and graduated from BHS in 2016. He stated he is an environmental permitting specialist for Eversource and is very familiar with the Wetlands Protection Act. He stated he lived in Uxbridge for a short time and served on their conservation commission but had recently moved back to Bellingham. He understands if any issues arise where his job would conflict with a project in Town, he would recuse himself. The Board thanked Mr. Clancy for his time this evening and his interest in the Conservation Commission.

Police Department – General Update

Chief Fitzgerald updated the Board on his recent compliance checks with the businesses with liquor licenses and he stated it went shockingly well and there was only one violation. He stated there are a few more that need to be completed. He stated as far as requiring businesses to use ID scanners he is indifferent as some scanners are able to scan fake ID's. Chief Fitzgerald also provided the Board with a general overview of the department which included recent training highlights, accomplishments, as well as grants they have received since he took over the department. The Board stated they were very impressed with all he has accomplished in such a short period of time and thanked him for his hard work.

Fire Department – FY 25 Budget Presentation

Fire Chief Miller and Deputy Milot appeared before the Board to present the Fire Department's FY25 budget. Chief Miller stated the community is growing rapidly and with that comes the demand for emergency services. He stated they are seeing a four, almost five, percent increase in calls just on the fire side alone. Chief Miller stated the operating budget for FY24 is \$3.8 million. He stated there is an overtime shortfall and even after a transfer at this past year's Fall Town Meeting he will still be short. He stated contributing factors to this include an individual being out on long term disability and open staffing positions. He was happy to report, however, that as of this evening the department will be fully staffed which he hopes will cut back on overtime. Chief Miller stated the FY25 Budget request is \$4.9 million which is a twenty one percent increase over last year's budget. This increase includes contractual salaries, operations (equipment and apparatus) as well as the medic only program. He stated that the staffing hasn't changed since 2013 and with the increase of calls, NFPA guidelines and the growing community his department is looking at ways to increase staff. He and Deputy Milot are proposing six new medic only positions. He is confident that they will be able to fill these positions with qualified candidates. This proposed program is a cutting edge initiative and being watched very closely by surrounding communities. Hiring medics only will allow for the department to meet staffing requirements. The Chief stated he is asking for the Board's support for this program and will be looking for the community's support as well. Mr. Hennessy asked what a shift would look like for these medics and Chief Miller stated they would be part of the regular duty shift and be involved in daily trainings, chores and calls just like the firefighter/paramedics. Chief Miller explained there would be two medic only personnel per shift. Chief Miller stated the department will apply for some grants to offset some of the budget requests.

Ms. Odabashian stated she is very interested in this medic program and believes it will help the Town and is hopeful that the Board will find a way to fund it. Mr. Sahin believes this would be a great opportunity for individuals who might not be interested in becoming a firefighter but would be a great place to learn and become part of the firefighter community. Mr. Connor asked where the majority of their calls came from and if they came from the new warehouses. Chief Miller stated the hot spots include Wrentham Manor and Depot Court as well as the two urgent care facilities in Town. He stated roughly twenty five percent of their calls come from motor vehicle accidents, structural fires and mutual aid. In conclusion, Mr. Fraine stated he thinks the medic program is a great idea seeing that most of the calls are medical but stated the obvious issue is affordability. He stated this is not something the Town can afford without undergoing some major changes.

Deficit Spending – Snow & Ice

On a Sahin/Hennessy motion, the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to authorize the Town to deficit spend for snow and ice removal for Fiscal Year 2024 as per Mass General Law, Chapter 44 Section 31D.

ARPA Funds

On an Odabashian/Hennessy motion the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to approve the listed funds be returned to Norfolk County.

Amount	Return To	For/Purpose	Spending Authority
\$26,800.00	Norfolk County	<i>To reallocate for new ARPA projects</i>	Finance

Under discussion Mr. Fraine explained that the funds being returned are funds that were administered by the County and were used for projects approved by the ARPA Committee but came in under budget. The funds can become available again for future projects once returned to Norfolk County.

On an Odabashian/Hennessy motion the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to approve the projects listed herein, with said expenditures to be under the direction of the parties noted:

Amount	From	For/Purpose	Spending Authority
\$44,000	ARPA Norfolk County funds	<i>S. Main Street Generator</i>	Police Department
\$45,000	ARPA Norfolk County funds	<i>Police Station Locker Room Expansion</i>	Police Department
\$29,413	ARPA Norfolk County funds	<i>Library Boiler Replacement</i>	Library
\$44,587	ARPA NEU funds	<i>Library Boiler Replacement</i>	Library

Under discussion Chief Fitzgerald explained there is no back up power at the water tower on South Main Street where the Police and Fire radio systems are housed. These funds will be used to purchase a backup generator.

Chief Fitzgerald stated the girl's locker room at the station has a total of six lockers. He stated the locker room will be maxed out as the sixth female officer is currently enrolled in the academy. These funds will be used to design the expansion of the locker room.

Election Warrant

The Select Board, at the request of the Town Clerk, signed the Election Warrant for the 2024 Presidential Primary that will take place in March.

Abatements

On an Odabashian/Sahin motion the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to approve the November capital improvement, sewer, stormwater, trash and water abatement charges in the amount of \$9,481.31.

Minutes

On an Odabashian/Sahin motion the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to approve the January 22nd minutes as submitted.

Citizen Input

The Board discussed once again allotting time at the beginning of each meeting to allow residents to come before the Board to speak about specific topics. They determined this would be from 7:00PM – 7:10PM at each scheduled Select Board meeting. They would ask that residents sign up with Administrative Assistant Hilarie Allie before the meeting so she can be sure the Board will be able to address any issue or topic that they wish to discuss.

On a Connor/Sahin motion, the Board unanimously voted 4-0 to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hilarie J. Allie', written in a cursive style.

Hilarie J. Allie
Administrative Assistant