

Town of Adams Massachusetts 01220-2087

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

TOWN HALL BUILDING
8 PARK STREET

Wednesday, August 11, 2021, 6:00 p.m.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER: On the above date the Board of Selectmen held a meeting at the Town Hall Board of Selectmen Room. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairman Duval. Present from the Board of Selectmen were Chairman Duval, Vice Chairman Hoyt, Members Blanchard, Nowak and Rosenberg. Also present were Town Administrator Green, Community Development Director Coughlin, Cemetery Commission Member Shepley, Town Counsel St. John III, Administrative Assistant Dunlap, and Greg Fournier from iBerkshires.

NEW BUSINESS

Community Development: update on CDBG application. *Town Administrator Green* reviewed a recent workshop where Community Development briefed the Board on the intentions of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Application. It was discovered that now the maximum grant allowable this year is \$800,000 which is reduced from what was believed to be available at the time. *Community Development Director Coughlin* explained that he discovered this the day after the workshop and checked with BRPC who confirmed it. He reviewed the changes made to the proposed application with the lower number, including a reduction of the Housing Rehabilitation Program units from fifteen to eight. He noted the big changes to the Hoosac Valley Coal and Grain park. He advised that he talked with DPW Operation Supervisor Cota regarding a donation of materials, getting walkway materials from Specialty Minerals for gravel or sand to use for the walkways at hopefully zero cost to the Town, and using a less expensive picnic table, which won't look as nice but will be just as functional and durable. He noted that he is confident he can get the project done but it may make the bidding process challenging with bids coming in high. He pointed out that the bones of the project could be put in first and applications for additional grants could be submitted for next year or the DPW could get additional materials then. He explained that there is no asphalt or concrete in the project, and it is all gravel, lawn and woodchips which are low cost materials. He briefly touched on the plantings that can be done year by year and proposed use of the DPW budget to get trees and shrubs in there at a later date. He reviewed that he was hoping to fund the Program Manager position held by Becky Ferguson and keep it funded for another year, as well as the Financial Assistant position to help with the administration for CDBG and housing rehabilitation at \$149,000, spread out over and eighteen-month long timeframe. It was explained that the Financial Assistant position will be filled after the current staff member retires, and it would be putting the salary load onto CDBG and expanding the position to more than what is currently in place. *Member Rosenberg* inquired about the expense of the ADA ramp and whether it was a necessity. It was explained that the ADA ramp connects the park to the rail trail to provide another access, and it is expensive because it needs to be custom-built for that site. It was pointed out that there is a nearly five-foot drop from the trail down to the park along the south of the barn area. *Vice Chairman Hoyt* noted that Monday was the public meeting and asked if there was any input from the neighbors. It was reported that there was low turnout of neighbors despite mailing of sixty notices.

The Parks Commission was the majority of the attendance, and there were only two members of the public. It was noted that feedback was that people seemed excited about it and about having a new dog park in town. It was announced that next week at 7:10pm is the public hearing in the Board of Selectmen Meeting to get feedback on the program. *Member Nowak* reviewed his attendance of the meeting and explained he was sad to see the building stabilization removed from the application because there are structural problems that need to be addressed. It was clarified that the removal of the building stabilization portion will not take away the fence around the building. It was confirmed that funding will be continually looked for and it will become more of a priority when the park is built. *Member Blanchard* noted the importance of the stabilization of the buildings because if the buildings fall down it will be an issue. It was stated that one building has an open window and is inhabited by pigeons. It was clarified that there is not a set cost determined yet on the study. *Town Administrator Green* noted that the staff is doing the best job they can because the state keeps moving around deadlines and data.

Cemetery Commission: Review fee structure and proposed updated fees: *Town Administrator Green* explained that the three-person Cemetery Commission is charged with policy development, fee structures and rules and regulations of the cemeteries, and Bruce Shepley is the current Chair. It was noted that discussion on fees had taken place in the past, and the Board will vote on it upon the recommendation of the Cemetery Commission. *Cemetery Commission Chair Shepley* explained that this review was triggered from a neighboring town asking for a spreadsheet on our fees, and a review had not been done since rate increases were implemented in 2015. He noted that rates and fee structures are not uniform from town to town due to differences in the way the cemeteries are run. He pointed out that there was not a suggestion for a specific percentage of increase but instead it was a proposal for what the Cemetery Commission thought was appropriate. He outlined the significant difference between resident and non-resident costs. He explained that perpetual care is dictated by the state, and it generated \$2,600 this year which goes towards the purchase of equipment, lawn mowers, water line repairs and more. He reviewed the fees for the local towns and explained why they were all different. He noted increases for cost of living, and if the amount is spaced out over five or six years it will best address what is currently being done. He advised that the “winter ground” may now be called a “winter fee” as it requires more than just thawing out the ground with propane and labor, as there is snow and stone removal from the plot. He explained that “cremains” are not interred during the winter months, which are designated from November to April. It was discussed that when reviewing fees, it was pointed out that burials brought in on Saturdays incur overtime. *Cemetery Commission Chair Shepley* noted the need to limit the hours and reinforce with funeral homes that 11:30 a.m. burial does not get people out of the cemetery because families linger. He emphasized that there are only so many resources available in the DPW and many times staff members come in on their own on Saturdays. It was pointed out that at Town Meeting there was a \$125,000 expenditure. The largest portion was explained as being 12” waterline replacement in Bellevue Cemetery that Superintendent Barrett wants to eliminate and replace, as it constant leaks. The desire to go to Town Meeting in 2022 with a proposal to replace water lines was expressed. An inquiry was made regarding what coverage was from perpetual care and what the Town budget covered. It was noted that the Finance Director would have more detailed information. It was explained that funds are generated from the sale of lots and the license fee to dig and put in a foundation for memorial stones but does those do not generate thousands of dollars. There are other funds in the budget. The Perpetual Care line item carries a balance, and can only appropriate the interest from year to year. Access to a larger amount of money must be appropriated from Town Meeting. It was pointed out that there is a cemetery investment fund of \$134,000 for renovations to the Town cemetery garage.

Some of this money comes from the sale of plots, and generated \$5,200. The total balance as of January 31, 2021 was \$134,896, which generated \$970 in interest. *Town Administrator Green* advised that he intended to hire Seasonal Laborers from the Perpetual Care fund, and it was insufficient to pay for them and instead the Seasonal Laborer pay came from the standard DPW and fleet budget. It was noted that \$2,600 in interest is all that can be spent. An inquiry was made about which funds the fees go into, and it was explained that the sale of lots go into the Cemetery Investment Fund and a portion go for deeds go to the Town Clerk. If there is greater than \$250,000 in the Perpetual Care Fund interest it may be invested. It was explained that Perpetual Care is a one-time fee, though not defined, but used to maintain the grounds of the cemetery. There are no guidelines on how many times per week the grass is cut, etc. and it was clarified that Town funds pay for that, not Perpetual Care. *Cemetery Commission Chair Shepley* advised that the money in the investment fund cannot be used arbitrarily, but has to go to Town Meeting for approval. A review of the funds will be done and Town Administrator Green, Finance Director Wojcik, Cemetery Commission Chair Shepley and Treasurer Rice will work together to look at the breakout of exact costs to maintain the two cemeteries and figure out whether to subsidize the costs. An analysis will be done to understand what is being spent and where the funds go, and then the Accounting Department will track them. It was pointed out that there is a statute that governs Perpetual Care but it is believed to be only for municipalities and not for private cemeteries. *Member Nowak* noted the increase of price of the lots, and also the steep costs incurred for burials and upkeep and expressed concern about how it will be handled in communities with a less wealthy population like Adams. It was pointed out that everything has a cost to it and the resources of the Town shouldn't be burdened with the responsibility. The number of cremains has increased significantly and some interments are not happening because people are choosing to have cremains taken care of in different ways. *Member Blanchard* verified there is currently \$463,541 in Perpetual Care, as of January 2021. *Cemetery Commission Chair Shepley* pointed out that Adams is on the lower end of Berkshire County in fees, and in the middle part of the state they are significantly higher. *Town Administrator Green* noted that the Town must find a way to afford these services as there is maintenance of the water structure and money comes from the tax rate or user fees. He noted a review of the fee structures will be done with the other departments as well. He pointed out that when the Town is not competitive with or equal to other communities it is an issue. *Chairman Duval* requested that Finance Director Wojcik attend the next meeting to go through this information. *Member Nowak* noted that the amounts may vary quite a bit from year to year depending on what equipment is needed. He explained that the cemeteries are running out of plots, and inquired where it goes after that. It was explained that this is prepared for by the Cemetery Investment Fund. He asked the Town Administrator to call the State Representative or Senator to find out what the history was on the inability to use more than the interest on Perpetual Care funds. *Cemetery Commission Chair Shepley* advised that during the winter the Commission wants to do a feasibility study and look at how many lots were in Bellevue, how many it can hold, what the rate of interments and growth is and have that in the budgetary discussion for the Board of Selectmen regarding the life span of the cemetery. An inquiry was made about having a mausoleum and it was noted that if the cemetery runs out of room there are different ways to honor "cremains". A workshop will be scheduled on this data.

Town Counsel: Review Housing Authority appointment process: *Town Administrator Green* reviewed the annual appointment process that takes place every June. He noted that recently the Board has had to do appointments because nobody ran for public election and therefore had to be appointed by the Board of Selectmen. It was noted that the legislation for this particular position changed just before it was to go before the Board of Selectmen. Last week it was brought up before the Board and questions were raised so Town Counsel St. John III is here to answer those questions.

Town Counsel St. John III advised there was one specific question about whether at the end of the appointment term it goes back to an election format. He reviewed that this is dealing with the Tenant Member of the Housing Authority, which must be appointed by the Board of Selectmen as it is mandatory, and has a mandatory three-year term. He explained that at the end of the term another appointment needs to take place and it will not revert back to an election format. He noted that the procedural part was done before the last meeting, and the next meeting the Board can take a vote to make an appointment with the understanding that it will always be an appointed position. It was clarified that the three-year period will begin retroactive to when the term would have begun, from May 2021 to May 2024.

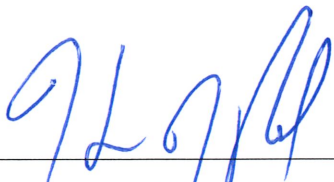
ANNOUNCEMENTS AND GOOD OF THE ORDER: *Member Rosenberg* reported that he had been approached by George LeMaitre regarding a desire for both him and Bill Riley to make a presentation to the Board of Selectmen about bringing the arts back to life in an appeal to the public. *Member Nowak* advised that he reached Melissa Provencher and would like to schedule her to come to the next Workshop to discuss carbon sequestration. A Zoom link can be provided if people are not comfortable attending in person. He also reported that contact has been initiated with Lindsay Nystrom, Forest Legacy Program Director as a lot of the communities in the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership are not in the Forest Legacy Program. He noted he left maps in the mailboxes and advised that there are lots of grants and opportunities if a community gets into the program. *Vice Chairman Hoyt* announced there are two events that Board Members are invited to. Coffee in the Court, will be held tomorrow morning and on Friday will be the Original Seed Grand Opening Ribbon Cutting. Scheduling of meetings was briefly discussed and it was noted there will be no meeting next week as the Board will not have a quorum.

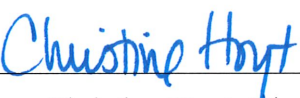
ADJOURNMENT: *Motion made by Member Blanchard to adjourn, second by Vice Chairman Hoyt. Vote: unanimous. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 6:49 p.m.*

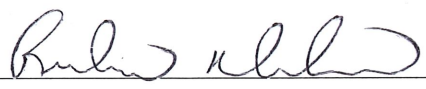
Respectfully Submitted,

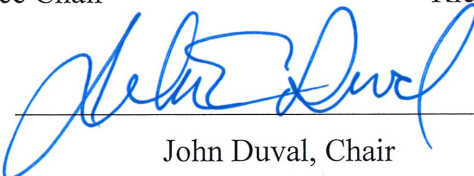
Deborah J. Dunlap, Recording Secretary


Joseph Nowak, Member


Howard Rosenberg, Member


Christine Hoyt, Vice Chair


Richard Blanchard, Member


John Duval, Chair