

Town of Adams Massachusetts 01220-2087

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

**TOWN HALL BUILDING
8 PARK STREET**

Wednesday, January 27, 2021, 6:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

CALL TO ORDER: On the above date the Board of Selectmen held a meeting on the first floor of Adams Town Hall and on Zoom. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Board of Selectmen Chairman Hoyt. Present were Vice Chairman Blanchard and Members Duval and Nowak. Also present were Town Administrator Green, Community Development Staff Ferguson and Donna Cesan. Jack Guerino from iBerkshires and Scott Stafford from Berkshire Eagle were in attendance.

Chairman Hoyt advised that "pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 *Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18*, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Town of Adams Board of Selectmen is being conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order. A recording of this meeting is available for anyone who wishes. Rule of 10 in place according to Code Enforcement for the size of the room in accordance with the Governor's order.

PUBLIC CALL-IN:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/99294310109?pwd=REVoYzRKcDBMeUZFSGhqK0Y2TFF3Zz09>;

Meeting ID: 992 9431 0109; Passcode: 064234

Dial In: 1 (929) 436-2866 US (New York); *Meeting ID: 992 9431 0109; Passcode: 064234*

NEW BUSINESS

FY2021 Community Development Block Grant projects: *Community Development Special Projects Coordinator Cesan* reported that typically at this point of the year a grant startup workshop would have begun but with Covid-19 the schedule is behind and a new deadline has not been provided but is expected to be in April. Community Development Programs Manager Ferguson has been the staff lead in the Hoosac Coal and Grain project. In 2017 the Town received funding to hire a designer for the park project, which has been completed. It was described as a good plan, and copies were provided to the Board for 1 Cook Street. *Community Development Programs Manager Ferguson* reviewed the design layout and noted that the elements of the design honor the location adjacent to the rail trail and the rail line as well as the history of the site. She advised that the ramp comes off of the rail trail and into a plaza area. There is an off-leash dog park area, fenced in with wood chip surface and gated to allow for dogs. She noted that the center of the park has grassy areas, a walkway that goes through the park, two areas of coal bunker and tank saddles as remnants of the old Coal and Grain to turn them into interesting features of the park. Climbing features for kids were incorporated. She explained that the parking area is on the far end on Cook Street at the old Coal and Grain building, and a wildflower or pollinator strip is designed as a setback from floodwalls, putting in a buffer zone that is low maintenance and mowed once a year as a solution. A cost estimate was done a couple years ago and there are no drastic changes expected but material costs have gone up.

Cost estimates are around \$560,000. The parking area will be paved minimally, and the park will have to share an entrance with a neighboring residence so they can get to their garage and parking area. She explained that parking was focused toward the building so they would have access but this feature needs to be worked out further. It was clarified that the Town owns the easement. *Vice Chairman Blanchard* inquired whether the lot on the corner of Cook and Columbia Streets will be converted to parking, and it was explained that it is privately owned lot not an option. It is hoped that most people will use the Ashuwillticook Trail to come there as it was intended to be a respite for trail users and for the neighborhood so the primary access to park is pedestrian. It was explained that the plan for the actual Coal and Grain building is to stabilize it as a structural element of that area of town and preserve the grain tower's historic element to potentially be a focus of restrooms. It is not seen to be an air-conditioned full building as a feasible concept in the near future. Community Development is trying to get architectural assessment work going and cleanup of the grain elevator. It was noted that there are two structures on the property and soil contamination is the focus. Once that is done, making it into a park is next, then stabilize the building and have dialogue on future usages. It was outlined that there is EPA cleanup funding and the Town will do cleanup in two phases. The first phase is the building, and also the barn building in the lawn area. It was explained that the bid is out right now and responses are expected in a couple weeks. Phase Two is ground contamination and that is being finalized now and expected back in the next week or two. Once complete, this is the big first step in being able to utilize the site. It was explained that the parking lot plan is to stone dust it and not to put down permanent pavement to keep it as flexible as possible for future construction. Concern was expressed about this park being another area that will need upkeep. It was pointed out that this park is designed to be low upkeep, having no complicated swing set, no fancy flowers or trees. *Town Administrator Green* recommended creating an ad hoc group to maintain it as more is added to it. It was suggested to have friends of the dog park provide upkeep and maintain that, as it is not desired to put the work on staff. *Member Nowak* advised that the grain elevator is a beautiful building and a good reminder of railroad history where railroad cars would be filled up. He noted that it is starting to deteriorate but the structural aspect needs to be looked at. The Steering Committee was identified as being former Selectman Bush, Heather Linscott, members from Berkshire Scenic and the historic society and who encouraged the pollinator garden. *Chairman Hoyt* inquired about what would be suggested to move forward without any clarity from the grant program. It was expected that potential funding is expected to be \$800,000, and this project is just under \$600,000 plus staff positions if funding is awarded with this grant. It was noted that the Town may be able to squeeze in a small planning project which may be outlined and brought forward to the Board informally at a later date to fill out the funding for the application. A public hearing needs to take place more than two weeks before the application deadline. It was explained that there is a broad range of projects that the Town has applied for under CDBG including the housing rehabilitation program. The Town is now implementing the 2019 CDBG grant, which was Russell Field and eight housing projects. It was noted that with Covid-19 it has been very difficult to advance these projects with homeowners and keep people safe. Three housing rehabilitation projects are out now and a fourth project will be out by Monday. There are a total of eight projects. It was pointed out that with construction projects the Town is pressing against the limit and has to make a choice of a construction project or a good group of housing. It was explained that the proposal is for a parks project.

2022-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): *Chairman Hoyt* reported that Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) reached out to municipalities to update and provide input on additional items to put on the TIP. *Member Duval* gave Board Members some background on how annual input is gathered and how BRPC reviews and ranks projects on the level of engineering.

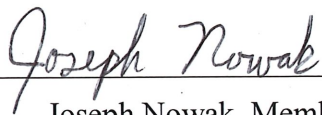
He noted that the Route 8 Commercial Street Improvement Project is an example of this. He inquired if there is another project that should start down that road. *Chairman Hoyt* noted that Board Members have the list of projects by location and in Adams there are two projects, specifically the Route 8 Quality Street and Bridge Replacement Project, and the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail Extension Project. For any other projects to be put on the TIP the Board would have to think about engineering costs to be budgeted for in future years. *Town Administrator Green* explained that the Town committed to the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail Extension Project, and what is being considered is that Howland Avenue has gotten a great deal of attention. He noted that he has spoken to Representative Barrett about it last week and there could be funds in the Economic Development fund. His staff is researching available funds. He explained that the Town has conceptualized what would be desired to have there and had determined it is best to keep control and ownership of that roadway. The Town is looking long range at using the TIP Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) method for what fits the community for funding to correct deficiencies of the roadway surface. *Community Development Special Projects Coordinator Cesan* advised that in the past the Board has had discussions on the concept, which is on the industrial side of town and a gateway, and on how to make it more attractive and inviting. She reviewed the "boulevard" concept, with a wide median planted with trees to calm the traffic level. She noted the lack of safety due to speeding and that the road is excessively wide as it is wider than the turnpike. These factors determined that the "boulevard" idea is desirable and after discussion with MassDOT District One the idea was agreed upon but challenged the Town to have a public meeting prior to having the project put on the TIP. MassDOT staff in Boston meet quarterly, and the Town is trying to be in a position to have project information prepared in time to have a public meeting completed prior to their next meeting on May 29th. The process would require a virtual meeting. VHB has been talked to about it with plans to get input. Community Development could go out to invite business owners along the corridor to participate in it to get people engaged and get input. *Chairman Hoyt* briefly reviewed Complete Streets from 2017 where VHB talked about Route 8 North and South projects. It was noted that plans show turn lane locations that can be shared with key property owners along the corridor to initiate one on one conversations. *Chairman Hoyt* mentioned the high cost of engineering. The Town used \$800,000 and multiple years of Chapter 90 funds to get the Route 8 Commercial Street Improvement Project done, which translated into a \$9 Million project utilizing federal highway money. Surface money would be state funds, but there is only \$4.5 Million a year for all of Berkshire County, and the Town of Adams is in competition with the other communities. It was explained that the municipality that gets the engineering and design done is the one that is able to access the construction dollars. A request was made to review the boulevard concept with grass in center, and to identify whether mowing, pavers, and cleanup will be required. It was pointed out that there were a couple of different concepts which was more of a layout. The Ashuwillticook Rail Trail engineering is complete and the Town is working toward the 25% design, which is a major milestone. Once MassDOT accepts it, a formal design public hearing is required before moving forward to construction. It was explained that engineers are working with VHB and it is believed that will be achieved before the end of the calendar year and approved during the first month or two of 2022. It was noted that this is a very complicated project and in the two miles of bike trail there has been every possible hurdle. Design challenges were presented with the project and the land owner identified an agricultural tourism opportunity with her land. It was explained that the Town was awarded Mass DOT grant funds for the project, which were matched by 25% Town funds to get to 25% design for a public hearing. These funds have already been matched by the existing budget. It was explained that the Town allocated a good portion for the Chapter 90 design. The Quality Street Bridge is a MassDOT project, and driven by their engineer and design, behind Mullen Mayflower.

A request was made to have a workshop soon on the Route 8 North conceptual designs, and to plan for a public meeting. Scheduling will be looked at for February or March for a virtual public meeting to get engineers to walk through the proposed designs and talk about the concepts. *Member Nowak* requested work be done with Specialty Minerals and Holland Company as a lot of trucks go in and out there causing safety issues. Concern was expressed that when the road turns to two lanes it will be a free for all so a lot of thought will need to be given to whether it should be a one lane concept with a divider and trees. It was noted that there is a lot of wetland along the road going toward North Adams which causes a lot of disruption of the layout of the road and trouble in that area. Water runoff and encroachment from the Hoosac River flood plain was noted. The Blackstone River Bike Trail was noted as having the same problem and has ways for water to go over it without damaging the roadway. Submissions to BRPC were noted and the Town already has the project information sheet and form submitted which is updated every year to show progress on the design.

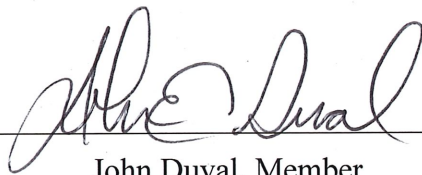
ANNOUNCEMENTS AND GOOD OF THE ORDER: *Town Administrator Green* reported next week there will be three vaccination clinics offered to eight northern Berkshire towns for citizens aged 75 and over, and the Council on Aging is proactively reaching out to that demographic, especially those without internet access. He noted that five or six staff members are helping out with that process. He advised that he got word on this Monday night and by Wednesday was told this would open up. He noted it has been covered by iBerkshires and the Berkshire Eagle. *Chairman Hoyt* announced that there will be a regular meeting next Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. and Covid numbers from the Department of Public Health are expected tomorrow. If the Town is in the yellow or red the meeting will be fully remote. If they are better, a hybrid model for two at home and two in the building may be considered. *Town Administrator Green* noted that if the new strain is more contagious, a six-foot buffer will increase and complicate things. Despite being in the midst of vaccination and driving numbers down, it may be an impact on how and where the Board meets.

ADJOURNMENT: *Motion made by Vice Chairman Blanchard to adjourn the meeting, second by Member Duval. Vote: unanimous. Roll Call Vote: Chair, Vice, Members Duval and Nowak. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 6:54 p.m.*

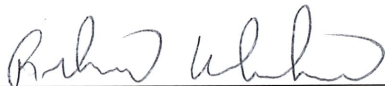
Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,
Recording Secretary



Joseph Nowak, Member



John Duval, Member



Richard Blanchard, Vice Chair



Christine Hoyt, Chairman