

Jonathan Anderson, Chair person
David Hall, Vice Chair
Jesse Limanek, Clerk
Jeffrey Bannon
Normand Champigny



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James A. Smith, Town Manager

Town of Sutton
Select Board

Meeting Minutes

Minutes Accepted and filed with the Town Clerk 9/19/2023 with a roll call vote of 5-0

6:00 p.m. – September 5, 2023

Roll Call vote taken:

Members in Attendance in person:

Chairperson Jonathan Anderson, Vice Chair David Hall, Clerk Jesse Limanek, Select members Jeffrey Bannon & Normand Champigny

Also attending in person: Town Manager James Smith, Town Accountant Tim Harrison & Deb Jacques, secretary

Public Forum – Christine Watkins 65 McClellan Road is here to invite the Town Manager and the Select Board to the 200th anniversary of the Rufus Putnam Building to be held on Sat. Sept. 30th at 1pm.

Vice Chair Hall motions to accept as presented the August 15, 2023 Select Board meeting minutes Select Person Bannon seconds passes 5-0 with roll call vote

Police Dept. Patrolman ratifications: present tonight is Police Chief Dennis Towle along with 2 new officers- Riniel Liriano and Den Yin. Chief Towle goes over the challenging hiring process and lack of candidates. The 1st new hire, Riniel Liriano graduated from Quinsigamond College Police academy. The 2nd new hire is Den Yin who attended a Worcester Police Academy that partnered with the NGuard. Den Yin was in the Military Police. The Select Board all welcome the 2 new officers with positive comments and sentiments. Select person Limanek motions to ratify the appointment of full time Police Officer Riniel Liriano effective January 2, 2023- Select person Bannon seconds passes 5-0 with roll call vote. Select person Limanek motions to ratify the appointment of full time Police Officer Den Yin effective August 1, 2023- Select person Bannon seconds passes 5-0 with roll call vote. At this time Chairperson Anderson swears in the new police officers.

Common Vic- The Little Coffee Bean- Present is Jessica Gianakis- Jessica introduces herself- this business will be located at 160 Worc. Prov. Tpk. and run by her father, brother and herself. Vice Chair Hall begins by welcoming the new breakfast site to town. When asked the hours- Jessica replies Mon-Fri 6-3 and Sat. & Sun. 7-2. Select members Limanek and Bannon offer good luck. Select member Champigny says thank you for choosing Sutton and asks about the offerings of coffee. Chairperson Anderson says he likes small businesses and is excited to try their offerings. Select person Bannon motions to approve the Common Victualer license for The Little Coffee Bean located at 160 Worcester Providence Tpk. Owner- Nicholas Gianakis contingent upon sign off from the Building Dept & Board of Health with an expiration date of December 31, 2024, Select person Limanek seconds passes 5-0 with roll call vote.

Boston Road Layout Vote- Planning Director Jen Hager is present- this is what they have discussed at the previous 2 meetings. Vice Chair Hall thanks the 2 neighbors for working with the town to make this a clean process. Select person Champigny motions to alter the layout of a portion of Boston Road, a public way, to include within said layout the land depicted as Parcel 3 on the plan entitled "Boston Road: Layout Alteration and Discontinuance Plan" by WSP USA Inc., dated September 5, 2023, and that said vote and plan be filed with the Town Clerk and reported to Town Meeting for acceptance. Vice Chair Hall seconds passes 5-0 with roll call vote. Select person Champigny motions to alter the layout of a portion of Boston Road, a public way, to include within said layout the parcels of land depicted as T-1, T-2 and T-3 on the plan entitled "Right of Way Plan – Boston Road, Sutton, MA" by WSP USA Inc., dated September 5, 2023, and that said vote and plan be filed with the Town Clerk and reported to Town Meeting for acceptance Vice Chair Hall seconds passes 5-0 with roll call vote.

Review OPEB Funding Policy- Town Manager Smith says as discussed at our annual Goals meeting- we will be reviewing and updating our policies. The current OPEB policy was adopted in Nov. 2017- we would like to amend this policy. The following 3 items are the changes: 1) remove the cell tower revenue as a funding source- With the recent agreement on Stone Sch. Rd the revenue from Town Farm Road will go to the general fund. 2) Remove utilizing the overlay acct. for OPEB- any surplus in the overlay will go towards the town budget and 3) amend the language of 10% of free cash going towards OPEB- when free cash exceeds \$2,000,000. 10% of that number goes towards free cash- when free cash falls between \$1 million and \$2 million, 5% goes towards OPEB. If free cash is certified at less than \$1 million, no free cash will go to OPEB. Town Accountant Tim Harrison worked along with Jim to request these changes- Tim states there will be a new Actuary (Parker Elmore) coming to a future Select Board meeting with a presentation. After brief discussion Vice Chair Hall agreed with moderation of use- but why now- Town Manager Smith replies we feel like we made progress. We have had other concerns in addition to OPEB- the budget and Capital Plan. Dave supports the approach. This Policy is not cast in stone it is a guideline. Select person Limanek says we have this liability- obligation to our town employees to take care of them yet we cannot get an actual figure of what we have to pay- it is the right time to do this- if trends change we can revisit. Hard times are coming and we need to be conservative, Select person Bannon agrees with moderation- Jeff is comfortable with these changes- we have priorities but Jeff is not a big fan of the last component- give future boards and administration the flexibility to spend as they see fit. Select person Champigny understands the modification- is there any forecast on the future liability- are there any big bumps- Tim replies it is already calculated and we are not increasing our work force. Chairperson Anderson says this does help with our Bond rating- yes this is for our liability but are we meeting our obligation. Vice Chair Hall motions to approve the updated Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) funding policy- Select person Champigny seconds passes 5-0 with roll call vote.

Review Draft Fall Town Meeting Warrant- present to discuss certain articles is Town Accountant Tim Harrison and Planning Director Jen Hager- Town Manager Smith reviews the 19 articles with input from Tim and Jen. This is the draft warrant- the final will be before the Select Board on Sept. 19th. Included in this warrant (#8) is sponsored by the Select Board- it is a prohibition on Use of Engine Compression Brakes. The Planning Board has articles 12-19- #17 is to see if the Zoning Bylaw will amend Special Regulations by adding Special Event Facility for those with 40+ acres. After brief discussion the board moves to the Town Manager update.

Town Manager Update:

- State Housing Refugee families in Sutton- MA. Gov. office notified by phone message Friday 8/25 at 6pm that a number of refugee families will be housed in Sutton over the weekend. On Monday morning we became aware that 18 families were here- Tuesday there were 25 families- by Thurs. 33 families. Dept. of Public Health sent nurses to do assessments for the vaccination history of the children. We want all these families to feel at home. This has been a challenge the 1st issue is food. We thank Cheryl Rawinski, Paul Maynard and the School- this has been an all hands on deck. Cheryl did suggest we keep these 30 families beyond the 30 days (new families would come in) as we are building a relationship with the current families. Jim states if we are placing these children in our school system we need to take a stand and try to keep these families. Once they enter into the school the town of Sutton is on the hook for them for a year even if they move to another location (McKenny-Vento Act). There is a serious language barrier. All of these families are here legally and are in the legal immigration process. We are looking to turn over to state agencies asap as we are concerned with the health and wellness of our staff. The state has not been great with information. There is a press release attached to the final minutes.
- Town Manager Evaluation- please fill out and return to Debbie by Sept 13/14 for the following meeting.
- MOA with Elite Homebuilders- the Board agreed at the last meeting to enter into an MOA with Elite Homebuilders- the following day Jim reached out to Cohen Babcock from Elite Homebuilders and was informed that as of the end of July they were no longer going forward with this project. The P&S expired.
- The 22nd annual Blackstone River Valley Greenway challenge- scheduled to take place Sept 30th- This is a relay race consisting of biking, running and kayaking on Singletary lake. There will be a Police Boat patrol on the lake as well as various police details along the route. Thank you to Sgt. Fortunato for organizing.
- Meeting with NGrid regarding the fiber project took place on 8/29- we made significant progress at this meeting.
- Fall Town Meeting was scheduled for Sept. 12th- the new date is Sept 20th (due to Millbury Chronicle issue posting).

In regards to the Refugee families in town- the Select board had the following concerns/comments:

Vice Chair Hall feels it was poorly executed circumstances that placed the refugee families here with no notice to the town- Dave is in awe of some of the people in Sutton including religious organizations to try and bring aid to these families in need. This help will be needed for a while. Dave did visit the location over the weekend to help where needed.

Select person Limanek was away over the weekend but had spoken to Cheryl Rawinski and Paul Maynard about the escalating situation. Jesse states these families were abandoned with no food, the number of families kept growing- the biggest concern is with the location. This location has had serious code issues- lack of smoke detectors, mold, no sprinklers. Jesse is concerned if this site is to be used long term- we need to put pressure on the owner to raise the standards and be proactive.

Select person Bannon offers thanks to Jonathan Anderson and his wife Kathleen for all they did to assist with the organization at this location as well as Cheryl, Paul, the Demoura family. Jeff states this is a sad difficult situation and is less than impressed with the state.

Food continues to be an issue with large lapses in time before it arrives. Jeff did visit the location and offered help where it was needed.

Select person Champigny begins by saying Cheryl Rawinski has gone above and beyond even using her own funds to purchase medication- we are Sutton- this is not political it is humanitarian. Normand also visited the location and found the families to be very nice. Normand is disappointed with the state and the cost to the town. Normand is glad the Superintendent is standing her ground making sure the Town will be compensated for the students. We have seen this coming for a while now- elections have consequences. We will do the best for these families.

Chairperson Anderson says the way the state handled this is egregious- it bordered on criminal- they offered no support and no food. Jonathan states it made him very angry how this all transpired. Cheryl and Paul were able to keep it from becoming complete chaos. We were able to get volunteers to respond quickly. There is a lot of negative responses on social media and a volunteer did receive a harassing call earlier today. This is unacceptable. People are misinformed. We have to do our best in this situation but it is an unsustainable situation- we need to find organizations that can take over and coordinate the needs these families require. Clothing, Food, volunteers, translators is what is needed. At the end of the day there are so many challenges- the state is not able to deal with the process so we need to rely on ourselves.

Announcement's / Round Table:

- Select person Limanek mentions the Dudley Gendron Chicken Barbecue Sat. Sept 9th 1-5. There will be a 9/11 ceremony at noon.
Food Pantry has taken a hit many items are out of stock- there have been over 220 families using the Food Pantry we need to remember all in need. Drop off locations are St Marks and the church on the common as well as the Town Hall and the Sr. Center.
- Select person Champigny attended the recent tractor pull at Waters Farm- thankyou to Paul Schaefer and his team.

Select person Limanek motions to adjourn, Select person Bannon 2nds- Roll Call vote taken- passes 5-0

Meeting adjourned 9:45pm