



**Town of West Boylston**  
140 Worcester Street, West Boylston, Massachusetts 01583

## **Board of Selectmen/Sewer Commission Meeting Minutes**

<b>Date / Time / Location of Meeting</b> February 21, 2018; 6:45 p.m.;Rm 210 Town Hall
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<b>Members Present</b> John W. Hadley, Chairman Christopher A. Rucho, Vice Chair Barur R. Rajeshkumar, Clerk Patrick J. Crowley, Selectman Siobhan M. Bohnson, Selectman
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<b>Members NOT Present</b>
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<b>Invited Guests:</b>
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**Welcome – Call to Order**

**Time: 6:45 pm**

Mr. Rucho, will be serving as Chairman and called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

Motion Mr. Crowley to amend the agenda to move the executive session to the end of the meeting, seconded by Mr. Rajeshkumar, all in favor.

**PUBLIC COMMENT – 7:05PM:** There is no one present for this agenda item.

### **APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:**

#### **February 12, 2018, regular session**

Motion to Accept: Mr. Rajeshkumar

Seconded: Mr. Hadley

Result: All in favor

#### **February 12, 2018, executive session**

Motion to Accept: Mr. Crowley

Seconded: Mr. Rajeshkumar

Result: All in favor

#### **September 6, 2017, regular session**

Motion to Accept: Mr. Rajeshkumar

Seconded: Mr. Crowley

Result: All in favor

**Review and vote to approve warrants for the period covering February 13, 2018 to February 21, 2018: payable warrants for the town FY2018-34 and FY2018-SP1, payroll warrant FY2018 #17, school warrant FY2018-13; and Municipal Light Plant warrant FY18 #15**

Motion to Accept: Mr. Crowley

Seconded: Mr. Rajeshkumar

Result: All in favor

**Adam Menard, Assistant Planner, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission – Hazardous Mitigation Plan**

Mr. Menard joined the Board. He explained that he is here this evening to present the plan and give a summary of the work done over the past year for the town. He worked together with Police Chief Dennis Minnich, Fire Chief Tom Welsh, DPW Director Vernon Jackson, Water District Superintendent Michael Coveney, Light Department Manager Jonathan Fitch and Bill Moulton of the Department of Conservation and Recreation on the plan. Hazardous mitigation is the effort to reduce loss of life and property by lessening the impact of natural disasters. Its goal is to reduce hazard impacts before a disaster occurs. By adopting a plan approved by FEMA allows the town to receive non-emergency federal disaster assistance and mitigation funding as mandated under the Disaster Mitigation Act. Some of the greatest natural risks are winter storms, severe thunderstorms, wind, flooding. In West Boylston we have flooding along West Boylston's Gates Brooks. He thanked the people involved in the plan, they met several times planning time lines and the plan will need to be updated every five years.

Mitigation strategies identified in the plan are broken down into four categories. The first is Structure and Infrastructure projects. The second is Preparedness, Coordination and Response Action Strategies. The third is Education and Awareness Programs. Under this category they would educate people on the effects of drought and teach them water conservation. The last section is Local Plans and Regulations. He asked the Board to vote to adopt the plan.

Ms. Scheipers noted that there was already good collaboration between department heads and having work on this plan provides a common sense approach. Mr. Crowley asked if everyone endorsed the plan and Ms. Scheipers replied yes, they provided feedback. Mr. Rajeshkumar ask if all the plans mentioned in the fourth section, Local Plans and Regulations were in place now. Ms. Scheipers advised that some may be currently in place and for transportation projects you have DOT projects with certain guidelines in place. If you decide to go for funds it is in place. Chief Welsh noted that most of the points have been reoccurring problem which impact the DPW and Water Department. Everybody was at the table and pointed out areas to be addressed. Mr. Crowley asked if there are any grants we could apply for. Ms. Scheipers noted that there is a culvert replacement program. The DPW Director will be getting information on.

Motion Mr. Crowley to adopt the Hazardous Mitigation Plan and sign the Adoption Certificate, seconded by Ms. Bohnson, all in favor.

**Fire Chief Tom Welsh**

1.Ambulance Rates

The Chief invited one of his Lieutenants to join him. He explained that once a year we review the ambulance rates and they need to be approved by the Board. He provided a spread sheet of area towns with their billing rates and noted that last year we went with bundling. The year went flawlessly and it was smooth. This year we are taking a look at the area town's ambulance rates. The three that mirror ours are about \$100 more for the same services. In the BLS service they have not adopted the bundling concept and oxygen is not included in their rate, it is in ours. The only one lower than us is Sterling. He recommends we increase our BLS rate by 10% to bring us in line with others out there. With the cost of running the service, the cost and maintenance of equipment, and a 24-hour staff, it will take the burden from decreased revenues. A lot of our residents have moved to Medicare and we are getting far less than we used to get. With 300 BLS calls our rates are increased about \$30,000. Ms. Bohnson asked if we lost the contract at the jail. The Chief advise that they went to a private service as well as some nursing homes. We are still the first responding ALS unit. We are also their back up. A lot of time was spent on those calls and what we got was very little. They have a rate they pay us through their insurance company. A lot of the time the prisoners get released quickly and we go to their private insurance. Some of those write offs are because of that. We are doing less calls at the jail and some of the nursing homes.

The Chief explained that we started with the bundling rate because our ambulance is prepared to provide services whether they go out for a band aid or cardiac arrest. The insurance company was recommending we go with bundling to help covers all the supplies such as expiring medications and other needed supplies. Mr. Crowley asked did it increase our collections. The Chief explained the only time it would increase our collections is if I went on a call and it was a BLS and I did not provide oxygen. We charge at the main rate but we didn't pay for the price of oxygen. Mr. Crowley thinks the answer should be yes, we probably made a few more dollars. The Chief replied you would not see it in our numbers. We are not getting back anywhere need \$1,035 on these calls.

We are getting \$342 for Medicare. We are getting whatever the insurance company pays and the co-pay goes to the patient. A lot of them do not respond, some have not paid, some have paid what they can. He could get those numbers on whether we are close to that number. With regard to write offs for private companies Mr. Crowley states it is probably 60% of what they bill they collect. Mr. Rajeshkumar asked if the billing of BLS non-emergency and emergency are the same. Chief Welsh explained that we do not do BLS non-emergency transports. We are only an emergency ambulance service. Sterling, Holden and Rutland have a la carte. You pay for what you use. He is recommending a 10% increase and noted that last year we did not increase our fees. He reports that only one quarter of the department have gone to bundling. It was our insurance company who wanted us to do that. Out of 1,000 calls, 300 would be at the BLS rate. Chief Welsh explained when you do an ALS call it is about \$900 worth of expenses into the call. He feels the BLS needs to be increased. Mr. Rucho asked what percentage of the calls pay these prices. The Chief thinks you would be pushing it at 15-20%. Mr. Crowley, works with private ambulance companies and in his experience it is less than 10%,

Mr. Rucho wants to make sure this is sufficient to run the department. Chief Welsh states this money goes to the General Fund not the Fire Department funds. The Chief explained that they are doing fire protection 24-hours a day. Mr. Crowley pointed out that even with the 10% increase we will still be the lowest of the towns around. Ms. Scheipers explained that one of the things she talked about with the Chief was while the policy says we will bring them to the Board annually if we start to have concerns that the revenues are dropping we may come back and say we were too conservative.

If needed we will come back to the Board. Mr. Crowley noted that historically the ambulance receipts fund pays for new ambulances and part of the general operating fund. The portion going towards funding the ambulance was trending downwards. He asked has that continued. The Chief added we are about the same as we have been for about the last three years. We are trying to put a little more money aside each year. Mr. Crowley feels the \$30,000 extra in ambulance billings will help to shore up those numbers.

Motion Mr. Crowley to approve the new rates presented by the Chief for BLS rate and mileage from \$29.30 to \$32.23, seconded by Mr. Rajeshkumar. Mr. Crowley would rather fix this in increments more often than a large increase moving forward. Vote on the motion – all in favor.

## 2.FY17 Write-off Report

The Chief reports that some of these are over one year old and there is nothing more we can do about it. He is still working on getting addresses and doing timely write-offs. The write-offs for those who are deceased total \$3,872.30. Per the policy, we cannot charge for that. For the write offs one year or longer ComStar suggests that we take them off the books and they are \$10,255.95. The next batch of write-offs were sent to a collection agency. Our billing company sends out three letters and they call and when all else fails we go to FFR. The next group we send to Experian and it is put on a persons credit report so if they apply for a car or a house loan it will show up that they own the town money before they can get a loan. That total is \$12,165.91. The grand total is \$66,163.76. We have exhaust all our means of collection. They were sent to collection and the FFR or they passed away. Ms. Bohnson asked how long we wait before they go to FFR. The Chief gets a report on a monthly basis and it is done monthly or on a quarterly basis to get it off the books. Before it goes he can send it to Experian or a collection agency FFR. When they cannot find anything they will put it on a collection agency. They only have one year to get this done. Experian was picked with the billing company. Mr. Crowley asked the Chief to inquire on why we are just using Experian and not the other two companies who also do these. He thinks it would be a check in the box to send it to the other ones. Ms. Bohnson advised that a lot of financial institutions only use certain credit bureaus and she would like to know if we have the option to do more than one. Mr. Hadley noted that most banks overlook anything medically related and it doesn't ruin someone's credit. He added that we only get ten cents on the dollar now. The Chief added we are not getting a lot back and there is no cost to the town.

For the viewing audience, Mr. Crowley clarified that we are saying that the \$66,000 write off doesn't mean that the \$1,035 we charge per call we collected all \$66,000. The Medicare rate reimbursement is about \$330, and that \$700 and change is a contractual adjustment that is written off internally and not included in the money we have a chance of collecting that we could collect. Our write offs on what we charge and what we actually write off are substantially more than \$66,000. Chief Welsh advised that some of these are back to 2014, and the amount written off is lower this year. He will get it and add it to the information on Experian. The reason it is lower is the last batch cleared up dead accounts that sat in a drawer and needed to be cleared off. Next year it might be lower. He added that he was quite frustrated when he sat down with interim Town Administrator Jim Purcell and went over the numbers and Mr. Purcell said boy you are getting a 35% write off that isn't bad so it set him at ease.

Motion Mr. Crowley to approve the write offs in the amount of \$66,163.76, seconded by Mr. Rajeshkumar, all in favor.

Ms. Scheipers noted that the ambulance rate increase will require a public hearing.

### 3. Status of fire truck and ambulance procurement

Chief Welsh reports that this was supposed to be brought forward the night of the snow storm. He now has firmer numbers for the ambulance and the Rescue/Pumper. He is replacing the 2008 ambulance with a Ford F550 four-wheel drive ambulance. The main reason they went with a Ford is for nearby maintenance. The company that services the box is Greenwood and it is a doable distance to get it repaired. It is a Horton/Ford Ambulance. They had a committee who did the research. They narrowed the fire truck down to three companies, received quotes from two of the three and decided to go with an E-One KME. It has a small pump configuration which gives us more compartment space because we are downsizing from two vehicles to one. The other benefit of Greenwood is the Fire Department is using the Metropolitan Area Planning Council for procurement. They do all the bid work, a lot of area Chief's use this program, and are very happy with it. We only had to pay one fee of \$6,000 for two trucks, \$294,800 for the ambulance and \$573,737 for the Rescue/Pumper. Ms. Bohannon asked if there is going to be any extra training needed. Chief Welsh replies, very similar to what we have now. A lot of those the company will come out and do an in-house training, pumps are pretty much the same configuration. On the ambulance the last one was about \$250,000. They added an electronic stretcher. With limited manpower it will help reduce back injuries. There will be some training with that. We approved \$575,000 for the fire truck and \$295,000 for a new ambulance and they both came in under budget. Mr. Rajeshkumar asked what will happen to the retired ambulance. Chief Welsh advised that they have given us some money back and if we are not happy we do not have to go with that. It could be a back-up ambulance for someone else. The fire truck salesperson said there is not much value in the vehicle. We can try to do it through a private sale as the rescue truck might have a little more value as a utility for another department. The ambulance is a 2008 and worth about \$5,000. The fire truck is about 25 years old.

Motion Mr. Crowley to authorize the procurement, seconded by Ms. Bohannon, all in favor.

### 4. AFG grant application

The Chief reports that under the grant this year he has applied for replacement equipment for the new fire engine. The past three years they applied for the apparatus. This year it will be equipment. We should hear back in July.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

### 1. \$190,374 Complete Street grant award – grant contract authorization and signing

The Transportation Committee did a great job putting together the prioritized plan under the Complete Street Program. We applied for a Tier 3 grant and we were awarded \$190,374 for a portion of our prioritized plan. Tonight we need to vote to accept and authorize the chairman to sign the contract. We can continue to go for other projects next year. They choose for us which portion of the plan will be funded. This is the section of sidewalk beyond the school in the Pine Arden area. It will now create a contiguous sidewalk area. Mr. Rucho doesn't think \$190,000 is going to get us a lot of sidewalk. Mr. Rajeshkumar noted that when we started to apply for this grant they said we could get up to \$400,000. Now a lot of communities are applying and they only have a certain amount.

Motion Mr. Rucho to approve and authorize the Chairman to sign the contract, seconded by Mr. Rajeshkumar, all in favor.

2.Consider approving the hiring of Lynn Harding-Smith the position of Assistant Town Clerk at 20 hours a week, Step 3 of Grade 3, \$17.50 per hour

Town Clerk Elaine Novia joined the Board with Lynn Harding-Smith. Ms. Scheipers reports that we posted the position internally and did not receive any candidates. We posted it outside, received seven applications and interviewed four individuals. She is pleased to present Lynn Harding-Smith as the top candidate, she resides in town and has the necessary skill set. Ms. Bohnson has read her hiring packet and asked her why she is interested in the Town of West Boylston now. She saw that she worked for the Chamber. Ms. Harding-Smith replied besides the fact that she lives here and loves it, she was previously a graphic designer, got laid off and is looking for something new and different. She likes to help people. She knows a lot of players in Worcester but not in West Boylston. Ms. Bohnson asked what are one or two things you think you bring to the town to fulfill this role. Ms. Harding-Smith states she likes to work with people and will have to learn as she goes on what she can improve on. Ms. Novia states that she thinks her personality will be a good fit for the office. Ms. Bohnson asked what three words would your previous employer use to describe you. Ms. Harding-Smith replied, happy, sincere and efficient.

Motion Ms. Bohnson to accept as presented for the Assistant Town Clerk position, seconded by Mr. Crowley, all in favor.

3.Update on Snow and Ice and in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 44, Section 31D, consider voting to authorize the over expenditure of the FY18 Snow and Ice

Ms. Scheipers reports that we currently have a deficit of \$19,402. This is our annual process that we need to authorize the continuation of deficit spending. We have set aside Free Cash to put towards this and we are in good shape.

Motion Mr. Crowley to approve the over expenditure of the FY18 Snow and Ice Account, seconded by Ms. Bohnson. Mr. Crowley explained the way the Snow and Ice Budget line item works is the town has to budget at least as much as the previous year and it is the only line item you can deficit spend. We do this every year and it is not that we inaccurately prepared the budget. Vote on the motion – all in favor.

4.Update on Board and Town Administrator's goals

We will table this item.

5. The 2017 Grant Report

The report shows that the town brought in \$182,000 in grants. They include a Housing Plan grant, a Police Grant for bullet proof vests, a State 911 Incentive Program Grant as being part of a regional dispatch center, a Sidewalk Grant, and an annual Council on Aging grant. In addition, we received \$12,000 from Holy Cross for the Library, \$250 for a Small Libraries in Network Grant, \$900 from the Hyde Family Fund for the Library, and \$13,593.20 in State Aid grants for the library. Ms. Scheipers reports that we continue to apply for new grants, mostly recently one for \$28,000 for IT improvements.

Mr. Rucho would like to see all grants applied for and those we looked at. He would also like to see information from the school. Ms. Scheipers feels it will be easy to identify those we applied for and didn't get rather than those we looked at. She will ask Roger at the school for their information.

6. Consider joining the Class Action Suit on opioids

Mr. Hadley requested information from Town Counsel on how to do this.

7. Continue discussion about amendments to Policy on Business License Applications

Mr. Rucho noted that the Board received a lot of emails today on this item and he prefers tabling it at this time. Mr. Rajeshkumar asked if we received anything on the zoning. Ms. Scheipers has not contacted Town Counsel and she is recommending at the next meeting of the various Board Chairs that they put together a list of questions. Ms. Bohnson explained that the additional information was to deal with the ability for the Board to consider unpaid water or electric bills when looking at renewing business licenses.

8. Flag at Half Staff Policy review

The Board asked for this item to be on the agenda. Ms. Bohnson states that she thinks it is good to review policies, let people know if they have concerns, and respect the towns' people. Mr. Crowley thinks the most important section of the policy is the United States Flag will be lowered to half staff for individuals, who in the opinion of the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, have contributed significantly to the betterment and welfare of the town. So if somebody passes and it is determined that that individual has done a lot for the town, and was not an employee of the town, we could lower the flag. Employees are already covered in the policy. Ms. Bohnson would like to put the name of the person on the electronic sign. It was also suggested that we post something on the electronic sign when the flag is lowered explaining why it is lowered. Due to the fact that the electronic sign only has three lines, with eighteen spaces per line, it was suggested that perhaps a posting on the website might be a good approach so more information could be posted such as the President or the Governor have requested that flags be lowered to half staff at all buildings. Mr. Rucho feels that would require a change in the policy which triggers a public hearing. He prefers putting it within the policy so people can have something to refer to. We will amend the policy to include posting information on the reason the flag is lowered to half staff either on the electronic sign and/or the town's website and schedule a public hearing.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

1. Town Clerk Stipend (tentative)

This item will be tabled for this evening.

2. Consider revisiting Board's vote on February 17<sup>th</sup> agenda item

At their February 17<sup>th</sup> meeting the Board met with Steve Migridichian of D&S Realty to discuss the temporary relocation of the senior center given that Mr. Migridichian is asking the town to allow him to move the seniors out of the building to allow him to bring a new tenant into the building. On Saturday, after the discussion, the Board voted to move ahead with the modular structure. Both Mr. Rucho and Mr. Crowley serve on this subcommittee. The choices were narrowed down to Woodland Park or the Congregational Church. The Board is now going to look at the church. Mr. Migridichian now has more information on putting the modular at the Woodland site and it is a time issue.

Mr. Rucho would like the Board to look at the Church and the Woodland Park site and they will discuss this at a special Selectmen's meeting this Saturday, February 25<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 at the police station. Ms. Bohnson reports that she did go to the Woodland site and is trying to figure out how many parking spots from the entrance to the park. It will be on the right. Mr. Crowley pointed out

that we have not actually received approval for that site from the Parks Commission. Mr. Rucho advised that there is new information since then with regards to the Congregational Church site. It is a temporary location until June of 2019 and we want to get the best location, nothing will be perfect, we will get something that will work. On Saturday morning at 8:30 there will be a guided tour of the Congregational Church. The agenda for the 10:30 Board meeting includes an executive session to discuss lease negotiations, an open session to make a decision if the Board feels it is ready, and we have some invoicing issues to take care of.

Robert Chisholm stepped forward to read a statement to the Board. He states my name is Robert Chisholm, I live at 91 Hillside Village Drive. I am your appointed liaison for the Council on Aging to the Facilities Implementation and Strategic Planning Committee. Since last Saturday's Selectmen's hearing I have had occasion to speak with several seniors and the consensus of those individuals is that moving to a modular building at the Woodland Park is unacceptable and the thought of moving to the Congregational Church is dreadful. As was stated at the hearing, there are no other viable alternatives. I would agree. Therefore, I submit that the senior center should remain in the building at 127 Hartwell Street until the end of the lease, which we have every right to do. Additionally, either of the courses of action put forth at the recent hearing on relocating the senior center were never even presented for consideration to the very committee you have charged with strategic planning. I respectfully request you to vote in favor of keeping the senior center at the present location until the stated termination of our lease in 2019. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Board thanked him for his input.

## **TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

### **1. Initial TIF discussion for 127 Hartwell Street**

This item will be tabled this evening.

### **2. Announce start of police, fire and cemetery union contract negotiations**

We have been notified by the bargaining units that they would like to begin formal negotiations. Board liaisons were assigned as follows. Mr. Rucho will assist with the police contract, Mr. Hadley with Fire and Messrs. Hadley and Rajeshkumar with Cemetery. Meetings will be scheduled during the day, the ground rules meeting will be held the last week in March or first week in April. Mr. Rucho noted that in the past the meetings typically began at 3:00.

### **3. Northeastern University student intern**

We have a student from Northeastern who will be working on the citizen survey project.

### **4. \$4M placed in Senate Bond Bill S. 2279 by Senator Chandler**

This item will be tabled this evening.

### **5. Next steps of ABM M&V Reports review**

Ms. Scheipers reports that at the last meeting we discussed the fact the representative from the Department of Energy did indicate that ABM did correctly do their reports, Mr. Crowley previously mentioned his continued concern about the data used and whether it was correct. Based on our experience with the ABM he does not like that the ESCO project can pay a company millions of dollars and the way the state program works is they hire the company to do the project and then you hire the same company to tell you if the project works. He would prefer an independent review of the project. Ms. Scheipers didn't want to go back to the company until she had consensus from the full board for this additional layer of peer review. ABM charges us \$15,000 a year. Mr. Rajeshkumar noted that since the system has not required any tweaking he doesn't see any need to have ABM come



in to verify the data. The Board requested Ms. Scheipers get a quote. Mr. Rucho suggested reaching out to other towns who have done this to see if they had the same thought.

**FISP UPDATE:**

1.Update on police and senior center projects

The project is still moving forward, and they are working on a few minor issues with the HVAC system and issues with the garage door and elevator have been resolved.

2.Invoices:

M-V Electrical (police project) Inv #22218, \$1,118.05 – motion Mr. Rajeshkumar to approve the invoice, seconded by Mr. Hadley, all in favor. This is for additional electrical work the department requested be done after RAC completed their work. All in favor of the motion.

Caolo & Bieniek (senior center project) Inv #5686, \$7,140.00 – motion Mr. Crowley to approve the invoice, second by Ms. Bohnson, all in favor.

It was noted that all invoices are reviewed by FISP prior to the Board taking its action.

**MEETINGS, INVITATIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

1.Special Election – Tuesday, February 27<sup>th</sup> noon until 8:00 p.m.

2.Special Town Meeting change of date – Wednesday, February 28th at 7:00p.m., snow date Monday, March 5

3.Senior Center Informational Meetings: Feb 22<sup>nd</sup> – Angell Brook 3:00 p.m., Feb 22<sup>nd</sup> – Library 6:00 p.m., Feb 23<sup>rd</sup> – Hillside Village 3:00 p.m. and Feb 24<sup>th</sup> – Police Station 10:00 a.m.

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS/SELECTMENS REPORTS:**

Ms. Bohnson reports that the trash bins at the parks were overflowing.

Motion Mr. Rajeshkumar at 9:10 p.m. to enter into executive session under the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 30a, Section 21(A), Part 2 to discuss contract negotiations with non-union personnel (Police Chief), seconded by Mr. Crowley. Roll call vote: Mr. Rajeshkumar yes, Mr. Rucho yes, Mr. Hadley yes, Mr. Crowley yes, Ms. Bohnson yes. The Board will not reconvene in open session.

Motion Mr. Crowley at 9:30 to come out of executive session, seconded by Mr. Rajeshkumar. Roll call vote: Ms. Bohnson yes, Mr. Crowley yes, Mr. Rucho yes, Mr. Hadley yes, Mr. Rajeshkumar yes.

Motion to Adjourn at 9:30 p.m.: Mr. Crowley

Seconded: Mr. Rajeshkumar

Result: All in favor

Respectfully submitted,

Approved: March 7, 2018

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Nancy E. Lucier, Municipal Assistant

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John W. Hadley, Chairman

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Christopher A., Vice Chairman

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Barur R. Rajeshkumar, Clerk

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Siobhan M. Bohnson, Selectman

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Patrick J. Crowley, Selectman