

Office of
SELECTMEN
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**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MONDAY, MARCH 11, 2024
MEETING MINUTES
FRANCIS FARM - FRANCIS HALL - 27 FRANCIS FARM ROAD**

Present: Selectman Frederick "Skip" Vadnais, Jr., Selectman Leonard Mills, Jr., Selectman George Solas, Sr., Selectman Robert Johnson II and Town Administrator Deborah Arruda

Absent: Selectman Michael P. Deignan

At 6:00 PM the Board voted to enter into Executive Session *pursuant to MGL CHAPTER 30A, §21 (a) (2) to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with non-union personnel*

(3) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares: Chairman Vadnais declared.

(6) to consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real estate, if the chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body

(7) to review and approve Executive Session Minutes: 12/19/2023, 1/18/2024 (tabled from previous meeting), and 2/12/2024

Call to Order at 7:07 PM: The meeting opened with the Board and the public participating in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Consent Agenda

Warrant:

G. Solas- Warrant for the week of March 11, 2024: 24-37B Payroll \$140,922.49; 24-36A Withholdings \$33,896.90; 24-36 Warrant \$203,856.88; motion to approve. Second by R. Johnson. Vote 3-0. Selectman Mills abstained.

Minutes: Regular Minutes: 3/4/2024

G. Solas- motion to approve Regular Meeting Minutes for March 4, 2024. Second by R. Johnson. Vote 4-0.

The Board voted to approve and hold the Executive Meeting Minutes for December 19, 2023 (previously tabled) and January 18, 2024 (previously tabled) and February 12, 2024, during an earlier Executive Session.

Announcements:

The next scheduled meeting will be on **Monday, March 18, 2024 7:00 PM**, at Francis Farm, in the Francis Hall Building.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Bids are due on Monday, March 18, 2024 for the moving of the buildings at Francis Farm. Please submit all sealed bids to the Board Selectmen's office by 10 AM, on the 18th.

The bid for the Vault at 340 Anawan Street, has been placed. Sealed Bids are due on March 27th, 2024 by 10 AM, to the Selectmen's office. The vault will house all of the Town's permanent records. There will be a walk-thru, on Monday the 18th, at the Town Hall.

NEW BUSINESS:

Action Item (1) Discussion: Carpenter Museum Representatives RE: Sowams Project, with possible action

The Chair invited Artie Pierce, as the Historical Commission representative.

Andria Rounds, presenter for Sowams Heritage Area Project, introduced colleague David Weed and Carpenter Museum representative Chelsey Johnston— the Sowams Heritage Area project has been in the works for approximately 7 years. Sowams is the ancestral homeland of the Massasoit Ousamequin is today, Somerset, Swansea, Seekonk and Rehoboth and RI Bristol, Barrington, Warren, East Providence and Providence. Ms. Rounds went into the history and the effects of what took place in Sowams – The members of the Sowams Project consist of representatives of the 9 towns and cities, that together comprise a really important landscape the nation's history. The group has received funding, started from National Trust for Historical Preservation and others, to retrain national consultants to explore the feasibility of creating a new National Heritage Area in Sowams (MA and RI).

Per Ms. Rounds, this is an initiative, which is not run by the government and there are no land transactions - the US Congress designates the area, called Sowams. An area that is important to the national heritage. Cities and towns can use this designation to protect and promote their priorities i.e. environmental, historical and cultural, etc.

The Chair asked what does the Carpenter Museum have to do with the Project and how will this be incorporated into the Town? What is the Museum's plan to incorporate into the Town, because the museum is a private group?

Ms. Johnston, a member of the steering committee, explained she started as a consultant and has looked at Rehoboth ties into the narrative. She sees the project as something that could lead to grants, more information and, new ways to engage with the important history of the Rehoboth area.

The Chair asked if the grant is to the Museum or to the Town of Rehoboth, and who would administer the grant monies.

Per Ms. Rounds, the National Heritage Area, if designated, receives \$500K per year for the whole area of Sowams and the individual entities (Town or private organizations) can apply for money.

The Chair clarified that the Museum may decide on an area of focus and will apply for a portion of the Sowam monies, and the Historical Commission, as the Town's public body, may vote to recognize the areas and pursue funding. Although there's an overlap, each is separate and distinct- each would apply for and administer their own projects.

Selectman Solas requested information on how the feasibility studies will be shared with the residents of the Town.

Ms. Rounds, in response to Selectman Solas, announced the upcoming "community conversation, public input session": there were two in October and, there are two more coming up - one in Seekonk and one in Bristol. There will be one in May, when the results of the feasibility study will be presented to the community.

The group, tonight, is introducing the Board to the project and would like the Board's support.

The Chair assigned Selectman Johnson, as the Historical Commission liaison, to work with the Commission Chair and keep the Selectmen updated on the project. And, stating that there is nothing that the Board of Selectmen needs to vote on, however Selectman Johnson should keep the Selectmen abreast of when a vote is needed.

The public is invited to attend March 26th at 3:30 p.m. at the Seekonk Public Library, 410 Newman Avenue, Seekonk, MA or on Wednesday, March 27, 2024, at 7:00 pm in the Barn at Mt. Hope Farm, 250 Metacom Avenue, Bristol, RI. Go to Sowams.org for more information.

Action Item (2) Discussion: Additional Articles for June 4, 2024 Warrant, with possible action

The Chair invited Sue Pimental to come forth and speak to the additional articles and capital items needing voter consideration, at the Annual Town Meeting.

Sue Pimental – requested Mike Viveiros to assess all town buildings and asked department heads to submit equipment needs – after a meeting with Selectman Mills and Mike Viveiros, and speaking with the Fire Chief, the following items need to be addressed in FY25: Police Station repair & replace gutters; South Fire Station gutters, replace rotted trim, paint the exterior & interior; North Fire Station repair the roof drainage; replace roof at the Animal Shelter; paint fuel tanks at the Highway department; add heat and air at the Facility garage, as well as burglar & fire alarm. Equipment: Four trailers (2-Highway Dept & 2-Fire Dept) are in disrepair- all four can be replace, at about \$9-10K each and, Highway Department needs a dump truck.

RE: Police Radio upgrade- ARPA potential, but wants a placeholder for Town Meeting in the event ARPA denies the application.

RE: Ambulance financial assistance – Rehoboth Ambulance Committee is looking for help and funding. As a non-profit, Ambulance is allowed to apply for ARPA funds. In the event the application is denied, a placeholder is needed at Town Meeting.

RE: Ambulance LUCAS CPR- this is an Ambulance requirement and needs to be replaced – Ambulance Committee is filing for a grant – placeholder at Town Meeting is needed in case Ambulance does not get a grant and the Town will have some monies to assist.

Lastly, Sue Pimental recommended leaving about \$500K available in free cash; taking the balance and putting it towards capital stabilization to help fund a long-term capital plan.

Selectman Solas commented on the importance of maintenance and saying, ongoing maintenance is crucial for the Town - not spending to maintain the buildings, on a regular basis, will result in future costs that are huge. Planning ahead is fiscally responsible.

G. Solas- motion to open the June 4th Warrant and accept the additional projects as presented by the Interim Finance and Compliance Director. Second by R. Johnson. Vote 4-0.

G. Solas- motion to accept the motion presented by Sue Pimental. Second by R. Johnson. Vote 4-0.

Sue Pimental asked to add an Article that Superintendent Bill Runey plans to submit - to upgrade the schools' phone system for E-911 – total cost is an estimated \$90K, split 50-50% between Dighton & Rehoboth and, Mr. Runey will put together a formal Article.

G. Solas- motion to accept the school Article, as explained by Sue Pimental, to upgrade the schools' phone system for 911. Second by R. Johnson. Vote 4-0.

G. Solar- motion to close the June 4th Warrant. Second by R. Johnson. Vote 4-0.

Action Item (3) Discussion RE: Board of Health Vacancy and Talent Bank Submissions from Trent Kellum, Benjamin Handwerger, and Tom Carcieri, with possible action

Chair Vadnais- The Board has had the opportunity to review talent bank submissions for the Board of Health vacancy and, if the members are ready, a motion will be accepted.

R. Johnson- motion to appoint Tom Carcieri, to the Board of Health, effective 3/11/2024 to 6/30/2027. Second by G. Solas. Vote 4-0.

The Chair thanked all candidates that applied for the position.

Action Item (4) Vote to Approve Greenlock Therapeutic 2024 Road Race

G. Solas- Greenlock Therapeutic Riding Center will hold an annual road race, on Sunday, October 6th, at 11 AM.

G. Solas- motion to approve the Greenlock Therapeutic 2024 Road Race, as submitted, and the placement of signs. Second by R. Johnson. Vote 4-0.

Action Item (5): Vote to Approve Appointments for Hornbine School-Paula Janson; COA Board-Linda Coolidge; Keep Rehoboth Beautiful-Ben Handwerger

G. Solas- motion to approve appointment of Paula Janson, to the Hornbine School Association Committee, effective 3/11/2024 to 6/30/2027. Second by R. Johnson. Vote 4-0.

G. Solas- motion to appoint Linda Coolidge, to the Council on Aging Board, effective 3/11/2024 to 6/30/2027. Second by R. Johnson. Vote 4-0.

G. Solas- motion to appoint Ben Handwerger, to the Keep Rehoboth Beautiful Committee, effective 3/11/2024 to 6/30/2024. Second by R. Johnson. Vote 4-0.

Action Item (6): Vote to Award Police BDA Radio Bid- Bid Submissions Received by-Industrial Communication and Electric, Inc; Clark A Lazare Chrisdan Services, LLC and Cyber Com, Inc.

L. Mills- motion to approve the Police BDA Radio Bid to Industrial Communications & Electronics, Inc. for \$178,715.00 and, to proceed with the project. Second by G. Solas. Vote 4-0.

L. Mills- Town Administrator Debbie Arruda and Deputy Chief Ramos met to review the bids received. Only one bid received was complete and as per the requirements of the bid. The other bids were missing documents and/or from bidders not allowed to bid because this was a closed bid on Combuys; only specific vendors could bid. The bidder that submitted a complete package was Industrial Communications and Electric, Inc. and the bid estimate was posted at \$180,000.00.

Action Item (7): Vote to Award RFP To Sell Parcel of Land Off Martin Street-Bidder Rehoboth Station-Three Men's Fire Association, Inc

Selectman Johnson invited Dan Noons and Al Noons, members of the Station Three Men's Fire Association to join the Board. Selectman Johnson explained that the Town needed a piece of land belonging to the Station Three Men's Fire Association, and the Town and the Association did not complete the swap - a fire station was never built in South Rehoboth. The Association has been very active for 40 years. They have made such donations as fire apparatuses, trucks, thermal imaging cameras, and they have designed the memorial at Station Three – they have always been a great organization that fundraises to help the Town. We are finally at a point when we can complete the transaction.

R. Johnson- motion to award the RFP to sell the Parcel of Land, off Martin Street, to the Rehoboth Station Three Men's Fire Association, Inc. Second by G. Solas. Vote 4-0.

Discussion:

Selectman Mills stated that out of all the buildings that the Town owns, the South Fire Station is the only which is 99.9% self-sufficient – grateful to the Association, and their volunteerism, for taking care of those buildings - the Noons family (Dan & Al), the two gentlemen in front of the Board, for their leadership in making sure the buildings are taken care of properly - Thank you!

The Chair also expressed appreciation to the Association and, especially, to the Noons brothers.

Action Item (7A): Vote to Approve and Sign Purchase and Sales Between TOR and Rehoboth Station-Three Men's Fire Association, Inc.

R. Johnson- motion to approve and sign the P & S between the TOR and Station Three Men's Fire Association, Inc. for \$1.00 and, further to authorize the Chair and Town Administrator to sign any documents that come forth due to this agreement. Second by G. Solas. Vote 4-0.

Action Item (8) Discussion RE: Wire Transfers in Conjunction with Comcast, with possible action

George spoke to a project which the Town's needs to transfer wires to new poles - approximately 24 poles on New Street need to have fiber moved from the existing poles to the new Comcast poles. In order to

keep costs down, Selectman Solas recommends using the same contractor Comcast is using. This cuts down the need of getting additional detail officers, finding contractors and coordinating the move with Comcast. The cost of the move is somewhere between \$3-5K, well under the amount needed to go out to bid.

Selectman Solas asked the Board's approval to contract for the approximate 24 poles to be moved.

These are changes required by National Grid and is not reimbursable to the Town.

Selectman Mills – if change is being made that presumably benefits NGRID, why is the Town paying? Why is it not reimbursable since the Town did not ask for this work?

Selectman Solas explained that this is Town owned fiber wires that need to be moved.

The Chair- confirmed that Selectman Solas is not asking the Board to approve a specific amount of money but, is asking the Board to approve pursuing the relationship with R W Bryant Contracting to the point where there's a contractual document. Administratively, the Chair gave Selectman Solas permission to continue with the project and continue gathering information.

The Town Administrator confirmed that if the cost is under \$10K, Selectman Solas can work with the one vendor and, if a signature is required the Board would either give Selectman Solas permission to sign or bring the document back for the Chair's signature.

Discussion only- no vote taken.

Action Item (9) Vote to Renew Agreement with North Bristol County Public Nurses-Shared Services

The Board welcomed Gerri Hamel.

G. Solas- motion to approve and sign the renewal agreement with North Bristol County Public Nurses-Shared Services. Second by R. Johnson. Vote 4-0.

The Board continued discussion with Gerri Hamel and moved forward to **OLD BUSINESS:**

Action Item (1) Discussion Re: Northern Bristol County Health Alliance-Relavent Systems, Inc Agreement with Geri Hamel, with possible action (Tabled Previously

Geri Hamel went into detail regarding the agreement and the food inspection services provided by Relavent Systems. Relevant will provide a laptop, iPad and software and education and training. This is a paperless means of doing food inspections. Karl Drown, Board of Health Agent agrees that based on the 55 food establishments inspections done in Town, this will streamline the process. It makes the food inspection results available to the establishment much more rapidly.

The total cost coming from the Grant money is between \$1,600-\$3,200 - the onboarding process is at a higher cost and the renewal will be \$1,600. Cost includes training, roll-out and onboarding.

The Chair asked that Town Counsel review the contract before the Selectmen will sign – also, requested that the Board of Health review the agreement, understand what is needed and vote on whether or not to move forward.

Selectman Mills- expressed concern about how this will impact the businesses and if there will be hidden costs for the businesses – will it burden the businesses? – will it burden the department? businesses need to be included in the discussion.

Selectman Solas said that this is an automated means to collect data and not a policy change – this gives the Agent the ability to collect information electronically- it's an automated way to collect data based on policies already in place.

The Chair instructed Geri Hamel not to do anything, and wait for Selectman Johnson to get clarification from the Board of Health, before moving forward.

The Chair entertained a motion to table. R. Johnson so moved. Second by G. Solas. Vote 4-0.

Continuation of NEW BUSINESS:

Action Item (10) Vote to Appoint Michael McBride to the Finance Committee

G. Solas- motion to appoint Michael McBride to the Finance Committee, effective 3/11/2024 to 6/30/2024. Second by R. Johnson. Vote 4-0.

Discussion:

The Chair pointed out that more people are needed on the Finance Committee - Mr. McBride is helping on a short-term basis - thanks to the Town Administrator for asking Mr. McBride to help through the budget season.

Selectmen's Reports:

Solas: Today, was a tremendous event. 150+ meals were served at the St. Patrick luncheon. There were 20 volunteers, including 8 office duty Police and former Chief Trombetta.

Selectman Solas read a letter from the Superintendent of Schools Bill Runey regarding upcoming school budget restraints.

Mills: Two open positions in the Building Maintenance Department and one opening at the Police Department, for a Police Officer - contact Deb Arruda for more information.

Town Administrator mention openings for Office Administrators positions.

Johnson: Thank you to Rachel Smith for all of the years worked with the Board of Health, Agricultural Commission and Agricultural & Natural Resources Preservation Council (RANRPC) and all the time she's devoted on these committees.

Vadnais: Clarification about the election and the Selectmen's seats- there are two seats and 3 candidates. The two individuals with the most votes will be seated at the table.

Deignan: Absent.

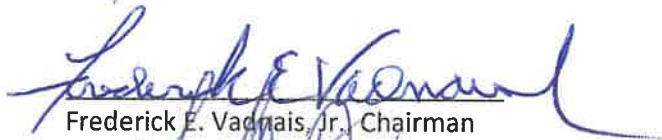
Other Business:

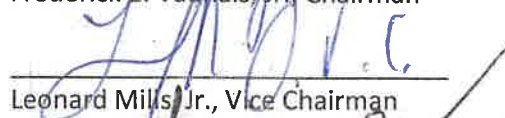
ADJOURNMENT:

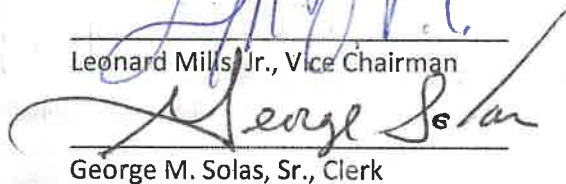
Selectman R. Johnson motioned to adjourn the Regular Session at 8:51 PM. Second by Selectman G. Solas
Vote 4-0.

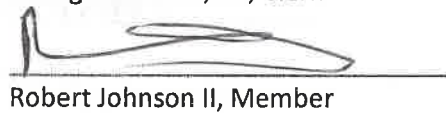
Respectfully Submitted,


Odete Lacourse


Frederick E. Vadnais, Jr., Chairman


Leonard Mills, Jr., Vice Chairman


George M. Solas, Sr., Clerk


Robert Johnson II, Member

Absent
Michael P. Deignan, Member

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Approve: 3/25/2024