

TOWN OF IPSWICH
Select Board Meeting as Electric Light Commissioners
Tuesday, June 20, 2023 at 7:00 PM
Ipswich Town Hall, Meeting Room A
25 Green St. Ipswich, MA

Pursuant to Open Meeting Law M.G.L. Chapter 30A, §§ 18-25, a written notice posted by the Town Clerk and delivered to all Board members, a meeting of the Select Board was held on Tuesday, June 20, 2023 at Town Hall, 25 Green Street.

Select Board members present: Sarah Player (Chair), Linda Alexson (Vice Chair), Carl Nysten, Charles Surpitski, Michael Dougherty

Also Present: Stephen Crane (Town Manager), Jon Blair (ELD Manager)

1. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Welcome/Announcements – S. Player

- Retirement proclamation for David Levesque IV.
- There has been a lot of feedback regarding the Public Safety Building, so there will be an additional meeting regarding the design. This will take place next Tuesday at 7PM in the Resource Room in the basement across from the COA, specifically to hear feedback from citizens on design.
- The next Select Board meeting is July 10th.
- The Veterans District Board will be meeting on June 28th at 6:30PM downstairs in the Veteran's office.
- Office closures will be posted to the website for summer closures.

3. Citizen Queries – S. Player

- Heather Leonard, 9 Bush Hill Rd., asked the Select Board how Ipswich will recognize Pride Month and Juneteenth and suggested flying a flag.
- Didi Schiano, 4 Applewood Drive, said she would be happy to connect the Select Board with other communities that have made this a focus, which could be helpful for providing information.
- Wendy Copithorne, 41 Linebrook Rd., said she is with the Build It Right Committee which is regarding the Public Safety Building. They have gathered signatures and gotten a lot of feedback around town. They have consulted with a lawyer and have also started raising money to cover the fees. She also said the Design Committee is meeting that same night as the Public Safety meeting, so won't be in attendance. Wendy said it would be good to have them there. Citizens can go to change.org to donate or sign up to be a part of this effort.
- Crickette Davidson, Blaisdell Terrace, said she read the initial report from the architects. The initial proposal included renderings that fit in with Ipswich, but that changed and since the change the design has been more industrial.
- Seth Perry, 29 Linebrook Rd., said he has been attending a lot of the Public Safety Committee meetings and has voiced concerns but he doesn't feel like they have been heard. Any time a concern is stated, instead of feeling heard he is just told the reasons why.
- Julian Colville, 34 Linebrook Rd., said the concerns are not solely about the aesthetics of the building. He also reiterated Mr. Perry's comments. He has attended a lot of the Public Safety Committee meetings. Everyone on the board has been very nice but he doesn't feel like their concerns are being addressed.

- Amanda Tower, 29 Linebrook Rd., asked if the Select Board will be present next week at the Public Safety Building meeting. Sarah said many of them will be there to listen but they will not be able to discuss that night.

4. Boards and Committee Appointments – S. Player

1. Select Board Committee and Subcommittee Appointments

- Affordable Housing Trust- Sarah
- Audit Committee- Michael
- Climate Resiliency Committee- Carl
- Eastern Essex Department of Veterans Services- Linda
- ELD Subcommittee- Charlie and Sarah
- Water and Wastewater- Carl and Michael
- MBTA Advisory Board- Linda
- Shellfish Advisory Board- Charlie and Linda
- Shade Tree Beautification Committee – Charlie
- Waste Reduction – Linda
- Pedestrian and Cycle Safety Group- Michael

- Motion to appoint Sarah Player to the Affordable Housing Trust, Michael Dougherty to the Audit Committee, Carl Nysten to the Climate Resiliency Committee, Linda Alexson to the Eastern Essex District of Veterans Services Committee, Charlie Surpitski to the ELD Subcommittee, Linda Alexson to the MBTA Advisory Board, Linda Alexson and Charles Surpitski to the Shellfish Advisory Board, Charlie Surpitski to the Shade Tree Beautification Committee, Linda Alexson to the Waste Reduction Committee, and Michael Dougherty to the Pedestrian and Cycle Safety Group made by Sarah, seconded by Michael.
- Sarah amended the motion so that all of these appointments are for 1 year, until June 30th. Seconded by Michael.
→ *Motion passed unanimously, 5-0*
- Sarah made the main motion, as amended, seconded by Michael.
→ *Motion passed unanimously, 5-0*

2. Wendall Waters, Reappointment Waste Reduction Advisory Committee

3. James Warner, Reappointment Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board

- Motion made to reappoint Wendall Waters to the Waste Reduction Advisory Committee for a three-year term ending June 30, 2026, and to reappoint James Warner to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board for a two-year term ending June 30, 2025, made by Michael, seconded by Linda.
→ *Motion passed unanimously, 5-0*

5. Memorial Bench Request, Musgrave – S. Player

Memorial Bench at Pavilion Beach for Winthrop Musgrave, who was born and raised in Ipswich. The Planning Department and Parks have approved of the application. The family of Winthrop Musgrave spoke about his life and his family's history in Ipswich.

- Motion to approve the Memorial Bench as presented to the Select Board made by Michael, seconded by Linda.
- Carl suggested we make sure the material used for the bench doesn't get too hot in the sun.

→ *Motion passed unanimously, 5-0*

- Sarah thanked the family for the generous donation.

4. Select Board Review of Electric Light Department Policy and Procedures – J. Blair

Jon Blair, ELD Manager, said he has noticed that other departments similar to the ELD have more frequent reviews regarding their policies with their governance boards. Jon would like to bring policy to the Select Board more frequently. He has started with the three most significant policies that he thinks warrant the Select Board's consideration, but there are about a dozen that warrant a discussion. The line crew and powerplant staff had previously been organized under a labor contract that expired last July. That group failed to come to terms throughout the negotiation process with the other labor groups in town and failed to recertify. They converted in September to "employees at will" which means they no longer have a highly regulated policy, and no assurance that they will be paid what they need and be given the proper protective equipment. This is a problem because we want to ensure we keep our workers, and keep them happy and safe. We also have a vacancy in the line crew and it is difficult or impossible to fill that vacancy without guidelines. The electric utility right now needs talent and there are not enough people to do the jobs. Other utilities are paying considerably more than Ipswich and it is very competitive right now. We need to put guarantees on paper that employees will have a safe working environment and when and how they will be paid. Jon sat down with the Town Manager, Human Resources, and Labor Counsel to create a document adapted to a new format from the previous Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Mike said there are other ways to incentivize people to want to work for us other than salary. He asked what their time off looks like currently. Jon said they have looked at that, this group is a little older and past maternity/paternity leave or may already have a lot of accrued vacation time. They have thought about possibly shifting summer hours to do 10 hours per day and then having 3-day weekends. Charlie asked if the at-will employees have looked at this, they have and they had concern about some of the language the attorneys put in. Being an at-will employee in MA means you can be let go without reason or notice, and that language was put into the contract which was concerning for the employees. Other than that, they were okay with the conditions of the document.

Jon suggested outlining pay increases with three conditions: market conditions, merit, and cost of living. Linda asked Stephen if we have other at-will employees, Stephen said they have a lot of non-union employees. Linda asked if these policies are consistent with other town non-union employees, Stephen said he thinks they are pretty consistent. Jon's approach to the merit-based system is not what they typically do, but it is okay if Jon wants to do that. He also said he will be interested to see how it goes, and perhaps they would do this for other non-union employees in town if it goes well. Linda asked, under the employee discipline section, should there be mention of the Human Resources Manager as well? Jon said in terms of his experience he would never engage in formal reprimand without Human Resources present. Jon also said he thinks his contract is problematic and the Board said they will put it on an agenda for executive session.

- Motion to approve the personnel policy manual and the compensation policy, made by Charlie, seconded by Linda.
- Carl said they would love to get updates on how this is working.

→ *Motion passed unanimously, 5-0*

7. Consent Agenda – S. Player

a. Partial Street Blocking Application –

- i. Jaynes Industrial Moving, 69 Bennett Street, Lynn, MA requests a partial street blocking at 115 Market Street on June 22, 2023, for approximately five hours between 6:00 AM and 1:00 PM and June 23, 2023, as a rain date for crane operation.

b. One Day All Alcohol Liquor License Application(s)-

- i. Andrew Skillman of Ipswich Masonic Temple, 70 Topsfield Road for Celebration of Life on July 8, 2023, at Wedding on 7/22/2023.

c. One Day Wine and Malt License Application(s)-

- i. David Hanna of Karma Liquors Inc. dba Harbor Tap Trailer for Concerts at the Castle Hill Barn, 290 Argilla Road on August 5, 12, and 19, 2023.
- ii. Renee Pelletier for Appleton Farms (Trustees of Reservations) for a Retreat/Business Meeting at Appleton Farms, 219 County Road on July 11, 2023.

- Motion to approve the Consent Agenda made by Linda, seconded by Michael.

→ *Motion passed unanimously, 5-0*

8. Town Manager Report – S. Crane

Stephen said the assessors will be mailing out tax relief checks in July and the first quarter bills will be arriving soon as well. Stephen attached the Moody's Report and said the town retained its Aa2 ratings. The library is doing summer Saturday hours for the first time in many years. Sarah Johnson asked the Finance Committee for \$200k in Reserve Funds and Stephen explained the reasons behind it. He also informed the Select Board of the Finance Committee's questions and comments regarding the move.

9. Select Board Sub Committee Updates – S. Player

- The ELD Subcommittee met off site, at the Housing Authority. Most of the conversation was about Jon and his team rolling out the new USDA interest free grants. They are doing a pilot program. They also discussed the prompt payment discount.
- The shellfish subcommittee met last week. Green crab trapping has begun and so far, 900 lbs. have been caught. We don't know yet how much money we will get from the state for the trapping. They reviewed a preliminary shellfish management plan outline. The next meeting will be next August.

10. New Business – S. Player

- none

11. Old Business – S. Player

- none

12. Miscellaneous and Correspondence – S. Player

- none
- Motion to adjourn made by Mike, seconded by Charlie.

→ *Motion passed unanimously, 5-0*

Respectfully Submitted By
Alyson von der Esch
6-27-2023