

Town of North Canaan
Board of Selectman
December 4, 2023
Regular Meeting

Present: First Selectman Brian Ohler, Craig Whiting, Jesse Bunce

Selectman Ohler called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm

Selectman Whiting moved to accept the minutes as read. Selectman Bunce seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Positive uplifting news from the Community: There was a walk on the Greenway this past weekend and about 15 people went. A lot of cleaning has been done on the trail. Town looks nice with all the lights. Mrs. Godburn celebrated 101st birthday.

Selectman Ohler thanked The Pilgrim House and the volunteers for the Thanksgiving dinner.

The light parade was nice and the largest thus far. Some of the businesses in town have their windows decorated for the holidays. The lamp posts have been decorated and look nice.

The Events Committee in regard to the Parade of Lights would like to thank: Maribeth Marchi, Mike Herrington and the Mountainside volunteers, Tammy and Jesse McDonald, The Cranford Club, The recreation commission, Lindells, and the town crew. The next committee meeting is at the library on December 6, and they welcome the public.

Public Comment:

Ron Clavette said: The selectmen did a good job in overnight parking downtown. How does the town plan to deal with parking during the day? Can there be more handicap parking downtown? He was approached by the bank regarding the dumpster, and they may let it stay but if it needs to be moved how will it be handled. Selectman Ohler responded regarding downtown parking. When the new railroad project was done and the new crosswalk was put in, new no parking signs went up. This was not due to truck traffic, but according to DOT there is no parking within 20 feet of a crosswalk. Selectman Ohler plans to discuss with the other selectman about approaching the DOT and removing the new crosswalk, leaving the old crosswalk which still complies with safety. Then spots on Main Street would open back up. Selectman Ohler is aware of the issues with the dumpster and will work with Ron to find an amicable solution if it is not able to stay where it is. Selectman Ohler had a conversation with the Resident Trooper regarding overnight parking issues and parking issues for employees. There was a question regarding why the crosswalk couldn't go closer to the diner. The engineers determined it was not a safe area to put it there which is why it ended up where it did.

Ralph Hummel questioned having an ADA automatic door open button put at the town hall main door.

Kathy Whiting mentioned that when 44 is shut down and traffic is rerouted in the valley it is very problematic as people do not know where they are going. Selectman Ohler explained that the recent

issue when the road was shut down was a breakdown of the communication process. Typically, the fire department in Canaan as well as Norfolk have a good process.

Appointment of Region 1 Board of Education member: Selectman Ohler explained that the Republican party had put up Rosemary Keilty to run, however, because she was cofacilitating the election it was determined that she needed to wait until after the election to be appointed. **Selectman Whiting made a motion to appoint Rosemary Keilty to the Region 1 Board of Ed. Selectman Bunce seconded the motion. Motion carried.**

Selectman Ohler read a letter of resignation for the Board of Ed from Rebecca Cahill. **Selectman Whiting made a motion to accept the resignation letter. Selectman Bunce seconded the motion. Motion carried.**

Transfer station redesign: Selectman Ohler spoke regarding the plan for the transfer station. It has been a topic of discussion for a lot of residents and businesses. There are procedural changes planned that could make things better. It needs to be effectively and appropriately run. The contract with MIRA will be up in 4 years, which gives us 4 years to come up with a new solution. The first step in redesign is to reroute traffic. The entrance will remain where it is. There will be 1 attendant that you will have to stop at to ensure you are good to use the facility and there will be 1 attendant at the hopper at all times for safety reasons. The new route will go up the hill to the left. All trash will be emptied into containers from up above. Electronics/clothes/books will be on the left-hand side as you go down the hill and the new exit will be the old entrance. This will allow a steady flow of traffic without the bottleneck. The Bulky waste will be 2 containers rather than just a pile. Hopefully in the spring we can figure out a cover for the bulky waste to eliminate the rain from causing excess weight. A number of residents would like a swap shop. The 2-bay garage needs to be cleaned out and once that is done it may be appropriate for a swap shop. The doors can close at night. There is no plan to sub it out to a third party. Dinnie Light is stepping down and Brian Carlson has expressed interest in the role. There will be no more trailer loads backing up into the bulky waste. There is a need to keep better track of contractors. Selectman Bunce is researching scales which could be helpful as well. The redesign will be after the first of the year.

Town hall office collaboration 2024: After speaking with some of the people in the office and some of the contractors and residents Selectman Ohler has decided that after the first of the year he will be having early Monday morning hours (5am) and from 8am to noon the building official, fire marshal and the ZEO will all be in the office so that any issues contractors may have can be solved then without having to wait.

Selectman Ohler read into record the dates of the Selectman meetings for 2024: January 3, February 5, March 4, April 1, May 6, June 3, July 1, August 5, September 3, October 7, November 6, December 3.

Virtual meeting options: The Selectmen want to make sure that every meeting is open to the public virtually. Selectman Whiting is researching the owl technology which is similar to zoom. There was a brief discussion on technology options. This will stay on the agenda until resolved.

Job Postings: Reposting the public works superintendent position. There is not a set start date yet. There is a 3-member panel with extensive knowledge that was put together to go through applications. It will be reposted tomorrow, and the deadline is December 29. There were applicants previously and they are welcome to reapply.

The Executive Assistant position will also be posted tomorrow. Missy will be retiring March 1. The position will be full-time, 40 hours Monday - Friday. The office needs to open 5 days a week. Looking for someone with strong municipal and civil experience. The deadline will be December 29. Hopefully a hire would be by the end of January to give the month of February for training before the transition. The ads will be on Indeed, the Shopper's Guide, The Lakeville Journal, Facebook, the town website and the bulletin board.

Fire marshal report: none

Selectman Ohler read the Resident Trooper/Troop B report read into record: There were 212 times responded in November. Selectman Ohler confirmed that this was from all of Troop B not just the trooper and also requested that the Resident Trooper give a report with his individual numbers as well.

Selectman Ohler read the Building Department report into record.

Selectman Ohler read the ZEO report into record.

Selectman Ohler read Social Services report into record.

Selectman Whiting report: The solar project at the transfer station has been ongoing for 6 years. If it goes forward, he suggests speaking with a different company. Years ago, the Boy Scouts used to collect cans/bottles for the veterans at the Transfer Station and maybe that could happen again. He spoke with the Scout master who is going to check on doing it again. He is having the town crew redo the equipment list that he created a few years ago. It is more helpful to the Finance Department but still good information. Would like an update on the ARPA money and what is left. That needs to be spent this year. There was a public hearing at the high school tonight to show the upgrades that they are proposing in a January 8th referendum vote for \$5.6 million. North Canaan would be paying 35 -40% on the capital project. Failing the referendum is the only way to make them understand it is a financial burden on the town. He would like to send a letter from the entire select board to legislature explaining how this is affecting the town and how it could be solved. Selectman Ohler explained in a high-level overview the methodology that they would pitch to the other towns which includes basing the budget off of each town's grand list. They have created a spreadsheet and would mean everyone pays their fair share. The town has to be unified in a vote to vote down the referendum. There was a discussion in how to explain this to the other towns. Selectman Ohler explained they will have to have concrete data. A lot of work has been done and still needs to be done.

Selectman Bunce report: He went to the high school meeting and shared the information he got there. He read the list of renovations and Selectman Ohler stated that he would like a list of the stuff that is a priority. The referendum is planned for January 8. Selectman Bunce is going to get a proposal from George Johanassen regarding the riverbank issue at Lawrence Field. At the recent EDC meeting it was suggested a business directory sign be put up across from the Fire House in the field and have businesses lease their sign space. EDC also has information they would like to put on the website. There will be a vote for the transaction of making them a commission instead of a committee next month. He signed up for a newly elected office workshop on January 6. He spoke with some people in town that would like to have a newsletter in addition to the new Facebook page.

Closing public Comment – Jill Godburn stated the riverbank by Lawrence field very dangerous. It was explained that the Selectmen have to work with the Army Corps of Engineers to fix the issue. They will

look into putting up a barrier. Melissa Gandolfo asked about the electric car charging stations. There was confusion between the charging company and Eversource and they are still trying to figure it out. So, it has not started yet.

Kathy Ducillo asked about the Railroad workers parking all day in 2-hour parking. Selectman Ohler will work on that as well as the railing in front of her building. Legally the 3 Selectmen cannot meet other than in a formal meeting. Selectman Ohler got that information from the town attorney.

Stacy Dodge asked about the town treasurer and the audit. We are audited every year.

Selectman Ohler explained the question that was on the ballot in November regarding cannabis sales in town was mandated by the State. The Zoning commission tried to get as much information out to the residents as they could. Some voters were still misinformed about what it meant. There are several licenses up for grabs, not just sale (i.e. growth, cultivation) The Planning and Zoning Board have prevue over it and are very cognizant of where it should go. There is a lot more information to be figured out. Selectman Ohler has spoken with Sheffield. Residents should know that the tax revenue in CT is different than Massachusetts. They receive 12% CT will get 3%.

Selectman Whiting made a motion to move to Executive Session. Selectman Bunce seconded the motion. Motion carried. Executive Session began 8:45pm

Selectman Ohler reopened the meeting at 9:00pm

Selectman Whiting made a motion to accept the Pilot Agreement in settlement of the pending litigation re: Highwatch Recovery Center, Inc vs Town of North Canaan Docket No HHB-CV22-6072927-S. Selectman Bunce seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Lindsay Crane asked about being sworn in after being elected to the BOE. She had not heard anything about it and neither had others. Selectman Ohler stated that they would speak with the Town Clerk and figure out what the process is and will circle back with her.

Selectman Whiting made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Selectman Bunce seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned 9:02pm

Respectfully submitted,

Ayrslea A Odell

Recording Secretary