

**General Government/Town Council**  
**Minutes for 2/8/23**

**1&2. Attendance:** Clrs Gus Steeves, Jasmin Rivas, Jackie Ryan; Cit Mem Martena Shea.  
Others: Clrs John Daniel, Dave Adams, Mike Marketti. Victor Roule, Rachael Carney, Francine Farland, Margaret Morrissey, Eric Rumsey, Mike Brunelle, Adriana Robaina, Philip Maloof, Maureen Doyle.

**3. Jan 18 minutes:** Passed over, not done yet.

Chair asked to take #11 out of order because Maloof had come here from Worcester to discuss it. Shea/Clemence motion to do so approved 5-0.

**11. Necessities bylaw:** He summarized his concept thus: In 1919, state passed law controlling prices of necessities, repealed it 1978, but we're seeing another period of rapid price hikes. Law was a criminal statute deterrent to price gouging/speculation, and he feels the Consitution and Declaration give us the authority to reinstate it. Passed out several copies. He believes the Legislature originally left definition of "necessities" to court's discretion, but town could more clearly define them for today and need much higher penalties (jail and fines). He'd have DA and police enforce it locally and said his goal is to have towns individually implement this to pressure state to restore it, starting here.

Members asked several questions, including why Legislature repealed it. Generally see need for reducing costs, but not sure we can apply jail time, just fines for violations. Wondered if town has legal authority to do this and took idea under advisement to get response from town attorney. Motion to table: Ryan/Rivas. Approved 5-0.

**4. Insurance transfer:** Approved unanimously, no comments.

**5. Capital policy change:** Robaina said most itemes are useful 5+ years and we don't need the 3-year threshold since nothing that short is in our inventory now. Daniel said he wants uniformity, but Marketti not available to clarify what his panel had discussed re: technology. Roule said most tech is 3-5 years, and they try to push it to 5. Ryan said she's not sold" on the switch, moved to postpone to next GG (Rivas 2<sup>nd</sup> ). Approved 4-0.

**6. Best Practices grant:** Roule said they're looking to do feasibility study for broadband fiber in town, looking at what exists and where potential hookups are. Morrissey said it would address fact town is at a "severe disadvantage" economically without it, has repeatedly seen need for good connection. Should be treated as a utility. Library recently upgraded internally, and she sees townwide upgrade as necessary to "be ready for the unknown."

Committee members in full support, with Ryan noting she'd lost phone-web connection 5 times this meeting alone (although Steeves's laptop had not), Rivas agreed, noting town shared Covid info online, but some lack access. Farland said some staff had to upgrade personal connections to work from home then, and still need to broaden access to work from home or non-office locations. Web access should be part of disaster plan, including encrypted hotspots. Shea asked about schools, and Roule said the study would include all, but he hasn't yet talked to them.

Motion to recommend approval: Ryan/Rivas. Approved 4-0.

**7. Planning Board hearing:** Rumsey said town got new zoning bylaw in Nov 2018, but Planning Board has been working to update it ever since. This batch includes "slew of changes" in sec 5, addition of text for flood zone in sec 9, definitions in sec 10. Seeking joint hearing with council in early/mid March, exact date to come.

Motion to recommend approval: Rivas/Ryan. Approved 4-0.

**8. Softball Assoc agreement:** Brunelle noted McCann Field had recent fire damage, Softball Assoc taking care of it mostly by themselves & has done good job. Has had “great communication” with them over the years, new agreement contains no changes. Motion to recommend approval: Ryan/Rivas. Approved 4-0.

**9. Town Billing:** Steeves summarized concept as one stemming from Trash Committee discussions of need to set up structure for trash enterprise fund in light of several other bills and enterprise funds being handled in various departments (mostly Assessor's Office). Carney said it's “a huge process to build a billing system” and we need to see what other towns have done for this; Rivas agreed.

Farland said one key issue is that our version of MUNIS doesn't have ability to add 6000+ recurrent bills; they have to manually input the airport bills (43) every time they send them out (once a year). Need changed software. Holden has version allowing five items in utility bills; need to compare with same contractors on bills. Can't yet determine whether it's better to do bills in-house or contract out. Carney noted we need to consider the risks of both, with hiring a billing firm still needing staff oversight that tends to get forgotten. Also need an abatement process.

Motion to postpone until manager and accountant can participate: Ryan/Rivas. Approved 4-0.

**10. Treasurer transfer:** Steeves summarized discussion with Harnois earlier today about why this is necessary, saying the plan is to pay this month in hope they'll be able to have permanent person soon and contract with Joanne ends this month. Robaina agreed, saying she got some info on potential permanent person today and will interview; same firm will send a new interim. Ryan noted we'll need to formally appoint that new person, and wondered if it's legal to appoint a firm instead of an individual; said she didn't like fact the firm didn't notify us earlier. Daneil said he'll see if it's legal. Motion to recommend approval: Ryan/Rivas. Approved 4-0.

Adjourned 9:30 PM.