

TOWN OF CANTON - BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Regular Hybrid Meeting
Tuesday, November 21, 2023 – 7:00 pm

DRAFT MINUTES

Members Present: First Selectman Kevin Witkos, Tim LeGeyt, William Volovski, Elizabeth Corkum Winsor, and Stephen Sedor (joined the meeting at 7:23 p.m.)

Also Present: Chief Administrative Officer Robert Skinner, Lori Ciuca, Alicia Cruess, Sarah Faulkner, Matt Loparco, Recording Secretary Maureen Griffin

Call to Order: W. Volovski called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

R. Skinner swore in First Selectman, Kevin Witkos.

K. Witkos asked Selectmen to keep their microphones off unless they are speaking, and he pointed out that the podium at the front of the room is to be used for public participation. These two things will help with the Owl system audio quality.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

K. Witkos opened the floor for public participation.

- Matt Loparco (Shallot Meadow Road) spoke in opposition of Lans Perry's request to use the paper road off Shallot Meadow Road for private driveway access. He thinks that K. Witkos has a conflict of interest in this matter because Mr. Witkos shares one of Mr. Perry's other two driveways. Mr. Loparco is concerned that residents' questions have not been answered by the BOS, P&Z, or Mr. Perry. They have numerous questions which include: Why does Mr. Perry need a third driveway when he already has two? Who would benefit from this? How does this benefit the Town or residents? What are Mr. Perry's intentions? He stated that residents have some legal questions. They would like to have answers. K. Witkos explained that Mr. Loparco can make appointments with individual Selectmen or with R. Skinner. Mr. Witkos plans to recuse himself from discussions/actions on this matter. Mr. Loparco will contact R. Skinner.
- Lori Ciuca (Shallot Meadow Road) said that she also opposes granting permission for Mr. Perry's requested access. She is a land owner and tax payer. Their words are not being heard. She agrees with Mr. Loparco and the 71 questions that he has presented to Selectmen. She requests that the BOS listen to residents, and make a right, ethical and legal decision on this matter.

K. Witkos closed public participation.

W. Volovski moved to add to Agenda as Action Item I – Review and possibly approve a change order for the Boat Ramp at 50 Old River Road to change the asphalt portion of the ramp to concrete for an additional cost of \$14,240.

Seconded by: T. LeGeyt

The motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING on a proposal to name the boat ramp located at 50 Old River Road after David Sinish in recognition of his commitment to the Town of Canton and the Farmington River.

K. Witkos opened the public hearing. He stated that the ramp name would be "The David Sinish Boat Ramp".

- Sarah Faulkner (Dyer Avenue) stated that she worked with David Sinish on the Farmington River's Wild & Scenic designation. He was her neighbor and friend. Mr. Sinish contributed to the Town by serving as a Selectman, on the Wetlands Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and on the Board of the Farmington River Watershed. He did a tremendous amount of work to protect and

promote the river, and to encourage good stewardship. She believes naming the boat ramp in his honor is the best thing to do.

- Alicia Cruess (Cherry Brook Road) expressed her gratitude for David Sinish. He was very well known in Town. She is thankful for being able to honor him for his work with the Farmington River Watershed.

K. Witkos closed the public hearing. He explained that the Town adopted a Naming Policy at the request of residents. He summarized the application and approval process. No other applications were received for naming the boat ramp.

ADOPTION OF CONSENT AGENDA

K. Witkos recommended adding Action Items B, D and E to the consent agenda, if there were no objections.

- Item B: “Review and possibly approve a proposal to name the future boat ramp located at 50 Old River Road after David Sinish in recognition of his commitment to the Town of Canton and the Farmington River.” T. LeGeyt requested that this remain a separate item on the Action Agenda because of the special nature of the honor.

- Item D: “Review and approve acceptance of a Community Activity Grant in the amount of \$223,478 to fund a sidewalk in front of the New Fire Station on River Road and pedestrian safety improvements to the intersection at Maple Avenue, High Street and Dyer Avenue and refer to the Board of Finance for further review and acceptance.” K. Witkos commented that the BOF approved this. He is thankful for the Town staff’s success in obtaining a grant that covers most of the cost. The grant covers the sidewalk and provides crosswalks/signals. The BOS listened to the community about their needs related to this matter.

- Item E. “Review request by the Director of Public Works to transfer \$16,077.08 from the undesignated portion of the Transfer Station Special Revenue Account to CIP account, Highway Truck #4 Purchase, to fund the balance remaining on the purchase of a new 2024 dump truck.”

K. Witkos said that his understanding is that the current truck stopped functioning last year. DPW needs a new truck to accommodate all Town roads. The truck is large enough to haul materials from the Transfer Station, as well as be used for plowing. They have the majority of funds—this amount is the remaining balance.

Motion: W. Volovski moved to adopt the Consent Agenda (Consent Agenda Items B and C were removed from the Consent Agenda; Action Items D and E were added to the Consent Agenda)

Seconded by: T. LeGeyt

The motion passed unanimously.

ACTION ITEMS

Appointment of Robert Bessel (D) as an alternate member of the Economic Development Agency for a term to expire on July 1, 2026.

K. Witkos commented that Mr. Bessel is eager to get the agency moving. He asked Mr. Bessel why he wants to serve on the EDA. R. Bessel explained that economic development has been a key issue for him for many years. The Town is growing—the attitudes and understanding of development is changing. Data gathering and interpretation, and community input is important. We need to develop a consensus to move forward; he is a consensus builder. He hopes to add to the efforts of the EDA. K. Witkos commented that Mr. Bessel did a great job when he previously served on the EDA from 2013-2019.

Motion: T. LeGeyt moved the appointment of Robert Bessel (D) as an alternate member of the Economic Development Agency for a term to expire on July 1, 2026.

Seconded by: W. Volovski

The motion passed unanimously.

R. Skinner swore in R. Bessel.

S. Sedor joined the meeting at 7:23 pm

Review Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting Minutes of November 8, 2023

Motion: W. Volovski moved to approve the Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting Minutes of November 8, 2023

Seconded by: S. Sedor

The motion passed 2-0-3

Review Board of Selectmen Special Meeting Minutes of November 8, 2023

Motion: S. Sedor moved to approve the Board of Selectmen Special Meeting Minutes of November 8, 2023

Seconded by: W. Volovski

The motion passed 2-0-3

Election of the Deputy First Selectman pursuant to Charter Section 6.01.

Motion: K. Witkos moved to appoint S. Sedor as Deputy First Selectman pursuant to Charter Section 6.01.

Seconded by: T. LeGeyt

The motion passed unanimously.

Review requests by the owner of 160 Bahre Corner Road, 27 Shallot Meadow Road and 21 Shallot Meadow Road to utilize Town owned property located on Shallot Meadow Road and bordered by 21 Shallot Meadow Road, 27 Shallot Meadow Road and 160 Bahre Corner Road.

K. Witkos recused himself and left the meeting. S. Sedor chaired the meeting for this issue. R. Skinner provided a summary. The Town Attorney replied with his opinion on the issue of the paper road (and L. Perry's request for driveway access) that was discussed at the last BOS meeting. The attorney said that this paper road is open land—it is not part of the Town road system, so Mr. Perry does not have frontage on a road. He stated that the BOS can approve this request under an easement, lease, or license. The BOS can set restrictions at its discretion, or they can deny it. S. Sedor said that he reviewed all documents and correspondence related to this matter. He recommends holding a public hearing to ensure that all residents are treated the same; so that Shallot Meadow Road residents are heard; and to have a BOS discussion after resident concerns are voiced. W. Volovski agreed with S. Sedor—he would like to hold a public hearing. T. LeGeyt agreed and said that it is important to avoid the appearance of any impropriety. E. Winsor said that she read all materials and would appreciate holding a public hearing because there are frustrations on both sides.

Motion: W. Volovski moved to set December 13, 2023 at 7:00pm in Room F of the Community Center as the date, time and location to hold a public hearing where people may comment on the requests by the owner of 160 Bahre Corner Road, 27 Shallot Meadow Road and 21 Shallot Meadow Road to utilize Town owned property located on Shallot Meadow Road and bordered by 21 Shallot Meadow Road, 27 Shallot Meadow Road and 160 Bahre Corner Road.

Seconded by: T. LeGeyt

The motion passed 4-0-1 (K. Witkos recusal).

R. Skinner added that it is important to clarify expectations about providing answers to residents' questions. Mr. Perry has no obligation to provide answers; the BOS cannot answer for him. S. Sedor questioned how to obtain answers by December 13th. E. Winsor suggested the approach of making a best effort in getting information/providing answers. T. LeGeyt said that it won't be a requirement for the BOS have all the answers; some questions can be reviewed and referred to other Town agencies, or to Mr. Perry. S. Sedor recommended that Selectmen review all meeting packets that provide information on this matter.

Review and possibly approve a proposal to name the future boat ramp located at 50 Old River Road after David Sinish in recognition of his commitment to the Town of Canton and the Farmington River.

Motion: T. LeGeyt moved that the Boat Ramp located at 50 Old River Road be named the David Sinish Boat Ramp in recognition of his commitment, and many years of service, to the Town of Canton and the Farmington River.

Seconded by: W. Volovski

The motion passed unanimously.

Review status of the Town's purchase of 37 Bridge Street from the State of Connecticut.

R. Skinner provided an update on this complicated matter. The DOT approached the Town about purchasing the land behind Collinsville Canoe and Kayak (CCK). In May 2019, the Town indicated an interest in purchasing the land. The Town and DOT worked through the process and details. Benefits of the purchase included a second boat ramp and additional parking. Agreements were reached with abutting land owners. A DOT representative contacted the Town last summer about a license on property on the west side of the river. They did not want to leave an orphan piece of land. Also, we have a license over part of the piece of land that was going to be purchased; it is actually two separate sections. The Town thought the two sections were being discussed as one piece, and that both pieces were included as part of the purchase agreement. R. Skinner showed a map of the area and the three sections being discussed. Selectmen discussed the impact of this change: how the license agreement compares to a fee simple purchase; protection of property; the term of the license agreement; the planned fence and signage; use of the CCK ramp; questions to pose to the owners of 41 Bridge Street; and the use of the designated funds if they are not needed for a purchase. R. Skinner said he was bringing this to the attention of the board; no decision is needed now but the BOS will need to make a final decision about moving forward with a license agreement in lieu of purchasing the property fee simple.

Appointment of Committee Assignments

- Capital Improvement Plan Joint Subcommittee of the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Education: W. Volovski and T. LeGeyt
- Board of Selectmen Appointment Sub-Committee: S. Sedor and W. Volovski
- River Access Study Committee: E. Winsor and K. Witkos

K. Witkos stated that he would like to have a discussion about the Appointment Committee. There was correspondence from the Chair of the EDA that stated they did not have a say on who the BOS was going to appoint. It is in the Charter that the BOS appoints members of committees. If there are several candidates, there should be an opportunity to for them come to a BOS meeting or Executive Session.

Board of Selectmen Policy and Procedures Review

R. Skinner reviewed some policies:

- Board of Selectman Package – this is distributed on the Friday prior to the meeting. It is also posted on the website. Background materials are included so that all required information is provided with sufficient time to review it.
- Town Webpage – this has good information (Town Calendar, Agendas and Packages, etc.)
- Policies – A few issues/policies came up for review (Submission Guidelines; Civil Discourse Policy; Facility Use Policy; Bid Procedure Policy) so policies were created or revised.
- Budget Process – Departments submit their budgets in the 2nd week in December. R. Skinner meets with departments to do a line by line review. The proposed budget is presented to the BOS in the 2nd week of February. It then goes to the BOF in March.
- Town Attorney – There is an RFP process for selecting the Town Attorney. This is done as a matter of course when there is a new BOS. Change is not required. Selectmen discussed the possibility of retaining the current Town Attorneys. R. Skinner said that they have been happy with the current firms. Their fees have been competitive—they find ways to simplify matters and save time. We have not had any major labor issues. S. Sedor said that municipal rates are comparable. W. Volovski added that we have a good relationship with these firms. Selectmen agreed that there is no reason to send this out to bid just because it has been done in the past.

- Annual Town Meeting – This is required by the Town Charter. The meeting can include a presentation, and the presentation of the annual report. It is a non-voting meeting. BOS goals could be discussed. Decisions should be made in December about meeting topics.
- Dedication of Annual Report - The annual report is produced in January. It can be dedicated to an individual or entity.

Board of Selectmen Goals

K. Witkos said that he had the opportunity to have conversations with R. Bessel and R. Skinner and came to the conclusion that R. Skinner gives much of his own time to the Town, including attending the ad hoc subcommittee meetings. He wants to make sure that R. Skinner does not feel compelled to do this because it is an expectation of the BOS. The BOS created many of these committees and should provide support and resources. Responsibilities should not necessarily fall on staff. There may be other ways to fill these needs. T. LeGeyt expressed appreciation for R. Skinner's time and involvement in keeping the Town running. He recognized that Mr. Skinner sets his own priorities, but that it may be possible to assign another representative, or to have some committees function on their own. R. Skinner expressed his appreciation for this support from Selectmen.

R. Skinner pointed out that the existing goals of the previous BOS were included in the meeting package. The new BOS may want to make changes in goals or priorities. Goals are then publicized at The Annual Town Meeting and Super Board Meeting. W. Volovski commented that he was impressed by past boards and how many goals they accomplished. K. Witkos suggested that Selectmen email their ideas for goals, and that goals should be established before budget time.

Review and possibly approve a change order for the Boat Ramp at 50 Old River Road to change the asphalt portion of the ramp to concrete for an additional cost of \$14,240.

R. Skinner reported that this project is proceeding well; it will be completed in a few weeks. The contractor (Yield Industries) raised a concern about the stability of a railing installed in poured asphalt. The railings were very expensive. They are ADA compliant and were custom made for the site. Yield Industries recommends a concrete ramp. The engineer and Project Administrator agree with them. This will support the rails and last 2 or 3 times longer than asphalt. The additional cost is \$14,240—the project has a contingency of \$16,221. No other change orders are anticipated.

Motion: S. Sedor moved to approve a change order for the Boat Ramp at 50 Old River Road to change the asphalt portion of the ramp to concrete for an additional cost of \$14,240.

Seconded by: W. Volovski

The motion passed unanimously.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CAO, TOWN AGENCIES, OFFICIALS AND/OR OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES AND OFFICIALS

CAO Report

- R. Skinner reported that the Temporary Traffic & Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee generated a survey about dangerous traffic areas and potential solutions. They received 650 responses. They are correlating the information, which should be useful. A joint meeting of this committee and the Rte. 44 Corridor Study group will be held on December 7 at 6:00 p.m.
- Town leadership Committee and the BOE met and toured Cherry Brook School to discuss the overcrowding problem. The BOF will be addressing this.
- Reevaluation is ongoing and will be done this coming year. Residential properties are expected to increase substantially. Commercial will lag behind residential. Preliminary numbers are: 47% residential median increase; 21% commercial median increase. It is consistent with other communities. Residents will be notified soon.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion: S. Sedor moved to approve Consent Agenda items:

- Refund of Taxes pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 12-129;
- Accept a \$2,000 donation for the Canton Police Department from the Wide Open Golf Tournament;
- That the Town accept a Community Activity Grant in the amount of \$223,478 to fund a sidewalk in front of the New Fire Station on River Road and pedestrian safety improvements to the intersection at Maple Avenue, High Street and Dyer Avenue and set final approval at a Town Meeting to occur on December 13, 2023 at 7:00pm in Room F at the Community Center;
- To approve the transfer \$16,077.08 from the undesignated portion of the Transfer Station Special Revenue Account to CIP account, Highway Truck #4 Purchase, to fund the balance remaining on the purchase of a new 2024 dump truck.

Seconded by: W. Volovski

The motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: S. Sedor moved to adjourn at 8:40 p.m.

Seconded by: W. Volovski

The motion passed unanimously.