

IPSWICH SELECT BOARD
Meeting of Monday, February 8, 2021

The Select Board participated in this meeting remotely utilizing Zoom in accordance with the Governor's March 12 Order suspending provisions of Open Meeting Law and to promote public health and social distancing.

Board Members present: Linda Alexson, Chair; Dr. Tammy Jones, Vice Chair; Kerry Mackin; Nishan Mootafian; William Whitmore

Also present: Anthony Marino, Town Manager; Eileen Page, Recording Secretary

With a quorum present, Ms. Alexson called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM.

Welcome/Announcements

The first round of COVID-19 vaccines have been distributed to Ipswich seniors over 75 at the COA's vaccination site.

The Zoom Chat feature has been disabled on this meeting, as it was found that anything written in the Chat constitutes as public record, and it has become disruptive during meetings. To get the attention of the Board, residents logged into the meeting should use the Hand Raise feature. It was confirmed that no open meeting laws are being violated by turning off the Chat.

Citizen Queries

Phil Goguen (Kingfisher Road) sent an email to the Board asking if keypad voting will be used for Annual Town Meeting. Ms. Alexson responded that it is at the discretion of the Town Moderator.

Board and Committee Appointments

- I. Michele McGrath – Reappointment – Cultural Council
- II. Laura Gresh – Reappointment – Design Review Board

- *Vote: Dr. Jones moved to reappoint Michele McGrath to the Cultural Council and Laura Gresh to the Design Review Board. Ms. Mackin seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

Approval of Minutes

- I. January 4, 2021

- *Vote: Mr. Mootafian moved to approve the minutes. Mr. Whitmore seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

PUBLIC HEARING: Water & Wastewater Rates (1 of 2)

“Residents of the Town of Ipswich: Please note that the Select Board, as Water and Sewer Commissioners, will hold remote public hearings on Monday, February 8, 2021, at 7:15 PM and Monday, February 22, 2021, at 7:15 PM to consider and act on the increase and/or modification of the current water and sewer rates effective for billings on and after May 1, 2021.” – Board of Water & Sewer Commissioners, Linda Alexson, Chair

WATER

Vicki Halmen (Director of Water & Wastewater) proposed to the Board a 10% increase, bringing the water rate from \$11.25 to \$12.38 per 100ft³. With a 10% increase, the typical household of four would pay \$8.70 more per month.

The proposed Seasonal Residential Rate would increase the base rate by 1.5%, bringing the water rate from \$5.95 to \$18.57 per 100ft³, effective May 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021.

Ms. Halmen also reviewed the proposed FY22 budget, which has an overall increase of 11%. Capital spending is set at \$1.9 million for FY22 through FY26, and includes vehicles, metering system upgrades, water system

improvements, and portable generators for wells. Debt service will increase with costs for water main replacements at High Street and Market Street, and the expansion and upgrade of walls, reservoirs, tanks, and plant improvements.

WASTEWATER

Ms. Halmen proposed to the Board a 5% increase, bringing the wastewater rate from \$10.85 to \$11.39 per 100ft³. With a 5% increase, the typical household of four would pay \$4.00 more per month. This increase would become effective May 1, 2021.

The proposed FY22 Wastewater budget has an overall decrease of 6.7%.

Mr. Whitmore asked if a projection could be run to show a 13% increase in water rates, suggesting that it may be more fiscally responsible to keep up with a budgetary surplus while possible.

There were no public comments.

- *Vote: Mr. Whitmore moved to close the Public Hearing. Mr. Mootafian seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

FY22 Budget Review: Water & Wastewater

WASTEWATER

Ms. Halmen presented the proposed FY22 Wastewater budget. Increases include contractual pay raises for staff and an increase in benefits and retirement contributions, which are carried in the enterprise fund. The personnel budget shows an increase of 3% overall, largely due to Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) and health insurance increases.

Ms. Alexson asked if the Town has been taking advantage of sewer rate relief funds. Ms. Halmen responded that the Town has utilized these on and off in the past, as Ipswich has only been sporadically approved. Ms. Halmen noted that any relief granted would be minimal, and would not affect the FY22 budget numbers presented. She stated that she would look into applying for relief in FY22. Ms. Alexson asked for an update on the Town Wharf pump station. Ms. Halmen responded that she has applied for a FEMA grant to relocate the pump to the Town Hall property. The request has been cleared at the state level, and was recommended to move to a national arena to compete for FEMA money. The award will be announced sometime this summer.

WATER & WATER TREATMENT

Ms. Halmen presented the proposed FY22 Water & Wastewater budget. Increases include workers compensation insurance premiums and long term debt principal and interest. Capital spending includes vehicles, water supply improvements, SCADA upgrades, generators for the water plant and raw water station, and AMI system upgrades. \$1.5 million is being requested for the design of upgrades to the distribution plant, but is delayed for two years in the Capital budget.

Mr. Whitmore asked if there would be any interest from the department and Board in proposing a warrant article that would impose a ban on automated lawn watering. Ms. Halmen responded that the department would have to speak with George Hall (Town Counsel) regarding the legalities, as inground irrigation is currently regulated in the bylaws.

Mr. Mootafian asked if current systems would be grandfathered into the ban. Mr. Whitmore responded that they would not.

Ms. Alexson stated that she would be in favor of discussing the article.

Ms. Mackin stated that she would be in favor of the article.

- *Dr. Jones moved to support the Water and Wastewater budgets as presented, reserving the right to amend the vote at a later time as discussions proceed. Mr. Mootafian seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

Change of Hours, Ipswich Tavern LLC, 24-26 Hammatt Street

Ipswich Tavern applied to amend the hours of their Sunday liquor license from 12:00 PM through 1:00 AM to 10:00 AM through 1:00 AM.

- *Vote: Dr. Jones moved to approve the change in hours. Mr. Mootafian seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

Vote Sale of SHI Unit, 98 Central Street

- *Vote: Mr. Whitmore moved to approve the sale of the SHI unit at 98 Central Street. Dr. Jones seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

Discuss/Vote Rosewood Settlement Agreement

Mr. Marino reported that the property in question was in litigation over fencing and wetland issues. Ipswich won the case, but the language in the ruling was vague, and to avoid a costly appeal, the Town has decided to settle with the property owner, Roger LeBlanc. The settlement agreement drafted allows for 28 new units to be placed on the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), which will need to remain on the inventory for at least 15 years and through the 2030 census. The Conservation Committee has voted to approve the settlement. The Affordable Housing Trust Board will also be contributing \$10,000 to the housing lottery.

Ms. Alexson asked if the settlement includes a requirement that the units must remain rentals. Mr. Marino responded that all 28 units must remain as rentals for at least 15 years.

Kristen Grubbs (Town Planner) applauded the measures taken to support affordable housing through the settlement agreement.

- *Ms. Alexson moved to approve the settlement agreement. Mr. Whitmore seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

Suspension of Commercial Shellfish Task Program for 2021

Due to the ongoing pandemic, the Shellfish Advisory Committee has voted to recommend suspending the task program for 2021, as was done in 2020.

- *Vote: Mr. Mootafian moved to suspend the program for calendar year 2021. Dr. Jones seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

New Business

REGIONALIZED 911 DISPATCH

Mr. Marino asked the Board to allow the State to conduct a feasibility study over the next year to determine if it would be beneficial for Ipswich to join the regionalized 911 dispatch center.

- *Vote: Mr. Mootafian moved to request the feasibility study. Dr. Jones seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

Consent Agenda

- I. One Day Wine and Malt Application
 - a. Gentile Brewing for Maple Happenings at Appleton Farms on Saturdays 2/27, 3/6, 3/13, 3/20, 3/27

- *Vote: Mr. Mootafian moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Whitmore seconded. The motion carried unanimously via roll call.*

Miscellaneous and Correspondence

The next Select Board meeting will be held on February 22, 2021.

- *Vote: Ms. Mackin moved to adjourn. Mr. Whitmore seconded. The motion carried unanimously.*

The Select Board adjourned at 9:09 PM.

*Respectfully submitted by Eileen G. Page
02.24.2021*