



**Select Board  
April 8, 2024  
Meeting Minutes**

**Public present:** C. DeFalco, T. Cofske, C. Jambora, R. Blomgren, T. Pina, Chief W. Beaudry, B. Cantell, P. Learning, A. McNitt, A. Guillette  
**Members present:** M. Kelly, G. Adams, A. Bercovici, A. Soto

Chair M. Kelly called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. All in attendance stood for the Pledge of Allegiance. M. Kelly announced that the meeting is being recorded.

**Meeting Minutes**

MOTION: G. Adams, to accept the Select Board meeting minutes from the March 25, 2024 meeting.  
SECOND: A. Bercovici  
VOTE: ALL IN FAVOR

**Appointments**

Building Committee – Chris DeBruin (3-Year Term)

MOTION: G. Adams, to approve the appointment of Chris DeBruin for a 3-Year Term to the Building Committee.  
SECOND: A. Bercovici  
VOTE: ALL IN FAVOR

**New Business**

**Chamber of Commerce, Alexandra McNitt – Requesting Permission to Use Property Between Town Annex Building and Library for the Chamber of Commerce Booth During the 2024 Brimfield Flea Market.**

MOTION: G. Adams, to approve the request for the use of the property between Town Annex Building and Library for the Chamber of Commerce Booth During the 2024 Brimfield Flea Market.  
SECOND: A. Bercovici  
VOTE: ALL IN FAVOR

**Select Board to Sign the 2024 Non Partisan Nomination Caucus Warrant (Caucus will be held in the Cafeteria of the Brimfield Elementary School on April 22, 2024 at 6:00PM)**

A. Bercovici said the Caucus would be at the same time as the Select Board meeting. M. Kelly replied the Board would probably start the meeting half an hour earlier.

MOTION: A. Bercovici, to sign the 2024 Non Partisan Nomination Caucus Warrant (Caucus will be held in the Cafeteria of the Brimfield Elementary School on April 22, 2024 at 6:00PM).

SECOND: G. Adams

VOTE: ALL IN FAVOR

**Total Communications Proposal – Provide 2 Mitel Model 6929W IP Phones and User Licenses in the Amount of \$932.62 (For Town Accountant & Select Board Clerk)**

M. Kelly stated that, personally, he believed the phones were too expensive but went on to say that Total Communications contract had already been signed and delivered. The phones could not be changed and had to work with the rest of the system, so there was no choice in that regard.

MOTION: G. Adams, to approve the proposal for the 2 Mitel Model 6929W IP Phones and User Licenses in the Amount of \$932.62 (For Town Accountant & Select Board Clerk).

SECOND: A. Bercovici

VOTE: ALL IN FAVOR

**Flea Market Owner/Operator's License:**

Brimfield Antique Shows & Auctions

MOTION: A. Bercovici, to approve the 2024 Flea Market Owner/Operator's License for Brimfield Antique Shows & Auctions.

SECOND: G. Adams

VOTE: ALL IN FAVOR

ABSTAIN: M. Kelly

**Special & One Day Liquor License:**

Hardwick Vineyard & Winery, LLC – John Samek (2024 Flea Market Shows – May, July, September)

MOTION: A. Bercovici, to approve the Special & One Day Liquor License for Hardwick Vineyard & Winery, LLC – John Samek (2024 Flea Market Shows – for the May, July, September shows).

SECOND: G. Adams

VOTE: ALL IN FAVOR

ABSTAIN: M. Kelly

**Computer Usage Policy – Amendment Provided by TRSD-IT Department**

M. Kelly specified that the policy is currently in place, this is simply an amendment to it. T. Cofske said the changes were primarily formatting and the addition of onboarding and offboarding forms, as well as an acceptance signature form.

MOTION: G. Adams, to approve the amendment provided by TRSD-IT Department for the Computer Usage Policy.

SECOND: A. Bercovici

VOTE: ALL IN FAVOR

#### **Town Treasurer-Collector – Recommending Amendment to Longevity Award Policy**

T. Cofske explained the current Longevity Award Policy, explaining that the current language provided for a longevity payment, a payroll disbursement at 5%, following the anniversary date of the employee's hire. In an effort to streamline, the Treasurer is requesting that all longevity payments be issued the last week in December.

MOTION: A. Bercovici, to amend Section 9.8 of the Personnel Policy entitled 'Longevity Award Administrative Procedure' by removing the following language:

“Awards will be paid as a payroll disbursement on the first pay following the anniversary date of five years required for eligibility.”

And inserting the following language:

“Awards will be paid as a payroll disbursement on the last pay period of December following the anniversary date of five years required for eligibility.”

SECOND: G. Adams

VOTE: ALL IN FAVOR

#### **Building Committee Chairman, M. Egan –**

- **Provide Results of the Town Hall Offices Project Polls**
- **Present Final Project Selection**
- **Request Direction from Select Board**

Building Committee Chair M. Egan was not present. Building Committee member R. Blomgren presented to the Board. The Building Committee met last week, with all members present. The Building Committee took into consideration the two informational sessions. In both informational sessions, Option 2 became the clear favorite after the financials were introduced although Option 1 was the top choice in the first informational session initially. 63% of people voted for Option 2 over the two sessions. [A. Soto entered the meeting at 6:15 PM.] The Building Committee all voted for Option 2. With Option 2 the Town Hall would become 8,000 square feet of office space and if needed would be oriented to allow for an expansion out of the back of the building. The Building Committee asked the Select Board to support their recommendation of Option 2.

M. Kelly asked R. Blomgren to go over the cost for Option 2, for the benefit of those who were not able to attend either informational session. R. Blomgren said Option 2 came in between \$8 and 9.5 million. R. Blomgren added that Option 1 would be between \$10 and 13 million, although he added that these numbers are ballpark figures until an architect draws up schematic plans. M. Kelly asked if Option 2 would eliminate the Great Hall. R. Blomgren said it would and that the Building Committee believed

that if the Town needed to hold a large meeting Tantasqua was available and the Brimfield Winery accommodated the Annual Town Meeting. M. Kelly said the Great Hall held a maximum of 145 people and Town Meetings are now closer to 250, so it is no longer something the Town could use for that purpose. R. Blomgren said the Town Hall is closed right now and thought maybe some kind of notice could be placed on the front door, issued by the building inspector, saying that.

M. Kelly said there is a Special Town Meeting May 8th at 6:00PM at the Brimfield Elementary School, the purpose of which is to see if the Town is willing to authorize \$300,000 to compensate TERVA. T. Pina said that if the Town goes forward with the schematic on May 8th, TERVA would go into a designer selection process and negotiate a contract some time in June. M. Kelly asked if it was accurate that the soonest the project could get off the ground would be 2027. T. Pina said he thought 2026. R. Blomgren said the Building Committee has talked about putting out a fact-finding sheet before the Special Town Meeting. R. Blomgren went on that the Town was at this point back in 2016/2017. M. Kelly said once before that as well. R. Blomgren said the Building Committee wanted to try to show what it would have cost if the Town had acted then and how the price will only get higher. R. Blomgren concluded that the Town needs to act and do something, and that's what the Building Committee is trying to show.

T. Pina interjected that he just wanted to add something about the Great Hall. TERVA wanted to have some respect in the design of the new building related to the Great Hall because it does have a great history. Maintaining the first 12 feet, maintaining the windows, remounting the memorabilia, and making it handicapped accessible were all things that had been discussed.

R. Blomgren said M. Egan wanted to know what direction the Select Board wanted the Building Committee to go in after the meeting. M. Kelly said people have been given a lot of opportunities to come to these meetings and the Building Committee has done all they could to get people engaged. M. Kelly added that at this stage it boils down to whether or not the Town votes to move forward. G. Adams said the Building Committee has done a great job to this point and that everything he has heard has been positive. T. Pina commented that the ability for TERVA to do its job was only as good as the turnout, and Brimfield's turnout was better than most towns. T. Pina added that the more information TERVA has, the more efficient it can be.

M. Kelly asked what, at this point, the Building Committee's request was. R. Blomgren said the Building Committee was hoping the Select Board would support Option 2. A. Bercovici said he thought Option 2 was the correct option, that it restores and preserves the building and makes it usable. R. Blomgren interjected that Option 2 gives the Town the option to add on later if need be.

MOTION: A. Bercovici, to accept Option 2 as a direction for the Building Committee to go in their presentation to the Town in May.

SECOND: G. Adams

DISCUSSION: A. Soto asked for clarification on the wording of the motion. M. Kelly said he would like to amend the motion to include "as presented and recommended by the Building Committee."

VOTE: ALL IN FAVOR

## **Discuss Benchmark & Classification Study – Next Steps**

M. Kelly said the Board has UMass carry out a benchmarking study about jobs and compensation. M. Kelly added that the Board has not accepted it, nor has any other board, it is simply a report that has been presented to the Select Board. The Finance Committee has a copy as well. M. Kelly further added that he personally believed the study was not as valid as people might think it is. M. Kelly went on to say that studies of this nature compare towns to similar municipalities and he believed several of the municipalities included fell outside of that parameter. UMass had responded to M. Kelly's concerns stating that the inclusion was valid because Brimfield is in competition with those towns. No decisions, at this point, as to what the Board is doing with the study. G. Adams asked what the next step would be and if there should be a committee formed. M. Kelly said the purpose of bringing the matter to this meeting was so that other Board members could voice concerns or questions to funnel back to UMass. T. Cofske said UMass informed her that they were done with the study. T. Cofske added that one of the things for the Board to consider is what their next steps will be. A. Soto and A. Bercovici said they had not had time to thoroughly look through the study. G. Adams said he had the same concerns as M. Kelly. M. Kelly said he would hold off asking for any action at the current meeting, to give Board members more time to examine the numbers, and put it on a later agenda once everyone has had time to review the study more thoroughly. M. Kelly said at that point the Board should probably have a joint meeting with the Finance Committee.

## **Old Business**

### **Revisit Permit Pro Usage by Departments for Licensing/Permitting**

M. Kelly said that a year ago the Board discussed the use of Permit Pro and, at that time, there were a lot of things people were unhappy about with it. M. Kelly added that while he was not personally familiar with the software he had been told that a lot of the issues had since been resolved. The Building Department, however, is not in favor of using Permit Pro. Building Inspector B. Cantell expressed his concerns with Permit Pro to the Board. B. Cantell said that Permit Pro is inadequate to the needs of the Building Department. B. Cantell went on to say that a lot of contractors prefer to do the applications by hand, the data entry is more time-consuming, permit fees are not collected by the Building Department so they are not as easily able to see how much was paid or when, the fees have never correctly tallied up with the Treasurer when paid through Permit Pro, requested updates happened haphazardly or not at all, signatures are only done electronically, it is cumbersome to accept large files through the system, and all of the documents would need to be printed out which would take up a large amount of time and dominate the copier in the Annex. The copier also does not have the capability to print large block plans. Notifications of incomplete applications were not being sent. Permit Pro adds another \$10-15 per permit. When the applicant submits an application, he gives a self-addressed stamped envelope, which allows for documents to be returned to wherever the applicant chooses. The Building Department does not have that capacity with the online system. B. Cantell continued that he does not have faith in the cloud or in the reliability of the Brimfield computer system. M. Kelly asked what the lack of faith was based on. B. Cantell said he does not know enough about it but when the computers crash the Building Department will not be able to get at permits. B. Cantell added that the skepticism was just his personal opinion. B. Cantell continued that the Building Department, at present, does not accept anything by email and, if they begin accepting permit applications through Permit Pro again, people will get confused.

and submit things by email. B. Cantell concluded by showing a sample of the volume of paperwork the Building Department processes for applications and stated that he did not necessarily oppose a web-based solution but he did not believe in this one.

M. Kelly asked if B. Cantell relayed these concerns when the Board had departments bring problems and concerns with Permit Pro forward. B. Cantell said he did when he came on board in 2018. M. Kelly reiterated if these concerns were enumerated in 2023 along with the other departments. B. Cantell said he did not recall, but, in the past, he had made multiple requests for things to be fixed and sometimes they were and sometimes they were not. B. Cantell said Sturbridge and Barre both had online permitting but got rid of it. B. Cantell added that he looked at the seven surrounding communities and found only two that have an online permitting system, Palmer and Monson, respectively 12,000 and 8,100 people.

M. Kelly said T. Cofske has been the point person on issues with Permit Pro and asked if she felt the issues being discussed had been taken care of. T. Cofske said some had. T. Cofske went on to say that she experienced the same issues with reconciling revenue but after sitting down with Patriot, she can now generate her own revenue reports. At the same time, T. Cofske worked out a process with the new Treasurer to see the prior month's payments through Unibank and to which applications the payments correspond. A physical turnover is done as though the applicant had given cash or a check. Every payment can be accounted for now. Follow-ups are required to ensure updates to the software. There are no physical signatures, but that is not a requirement. T. Cofske said that one thing she did note was that while a lot of plans come over as 11x17, which can be printed, larger plot plans cannot be. T. Cofske said maybe the Building Department should not accept plot plans on the system. B. Cantell said that the office's workload became a lot more manageable after they stopped using Permit Pro.

M. Kelly opened the discussion up for other members of the Board to voice any comments or questions and then said he would come back with two questions. G. Adams said everything that B. Cantell shared is what was shared with the Board a year ago. When G. Adams first became a Select Board member, everyone was getting rid of Permit Pro because of issues. G. Adams said he found the biggest problem to be a lack of communication. On May 2nd, 2023, G. Adams sent an email to all of the department heads asking what the issues were. G. Adams said he talked to other towns in the area, as well – Southbridge, Monson, Palmer. The other department heads met online and every issue they had with Permit Pro was worked out. As of two weeks ago, G. Adams said, all of the issues had been worked out and everyone was happy with Permit Pro. On June 1st, G. Adams said he received an email from A. Guillette containing all of the concerns voiced at the meeting tonight. Permit Pro said they could address every one of those issues, from file size to payments to notifications. B. Cantell said that Permit Pro did not address them, though. G. Adams replied that was because B. Cantell refused to meet with the Permit Pro representative. The Board voted and the Building Department went offline last year. G. Adams said he talked to Permit Pro again today and they reiterated that they can do everything but control hard copies. G. Adams said they could meet with Permit Pro this week and have the problems resolved. The other three departments use Permit Pro and it is important to get the Building Department back online. In the past year, G. Adams said he had gotten hundreds of emails asking why the Building Department was offline. G. Adams suggested a hybrid system may make sense to accommodate the Building Department.

M. Kelly said that it seemed like a good spot to bring in his two problems. Problem 1: the actual operation of the system. Does the system do what it is supposed to do? Problem 2: how can this be done with as much paperwork as there is. M. Kelly asked if the system did not do what it purported to do. B. Cantell said it has the capacity to do it but that he has had numerous issues when trying to utilize it. M. Kelly asked if those were still problems. B. Cantell said he did not know as he had not used Permit

Pro since last June. G. Adams said Permit Pro could address those issues. B. Cantell said he was not going to tell a purveyor of a system how to bring their system into compliance, it was not his job to do so. A. Guillette said she did not believe the issues had been worked out and added that the Board of Health Clerk had two issues that day. A. Guillette added that the representative from Permit Pro said he did not have emails from her and that was not correct. T. Cofske said the Board of Health Clerk did express that there was an application that she needed to have put online and that the software did still have glitches from time to time. M. Kelly said he felt the discussion was going around in circles and asked if there was any scenario where using Permit Pro would make sense for the Building Department. B. Cantell said he did not see there was any way he was going to again deal with trying to make the software work. M. Kelly asked if there were any circumstances where payments were not turned over in a timely manner to the Treasurer. B. Cantell said he did not believe so. A. Guillette said that if he was speaking of the electrical ones, that was not her department and that the Building Department payments were turned over weekly. P. Leaming said the Building Inspector by law has to have plans he can read. P. Leaming added that online permitting software does not work well for small towns. P. Leaming concluded that section 1.05 of the Building Code specified that a Building Commissioner, who is certified by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, can dictate the medium, so he can use whatever he wants.

M. Kelly asked the Board for their thoughts. M. Kelly added that he could not speak to the state law, but if the Building Inspector, by law, can dictate the medium, it seemed as though the Board did not have a choice. M. Kelly added that he would like to read through the law and see what it does say. A. Soto suggested having Town Counsel look at it. G. Adams said that in the meantime it would not hurt to set up a meeting with Permit Pro to address the Building Department's concerns. B. Cantell said A. Guillette is the point person and she could do that. M. Kelly said the Board should revisit the matter at the next meeting. P. Leaming specified it was state building code and not state law.

B. Cantell asked why the Board felt the Building Department needed to be online. M. Kelly said that it makes it easier to track the permits and the payments. A. Soto said contractors are waiting to get online, they do not want to have to come down to the Town Hall. G. Adams said the Finance Committee is meeting on Tuesday and they are looking at the amount of revenue not coming in through Permit Pro. Without the Building Department going online, the software would have to go away for the other departments. B. Cantell said the Building Department deals with a larger volume of permits than the other departments. M. Kelly said he was going to stop the discussion at this point. M. Kelly continued that the Board needed to further look into the matter and talk to Town Counsel. M. Kelly concluded that he would commit right now to this board that he will put this on the April 22nd meeting agenda, although it will be a short meeting because the Caucus is that night as well, and the Board will come to some decision at that point.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION: G. Adams, to adjourn the meeting.

SECOND: A. Bercovici

VOTE: ALL IN FAVOR

The meeting adjourned at 7:28 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by Christopher DeFalco



Martin J. Kelly, Chairperson

MEETING MATERIALS:

- Posting Updated 4-8-24
- Meeting Minutes March 25th
- Longevity Award Policy Amendment Recommendation Email
- Total Communications Quote
- Computer Usage Policy
- Permit Pro Usage Spreadsheet