

Board of Selectmen Meeting of Nov. 18, 2021



The first meeting of the 2021 Board of Selectmen took place on Nov. 18. At the start of the meeting, First Selectman David Bindelglass swore in selectmen Kristi Sogofsky and Bob Lessler. Typically, the swearing in takes place at the polls on election night. However, due to the recount in the selectmen's race, that was not possible.

The board approved the minutes of its Oct. 21 meeting and approved 21 tax refunds as recommended by Tax Collector Krista Kot.

The board tabled action on the request to approve a driveway variance and indemnity agreement as the form was not properly witnessed.

The board awarded the bid for a consultant to assist the town in preparing the mandatory affordable housing plan to Planimetrics Inc. The town has until the end of July 2022 to adopt a plan.

The board made a referral to the Planning and Zoning Commission pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 8-24 regarding the proposal to sell 19 acres of land along the Mill River on South Park Avenue to the Aspetuck Land Trust. This referral is required whenever a town proposes to sell land - and take certain other actions with regard to town property or purchases of land.

As is its custom, the board heard public comment at the beginning and the end of its agenda as follows:

John Meyer congratulated the members of the board on their re-elections. He asked if we know the total percentage increase in the grand list as a result of the recent revaluation. The first selectman explained that the final number will not be available until late January after adjustments and information are completed. [*Author's Note: taxpayers cannot yet know how much their tax bill will be impacted based solely on the new assessed value of their home.*] He also pointed out that one reason the South Park Avenue property is not being sold as one piece is that if the entire parcel is sold now, the full balance on the outstanding bond from the 2008 purchase immediately becomes due. If a sales price is substantially lower than the remaining balance of the bond, this would have a significant negative impact on the next year's budget and tax numbers. Director of Finance and Treasurer Christine Calvert confirmed this information.

Dan Lent congratulated the members of the board on their re-elections. He spoke about a potential conflict of interest of a Planning and Zoning Commission member in connection with the sale of the South Park Avenue property to the Aspetuck Land Trust. He expressed concern that only one company bid on the affordable housing plan consultant contract. He reiterated his suggestion that flashing lights be installed on Sport Hill Road near the middle school to improve safety.

Jeff Becker congratulated the members of the board on their re-elections. He asked what steps the town is taking to prevent a ransomware attack. He reported that Easton Grows successfully grew a hemp crop on the South Park Avenue property. He stated he would like to see the Aspetuck Land Trust buy all of the South Park Avenue property or have the town put deed restrictions on the property to control the future use of the property. Alternately, we should ask the voters if they want to have the land split before selling the 19 acres.

Dwight Senior read a letter from June Logie who could not attend tonight's meeting. The

letter addressed the sale of the South Park Avenue property to the Aspetuck Land Trust. He congratulated the members of the board on their re-elections. He reported that the South Park Avenue bridge replacement is nearly complete. He raised safety concerns now that the bridge is wider than the rest of the road. He is pleased at the speed with which the work has been completed.

Grant Monserratt expressed concern about the selection of Planimetrics as the affordable housing consultant and spoke about the possible conflict of interest on the Planning and Zoning Commission relative to the sale of the South Park Avenue property to the Aspetuck Land Trust.

Lou DiPietro congratulated the members of the board on their re-elections. He has some road safety concerns he will bring to the attention of the Police Commission as they are the traffic authority for the town. He feels the Nov. 23 session on the impact of **Public Act 21-29** regarding affordable housing is unfortunate given the Thanksgiving holiday. He suggested that the Aspetuck Land Trust be given a right of first refusal to purchase the remaining 10 acres of the South Park Avenue property. He thought the use of Zoom for various town meetings may have been a factor in the record high election turnout but more should be done to increase citizen participation in local affairs.

Selectman Bob Lessler congratulated his colleagues on their re-election. He praised all of the candidates — winners and those who fell short, the election workers, campaign workers and everyone who voted. He looks forward to continuing to serve the town.

Selectman Kristi Sogofsky joined in this expression of appreciation. She is proud of the high turnout and looks forward to working together for the next two years.

First Selectman Dave Bindelglass also expressed his congratulations to those elected on Nov. 2. He pointed out that 55% turnout is great but that means 45% of voters did not show up at the polls so we need to do more to engage them. Responding to concerns about a conflict of interest regarding the sale of the South Park Avenue property, he said

you cannot assume someone will do the wrong thing in advance. He pointed out that a prior application for a grant to purchase the entire South Park Avenue parcel was denied. At the beginning of the process, the Aspetuck Land Trust did not appear to have the funds needed to purchase the entire parcel but things could change. The Nov. 23 meeting regarding Public Act 21-29 will not be the only opportunity to learn about the meaning of the act and its opt out provisions. Responding to the first selectman, Selectman Sogofsky pointed out that state Senator Tony Hwang — who will be a panelist at the Nov. 23 public information session — was a key legislator in the drafting of the public act. She assured everyone that the session will be recorded and re-broadcast.

Happy Thanksgiving to everyone!