



**Town of Amherst
Special Town Council Meeting – Retreat
Saturday, November 14, 2020
1:00
Virtual Meeting
Minutes**

Complete video is available online: <https://amherstmedia.org/content/amherst-town-council-retreat-november-14-2020>

1. Call to Order

Councilors Participating Remotely: Bahl-Milne, Brewer, De Angelis, DuMont, Griesemer, Hanneke, Pam, Ross, Ryan, Schoen, Schreiber, Steinberg, Swartz

Councilors Absent: None

Others Participating Remotely: Town Manager Paul Bockelman, Assistant Town Manager David Ziomek, Finance Director Sean Mangano, Comptroller Sonia Aldrich, and Clerk of the Council Athena O’Keeffe

After confirming all participants could hear and be heard, President Griesemer declared the presence of a quorum, called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. and announced audio and video recording by Amherst Media.

Note: Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, this meeting of the Town Council was conducted via remote participation.

2. Announcements

- November 16, 2020, 6:30 p.m. – Special Town Council Meeting: Public Forum Regarding an Appropriation Not in the Annual Budget – Purchase of a new ambulance
- November 16, 2020, 6:45 p.m. – Regular Town Council Meeting, including Tax Classification Public Hearing
- November 19, 2020, 6:30 p.m. – Budget Forum
- December 5, 2020, 9:00 a.m. – Four Towns Meeting
- December 7, 2020, 6:30 p.m. – Regular Town Council Meeting, including State of the Town

3. Discussion

a. Major Capital Projects – Update and Discussion

(1) Jones Library, Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners

President Griesemer spoke about the process and steps taken regarding the project so far. The Town Council has been asked to commit to accept the grant by April, 2021.

Councilors discussed the following:

- Total cost of projects with inflation
- Sustainability and energy update
- Cost of removing debris
- Donors and fundraising
- Social justice
- Staffing
- Maintenance
- Grant funding
- Cost of doing nothing
- Library is an economic driver in the downtown
- Concerns about endowment
- Town pledge of full cost if grant is accepted
- Community Preservation Act application for \$1M for special collections
- Possible debt exclusion override
- Additional services that may bring new revenue streams
- Public participation
- Focus on donations and commitment to the project and willingness to fund the library
- Timeline for a new Department of Public Works building without a location
- Financing is favorable right now, cost of borrowing is currently low
- Accessibility of the Jones Library via public transportation

(2) Elementary School, Massachusetts School Building Authority

Councilors discussed the following:

- Earliest the Town would need to fund the project
- Concerns regarding enrollment projections
- Timeline of binding decisions
- Climate goals—will the new school be net zero
- Ongoing reports and updates from the School Building Committee build trust
- Indoor spaces and green spaces
- COVID-19 implications in school spaces
- Possibility of selling surplus property to offset cost of the school
- Earliest reasonable estimate the building would be online is FY26

(3) Department of Public Works Building

(4) Fire/EMS Station and Headquarters

Councilors discussed the current state of the Department of Public Works (DPW) building, and discussed the following:

- Feasibility of splitting the office space and the storage/garage space in separate locations
- Potential surplus school property that could be used
- Use of Hickory Ridge property
- Outreach and messaging
- Cost of the Hadley station versus the potential cost of an Amherst Fire/EMS headquarters
- Cost of operating multiple locations
- Short-term location for DPW

- Current lifespan of DPW and Fire Station buildings
- Building maintenance
- Safety
- Adding bike lanes when repairing streets
- Grant opportunities
- How to figure out who the vulnerable populations are that utilize services and how to bring them in during outreach
- Priority of projects

b. Other Capital Projects – Large, Medium, and Small: Brainstorm

Councilors named the following ideas for other capital projects:

- Recreation center
- Senior center
- Permanent homeless shelter
- Public restroom downtown
- Solar study and solar canopies at middle and high schools
- Pre-K/early learning center
- Cultural center for BIPOC community
- Co-location for senior and early learning center

c. List of Future Agenda Items

4. Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting -
None

5. Adjourn

President Griesemer declared the meeting of the Town Council adjourned at 3:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Athena O'Keefe

Clerk of the Council

Record of Agenda Packet Materials and Documents Presented

11-14-2020 FINAL Special Town Council Agenda - Retreat