

Minutes of the Board of Selectmen Meeting

This meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 6:00PM on Tuesday, April 25, 2023 at the Police Department. Jason Petraitis, John Tripp, and Brooke Canada were present.

Approval of Minutes: Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to approve the minutes from 3/16 and 3/21 exec. So voted.

Approval of Warrants: Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to approve the following warrants-Payroll #22 for \$330,432.13, School #1054 for \$82,300.90, General #1055 for \$221,095.88, and General #1056 for \$29,032.61. So voted.

Mr. Petraitis stated we could skip ahead to revisit vote of April 11th to approve the Pride Event with the exclusion of the Drag Show. He said this is a polarizing topic and asked the attendees to keep calm and listen to what the Board has to say. Mr. Petraitis said after reviewing Town Counsel's opinion on the ACLU letter, they recommended the drag show be included, ACLU has filed numerous lawsuits, which could cost the town tens of thousands of dollars, and the threshold has been met. Mr. Petraitis explained the Board would vote to rescind the vote that approved the event without the drag show.

Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to rescind the vote that authorized the Pride Event without the drag show. So voted.

Mrs. Canada moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to approve the Small Town Pride Event with the inclusion of the drag performance. Discussion: Mr. Tripp said he thinks its wrong based on his religious and constitutional beliefs. All in favor: Mrs. Canada, aye, Mr. Petraitis abstained, Mr. Tripp abstained. Motion fails. Mr. Petraitis explained that although the motion to approve the event with the drag show failed, the Board is not required to give permission to gather on the common, it is a free and open space. Mrs. Canada asked Mr. Petraitis to clarify, can the group have the event? Mr. Petraitis said yes, but it is not approved by the Board.

Financial Items: The Board received a spending request from Holly Kularski to use available funds to pay for the 2023 MVSOA Summer Conference in June. Mrs. Canada moved, and Mr. Petraitis seconded, a motion to approve the request to spend \$902.24 for the conference and accommodations. So voted.

Old Business:

Sign BSC Contract: Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to sign a contract with BSC Group to continue work on designing the complete streets project. So voted.

Sign Vibram Common Vic License: Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to re-sign and reissue the Vibram Common Vic license. So voted.

New Business:

Accept Resignation: Mr. Petraitis explained that Dennis Kelly is resigning from Cultural Council, Mr. Petraitis said Mr. Kelly has been a great asset to Town. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to accept the resignation of Dennis Kelly. So voted.

Sign Annual Town Meeting Warrant: Mr. Petraitis read aloud the 22 articles for the Annual Town Meeting. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to sign the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. So voted.

Public Comment:

Joanne Carey stated that LGBTQ events are not safe, they are grooming events and we need to stand against perversion of young children. She disagrees with Town Counsel that the ACLU will sue North Brookfield. Mr. Petraitis said a lot of people agree with her sentiments.

Someone asked if an even on the Town Common is mandatory, Mr. Petraitis said no. The person responded saying no one is being made to go to the event.

Tashena Holmes of the Rural Justice Network, hosting Small Town Pride, is family friendly, creative event that is positive and inclusive. Drag is the hallmark of the queer community, no one will be provocative, they just want to express themselves.

Tonya of Sturbridge said she's been coming to North Brookfield her whole life and she's horrified; your religion is not hers; this is about freedom and the need to feel safe.

Mr. Petraitis said the only exclusion they asked was to remove the drag show.

Someone said that when the Board makes these decisions, they need to consider that not every resident is straight or cisgender, everyone needs to feel a sense of community and told the Board to be more careful and considerate.

Mr. Petraitis said the Board was done discussing the drag show.

Jamie Gilman said there are really important questions on the May 1 ballot and asked if anyone had put together a summary of what it all means. Mr. Petraitis said there's a chart that helps, Jamie said it took five people to explain what it meant.

Someone asked about security at pride event, liability insurance, and who's paying for it all. Tashena said they have insurance, and a security plan, and will have more answers soon. Someone asked if the Police Dept would be there, Tashena said she wasn't sure as this was not the outcome they planned for. Mr. Petraitis they are not required to provide police details.

Someone said their brother-in-law, living in Florida, called them about the ACLU letter, this news has been scattered far and wide. They plan to attend, they attended the event in West Brookfield, they're concerned a lot of people will be at the event to make a statement and people will get rowdy. Mr. Petraitis said he has no control over that. The person said this is a potential public safety issue that the town needs to address.

Sue Lyons said our Police are top notch, they won't sit back and do nothing. People here are hell bent on keeping the event safe, and she's sure the police would be there in a nano-second, everyone will be safe. The police know how to call for backup, this is a great town, we want this event to remain peaceful.

Mindy Tripp said she's concerned about the people that are coming from out of town.

Lt Ryan Daley said police will be on hand and a detailed safety plan is in place.

Another person said they're worried about people coming to hurt the attendants at the event and referenced an event in Texas, it can happen anywhere.

Announcements:

Annual Town Election Monday, May 1

Special Town Meeting Friday, May 5 6:30PM

Annual Town Meeting Friday, May 5 7:30PM

Water Department Flushing Schedule posted on Facebook

Mr. Tripp read an update from the tax collector-of the 7.2 million dollars in real estate taxes, only \$700.00 remains uncollected. Mr. Tripp thanked Lisa for her diligence and commitment.

At 6:34PM, there being no further business, Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to adjourn. So voted.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ashley Barre