

*RECEIVED November 22, 2023 @ 8:30AM
Kimberly Keil, Assistant Redding Town Clerk
4 pages*

Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting Minutes

November 20, 2023, at 7:30 pm
Town Hall Hearing Room
100 Hill Road, Redding CT 06896

Board of Selectmen in Attendance: Julia Pemberton; Margaret O'Donnell; Michael Thompson.

Others Attending: Janet August, Recording Secretary; Jim Sanders, Finance Director; Angela Caes, Park and Recreation Commissioner; Angelica Fontanez, LCSW and Director of Social Services; Ruth Moran, Chairperson of the Redding Commission on Aging; Dave Pattee, Chairman of the Conservation Commission; members of the public.

Item 1: Call to order

First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

Item 2: Flag Ceremony by Troop 118

Cub Scout Pack 118 conducted a flag ceremony, including leading the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item 3: Approval of BOS Regular Meeting Minutes from October 16, 2023, and BOS Special Meeting Minutes from October 30, 2023

Ms. O'Donnell cites three errors in the October 16, 2023, BOS minutes:

- 1) On the first page, Item 3, third paragraph: "acquired" should be "allocated".
- 2) Item 3, last paragraph: Alexis Bennett pronoun is "he" and should be "she".
- 3) Page 3, first sentence: "totally" should be "totaling".

MOTION: Mr. Thompson moved to approve the BOS Regular Meeting Minutes from October 16, 2023, as amended. The motion was seconded by Ms. O'Donnell and the motion was carried unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Thompson moved to approve the BOS Regular Meeting Minutes from October 30, 2023. The motion was seconded by Ms. Pemberton and the motion was carried unanimously.

MOTION: Ms. O'Donnell moved to add to tonight's meeting agenda Meeting Schedule under Item 8, and Discussion and Possible Action for a SHPA Grant under Item 9. The motion was seconded by Mr. Thompson and the motion was carried out.

Item 4: Public Comment

None.

Item 5: Discussion and Possible Action: Senior Center Van

Ms. Pemberton explained how the senior center van is used for transporting seniors and others to medical appointments, grocery stores, etc. Ms. Pemberton briefly explained the delay is the new van from the state, first approved in 2021. Ms. Pemberton asked Ms. Fontanez, Director of Social Services, to explain the current situation with the van.

Ms. Fontanez stated that they currently have one wheelchair accessible van that they are renting. The previous van was donated by Mary Travers. In 2021, the state approved a grant to the Town for a new senior van, which was valued at \$67,000 at that time. Since that time, manufacturing and supply chain issues have delayed delivery, and the price has approximately doubled. The state has agreed to cover the price increase, but the delivery date is estimated to be sometime in 2024 or 2025.

To continue transportation services while waiting for the new van, the Town is renting a van at a cost of approximately \$2,000 per month. The owner of the van has approached the senior center and offered to sell it to the Town for approximately \$36,000. Ms. Fontanez stated that the Town mechanics have examined the van and found it in good shape. Ms. Fontanez stated that the price for the van given its condition and mileage (approximately 36,000 miles) is very reasonable, when compared to others in the marketplace that Ms. Fontanez researched.

A discussion of the need for transportation was held. Transportation needs continue to grow, and currently we only travel to Ridgefield, Redding, Danbury, and Bethel. Transportation requests to Wilton, the Bridgeport area and Yale New Haven are increasing. Ms. Moran stated that it is hard to get volunteers to drive their own vehicles. Ms. O'Donnell asked if a special driver's license is required to drive the van. Ms. Fontanez said no; however, the drivers are vetted the same as any town employee. Purchasing this used van now and receiving the state van in 2024 or 2025 would allow the program to increase its transportation services and trips, and drive to medical appointments in other areas.

Ms. O'Donnell asked how the Town could pay for this. Ms. Pemberton stated there are several funding sources. She noted that the State will make us whole on the new van but there is no guarantee when the new van will arrive while accruing rental costs will approach the cost of purchasing the rental van. Ms. Pemberton noted the available funding including:

- \$24,000 ARPA funding for Senior Center Programs
- \$8,000 available in the senior center operating budget
- \$85,000 in the senior center Trust and Agency account (T&A)

The BOS discussed these funds. Ms. O’Donnell said that she would rather not use money from T&A. Mr. Sanders noted that ARPA funds would be a reimbursement, so the Town would need to purchase the van and file for reimbursement. Ms. Pemberton asked if we could use grant money for capital purposes by fronting the money and reimbursing it after. The BOS continued discussion of the best funding for the vehicle. The T&A account could be used if it is reimbursed. Ms. O’Donnell suggests that the ARPA funding could fund a large amount of the cost.

MOTION: Ms. O’Donnell moved to authorize the purchase of a transportation van for Redding Senior Services of an amount up to \$36,000 using ARPA funding sourced from the State DOA and Disability Service, the Heritage Center operating budget, and the social services Trust and Agency fund. The motion was seconded by Mr. Thompson and the motion was carried unanimously.

Mr. Thompson noted that we should talk more about programs in the future.

Item 6: Discussion and Possible Action: Topstone Park Improvements

Ms. Pemberton stated that Park and Recreation commissioners sent the BOS documents, the RFP, and a rough site plan. She noted that extensive discussions were held over a year ago to use ARPA funds for improvements. Park and Recreation Commission Co-Chair Ms. Caes reviewed the exercise equipment and structures proposed for the site. She noted some concern that the improvements would ruin the historic nature of the site. Public meetings were held to fully explain the plan. The full cost cannot be estimated prior to an RFQ. Tonight is for permission to go forward with the RFQ. A discussion of the costs, firepits, and ping pong tables ensued. Cub Scout Jack Correa suggested that instead of ping pong tables, that “9-Square Volleyball” (manufactured by 9-Square in the Air Company) be considered. He described how much fun he and friends found it.

Mr. Pattee, Chair of the Conservation Commission, asked if any construction would need approval from land-use commissions, and expresses concerns on the proximity of the construction to the water. Ms. Pemberton noted that the playground will be in the same area as the last playground and that all plans will go through the application and permitting processes.

MOTION: Mr. Thompson moved to approve Park and Recreation to move forward and issue an RFP for Topstone Park improvements. The motion was seconded by Ms. O’Donnell and the motion carried unanimously.

Item 7: Appointments: Reappoint Mercedes DeMasi to the Board of Ethics, December 6, 2023, to December 6, 2025

MOTION: Ms. O'Donnell moved to approve the reappointment of Mercedes DeMasi to the Board of Ethics. The motion was seconded by Mr. Thompson and the motion carried unanimously.

Item 8: Board Member Comments

The Board reviewed the proposed BOS Meeting Schedule for 2024.

MOTION: Mr. Thompson moved to approve the proposed meeting schedule for 2024. Ms. O'Donnell seconded the motion. The selectman discussed adding the Selectman's Budget Workshop on January 12, 2024, to the Meeting Schedule for 2024. Mr. Thompson moved to accept the BOS Meeting Schedule for 2024 with the addition of the January 12, 2024, Selectman's Budget Workshop. The amended motion was seconded by Ms. O'Donnell and the motion was carried.

Item 9: Old Business

The Board discussed applying for a State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) the grant for ground penetrating radar for Lonetown Cemetery. The radar would assist in determining the location of covered historical burial sites and prevent them from being damaged by tree equipment and landscaping equipment.

MOTION: Mr. Thompson moved to approve the Town applying for a SHPO grant for the Lonetown Cemetery. The motion was seconded by Ms. O'Donnell. The motion was carried unanimously.

Ms. Pemberton stated that two responses have been received in response to the RFP for the walking path. The firms will be invited in for interviews.

Ms. Pemberton stated that the BOS should consider adding the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee's 2023 Annual Report and the League of Women Voters report to the agenda for the December meeting. Both reports contain recommendations.

Item 10: New Business

None.

Item 11: Adjourn

MOTION: Ms. O'Donnell moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Thompson and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:38pm.

Submitted by:
Janet August, Recording Secretary