

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

David Lindsay, Chairman2013
Stanley Wysocki2014
Lawrence Delaney2015



Lawrence Delaney, David Lindsay Chairman and Stanley Wysocki

Early in the year, the selectmen were occupied with issues that arose from a major snow storm that had occurred late in 2011. They discussed the possibility of establishing a shelter in Bolton for residents severely impacted by future storms. The Florence Sawyer or Emerson schools were thought to be likely locations for such a shelter, but substantial upgrades would be required before either school could qualify as a shelter. The selectmen also reviewed the impact of the storm on the Department of Public Works snow and ice removal budget.

During the period from January through April, the selectmen attended many of the Advisory Committee's budget meetings so that they would be familiar with major budget issues by the time in early April when they had to approve the budget and other articles for the Town Meeting warrant. The Board set in motion the Annual Town Meeting and Town Election process that would culminate in the spring by executing notice for the Town Caucus to take place on March 12.

During this period, the selectmen met with the Nashoba school committee to receive information regarding a plan by the school district to make a substantial upgrade to the high school's outdoor athletic facilities, including a new track and a new synthetic football/soccer field.

The Board considered whether or not to recommend to the Town Moderator that the Annual Town Meeting be televised live, or only with a delay. A majority of the selectmen voted to recommend against a live telecast, fearing that a live telecast would cause a decline in attendance at Town Meeting.

The Board discussed the desirability of establishing a policy that would allow town committee members to participate remotely (primarily by telephone) in meetings of the committees of which they were members if they were unable to attend due to a business commitment or illness. A Remote Participation policy was eventually written by the Town Administrator and approved by the selectmen.

In February, the Board received a proposal from Syncarpha for a solar electricity production facility at an exhausted gravel pit on the Bolton Orchards property. In March, it also received a proposal from the Kanes to rezone a portion of their property located near the intersection of State Route 117 and Interstate 495, which would permit a larger commercial development on that site. These proposals would prove to be major elements in the 2012 Annual Town Meeting. The town meeting warrant began to take shape and was regularly reviewed by the selectmen.

As town meeting approached, the selectmen finalized the warrant. They also intensified their review of the Nashoba plan for a new track and athletic field at the high school. Additional attention was given to the Syncarpha/Bolton Orchards solar energy facility and to the method by which this entity would be taxed. Discussion and review of two important zoning-related articles also increased. In addition to the Kane proposal the Planning Board submitted an article to establish a Village Overlay district.

The Annual Town Meeting in May produced little controversy regarding the town's budget for fiscal year 2013. Due to a release of funds from the Town's abatements reserves, revenues were less scarce than usual, and it was possible for the Advisory Committee to craft, and the selectmen to approve, a budget that satisfied nearly everyone. For the first time in several years, there were no borrowings needed for capital projects. A robust assortment of these projects, including repair of the Fyfeshire Dam, was able to be paid for from free cash (the Town's unrestricted cash holdings).

Town Meeting discussion focused primarily on zoning issues. The rezoning of the Kane property was debated vigorously and then rejected by the voters. Similarly, the proposed Village Overlay district also engendered an active debate and was then defeated. Finally, the town approved a tax agreement with Syncarpha, the company planning to build the large solar facility on the Bolton Orchards property. The agreement is expected to bring significant incremental revenue to the town, and at the same time be financially viable for Syncarpha.

At the May Town Election, Larry Delaney was elected to the open seat on the Board of Selectmen.

In sessions following Town Meeting, the selectmen appointed a Mobility Committee. It will function as a sub-committee of the Public Ways Safety Committee and will be concerned with developing ways for residents to move about town by means other than automobiles, such as sidewalks, pathways, trails, and bicycle paths. The selectmen also approved placing, and funding, a stair chair in the Houghton Building and accepted the gift of a stair chair in Town Hall. In the summer, the selectmen voted to raise the maximum that seniors who participate in the Senior Tax Rebate Program are able to deduct from their property taxes to \$1,000 from \$750.

From late summer into the fall, the Selectmen considered a proposal by the Nashoba school district to undertake an \$8 million high school science laboratories renovation, half of which would be paid for by a State grant. At Special Town Meeting, which followed the rejection of the proposal by Lancaster, Bolton voters also defeated the project.

Following the fall Special Town Meeting, the selectmen turned their attention to the concept of a Village Overlay District. While the bylaw proposed by the Planning Board failed at Town Meeting many thought it to be a concept worth pursuing. The selectmen appointed Jonathan Keep, Planning Board chairman, as chairman of the new Village Overlay District committee. In addition, seven other residents, possessing a wide range of interests and backgrounds, were appointed to the committee. The new committee is planning to have an updated Village Overlay District proposal ready for Annual Town Meeting in the spring of 2014.

The very successful completion of the town's new public safety building was made official when the selectmen agreed to dissolve the construction committee that had overseen the project. Well-deserved thanks were given to all those who served so effectively on the committee. In addition, the Board released nearly the last of the funds from the Comcast pool to be used by Bolton Access TV for its construction of telecast facilities and renovations in the Houghton Building. The selectmen noted that Bolton Access TV had done an excellent job with the building and had dramatically upgraded the quality and usefulness of an important town asset.

The Selectmen learned in the fall that their ruling in a dangerous dog hearing was upheld by the court and that the dog owner would not pursue further appeals.

Hurricane Sandy hit Bolton, along with the rest of the Northeast, late in October. The selectmen authorized opening the town's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to oversee responses to problems caused by the storm. In reviewing the response at a selectmen's meeting after the storm, the Board concluded that the EOC had worked very well and reacted to problems expeditiously and effectively. Bolton was fortunate and was not seriously impacted by the storm, even avoiding any significant power outages.

Later in the fall, the selectmen met with the Board of Assessors to address the question of whether or not Bolton should have a split tax rate, charging businesses at a higher level than residential home owners. As it has done in the past, the Board decided that the town should have a single rate applying to all taxpayers. The selectmen did not want to do anything to discourage the relatively small number of commercial enterprises in town. At a subsequent meeting, the Assessors announced that they had set the tax rate at \$20.96 per \$1,000 of valuation.

In addition to the activities discussed above, the selectmen carried out many administrative actions, most of which are summarized here:

New and one-day liquor license approvals: 7
Conservation restriction approvals: 8
Sign request decisions: 12
Committee appointments: 9
Site plan reviews and similar actions: 14
Bicycle and other charity event approvals: 9
Lease approvals: 2

Financial Statement
July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012

Salary

Appropriated		\$ 900.00
Expended		<u>\$ 300.00</u>
Unexpended balance returned to general fund		\$ 600.00

Expenses

Appropriated			\$19,900.00
Expended	WHEAT membership	\$5,000.00	
	Purchase of Services	1,783.53	
	Dues	647.00	
	Miscellaneous	605.86	
	Supplies	70.77	<u>\$ 8,407.16</u>
Unexpended balance returned to general fund			\$11,792.84