

At a meeting of the Town Council holden in and for the Town of Gloucester on September 19, 2024

I. Call to Order

The meeting was Called to Order at 7:30 P.M. by Councilor W. Worthy, Town Council President.

II. Roll Call

Members present: Cheryl A. Greathouse; Walter M.O. Steere, III; Jonathan E. Burlingame; Stephen W. Arnold, Vice President; William A. Worthy, Jr. , President

Also Present: Jean Fecteau, Town Clerk; David Igliazzi, Town Solicitor ; Christine Mathieu, Deputy Town Clerk; Chief Joseph Delprete; G.Mosca, EMA Director; G.Treml, DPW Director; K.Scott, Town Planner; M.Bouvier, Senior Center director

III. Pledge of Allegiance

Councilor W. Worthy asked all to please stand and join us in the Pledge.

IV. Open Forum - For Agenda Items

Councilor W. Worthy asked if anyone wished to speak on an agenda item to please step to the microphone and state your name when called on.

V. Town Council Citation - Employee Years of Service

Councilor W. Worthy stated that Council has a Citation for a 33 year employee who is about to retire. Councilor W. Worthy stated that together we thank Tax Collector Jane Steere and read the citation as follows:

State of Rhode Island

Town of Gloucester

Citation

Jane Steere

For 33 Years of Service to the Town of Gloucester

Given with deep gratitude and appreciation for your years of service to our Town as you retire.

You have served the Town of Gloucester with your experience, integrity, patience, and kind spirit to all.

We appreciate your commitment and acknowledge your service to our community. We promise, in your honor, we will do our best to keep the tax collection rate high.

The Town Council wholeheartedly represents all your fellow employees and our residents when we say “ Thank You” and we wish you much enjoyment and new adventures in your retirement.

Councilor William A. Worthy, President Jean M. Fecteau, CMC ,Town Clerk
Councilor Stephen W. Arnold ,Vice-President
Councilor Jonathan E. Burlingame
Councilor Cheryl A. Greathouse
Councilor Walter M.O. Steere, III

Adopted this 19th day of September, 2024

seconded by Councilor J. Burlingame

Discussion: Councilor W. Steere stated that Jane went above and beyond on numerous occasions especially during the last few years. Councilor W. Steere stated his opinion that J.Steere really saved our bacon by filling a role when needed and the town owes a deep debt of gratitude towards her for all her time. Councilor S. Arnold stated his opinion that J. Steere took one for team Gloucester and offered his sincere gratitude and best wishes . Councilor C. Greathouse offered J. Steere her best wishes.

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, W. Steere, J.Burlingame ,S. Arnold , W. Worthy
 NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

VI. Consent Items- Discussion and/or Action

- A. Approval of Town Council Minutes: Regular meeting September 5, 2024 and Special meeting of August 19, 2024
- B. Tax Assessor's Additions and Abatements - August 2024
- C. Finance Director's Report- August 2024

MOTION was made by Councilor J. Burlingame to APPROVE the Town Council regular minutes of September 5th and the Special meeting minutes of August 19, 2024; to APPROVE the Additions to the 2024 Tax Roll in the amount of \$1554.79 and the Abatements to the 2024 Tax Roll in the amount of \$1,362.44; and to ACCEPT the Finance Director's Report for August 2024; seconded by Councilor C. Greathouse

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, W. Steere, J.Burlingame ,S. Arnold , W. Worthy
 NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

VII. New Business

- A. ARPA Update/status report - Discussion and/or Action

Councilor W. Worthy stated that K. Scott has worked on an update for Council.

Councilor S. Arnold stated that K.Scott, Town Planner, E. Beltram, Finance Director, as well as the other department heads, have been working on identifying the status of their various projects to determine any balances. Councilor S. Arnold stated that several small ticket items have been identified that may result in a deobligation of ARPA funds at the next meeting.

K.Scott, Town Planner stated that the ARPA funds have to be obligated by the end of 2024 but we will

have until 2026 to spend.

VIII. Unfinished Business

A. ARPA Funds

1. Deobligation of Obligated Funds: \$50,000 from Project #14, Dam Repairs/improvements - Discussion and/or Action

MOTION was made by Councilor S. Arnold to REMOVE from the table the deobligation of obligated funds: \$50,000 from Project # 14, Dam repairs/improvements; seconded by Councilor C. Greathouse

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, W. Steere, J.Burlingame ,S. Arnold , W. Worthy
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

2. Obligate ARPA funds: \$25,700 to Project #31 Sansoucy Appraisal project- Discussion and/or Action

Discussion: Councilor J. Burlingame asked the source of this potential obligation of ARPA funds. Councilor S. Arnold stated that there are unobligated funds available to be used.

MOTION was made by Councilor S. Arnold to obligate ARPA funds of \$25,700 to Project # 31 Sansoucy Appraisal project; seconded by Councilor C. Greathouse

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, W. Steere, J.Burlingame ,S. Arnold , W. Worthy
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

3. Obligate ARPA Funds: \$24,000 towards purchase of a first line Police Vehicle- Discussion and/or Action

MOTION was made by Councilor S. Arnold to TABLE the obligation of ARPA funds: \$24,000 towards purchase of a first line police vehicle to the October 3, 2024 meeting ; seconded by Councilor C. Greathouse

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, W. Steere, J.Burlingame ,S. Arnold , W. Worthy
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

IX. New Business

A. Personnel-Discussion and/or Action

1. Tax Collector- Ratification of Appointment

Councilor W. Worthy stated that after interviews the Town Council voted in Executive Session (August

19, 2024) to make an offer to Laurie A. Caspoli for the position of Tax Collector. Councilor W. Worthy stated that Ms. Caspoli has accepted the offer and Council must now ratify the appointment:

MOTION was made by Councilor J. Burlingame to APPOINT, effective September 9, 2024, Laurie Caspoli to the position of Tax Collector at an annual salary of \$70,000 which will increase to \$72,000 upon successful completion of a six-month orientation period. Said position will accrue three weeks (15 days) vacation leave per year for the first five years of employment and four weeks (20 days) per year effective on the fifth employment anniversary; said position requires successful completion of the Rhode Island Tax Collector's certificate program within three (3) years of appointment; seconded by Councilor C. Greathouse

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, W. Steere, J.Burlingame ,S. Arnold , W. Worthy
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

B. Authorization for Signature

1. Municipal Technical Assistance Program Grant- Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations Assistance- Extension of Grant Agreement- Discussion and/or Action

Councilor W. Worthy stated that Council has received a request from the Town Planner which he read as follows:

To: Town Council Members
From: Karen Scott, Town Planner
Date: September 16, 2024
RE: Request for Signature – Grant Agreement

The Town received a Municipal Technical Assistance Program grant from the Rhode Island Housing for \$100,000 for assistance in updating the Town's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations to come into compliance with legislation passed by the General Assembly in 2023. This work is currently underway with the assistance of Weston and Sampson. The request before Town Council is authorization to extend the grant agreement with Rhode Island Housing. It expires on October 30, 2024. The extension will give the Town until April 30, 2025 to complete the project. According to the consultant, this is sufficient time to complete the project. There is no change to the scope of work or budget associated with the project. This grant required no cash contribution from the Town.

(End of memo)

MOTION was made by Councilor S. Arnold to extend the grant agreement, authorized on November 2023, between Rhode Island Housing, Weston & Sampson Engineers Inc. (Statement of Work #10) for the Municipal Technical Assistance Program grant for assistance in updating the Town's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations to April 30, 2025; seconded by Councilor C. Greathouse

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, W. Steere, J.Burlingame ,S. Arnold , W. Worthy
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

C. Ratification by Town Council - Discussion and/or Action

1. Code Red Contract - Between Town of Gloucester & OnSolve, LLC

Councilor W. Worthy stated that the Chief has signed the Code Red contract from OnSolve, LLC., for another year of Code Red services, Council needs to ratify.

MOTION was made by Councilor C. Greathouse to RATIFY the Code Red Contract (entitled Order Form) between Onsolve, LLC and the Town of Gloucester for the period of one year commencing on Service Start Date: October 2, 2024; seconded by Councilor J. Burlingame

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, W. Steere, J.Burlingame ,S. Arnold , W. Worthy
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

D. Authorization by Town Council for Signature - Contract Awards

1. Propane Contract - Between Town of Gloucester & Quality Propane

Councilor W. Worthy stated that Council received a recommendation from the Finance Director which he read as follows:

Memo: Honorable Town Council
From: Elizabeth A. Beltram, Finance Director
Re: Contract with New Propane Supplier
Date: September 19, 2024

At the request of DPW Director, Gary Treml, I am requesting Council approval and signature of the attached agreement with Quality Propane for propane service to the Town starting October 1, 2024. The switch to the new company is based on information provided by Mr. Treml which I have reviewed with him and is also attached. (In council's packet)

Respectfully,
Elizabeth A. Beltram, Finance Director
(end of memo)

MOTION was made by Councilor C. Greathouse to GRANT a contract between Quality Propane and the Town of Gloucester for propane at \$.246 per gallon over the Selkirk Terminal price; said contract to run from 9/30/2024 to 9/30/2025 with the opportunity for a 12 month extension at that time; seconded by Councilor J. Burlingame

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, W. Steere, J.Burlingame ,S. Arnold , W. Worthy
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

- 2. FY 2022 State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program - Multi-Factor Authentication Between RIEMA & Town of Gloucester - Discussion and/or Action

Councilor W. Worthy stated that Matt Floor, IT Director & Gerry Mosca, EMA Director have received a grant in the amount of \$45,000, with no local match, for Multi-Factor Authentication. Councilor W. Worthy stated that Council must now agree to the terms and conditions as outlined in the Special Grant Conditions/ Assurances and Reporting Requirement Guidelines. Councilor W. Worthy stated that these assurances are requirements set forth by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to ensure compliance with federal and state regulations.

MOTION was made by Councilor J. Burlingame to AUTHORIZE the Town Council President to sign the assurances, as set forth by the Department of Homeland Security, to secure the “Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP) -Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)- 13-06A-2022 SLCGP” grant, in the amount of \$45,000, with no local match, from the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency to the Town of Gloucester; seconded by Councilor C. Greathouse

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, W. Steere, J.Burlingame ,S. Arnold , W. Worthy
 NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

- D. Gloucester Code of Ordinance & Comprehensive Plan
 - 1. Proposed Amendments related to Housing and Land Use - Discussion and/or Action

Councilor W. Worthy stated that the Town Planner had submitted the following information to Council which he read as follows:

To: Town Council Members
 From: Karen Scott, Town Planner
 Date: September 17, 2024
 Re: Proposed Amendments to the Gloucester Code of Ordinances related to Housing and Land Use

The Town of Gloucester, along with all Rhode Island municipalities, are required to amend their local land use regulations in response to enabling legislation that has been passed in 2023 and 2024 by the General Assembly. The Planning Board has been working diligently and has finalized amendments to the following sections of our ordinances and regulations:

- 1. **Zoning Ordinance**
 - Definitions
 - Notification
 - Modifications
 - Variances
 - Development Plan Review
 - Unified Development Review

Adaptive Reuse
Substandard Lots of Record
Comprehensive Permit for Low and Moderate Income Housing

2. Subdivision Regulations

Certificate of Completion
Minor Subdivision and Land Development Project
Major Subdivision
Design Requirements
Unified Development Review
Administration
Appeals
Definitions
Development Plan Review
Procedures

3. Comprehensive Plan

Growth Centers

The Planning Board worked with Weston and Sampson, a consultant we hired using a Municipal Technical Assistance grant to draft the language. In all sections that are amended, we attempted to maximize public participation and public notice in compliance with the new legislation.

The Planning Board has begun the process of moving these amendments through the approval process on the following schedule:

1. Zoning Ordinance Amendments
 - a. First Reading before Town Council on 10/17/24
 - b. Advisory Opinion before Planning Board on 11/12/24
 - c. Public Hearing before the Town Council on 11/21/24
2. Comprehensive Plan Amendments
 - a. First Reading before Town Council on 10/17/24
 - b. Advisory Opinion before Planning Board on 11/12/24
 - c. Public Hearing before the Town Council on 11/21/24
3. Subdivision Regulations
 - a. Notice and request for input from the Town Council on 10/17/24
 - b. Public Hearing before the Planning Board on 11/12/24

I just wanted to make the Town Council aware of these upcoming changes and hearings. I'm happy to answer any questions related to this information
(end of memo)

Discussion: Councilor W. Worthy stated his opinion that these are a lot of changes. K. Scott, Town Planner, stated that these are an exceptional amount of changes and it is the most significant amount of land use changes seen in the past 30 plus years. K. Scott stated that this is the first phase and she anticipates two more phases. K. Scott stated that many of the changes removed the requirement of notice to the public on many things. K. Scott stated that the Planning Board has tried to maximize public notice in their changes as it is very important for the public to know.

Councilor W. Worthy stated his opinion that these changes are the state trying to take away small town right so people should be aware.

No action needed or taken

2. Set 1st Reading Date - Discussion and/or Action

Councilor W. Worthy stated that if Council agrees with schedule a first reading can be set for the proposed ordinance amendments and the Comprehensive Plan Amendments.

MOTION was made by Councilor C. Greathouse to SET First Readings for the Town Council meeting of October 17, 2024 to introduce the proposed ordinance amendments related to legislative changes of 2023/2024; seconded by Councilor J. Burlingame

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, W. Steere, J.Burlingame ,S. Arnold , W. Worthy
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

X.. Legislative Updates - Discussion and/or Action

Councilor W. Worthy asked if anyone has any legislative news or questions.

Councilor W. Worthy stated that E. Almonte has resigned from the RI League of Cities and Towns and that R. Rossi, former Smithfield town manager will be taking his place.

XI. Town Council Correspondence/ Discussion

Councilor W. Worthy asked if any Councilor have correspondence or a discussion item.

Councilor W. Worthy stated that Council received correspondence from the Fire District last meeting, and tonight he read it into the record as follows:

10 July 2024

Greetings; members of respective Fire Districts, Gloucester Town Council

As a dedicated member of the Harmony Fire District Board, and a lifelong resident of Gloucester who proudly served this community for 45 years as a volunteer with Harmony Fire Dept., I am compelled to address an issue which is becoming critical. This issue is affecting our community.

The present Fire District operating systems, which have served Gloucester for the past century, are becoming outdated and no longer adequately meet the needs of our growing community.

In today's fast paced world, relying solely on volunteers/paid on-call members to staff our departments has become increasingly challenging.

The demands of the profession have grown exponentially, and it is unreasonable to expect volunteers/paid on-call members to work under such conditions for limited compensation. Our community is at risk.

I am urging the three Fire Districts in Gloucester, along with the Town Council, to initiate discussions to explore options that will best address the emergency response needs of Gloucester's citizens.

As our population has grown, the need to robustly staff EMS units has become evident not only in the Harmony District but across the entire town. Additionally, the issue of town wide fire suppression needs to be included in this discussion. A limited or delayed response could lead to tragic consequences. Any

casualty, be it a citizen or an emergency responder due to insufficient resources, is unacceptable.

This problem is not unique to Gloucester or even to Rhode Island.

Across the country, the number of volunteer/paid on-call personnel has declined significantly over the last several decades for various reasons. We

must proactively address these issues to best serve our town in the future.

One option I propose is to merge the three separate fire districts into a single unified fire district for all of Gloucester. By consolidating our resources, they can be more effectively distributed to meet the needs of our citizens and emergency responders.

Despite the long history of utilizing separate districts within the town, it is imperative we implement changes to ensure that the residents of Gloucester are always protected and cared for in their time of need.

Respectfully,

David G. Plante

Harmony Fire District Commissioner

(end of memo)

Discussion: Councilor S. Arnold thanked D. Plante for a well thought out letter and stated that there seems to be a need to maximize efficiency. Councilor S. Arnold stated that his comment is not making a dig or being critical of the volunteers.

Councilor J. Burlingame asked if any meetings between the three districts have been held. D. Plante stated that there have been attempts to meet but no meetings have been held. D. Plante stated some of his concerns regarding the ability to respond to emergencies in these circumstances. D. Plante stated his desire to make the system work more efficiently. Councilor J. Burlingame asked D. Plante what Council could do to help. D. Plante stated his hope that council can motivate the fire departments to sit down and talk.

Councilor S. Arnold stated that the Council sent the three departments a letter asking for all to meet. Councilor W. Steere stated that the problem has been trying to coordinate schedules because all do want to meet. J. Fecteau, Town Clerk, stated that with summer over she is hopeful to get two members from each department to meet.

D. Plante stated he is not saying that he wants the fire department to become a fully paid one but just want to brainstorm ways to make the three departments work more efficiently. G. Kain, Fire Department member, stated that another problem with staffing paramedics is that the state made changes as to training. J. Fecteau stated that she is working on getting a date.

2. Councilor S. Arnold stated he feels that the town Finance Director also being the finance director, for lack of a better term, for the Gloucester School Department is really two separate jobs. Councilor S. Arnold stated he would like Council to consider this issue. Councilor S. Arnold described the process that every department head takes when they prepare their budget for the upcoming year. Councilor S. Arnold stated that the town's Finance Director does not prepare a budget for any department. Councilor S. Arnold stated that he feels it would be beneficial for the school to create their own budget as that would result in more involvement by the schools as well as effect efficiency. Councilor S. Arnold stated that the Gloucester schools now have a superintendent and an assistant superintendent.

Councilor J. Burlingame stated his opinion that a full time employee would need to be hired.

Councilor S. Arnold stated that it may be a part time position.

Councilor S. Arnold stated his opinion that the line items in a budget don't change and it is the

dollar amounts that change.

Councilor W. Steere stated that he agrees it is actually two jobs and that it is not sustainable by the town Finance Director. Councilor S. Arnold stated that the position was inherited by a previous finance director and just continued by subsequent finance directors. Councilor S. Arnold stated that the charter is gray as to defining . Councilor W. Steere stated that the next Council in 2025 as well as the school committee should be looking at this issue. Councilor J. Burlingame stated his opinion that preparing the budget is not the responsibility of the principal or the superintendent.

3. Councilor W. Steere stated that Council received correspondence from the State Traffic Commissioner’s response to a state representative regarding a request for a flashing signal to be installed at the corner of Route 94 . Councilor W. Steere stated his opinion that the Gloucester Council should be notified directly by the traffic commissioner .

XII. Department Head Reports/Discussion

Councilor W. Worthy asked if any Department heads had anything to report or if any Councilors had any questions for any Department heads.

1. Chief J. Delprete stated that he has seen amazing work by the fire departments during his fourteen and one half years with the Police Department. Chief Delprete stated that he has also seen how things have deteriorated over the last few years for all the reasons stated by D. Plante.
2. K.Scott, Town Planner, stated that next week there will be the first meeting for the community septic program in the Chepachet Village District at 7:00 pm on Sept 25, 2024. Councilor S. Arnold asked if all effected parties had been notified. K.Scott stated that a direct mailing went out about three weeks ago followed up by a direct flyer.
3. M. Bouvier, Senior Center Director, stated a list of upcoming events with dates planned at the Senior Center for matters like a flu clinic, low income assistance program for heat, safe driver course, open enrollment for Medicare. Councilor S. Arnold asked how people would learn about these events. M.Bouvier stated that she has listed them in her monthly newsletter which is posted on the town website as well as message board at the Center.

4. Town Clerk request

Councilor W. Worthy asked if a Councilor could make a motion to add “Financial Signatories for the Town” to the agenda for discussion on the request of the Town Clerk who will offer an explanation.

MOTION was made by Councilor S. Arnold to ADD “Financial Signatories for the Town” to the agenda for discussion; seconded by Councilor J. Burlingame

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, W. Steere, J.Burlingame ,S. Arnold , W. Worthy
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

Councilor W. Worthy stated that Council received a memo from the Clerk which he read as follows:

The Finance Director and I discussed Jane Steere leaving on Friday and she was concerned with the status of signatories. This should have been an agenda item but it was too late. Currently Beth and Jane are the authorized signatories for the Town's banking transactions. Jane's retirement will leave us with just one authorized signer, and for security reasons, we should always have at least two. We are suggesting temporarily adding the Deputy Town Clerk as the second signer while we are in the process of training our new Finance Department staff members. If there is a consensus, to let Beth Beltram appoint Christine Mathieu, Deputy Town Clerk as the Deputy Treasurer Council can put it on the next agenda for Council ratification. This would be a temporary appointment.

Discussion: Councilors stated their consensus to place the item on the next agenda.

XIII. Bds. and Commissions Reports/ Discussion

Councilor W. Worthy asked if any Boards and Commissions have anything to report or if any Councilors have any questions for Boards and commission members.

1. W. Morin, Land Trust Chair, gave a detailed reasoning as to the possible reclassification for the Hawkins Dam from high hazard to significant hazard by DEM. W. Morin stated that they are hopeful to get a final answer from DEM as to the reclassification and that the Land Trust has been saving funds for years to use to address this issue.

XIV. Open Forum

Councilor W. Worthy asked if anyone had anything to discuss on any other subject and if so, please state your name when you come to the microphone.

NONE

XV. Adjourn

MOTION was made by Councilor W. Steere to ADJOURN at 8:25 p.m.; seconded by Councilor J. Burlingame

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, W. Steere, J.Burlingame ,S. Arnold , W. Worthy
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED