

**TOWN OF WASHINGTON
Board of Selectmen
Minutes
November 26, 2019**

Minutes are subject to the approval of the Board of Selectmen.

Present: First Selectman James Brinton, Selectmen Jay Hubelbank and Michelle Gorra.

Public: Tony Bedini, Dan Sherr, Tim Cole, Matt Cain, Debra Radosevich, Susan Smith, Mary Weber, Janet Hill, Janet Wildman, Joan Lodsins, Chris Charles, Henrietta Small.

Call to Order: First Selectman Mark Lyon called the meeting to order at 1:00p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

- **Motion:** To approve the minutes of the November 14, 2019 meeting of the Board of Selectmen. By Jay Hubelbank, seconded by Michelle Gorra and unanimously approved.

Communications:

- **Memo from the Washington Democratic Town Committee:** The following memo was received by the Board of Selectmen and read into the minutes:

**Washington Democratic Town
Committee**

MEMO

To: Board of Selectmen

From: Washington Democratic Town Committee

Date: November 25, 2019

Re: Appointments to Vacancies on Elected Boards and Commissions

On Thursday, November 14, 2019 Republican First Selectman, Mark Lyon, and Republican Selectman, David Werkhoven, appointed Democrat Debra Radosevich to serve the remainder of elected Democrat Peter Armstrong's full seat on the Zoning Commission and then appointed a Republican to fill Ms. Radosevich's vacated Democratic alternate seat. Their action to appoint a Republican to an elected Democratic seat is extremely disturbing to the Washington Democratic Town Committee.

- It was not necessary or required to immediately fill this vacancy. Certainly, there was no emergency and typically, board vacancies have not been filled immediately.
- The Democratic Town Committee was not consulted per previous practice for recommendations for filling this vacancy.
- The Republicans took this action in the absence of Democratic Selectman Jay Hubelbank whose party was negatively impacted by their action.
- The DTC cannot recall another instance where a vacant seat on an elected board or commission was filled by a person who was not of the same political party as the person elected to that position.
- Washington's voters elected a Democrat to fill the alternate seat on the Zoning Commission. To appoint a Republican to fill this Democratic seat overturns the election results and is contrary to the will of the people.

The Washington Democratic Town Committee thereby asks the Board of Selectmen to take the following actions:

1 . Rescind the Republican appointment to the vacant Democratic alternate seat on the Zoning Commission and appoint a Democrat to serve in this elected Democratic alternate seat.

2 . Appoint Elizabeth Fenton, Democrat supported and recommended by the WDTC, to fill the Democratic alternate seat vacated by Matthew Cain, elected Democrat, upon his election as a full member of the Board of Finance. Mrs. Fenton is eminently qualified having an MA from San Francisco State, an MBA from New York University, was a member of the Darien Board of Education for eight years,

one as chairman, and served as the chairman of the Darien RTM's Finance and Budget Committee for two years. A full CV is available upon request. The WDTC wholeheartedly opposes the appointment of any Republican or Unaffiliated voter to this position.

3 . Implement an official written Town policy that the impacted Republican or Democratic Town Committee must be consulted prior to appointments by the Board of Selectmen to fill vacancies on elected boards and commissions.

Finally, the Washington Democratic Town Committee very strongly recommends and requests that a proposed Town ordinance be placed on the 2020 ballot for action by a townwide vote to require that vacancies on elected boards and commissions be filled by persons of the same political party as that of the elected official who vacated that seat. This is a nonpartisan proposal. It would equally impact and benefit Democrats and Republicans and would be a fair and democratic way in which to handle appointments to vacancies on elected boards and commissions in the future.

We look forward to your consideration of the WDTC' s requests. Thank you.

Washington Democratic Town Committee

Janet Hill, Chairman
Judie Gorra, Secretary
Susan Branson, Treasurer
Jack Boyer
Jane Boyer
Matt Cain
Tim Fenton
Dick Heffernan
Alex Laifer
Debra Radosevich
Henrietta Small
Mary Weber

Cc: Michael Jackson
Nick Solley

Following the reading of the Memo, there was lengthy discussion. Debra Radosevich expressed her upset in her not being consulted about being appointed as a full commissioner and the action to do that and appoint Rebecca Rebillard, a Republican, as an alternate (the seat vacated by Debra's new appointment) was "hasty and ill conceived". Her feeling was that as she is a Democrat, her alternate position should have been filled with a Democrat. At the very least, the DTC should have been consulted. Jim Brinton explained that it was his understanding that usually both the DTC and RTC are contacted when there is a vacancy as well as the Chairman of the Commission in question. In this particular case, Zoning Chairman Nick Solley requested that the appointment of Debra as a full member and Rebecca as an alternate be done. The appointment of Rebecca did not upset minority representation. The previous Selectmen Mark Lyon and Dave Werkhoven acted on Nick's request and supported it as Rebecca has shown herself to be an interested and active Commissioner. Jim Brinton agreed that going forward, contacting the Committees and Chairmen was good practice but did not feel Rebecca should be removed. RTC Chairman, Joan Lodsin expressed concern that if the Ordinance suggested in the DTC Memo were to be enacted, no unaffiliated voters could be appointed. She further stated that even if both Committees are consulted, the final decision is up to the Board of Selectmen. Jay Hubelbank was also disappointed that the DTC was not consulted about these appointments and thought that both Committees should be contacted about vacancies and that perspective candidates should also be "interviewed" by the Selectmen. Michelle Gorra agreed with Jay and as there is no State Statute or Town Policy, the suggestions in the Memo were good ones. Mary Weber stated that in her opinion, Rebecca should be removed and that the "people of Washington" needed to know what occurred and that a Republican taking the place of a Democrat was wrong. **Motion:** To rescind the appointment of Rebecca Rebillard as an alternate on the Zoning Commission and that the position remain open until the process is reviewed further. By Jay Hubelbank, seconded by Michelle Gorra. The motion passed with their approval and Jim Brinton's vote against.

Appointments/Resignations: None.

First Selectman's Report: Jim Brinton reported:

- **Road and Bridge Work:** the first Selectman's Office has received numerous calls expressing concern about proposed road and bridge work and feels that there should be a policy in place to notify residents who may be affected by the work.
- **Representative Johanna Hayes** has requested permission to set up a table in the lobby of the Town Hall on December 13th so that residents of Washington can leave, suggestions, comments, etc.
- **Region #12 Labor Negotiations** have been scheduled and Superintendent Megan Bennett has extended an invitation to the Selectmen to attend.
- **Highway Department truck replacement:** Following the fire at the Highway Department several years ago, six new International trucks were purchased. Two are having issues and the warranties have run out. Several other towns are experiencing similar problems. The Selectmen will be looking into replacing the trucks on a rotating basis and leasing as opposed to purchasing will be looked into.
- **Salt/sand for Town residents:** Jim Brinton and Highway Director are discussing the possibility of placing sand at the Transfer Station for residents to take.

OLD BUSINESS:

- **WiFi in the Depot:** Jay Hubelbank reported that the wiring in the Region #12 Central Office has been completed so that the signal can be beamed to the Town Hall and broadcast to the Depot. Ed Advance will begin installation of equipment at the Town Hall shortly.
- **Agriscience Open House** at the Shepaug campus took place on November 23rd.
- **Job Descriptions:** Jay continues to edit and will then share with the Board of Selectmen and employees.

NEW BUSINESS:

- **Washington Gives:** Michelle Gorra reported that a committee has been formed to again hold a “Washington Gives” day on Martin Luther King Day at the Julie Black Park – co-sponsored by ASAP and the Washington Business Association.. The Committee has requested that the Board of Selectmen host the event. Jim Brinton was in favor and suggested he first check with FOI regarding the necessity of noticing of the event as the three Selectmen would be together.
- **Future Discussions:** Jay Hubelbank suggested meeting with the Town Attorney regarding FOI issues. He would also like to have discussion about the Town’s POCD on a future agenda. Michelle Gorra reported she had attended a Zoning Commission meeting and there will be a vote on Special Use permits and will not need to go to another public hearing. Jay Hubelbank also suggested that Commissions have copies of what is being discussed at their meetings for the public.
- **Request from the Washington Environmental Council:** The WEC has submitted a letter requesting that the fee for use of the Main Hall be waived for their fundraiser on May 2, 2020. **Motion:** To waive the fee for use of the Main Hall by the WEC on May 2, 2020. A Certificate of Insurance will need to be submitted as well as the required deposit. Custodial fees will also be the responsibility of WEC. By Jim Brinton, seconded by Michelle Gorra and unanimously approved.
- **Proclamation recognizing National School Choice Week:** The Selectmen received a request from National School Choice Week to issue a proclamation declaring January 26 – February 4, 2020 as School Choice Week. Michelle Gorra and Jay Hubelbank asked that this be tabled until more can be learned about the organization making the request.

Visitors:

- **Chis Charles** suggested that along with review of job descriptions, Marty Connor’s review of the Town’s Land Use Department (done several years ago) also be reviewed.

Adjournment:

- **Motion:** To adjourn the meeting at 2:01p.m. as there was no further business for discussion. By Jay Hubelbank, seconded by Jim Brinton and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,
 Mary Anne Greene
 Selectmen’s Assistant