



**Board of Selectmen  
Minutes  
Tuesday, August 22, 2017 at 6:30pm  
Town Hall Meeting Room**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm by Chair Lucy Wallace in the Town Hall Meeting Room. Selectmen Ken Swanton and Alice von Loesecke were in attendance as well as Town Administrator Tim Bragan, Assistant Town Administrator/HR Director Marie Sobalvarro and Executive Assistant Julie Doucet.

### **Appointments**

Von Loesecke introduced Michael Barton for appointment to the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust. On a von Loesecke motion /Swanton motion, the board voted unanimously to appoint Michael Barton.

On a Swanton/von Loesecke motion, the board voted unanimously to appoint Rick Maiore to the Board of Assessors.

### **Town Administrator Report**

Bragan distributed a draft of the Charter Commission report to all members. A public hearing will be held on September 13<sup>th</sup> and notice of the hearing will be sent to all boards/committees. Bragan said the commission is also requesting additional funds from the Finance Committee for legal advertisements, printing and mailing of the draft charter. The BoS will schedule the commission to attend either the second meeting in September or first meeting in October.

Bragan is reviewing BoS and Master Plan goals in preparation for the All Boards Meeting on September 6<sup>th</sup>. He has also requested input from all boards/committees.

Bragan confirmed the Lieutenant Governor will be here at 9:30 AM on Tuesday, August 29<sup>th</sup> to sign the community compact.

Bragan informed the BoS two liquor license hearings will be held at the September 5<sup>th</sup> meeting. One from Carlson Orchards and the other from the Harvard Cultural Collaborative.

Bragan is working with DPW Director Tim Kilhart on the public buildings report. They will review at the September 19<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Bragan reported capital request documents have been distributed and are due by August 31<sup>st</sup> for funding requests for the fall Special Town Meeting.

### **Housing @ Hildreth House – surplus of land**

Sobalvarro said all departments had been notified of the land. The only department who expressed interest was the Fire Department. Bragan spoke with the Fire Chief who wanted to make it known the department has an interest however he does not object to the surplus of the land. On a von Loesecke/Swanton motion, the board voted unanimously to surplus 3.17 acres of town owned property that abuts the Hildreth House and the Fire Station in the center of town referencing site plan developed by TTI dated July 10, 2017 as well as further delineation on assessors map 17C parcels 35 & 36 as approved by the Harvard Planning Board.

Lucy Wallace confirmed that the RFP for a developer of the property would be listed in the Central Register for 30 days beginning August 23<sup>rd</sup>.

### **Construction Manager at Risk for Hildreth Elementary School (HES) project**

Von Loesecke explained the benefits to taking the construction manager at risk approach. She indicated this also allows for a higher reimbursements from the MSBA. On a von Loesecke/Swanton motion, the board voted unanimously for the chair to sign the application to proceed to use construction management at risk for the Hildreth Elementary School project.

The board voted to recess until their hearing at 7:30pm.

### **Retired Teacher's health insurance – Public Hearing**

Wallace opened the hearing at 7:30pm.

She began by confirming all retirees were duly noticed of the hearing. Sobalvarro said notices were sent within the required 30 day timeframe.

This hearing is being held because under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 32B, health insurance is under the purview of the Board of Selectmen (BoS). In 1972 the Board accepted 'Chapter 626 of the Acts of 1970,' which enrolled the Town in the GICRMT. To remove the Town from the GICRMT the BoS needs to vote to do so. Wallace explained the impact of insurance on the towns Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) liability is part of the reason why the BoS is considering this change.

Wallace then outlined the hearing process and thanked everyone for coming to discuss this very important decision. She said many letters have been received and each one will be read into the record. Wallace explained trying to manage costs and thinking proactively about the long term are other reasons driving the decision. Additionally, she pointed out other town retirees do not receive the same benefits teachers do through the GICRMT and the cost to participate is greater to the town.

Town Administrator Tim Bragan explained the town has been dealing with insurance for a long time and in fact Harvard joined the GICRMT back in 1972. Back then insurance only represented 1.1% of the total budget as opposed to the 13.7% it is now. He said the town worked to realize savings in insurance back in 2008 when they tried to move all employees to the GIC. The town unions (DPW, Dispatch and Police) objected; since then the BoS has continued to take other measures to realize savings such as actively funding its OPEB liability, sponsoring special legislation to gain control of our insurance costs (to no avail), and negotiating changes to the active employee contribution rates for insurance. He added when scheduling this hearing the other two board members informed us that would not be able to attend but encouraged us to continue on without them.

Sobalvarro distributed a handout she created to address the common questions and concerns she heard from retirees.

To the best of her knowledge at this time, she provided information on the following:

- why now
- how many are currently enrolled in the GICRMT
- Minuteman Nashoba Health Group (MNHG) and how many retirees are in the plan
- costs
- out of state coverage
- non-Medicare plans
- dental plans

- life insurance
- surviving spouse
- percentage split
- ability to keep current doctor
- change to co-pays and referrals
- percentage paid by retirees compared to other school districts.

Bragan and Sobalvarro read letters received from:

Thomas Hill, Jane McIntyre, Linda Gaumond, Arlene Sullivan Julia Chadwick, Diane Temple, Kathleen Donnellan, Howard Chansky, Carol Powers, Dennis DeGara, Jeanne Smith, Judith Boyce, Lisa Soldi, Mary Carroll, Jim McBride, Lisa Soldi, Mary Carroll, Janet Taylor, Phyllis Konop, Therese Keosian, Christine Moeser, Nancy Palie Besold, Robert Scholl, Halston Lewis, Ruth Schemel, Mary Halpin, Joan Marchant, Denise Keating, Donald & Therese Blood, Marilyn Elsworth, Geraldine Stanley.

### **Public Comments**

Lorraine Leonard spoke as former Finance Director for the town. When she was employed with Harvard the actuary indicated it would not be a good idea to move the retired teachers into Minuteman Nashoba. She said OPEB does not need to be fully funded and actuaries will tell you that. She is concerned bringing in so many new people into Minuteman could increase rates for everyone. She asked if the BoS has a target percentage they are moving toward if looking at retirees now. She is scared of the ultimate goal.

Melissa Niland has worked in the schools for almost twenty years and is president of the Teachers Association. She reported the association agrees with the retirees and asks the BoS to vote against moving the teachers out of the RMT. She noted benefits are important to attracting and retaining high quality teachers. The association encourages the BoS to find other ways to reach their goal stating this is not the best or fair way to do this.

Don Blood wrote a letter. He is concerned about those with pre-existing or chronic conditions and how this could impact Minuteman Nashoba's rates. He also questioned risk adjustments.

Mike McGarty said beyond looking at numbers the human element needs to be considered. He said it took him two years to find a doctor on Cape Cod. He has called around and is concerned the insurance plans being proposed are not widely accepted. He said it is not an ethical thing to do. He also noted out of state retirees will be at a disadvantage as well. He said the Tufts plan is nationwide but after some investigation he found that plan is not widely accepted either. He was adamant this change is not a good idea and if trying to create parity it does not work if you are taking insurance away entirely.

Mirhan Keosian, former principal and superintendent, said during his tenure he worked on negotiating two wonderful contracts and always felt Harvard was an extraordinary place to work. He was moved by many of the letters sent and encourages the BoS to seriously consider some of the suggestions. He does not want retirees who gave some much to be let down.

Judith Boyce said to create parity instead of bringing some down why not consider bringing others up. She thinks the idea of parity is pretty silly.

Jim McBride asked when the decision will be made. He expressed disappointment the entire board was not present. He said many residents come to Harvard for the schools seeking an education comparative to a private school education. If the BoS votes to make this change he believes Harvard's reputation could go down.

Judy Moore, a recent retiree, simply wondered if any of this really matters; the hearing, the letters, their opinions?

Joan Accorsi is a current teacher and views the retirees as mentors who devoted their life to their career and continue to be relevant today. She hopes as a Harvard resident the BoS can think out of the box. As a taxpayer she hates the idea of savings on the backs of retired teachers. Surely there must be another way.

Wallace said if there are no more speakers it is now time for the retired teachers (not the current teachers) to caucus and vote on their recommendations.

Diane Temple came to the microphone and stated there is no doubt in her mind the retirees are desperate to continue with the current medical care especially considering the state of our country when it comes to health care. She pleaded please do not throw us into this vacuum where they will undoubtedly be vulnerable. They view GIC as their strong pillar and were assured in retirement the percentages would not change. A decision to move the retired teachers out of the GIC will surely put retirees in jeopardy. They are asking for compassion and request another solution. She said there was an agreement that in retirement we would be okay and now you want to take that away.

Temple asked the retirees to take a vote by the show of hands who want to remain in the GICRMT and then who are in favor of Minuteman Nashoba Health Group. All hands were raised to remain in the GICRMT and no hands were raised to move to Minuteman Nashoba Health Group.

The hearing was closed at 9:20pm.

Wallace indicated this is now the time for the BoS to deliberate.

Wallace, Swanton and von Loesecke agreed the right thing to do at this point is to allow the other two board members time to review the hearing so they can hear comments made. The BoS will deliberate and vote at their September 5<sup>th</sup> meeting. Wallace said additional comment on the subject will not be heard. This will also allow time for the board members present to absorb what they have heard and attain further information they may require to make their decision.

Wallace expressed her appreciation for everyone's concern and willingness to come and sit through the hearing.

Sobalvarro confirmed once the BoS make their decision correspondence either by mail or email will be sent to all retirees. She will remain the main point of contact through this process.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30pm.

Documents referenced:

Barton vol form – dated 6.26.2017

RFP final – dated 8.16.2017

Construction Manager application dated 8.10.2017

Various RMT letters – dated July & August 2017

HR FAQ handout – dated 8.22.2017