Board of Selectmen
Minutes
Tuesday, April 24, 2018 at 7:00pm
Town Hall Meeting Room, 13 Ayer Road, Harvard, MA

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by Chair Lucy Wallace in the Town Hall Meeting Room. Selectmen Ken Swanton, Kara Minar, Stu Sklar and Alice von Loesecke were in attendance as well as Town Administrator Tim Bragan and Assistant and Executive Assistant Julie Doucet.

Appointment of Assistant Treasurer/Tax Collector
Finance Director David Nalchajian introduced Lindsey Ames for appointment as the Assistant Treasurer/Tax Collector. Ames has worked in Shrewsbury for eight years and has the experience and qualifications necessary to fill the position. Ames spoke about her background and interest in the position. On a Swanton/Minar motion, the board voted unanimously to appoint Lindsey Ames as Assistant Treasurer/Collector.

Hildreth Elementary School project financing
Board member Ken Swanton requested an item on the agenda to allow resident Bill Marinelli an opportunity to speak on behalf of the opposing view in town to not support the school project as proposed. He explained there is a newly formed group in town (including former Selectmen and Finance Committee members) that believe there is a better way for the Harvard schools. Swanton said that one of the biggest questions before Harvard is this project, and there are clearly two points of view in town, as evident by the debate raging in the newspaper and on Nextdoor. He noted that the Selectmen have only heard from one side, that of the proponents, and so the objective of this agenda item is for the Board to hear the other perspective. KS Selectmen Minar, Sklar and von Loesecke were not aware this item was a presentation by Marinelli therefore it was decided the best approach was to have Swanton speak to it.

Main concerns outlined in the presentation included:

- The HES conceptual design process strayed from its original $4.5M project objective
- The cost of the district offices, gym, and cafeteria, and much more, is not justified by the value provided (Educational Plan)
- The financial analysis of the project's impact does not reflect it's true cost
- The project's true cost puts the town (including future teacher funding) at considerable financial risk
- The replacement of the K-wing and the upgrade of the "1988 building" can be accomplished with a high priority for state funding

The presentation implied:

- The renovation option was never a true option or properly vetted
- The business plan process was flawed
- The project was designed with desires instead of building requirements
- The pledge of monies from CPIC and the School Committee does not lower the dollar amount merely moves from debt exclusion to an operating override
- Inadequate future debt analysis
- An increase of reliance on the Devens contract
- Tax increase at a time when enrollment is decreasing
- A rejection at this does not mean no MSBA aid

In closing, the presentation suggests voting to reject the new school, development of a prioritized education plan based on MBSA-compliant K-wing replacement and sensible 1988 building upgrades, fund and conduct design saving taxpayers $10-15+M, perform an impartial and “no gimmicks” assessment of its impact on capital, operating, and maintenance budgets and give voters a transparent and informed choice.

Sklar said for the record this is a BS stunt and I'm not commenting on anything I'm seeing here without having advanced warning. Von Loesecke admitted she was not fully prepared for this presentation but as a member of the School Building Committee she offered some explanations as to why the original concept proved to not be feasible or cost effective. Wallace confirmed members of the audience would have a chance to speak during public communication.

Results of personnel study and recommendations
Human Resource Director Marie Sobalvarro explained the personnel study was conducted by Human Resources Services Inc. to develop a plan that is fair and equitable with a classification/compensation plan that includes merit/performance based components. The study was presented to the Personnel Board who voted unanimously to support the proposed plan. Sobalvarro said as part of the study all job descriptions were updated which had not been done since the 90’s. She explained some positions will need to be adjusted sooner rather than later with an estimated financial impact of $56,000. The board members agreed with the study results. On a Minar/von Loesecke motion, the board voted unanimously to endorse recommendations of personnel study.

Minutes
On a Sklar/Swanton motion, the board voted unanimously to approve 4/3 minutes, as presented.

Public communication
Ron Ricci (former BoS member), East Bare Hill Road, said he has not attended a Selectmen’s meeting since his term expired last year. He felt compelled to attend now as the HES building project vote is a big deal. He was disappointed Bill Marinelli was not able to speak to his presentation. Marinelli did a fair amount of work and he thought it was a shame the board was not open to having him speak. Ricci believes a big problem surrounding this project is people’s unwillingness to listen. He is saddened the opportunity to hear Marinelli speak was missed.

Cindy Russo (former BoS member), Lancaster County Road, pointed out five former Board of Selectmen (BoS) are in the audience including herself. She echoed what Ricci said about Marinelli who spent a lot of time preparing the presentation. She too felt it was unfortunate he was not permitted to speak to it. She was also disappointed the current Board of Selectmen were not more polite to their fellow alumni who were in the audience and were there to hear Marinelli.

Bill Marinelli (former BoS member), Stow Road, apologized for not getting the information to the BoS sooner. He spent a lot of time gathering accurate information to assist with the lack of transparency on the project after the errors he heard at the School Building Committee public information session at the library last week. He admitted after hearing von Loesecke’s explanation of the process it is clear an adequate examination of the Kindergarten wing and true renovation of the HES building was never done. He is disappointed the School Committee did not do better with the MSBA process to create a project that would meet minimum requirements and commitment to the town.

SusanMary Redinger, School Committee member, appreciates the work put into the presentation however there is a lot of misinformation. She has found at least five or six items that are inaccurate. She reaffirmed the committee's commitment to being transparent through public information sessions. Redinger was disappointed the group present was able to speak without the School Building Committee being able to provide accurate information.

Nate Finch, Capital Planning & Investment Committee member, said it is unfortunate this has come out a week and a half prior to the Annual Town Meeting. Many public information sessions have been held and properly advertised. He does not want to delay the project expecting costs will only increase.

Wade Holtzman, Bolton Road, asked Redinger to reveal the misinformation in the presentation. He said it was unethical for the Board of Selectmen to not allow Marinelli to speak. He suggested residents consider not voting in favor of the proposed Charter which would give additional appointment authority to the BoS.

Alexandra Moussouris, Park Lane, asked if it was customary for the BoS to allow just any resident to present their own evaluation at an open meeting. Wallace said it was not uncommon for the BoS to gather information from the public on issues. However, she was unaware a presentation was planned for this evening. Moussouris noted the BoS had voted to move ahead with the building project making this presentation confusing as it appears to not be the opinion of the BoS.

Leo Blair (former BoS member), Prospect Hill Road, is glad to be on the other side of the table this time around. He views the problem with the school project is that everyone is right. Yes, we need to fix the school but the how and how much are what everyone is passionate about. He is not crazy about the idea and has noticed many For Sale signs going up around town. In his experience, every time a big project is proposed it comes down to the wire and typically compromises are made. Sometimes there is not enough money and the entire budgets have to be recalibrated. Blair's hunch is this project may not pass and will have to be reworked. He thinks many people may not have a definite option but will be uncomfortable voting in favor when there is so much disagreement. He encourages everyone to stick to their convictions and not give up.

Jeremy Crochiere, Deerfoot Trail, said the school system is what attracted him to Harvard. He has already invested in the town by volunteering as a soccer coach and into his property. As part of the growing group in town with young families, he feels it is important to address school needs sooner rather than later. He does not appreciate the eye rolling from BoS member Swanton when he hears something he does not like or agree with. Crochiere encouraged respectfulness even if opinions are different. He has a vested interest and wants Harvard to be renowned for the school system.

SusanMary Redinger, School Committee, came forward to address question from previous speaker Wade Holtzman. One piece of misinformation she found in Marinelli's presentation had to do with the slide titled "rejection doesn't mean no MSBA aid". She explained it does mean a delay and there is no assurance Harvard will be accepted into the program again. She plans to address all the errors she finds.

Charles Oliver, Finance Committee member, said there is no savings in delaying the project. He thinks it is silly to put this off any longer. He views tonight as an attempt from those who never planned on supporting the project to sandbag it. He does not understand why these concerns are coming up so late in the game. He believes the process had gone quite well up until this point. Oliver said the risk of not getting back into the MSBA process could be costly. In Lincoln, he heard they are struggling to get into the MSBA and if they do not the project costs are insane. He said it is ludacris to not do this now.

Debbie Ricci (former CPIC member) East Bare Hill Road, said when the project was in the initial phases all major boards supported it. She is raising objections now because the project has gone from the Kindergarten

wing to a whole new building. She said the project started as a base job and now has ended up high end. She is sorry a better job was not done for a moderate job. Ricci has raised concerns at School Building Committee meetings.

Barbara Romero, Woodchuck Hill Road, is a real estate broker who came from New York. She strongly believes school problems can have a huge negative impact on property values.

Von Loesecke asked Marinelli to not take her lack of clarity as a reflection on the quality of the MSBA process.

Town Administrator Report
Bragan announced there will be another hearing on May 1st for the on premise liquor license request from the Harvard General Store. He explained there was an issue with the corporation name therefore the hearing had to be conducted again.

Bragan announced the 4th of July Committee is requesting participation in this year's parade. "Harvard has History: 1918-2018" recognizing the 100th Anniversary WWI Armistice. The parade will be on the 4th with a rain date of ??

Bragan said the Town Planner has made us aware of a grant through the Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs which is for Municipal Vulnerability Planning Grant. He explained municipalities who wish to prepare for climate change impacts, building community resilience and receive a designation as a Climate Change Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness program will be eligible.

Bragan said every effort is being made to accommodate all registered voters who want to attend the ATM. He discussed having an overflow area in the Cronin Auditorium for non-voters and a paper ballot for article 25 for the HES project. Sklar was not happy about those two items however Bragan said these are decisions of the Moderator as this is the person who runs the meeting.

Ginny Thurston Scholarship
Minar and von Loesecke volunteered to review letters of interest.

Resignation
On a von Loesecke/Minar motion, the board voted unanimously to accept resignation from Frank Culmone and send letter of thanks.

Nashua River Wild & Scenic Stewardship Plan
On a von Loesecke/Minar motion, the board voted unanimously to approve plan and authorize the Town Administrator to send proposed letter.

The board moved the amended Police Contract and endorsement of Environmental Justice to the next agenda.

Ragged Hill Cider Company
On a von Loesecke/Minar motion, the board voted unanimously to approve the Farmers Market license to the Ragged Hill Cider Company for May 5th from 10:00am – 1:00pm.

Selectmen reports
Swanton reported the Transfer Station Committee is targeting next year for implementation of the SMART Plan. The process is off to a good start. The committee will have an update for the BoS at their second meeting in June.

Swanton reported the Old Library Accessibility Committee is making progress. The architect is working on detailed drawings for a hearing before the Historical Commission on May 9th.

Von Loesecke confirmed Harvard will receive credit for 40 units of affordable housing being built in Devens.

Sklar said the War Monument Restoration Committee is still targeting a Memorial Day dedication ceremony for the new flag pole on the common.

Minar encouraged residents to look into the HEAT Smart Program for great options for energy efficient systems.

Minar thanked Park & Rec and the DPW for their assistance during the recent regatta on Bare Hill Pond.

**** On a Swanton motion, the Board voted unanimously by a roll call vote:
(Sklar – Aye, Wallace – Aye, Swanton – Aye, von Loesecke – Aye) to enter into executive session at 9:30pm, as authorized by Chapter 30A, Section 21. 2, to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel. Following the executive session, the Board will reconvene only to adjourn. ****

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50pm.

Documents referenced:
Ames resume – dated 4.19.2018
A Better Way for Harvard Schools PowerPoint – dated 4.24.2018
Personnel Study final report – dated March 2018
Compensation & Classification Study & Recommendations PowerPoint – dated 4.23.2018
Culmone resignation letter – dated 4.23.2018
Nashua River Wild & Scenic Stewardship Plan endorsement letter – dated 4.24.2018
Ragged Hill Cider Company application – dated 4.11.2018