

Select Board Minutes
Tuesday, April 21, 2020
7:00pm

The Select Board Regular Meeting was held virtually in accordance with the Governor's Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L.c.30A. S.20.

Select Board participants:

Chair Alice von Loesecke, Rich Maiore, Kara Minar, Stu Sklar, Lucy Wallace

Town Staff participants:

Town Administrator Tim Bragan, Meeting Host/Assistant Town Administrator Marie Sobalvarro, Executive Assistant Julie Doucet

Additional participants:

Energy Advisory Committee member David Fay

Hildreth Elementary School Solar Project

Energy Advisory Committee David Fay serves on the School Building Committee. Fay is learning how the town can enter into a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) for the purchase of a solar array. This agreement allows for zero cost to the town and reduces electricity costs. The agreement offers lower electricity charges, lesser demand, and a fixed price for 20 years. In addition, this reduces the schools carbon footprint. Fay outlined the terms of the agreement the town would enter into with Solect Energy explaining this would include a maintenance agreement as well. He was able to interview four recent customers of Solect Energy. He discovered some installation issues however Solect Energy paid for repairs and besides that comments were generally positive. The Energy Advisory Committee and School Committee have voted in favor of the project. Fay asked the Select Board to do the same and endorse a letter of intent to move forward in the process. Bragan said the lease would require a vote at the annual town meeting. By a roll call vote, Wallace – aye, Minar – aye, Maiore – aye, Sklar – aye, von Loesecke – aye, and the board voted unanimously to authorize the Town Administrator to sign letter of intent subject to amendment requiring vote at the Annual Town Meeting.

Minutes

By a roll call vote, Wallace – aye, Minar – aye, Maiore – aye, Sklar – aye, von Loesecke – aye, and the board voted unanimously to approve minutes for 3/17, 3/26 and 4/7, as presented.

Sale of Bond Anticipation Notes (BANS)

Von Loesecke explained the BANS are for short term borrowing in the amount of \$495,000 for a dump truck and the Ayer Rd Design Engineering Study. By a roll call vote, Wallace – aye, Minar – aye, Maiore – aye, Sklar – aye, von Loesecke – aye, and the board voted unanimously in favor of the notice of sale as written.

Pine Hill Village Marketing Plan

The Pine Hill Village development of 23 units on Stow Road is due to begin construction this spring. The project includes 6 affordable units therefore a marketing plan is required and must be approved by the Select Board. The plan includes a local preference option for Harvard residents. Sudbury Housing Trust will serve as the lottery agent. They expect marketing to begin in late spring/early summer depending on when groundbreaking happens. By a roll call vote, Wallace – aye, Maiore – aye, Sklar – aye, Minar – aye, von Loesecke – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve the marketing plan for Pine Hill Village as submitted.

Town Caucus

Bragan reported the traditional caucus cannot happen this year. Town Clerk Marlene Kenney has notified those up for reelection that nomination papers can be mailed in. A notice for all residents has also been posted on the town website.

Annual appointments

Executive Assistant Julie Doucet reminded the Select Board that annual appointments are coming up in June. A list of all committee/board members up for reappointment along with all vacant positions were distributed for their review. Announcement of openings has also been posted on the town website.

COVID - 19 related topics

Von Loesecke invited the Finance Committee and school department to participate in discussion on how best to address the upcoming override question in the event it does not pass. Finance Committee Chair Don Ludwig said the Finance Committee is proposing the school department consider assuming obligation for the deficit considering additional reductions from town departments would be very difficult. Bragan expects to have a better understanding of the economic forecast after an upcoming session with the state. Superintendent Linda Dwight appreciates the ability to work collaboratively with the town to determine the best approach. The school department does not agree they should endure responsibility for the entire shortfall. Everyone acknowledged further cuts will require reductions in personnel. Select Board member Lucy Wallace offered her ideas on other avenues to minimize cuts to services such as lower contribution to the OPEB fund or use of stabilization funds. They decided to form a budget working group with reps from the Select Board, Finance Committee, school department and town administration. This group will work together to brainstorm ideas on how to address the override. In addition, they will craft a narrative supporting the override or explanation as to why the override was avoided. The group will work under the premise that 70% of the budget is allocated to the school department and 30% to other town departments. Everyone agreed beginning the dialogue now allows enough time for thoughtful consideration on how best to proceed. Ludwig noted with the states rainy day fund hopefully the FY20 budget will be sustainable. School Committee member SusanMary Reddinger appreciates taking a holistic approach to determining what is best for the town.

Bragan commented on the announcement that schools will be closed for the rest of the school year. He is working with department heads on guidelines for reopening town public buildings utilizing a phased approach.

HR Director Marie Sobalvarro is following unemployment exposure for the town. The estimates are increasing.

Bragan reported Transfer Station stickers will be available for purchase online and through the mail. Senior citizens will have their free bags delivered to them in the month of July.

Bragan reported Town Hall staff continues working staggered shifts and remotely from home. He expects an increase in the need for public meetings in May.

Von Loesecke mentioned the maintenance work being done on the playing fields and with no activities it has provided an opportunity to rest the fields. She also noted the completion of the Town Hall landscaping and with the sidewalk project beginning the town center is coming along nicely.

Wallace announced Loaves and Fishes has reopened. They are in need of monetary donations and volunteers. The Council on Aging van will deliver basics to residents in Harvard.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:48pm.

Documents referenced:

HES Solar presentation – dated .21.2020

BAN - dated 4.21.2020

Pine Hill Village marketing plan – dated 1.23.2020

Annual appointments – FY21 listings