

Select Board Minutes

Tuesday, October 20, 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, Rich Maiore

Town Department attendees: Town Administrator Tim Bragan, Assistant Town Administrator/HR Director Marie Sobalvarro, Executive Assistant Julie Doucet, and Police Chief Ed Denmark

Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) town comparison

Assistant Town Administrator/HR Director Marie Sobalvarro surveyed the MMHR list serve and received thirty five responses. She learned most communities contribute a fixed amount annually. Sobalvarro reported notable differences with communities that belong to a regional school district. She was able to gather more data learning 262 communities contribute to OPEB with 89 that do not. Sobalvarro highlighted the town of Ayer dedicates their meals tax for this and the town of Littleton contributes a larger amount however they have more commercial tax revenue to rely on.

Town wide fee review

Town Administrator Tim Bragan explained the communities used for comparison are the same used in the compensation & classification study done back in 2018. The town department fee review included Conservation Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Town Clerk, Library, Wiring, Gas, Plumbing, Building and Select Board. Minar had some questions about the abutter fee for ZBA applications. Von Loesecke asked to have a municipal buildings fee added to the gas, plumbing, electrical and building fee schedules. She explained this will clarify how inspectors are paid for these projects. The board decided to hold off on any building, gas, plumbing and electrical fee changes until the building permit fee review was completed. The board members agreed with the proposed Select Board fee increases and discussed offering license holders who have been negatively affected by the Coronavirus pandemic a discount for the coming year. By a roll call vote, Minar – aye, Wallace – aye, Maiore – aye, Sklar – aye, von Loesecke – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve recommendations except electrical, gas and plumbing. By a roll call vote, Minar – aye, Wallace – aye, Maiore – aye, Sklar – aye, von Loesecke – aye, the board voted unanimously to discount 50% for all alcohol on-premise and wine malt on-premise and farmer pouring licenses for the 2021 calendar year. By a roll call vote, Minar – aye, Wallace – aye, Maiore – aye, Sklar – aye, von Loesecke – aye, the board voted unanimously the common victualler and entertainment license fee to stay at \$25 for the current year.

Public Communication

Park & Recreation Chair Bob O'Shea wants to start a discussion with the Select Board about considering changing jurisdiction over the town common from the Park & Rec Commission to the Select Board. He believes this will simplify the procedures for events in the town center. He plans to reach out to the Conservation Commission and school department as well. Von Loesecke suggested this as an agenda topic for an upcoming meeting.

Brandon Smithwood, 11 Mass Ave, is new to town and wanted to provide feedback to the board on his recent negative experience with the Historical Commission. He does not expect any immediate action but simply felt it

was worth sharing. He explained his application was rejected after much time and money was spent working with engineers. Smithwood felt the process was frustrating, rushed and the commission is misreading their guidelines.

Halloween

The Select Board was satisfied with the recommendation and safety poster provided by the Board of Health. The information will be shared on the town website with copies posted at the General Store and Post Office. Minar or Sklar will post on Next Door Harvard as well. Fire Chief Rick Sicard will use the reverse 911 system on October 28th to spread the word as well.

Minutes

By a roll call vote, Wallace – aye, Maiore – aye, Minar – aye, Sklar – aye, von Loesecke – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve 10/6 minutes, as presented.

Town Administrator Report

Tim Bragan announced the following items:

- A hearing for renewal of Carlson Orchards Farmer Series Pouring Permit will be held at the December 1st meeting.
- The financial update has the State budget at \$45 billion. This relies on \$1.3 billion in rainy day funds and \$2 billion in additional federal aid. The Senate Ways and Means Chairman has recently praised the governor's new budget.
- Local Budget Documents went out yesterday per the guidelines set by the Select Board and Finance Committee. Von Loesecke suggested departments include additional items in the event we are able to do more than level funding. Wallace noted the importance to highlight with limited finance.
- Colonial Power Group has informed us that DYNEGY is currently reaching out to those residents that did not join Harvard's aggregation effort in the spring (currently on basic service) and these people should realize that this is happening and started last week.
- A new large scale automatic machine gun range is being proposed at the South Post in Lancaster. He is working with Lancaster on questions to base commander.
- As we continue to maneuver our way through the pandemic and as Massachusetts' numbers continue to rise we will be looking at employee safety and possibly instituting previous protocols after the election. These could include limiting the number of people coming into the building, requiring appointments, closing the buildings, and possibly going back to Team A and Team B approach to staffing Town Hall. We are watching everything closely and hoping that these steps do not have to be implemented but are cognizant of threat larger numbers pose for the public as a whole and our staff.

Still River update

Kara Minar said Refuge Manager Linh Phu learned the Harvard police can enforce laws within the boundaries of the Oxbow. This guidance is included in the federal regulations but can vary state to state. Chief Denmark provided the agreement which was written back when Michael Dukakis was Governor. Chief Denmark said the traffic study on Still River Depot Road qualifies this roadway as a 30mph zone.

Still River resident Arlene Genova was very unhappy with the process thus far and urged those involved to work toward goals to slow speed for safety and flow.

Act on Right of First Refusal – 19 South Shaker Road

Bragan explained this parcel is being taken out of chapter to accommodate the necessary land for a septic system install. Town Counsel worked with the attorney to have a few items corrected. By a roll call vote, Wallace – aye, Sklar – aye, Minar – aye, Maiore – aye, von Loesecke – aye, the board voted unanimously to not exercise the right of first refusal on parcel A of the Stone land off Shaker Road, plan dated September 2020.

Review charge and composition of Bromfield House Disposition Committee

Alice von Loesecke provided a draft. Wallace and Minar assisted with editing. By a roll call vote, Wallace – aye, Minar – aye, Maiore – aye, Sklar – aye, von Loesecke – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve charge as written.

Discuss a Select Board policy for Gmail accounts next meeting & Select Board policy for use of free cash/OPEB funds during financial crisis were moved to the next meeting due to the late hour.

Update on progress with the Insurance Advisory Committee (IAC)

Marie Sobalvarro reported the IAC held their first meeting. She noted the MIA Blue Cross Blue Shield plan is generous however Fallon is currently the most subscribed plan and they offer dental coverage as part of their plan. She explained the committee members are working hard to sort out all the details. Sobalvarro admitted it is difficult to do an accurate comparison without the Minuteman Nashoba Health Group rates for the coming year.

Municipal Affordable Housing Trust appointments

By a roll call vote, Wallace – aye, Minar – aye, Maiore – aye, Sklar – aye, von Loesecke, the board voted unanimously to appoint Michelle Catalina and Didi Chadran to the MAHT. Von Loesecke noted current member Michael Barton has resigned.

Select Board Reports

Wallace reported the Council on Aging has visited Friendly Crossways as an alternative location for the senior center. One take-away was that should the Town acquire it, the building would require its own, dedicated facilities person.

Wallace asked if other cell tower locations such as the Hildreth House or Bolton Road may work. She wondered if others would consider developing a request for proposals.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:04pm.

Documents referenced:

OPEB comparison – dated 10.20.20

Fee review spreadsheet – dated 10.15.2020

Halloween – Board of Health letter Halloween 2020

Still River update – notes dated 10.20.2020

19 Shaker Road Right of First Refusal – dated 9.25.2020

IAC fee comparison– dated for FY2 6.1.2021

MAHT appointments – Catalina vol form dated Oct 2020 & Chadran vol form updated for Oct 2020