Select Board Minutes
Tuesday, March 2, 2021
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:
Alice von Loesecke, Stu Sklar, Lucy Wallace, Rich Maiore, Kara Minar

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

Additional participants:
CPC members John Lee, Michelle Catalina, Beth Williams and Chair Didi Chadran,
Historical Commission member Manny Lindo and Chair Pam Marston
Finance Committee Chair Don Ludwig, School Committee Chair SusanMary Redinger

Chair Alice von Loesecke opened the meeting with a tribute to longtime resident and co-owner of the Harvard Press who recently passed away, Worth Robbins. Lucy Wallace said the 40 year resident is a great loss to the community. His dedication and humble approach to all he did was unique and benefited the town in many ways. He will surely be missed.

Community Preservation Committee (CPC) recommendations
CPC member John Lee reported on the grant applications submitted to the CPC. He reviewed their funding recommendations below:

Requesting Organization	Application/ Funding Title	Requested Amount	CPC Vote
Athletic Field Planning Subcommittee	Bare Hill Pond Woods Feasibility Study	$20,000	Decline to fund
Athletic Field Planning Subcommittee	Harvard Park Feasibility Study	$30,000	Decline to fund
Community Preservation Committee	CPC Administrative Fees	$2,500	Transfer from CPC unrestricted reserves to CPC Admin fund
Community Preservation Committee	Transfer to Affordable Housing Reserve	$33,800	Transfer from CPC unrestricted reserves to CPC Affordable Housing Reserve fund
Conservation Commission	Community Harvest Project Agricultural Preservation Restriction	$150,000	Fund in full
Parks & Recreation Commission	Boat Kiosk Upgrade	$5,000	Fund in full
Select Board	Town Hall Preservation Debt	$48,000	Fund in full
Town Clerk	Preservation of Town Documents	$25,000	Fund in full

Lee explained the requests from the Athletic Field subcommittee were decline due to minimal support from the community. The CPC recommended they come back with better planning. Chair Didi Chadran will correct the final figures and resend as an error was found.

Historical Commission presentation on the Shaker Herb House

Member Manny Lindo acknowledged the team of excellent volunteers he worked with to prepare this study: Richard & Carolyn Dabrowski, Sadie Keiran, Olivia Lindo, Nickolas Thornton (high school students) and local tradesman specializing in historical projects Robert Adam.

Lindo gave a brief introduction about the building and its importance to the town. He explained the report includes exterior envelope and interior assessments, required repairs and estimated costs. Lindo said the study also includes a section about possible ways or repurposing the building. At this time, the commission is seeking support from the Select Board on this project as they apply for state grant funding to help with restoration costs. Commission Chair Pam Marston explained the CPC deadline did not align with completion of the study therefore making the timelines complicated since the grant application is due by March 19th. Kara Minar asked about the concerns highlighted in a letter from resident Mark Sevigny. Lindo acknowledged their differing views on the best approach and most cost effective way to restore the building. Lucy Wallace expressed her support for the general concept to preserve the building as best we can and applauds efforts of the commission to attain state grant funding. By a roll call vote, Wallace – aye, Minar – aye, Maiore – aye, Sklar – aye, von Loesecke – aye, the board voted unanimously to support the concept to preserve the building.

Finance Committee budget recommendations

Committee Chair Don Ludwig thanked everyone for their hard work during this challenging budget year. He was happy to report a current budget surplus however they remain cautious until the state budget is finalized. Ludwig reviewed the following proposed cuts and additions to the budget:

Proposed Cuts			
Budgeted Expenses			
	Election Supplies	$ 6,950	
	Transfer Station Hours	$ 6,600	
	Public Building Oil	$ 2,000	
	Public Building Gas	$ 2,000	
	Transfer Station Controlled Materials	$ 2,000	
		$ 19,550	
Proposed Additions			
Wages			*Funding Source*
	COLA (Non Contractual Non School Employees	$27,000	R&A
	DPW and Contracted Dept. Heads	$21,000	R&A
	Police Overtime	$33,715	R&A
		$81,715	
Budgeted Expenses			
	Board of Health	$ 766	R&A
	Agricultural Commission	$ 981	Free Cash
	Transfer Station Bags	$ 5,000	R&A
	Land Use	$ 616	R&A
		$ 7,363	

He explained the committee's rationale behind their decisions.

Next, Ludwig reviewed the small warrant articles for FY22.

Article Title	Amount	Board/Dept.	Funding Source
Tree triming	$ 20,000	DPW	R&A
Bare Hill Pond Testing	$ 5,000	BOH	R&A
Field Maintenance	$ 20,000	Park and Rec	R&A
Merit Pay	$ 35,000	Personnel Board	R&A
Architect COA	$ 45,000	COA	Free Cash
Bromfield House	$ 50,000	Select Board	Free Cash
Total	**$ 175,000**		

Lucy Wallace asked when they expect the Governor to finalize the state budget. Town Administrator Tim Bragan estimated by the end of June and possibly sooner depending on what happens with federal funding.

Ludwig and Bragan expect future budgets to be challenging as well. They acknowledged the town has a structural budget problem that cannot continue to be solved by cutting into department budgets. The time has come to prioritize needs versus wants because without more revenue these issues will persist. Everyone was in agreement if an override will be necessary with future budgets the discussions and explanations need to start now. Ludwig proposed a working group to begin strategizing how to provide the services the community expects. Bragan said the budget will be finalized the first week of April.

Minutes
By a roll call vote, Wallace – aye, Sklar – aye, Minar – aye, Maiore – aye, von Loesecke –aye, the board voted unanimously to approve minutes of 2/16, as presented.

Verizon Easement for Hildreth Elementary School
School Committee Chair SusanMary Redinger explained the Verizon line goes under the building therefore an easement is necessary in the event Verizon needs to gain access to the line in the future. By a roll call vote, Minar – aye, Wallace – aye, Maiore – aye, Sklar – aye, von Loesecke – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve the easement for Verizon as described on the diagram under HES.

Town Administrator Report
Covid-19 Vaccination Update:
A letter is being sent to the Governor and Public Health Secretary from the NABOH communities expressing displeasure with their guidelines for setting up regional vaccination sites and that we in this area still do not have a site that is local to the NABOH district. There is an effort to have the Select

Boards in the district endorse a support document as well. As you can see we are still pushing for a regional vaccination site in the Nashoba Valley area. There is hope with the approval of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine and with more vaccines being available that the Governor will change his stance on the requirements for regional collaboration vaccination sites. By a roll call vote, Wallace – aye, Minar – aye, Maiore – aye, Sklar –aye, von Loesecke –aye, the board voted unanimously to sign support letter to the Governor.

The new timeline for the appointment process is moving forward and Executive Assistant Julie Doucet is doing fine work with juggling this adjusted timeline and getting the Town Report out too.

An age restricted (55+) Condominium Home at 10C Trail Ridge that will be filled by lottery and a copy of the attached notice is on our website.

The Personnel Board met on Monday and discussed their recommendation for what a Merit increase would be provided that it is funded and they determined that 1% would be the maximum amount an eligible employee could receive. The potential cost of this is $19,561 which is almost half of what the placeholder was for the Merit Pay small warrant article. The COLA of 1.4% is already in the proposed budget numbers.

Budget Update:
Since the last Finance Committee meeting (2/24/2021) the only change in the budget is that mentioned in the prior bullet regarding the Personnel Board and Merit Pay. This change would reduce the original estimate by $15,439 and thus increase the final number. This means that the current estimate, and let me stress **current** estimate, for the surplus is $50,815.

On the State level the lottery has recently changed their estimate for the current year (FY21) upward by $45,000,000. This will have an impact on the current year lottery aid if this does indeed become reality by the end of June. The House will start deliberation on the Governor's proposed budget in a few weeks.

Town Hall has reopened to the public for appointments on the 1st, will open to limited capacity on March 22, and will be open completely on April 5th. All of these continue to utilize social distancing, face masks, and hand sanitizer. The potential issues we see are what happens with the variants and thus the number of infected individuals and the fact that with individuals being vaccinated having problems with individuals not wanting to wear masks or socially distance. The key for me is that the staff and public stay safe. We have not had a covid positive person at Town Hall and this is due to our diligence and safety measures. Unlike some of my counterparts, who will wait until their staff can get vaccinated to open Town Hall, Tim believes we can do this safely. Not all employees are on board with this thought and balancing many opinions with safety issues is key. One main employee issue is that anyone who is sick or required to quarantine will have to use their PTO or take time as unpaid if they do not have the time.

Lucy Wallace and Stu Sklar questioned why employees would be punished (by having to use PTO or go unpaid) if they have to quarantine. Wallace thought it uncaring especially for an employee to be forced to go without pay considering what we have all been through over the past year. HR Director Marie Sobalvarro said there had been instances in other town departments of employees claiming covid exposure when not exposed in order to take time off. . She believes the reopening of town hall will dramatically increase the risk to staff and, therefore, precautions should be in place to assure everyone's safety. Kara Minar worries this could incentivize employees to not do the right thing if they may lose

critical wages. Von Loesecke understood PTO (Paid time off) time can be used for sick or time off and if necessary those employees who can work remotely have that option to work and not use PTO. Sobalvarro expressed disappointment the families' first reimbursement was not extended as that provided two weeks of pay for any employee required to quarantine. After more discussion it was obvious the board members were in favor of finding a different way to address quarantine requirements for staff. Bragan and Sobalvarro will work out other options.

Finally, this report will be renamed to "Staff Update and Report". Having it read "Town Administrator's Report" makes it look like an individual is responsible for the content and in fact this is a team effort and thus the new title.

Discuss Planning Board articles for spring/fall Annual Town Meetings
Planning Board liaison Rich Maiore said the Planning Board has been working hard and expect to bring the senior housing bylaw and two amendments to the accessory apartment bylaw to the spring town meeting. They have conducted surveys seeking ample feedback. He explained their plan for the spring is too tight up the senior bylaw definitions, come back in the fall and then again next spring to finalize the bylaw. They believe doing this in a more pragmatic way be a better approach. Maiore said emphasis should be on the progress instead of the process. The board members were supportive of the articles for the spring town meeting.

Stretch code support letter
The board members had questions and required more information on this item therefore it was decided to delay any decision until the next meeting when the Energy Advisory Committee will be present.

Select Board Reports
Rich Maiore said the Bromfield House Committee will have a recommendation for the next meeting.

By a roll call vote, Wallace –aye, Maiore – aye, Sklar – aye, Minar – aye, von Loesecke – aye,
the board voted unanimously to enter into executive session at 9:00pm as per MGL 30A Sec. 21.3 to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open an open meeting will have a detrimental effect on the government's bargaining or litigating position. Also, to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel; to actually conduct collective bargaining and contract negotiations with non-union personnel. The Board will reconvene into open session only to adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30pm.

Documents referenced:
CPC recommendations – dated 2.25.2021
Herb House study – dated Jan 2021
FinCom recommendations – dated FY22
Verizon easement – plan dated 4.26.2020 & easement for recording
HEAC draft support stretch code – no date