Select Board Minutes
Tuesday, November 15, 2022
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:
Rich Maiore, Erin McBee, Kara Minar, Don Ludwig, Charles Oliver
Town Department attendees:
Town Administrator Tim Bragan, Assistant Town Administrator Marie Sobalvarro and Executive Assistant Julie Doucet
Additional participants:
TAC Chair Gabe Medjanis, HCIC members Ellen Leicher and Jefferson Burson

Discuss Transportation Plan Actions & Goals w/ Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)
TAC Chair Gabe Medjanis reported the TAC has worked to establish reasonable timelines associated with goals included in the greater transportation plan. He shared four goals TAC views as short-term deliverables. Medjanis said TAC will revisit their charge and revise with goals outlined below.

Goal 1: Improve the general visibility and condition of bike ability, walkability, and accessibility throughout Harvard by developing and expanding networks for cycling and pedestrian use that can also interconnect with larger regional networks.
Goal 2: Develop and maintain both new and existing transportation planning documents and procedures as needed to improve Harvard's soft infrastructure.
Goal 3: Work to meet and remain ahead of Harvard's transportation infrastructure needs, prioritizing safety and green principles wherever possible and financially feasible.
Goal 4: Work to incorporate and complete Harvard Energy Advisory Committee (HEAC) Decarbonization Plan goals where they align or overlap with Circulation and Transportation commitments.

By a roll call vote, Minar – aye, McBee – aye, Ludwig – aye, Oliver – aye, Maiore – aye, the board voted unanimously to support plan and actions.

Presentation of the Harvard Climate Initiation Committee's (HCIC) Climate Action Plan
HCIC Chair Ellen Leicher presented the completed Climate Action Plan. She explained the goals/actions have not changed from the draft shared prior. HCIC is seeking adoption of the plan by the Select Board so they can begin implementation. HCIC member Jefferson Burson walked through the plan highlighting the focus areas and the associated goals/specific actions. Board members Kara Minar and Charles Oliver were prepared to vote on adoption of the plan however Erin McBee, Don Ludwig and Rich Maiore were inclined to have a bit more time to review. Maiore presumed town administration staff would also welcome more time to review and identify unintended consequences/impacts related to budgets with a plan of this magnitude. Charles Oliver made a motion to accept the report as written which was seconded by Kara Minar however the motion did not pass, 3-2. (Oliver – aye, Minar – aye, Ludwig – nay, McBee – nay, Maiore – nay) By a roll call vote, McBee – aye, Oliver – aye, Minar – aye, Ludwig – aye, Maiore – aye, the board voted unanimously to vote on approving the Climate Action Plan at the December 6th meeting along with an implementation plan. Leicher thinks this plan will have to be a living document with timelines only as estimated suggestions. The Select Board thanked the HCIC.

Public Communication
Kathleen Doherty, Harvard Educators Association (HEA), is a long-time teacher and a member of the bargaining team negotiating the teachers' contract. On behalf of the HEA, Doherty urged the Select Board and Finance Committee to reexamine guidance on revenue to help ensure a fair contract can be negotiated.

Abby Besse, School Committee Chair, spoke to address the recent Devens Revenue Report. She read from a detailed memo given to the Select Board outlining their concerns with the report and expectations moving forward.

Stu Sklar, Scott Road, is a former member of the Select Board and School Committee. He noted the prior Finance Director/School Business Manager, when the position was shared, Lorraine Leonard never had an issue with the arrangement. Sklar served on the school committee when the contract was initially negotiated and never heard of a specific breakout with regards to benefit costs.

Staff Report/Updates (Attachment A)

Follow up on the Revenue Ideation Committee (RIC) final report
RIC Chair Kara Minar said the committee incorporated town administration comments into the report and vetted some additional suggestions such as additional marijuana licensing or Airbnb short term lodging tax. Minar is confident a combination of efforts can increase the stream of revenue into town. Rich Maiore thanked the committee for their work. Minar emphasized the importance of the work by the Planning Board to implement form-based code in an effort to improve the economic benefits in the Ayer Road commercial district.

Minutes
By a roll call vote, Minar – aye, Ludwig – aye, McBee – aye, Oliver – aye, Maiore – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve minutes of 11/1, as presented.

FY24 cost of living adjustment
Personnel Board liaison Don Ludwig reported the Personnel Board met to clarify the 8.2% cola recommendation does not include any percentage toward merit increases. This cola is only for not union town personnel. By a roll call vote, Minar – aye, Oliver – aye, Ludwig – aye, McBee – aye, Maiore – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve an 8.2% cola and revisit if economy improves by March 1st 2023 to lower the cola but not increase it.

Update on playing fields
Rich Maiore said the wetlands delineation on the fields behind and next to Harvard Park. This will take a couple of weeks but once it has been completed the information with be shared with the Park & Recreation Commission.

Discuss the Select Board FY24 budget
Town Administrator Tim Bragan asked if the board members had any input with respect to their budget submissions for FY24. There were no additional requests/comments at this time.

Town Common items
Executive Assistant Julie Doucet received a request from the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) to use yellow on the town common to recognize November as SEPAC month. The board members were agreeable to the request. The board was agreeable to have the Executive Assistant handle such request in the future.

Rich Maiore is working on a holiday light display for the town common.

Select Board reports
Erin McBee reported the Conservation Commission continue their efforts to control knotweed and Planning Board hearings will be held on Monday, November 28th

Kara Minar received a request from homeowners near 5 Old Littleton and Fairbank Street to install permanent no parking signs as the roadway is very narrow there. She will review the Devens Revenue Report in more detail as School Committee liaison

Rich Maiore met with the Finance Committee Chair, School Committee Chair, Finance Director, School Business Manager, School Superintendent, Town Administrator and the Assistant Town Administrator to discuss the Devens Revenue Report and bring recommendations back to their respective boards in an effort to resolve disagreement over numbers and philosophy. All received the revenue reports in September.

Don Ludwig reported the School Building Committee has approved funds to complete the stonewall. Work has been stopped until the required hearing is held with the Historical Commission.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10pm.

Documents referenced:
Harvard Master Plan 2022 – Ch 8 – Circulation and Transportation
TAC Vison/Goals – dated Nov 2022
HCIC Climate Plan – dated 11.10.2022
COLA recommendation pros/cons – dated 11.1.2022
Select Board draft budgets – FY22-FY24
SEPAC email request – dated 11.1.2022

Attachment A

Staff Report
November 15, 2022

1. Local Legislation Updates:

   a. House Bill 4739, "An Act authorizing the town of Harvard to establish and enforce speed limits on certain public ways in the town", as it has been in Third Reading for a while. Representative Sena's office is trying to move it along so that it does not die at the end of this legislative session.

2. Staffing Updates:

   a. Catherine Bowen has moved from Asst. Town Clerk to Asst. Finance position and we have hired Andrew Sammarco of Littleton to be the Asst. Town Clerk. We have also, finally filled the Land Use Administrative Assistant position with Brie Jones of Sterling. They will be starting the week of November 28, 2022.

   b. BlueCross met with HR Director/Asst. Town Administrator, Executive Asst., and Town administrator to review Harvard's Q1 claims, and provide information on Harvard's projected FY24 health insurance premiums. Currently it is anticipated that we will remain the same for public buildings and increase 6% on the health side.

   c. Julie Doucet attended and successfully completed the first section of the State's procurement class program as she readies to pass on building department work to the new person later this month. Julie will begin helping out with procurement related items during this same timeframe.

3. Police Department Updates: (September/October)

   a. Officers completed the Driver Training Simulator through MIIA. This was excellent training which reinforced some important concepts in regards to emergency vehicle operations. In the future the Chief will also schedule officers to attend hands-on emergency vehicle operations course.

   b. The Department continues its ongoing training and professional development. Sergeant Callahan attended his third and final FBI LEEDA (FBI Law Enforcement Executive Development Association) training and will receive his trilogy award. Sergeant Dirienzo and Det.Fortunato will also be attending these classes over the next six months. Funding for these classes is paid for by the Municipal Police Training Committee. These classes usually cost approximately $1000 for each level.

   c. Radar trailer titles are in and both trailers are now registered. They have been marked up and deployed. Radar sign conversions are scheduled for pole installations and transfers for the Bolton Road and Still River Road Signs.

Mass DOT released the funding on 9/25/22 for the additional purchase of the four new smaller radar signs. The Chief is working with two vendors on acquiring those radars.

d. There is a new co-clinician and she started with us on 9/29. Kristin Normandin received her Master's Degree in Social Work from Boston University in 2020 where she received the Dean's Award for Leadership in Social Work and also graduated from Fitchburg State College with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Human Services. She graduated Summa Cum Laude from FSU. She was carefully selected through an arduous process before she made it to the final interview in front of both police chiefs and Det.Fortunato. She already has attended our first school district crisis meeting on 10/19 and we discussed many action items with the schools, including an MOU, joint response and developing a new action response plan for both schools. Co-clinician response is a great asset and we continue to grow and implement Kristin in many different areas.

e. The Chief received another grant from the Executive Office of Public Safety for $20,000 which will be used for traffic enforcement and purchasing new handheld radars and Lidars. This grant will take effect in November and it will go until Labor Day of next year.

f. October was a busy month for the Police Department. They responded to approximately 525 calls of service with numerous incidents, arrests, and summonses and 7 motor vehicle crashes.

g. The Chief is working with the Executive Office of Public Safety to acquire an Automated Fingerprint Identification System which is now required. Chapter 6A Section 18 ¾ (12)(ii) now requires criminal justice agencies to use, "a unique state identification number assigned to each person who enters the criminal justice system". The only existing unique statewide identification number is the state identification number, a unique ten-character alphanumerical identifier supported by fingerprints of an individual printed using the Automated Fingerprint/Biometric identification System. Therefore, all law enforcement agencies are required to fingerprint all arrests, both felonies and misdemeanors and must follow the protocols issued by the State Police. This policy requires that fingerprints be submitted to SIS electronically on a Live Scan Device.

h. Final authorization of the grant for electronic citation systems was issued by the state and we are awaiting installation of all electronic printers in our cruises at no cost to the town.

4. <u>State Updates:</u> (State House News Service)

   a. The State Auditor came out with her report on unfunded mandates which add to the financial pressures experienced by municipalities. The report flags gaps in State Aid for school transportation, education, veteran's benefits, and other services within cities and towns.

   b. Learning loss due to covid is significant statewide given the recent test results. The Education Commissioner announced last Tuesday that his department will be taking a more supportive role to accelerate student leaning, building a diverse and culturally responsive workforce, cultivating safe and healthy learning environments, and aligning DESE supports to a shared academic vision of deeper learning.

   c. The State still has ~$2 billion left in Federal Education funds remaining. Funds are predominantly from ESSER grants for which spending must be completed by December 31, 2024.

   d. Lottery sales skid continued through September. September sales were down $40.3 million over 2021. If this trend continues it does not bode well for future local aid from the State for Schools and Cities and Towns.

   e. The State DPU approved various Company requests to upgrade their electric grids. National Grid was the largest with over $300 million in upgrades to help manage the influx of clean energy suppliers. This approval comes at the same time some people want to slow the growth of large industrial solar projects citing the fact that over 4,000 acres of forest land, open space, and farmland have been cleared to build ground-mounted solar systems in Massachusetts. Another potential impact on the State's green energy initiatives is the fact that the developers of the State offshore wind projects have asked for a pause in the review of contracts for more than a month amid price increases, supply shortages, and interest rate hikes.

5. <u>Building Related</u>:

   a. The copper finials were installed last week at the Old Library, and the roof project -- give or take one further visit by the architectural/engineering firm, Gale Associates, to confirm that all of the punch list items will be complete by the end of next week! Our thanks again to the abutting residents who have graciously tolerated the noise and disruption.

   b. The COA @ 16 Lancaster County remains on track -- one may have noticed the new trim color, and the newly-paved (and ADA-accessible) entrance, although the bulk of the renovation is interior improvements and fit-out.

6. Cell Tower Update:
    a. A draft of the Cell Tower request for bids was received Monday; the Select Board will need to determine base rent, escalators, and ideal lease duration at an upcoming executive session.

7. Notice, Reminders, and Updates:

    a. FinCom updated its approach to the budget and has given the School Department and the Town budget numbers to work within based on revenue projections. (see attached)

    b. UU Updates :
        i. December 3 and 10 there is rehearsal for the Christmas Pageant in the sanctuary.

    c. We are seeking comments and/or suggestions from the public regarding the cable license renewal with Charter Communications; feedback regarding the cable operator's performance under the existing license and the cable-related needs and interests of the community should be directed to asktheTA@harvard-ma.gov.

    d. Time to start thinking about the Annual Town Report (see attached from Julie)

    e. Annual License Renewals will happen at the December 20, 2022 SB meeting.