Select Board Minutes
Tuesday, April 2, 2024
7:00pm

The Select Board Regular Meeting was held virtually in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, An Act Making Appropriations for the Fiscal Year 2023 to Provide for Supplementing Certain Existing Appropriations and for Certain Other Activities and Projects, and signed into law on March 29, 2023, this meeting was conducted via remote participation.

Select Board participants:
Charles Oliver, Erin McBee, Kara Minar, Don Ludwig
Rich Maiore was absent
Town Department participants:
Town Administrator Tim Bragan, Assistant Town Administrator Marie Sobalvarro, Executive Assistant Julie Doucet
Additional participants:
4th of July Chair Chris Chalifoux

4th of July Committee draft instructions for the parade
Committee Chair Chris Chalifoux reviewed the document outline which includes everything from the parade route, rules, decorations/signs, safety, and a code of conduct section. Town Administrator Tim Bragan explained the version in the packet included language that was previously deemed by Town Counsel as unlawful. Chalifoux indicated the two-sign limit will also be removed. He explained the committee is working on an electronic document for parade participants to sign up that will include a review of the parade instructions. The Select Board decided to formalize the instructions at their next meeting.

Minutes
By a roll call vote, Minar – aye, Oliver – aye, Ludwig – aye, McBee – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of 3/5, as presented.

Public Communication
Jason Cole, Warren Ave, drafted the citizens petition requesting the Select Board extend the lease of the Bromfield House. He appreciates recent efforts on ultimate disposition of the house however there has been much change since the last vote in 2021. He encouraged the Select Board to support efforts to allow the Afghan families to stay and pay their way while they get on their feet. Cole believes article 24 would benefit from Select Board support.

Meg Bagdonas, South Shaker Road, offered her perspective on the 4th of July parade code of conduct. She recalls during last year's parade the League of Women Voters being asked to remove a sign. She cautioned censorship is a slippery slope.

Eve Wittenburg, Prospect Hill Road, asked the Select Board to think again about hiring a professional search committee to have the ability to consider a diverse applicant pool. She offered it be done in tandem with the process started thus far.

Brad Besse, Westcott Road, revisited the discussion by the Select Board members on the use of clickers at the Town Meeting by elected officials. He researched and learned 43 communities have open town meetings and use clickers exclusively. He supports the rights of all voters to have confidentiality.

Stephanie Opalka, League of Women Voters, commented on the 4th of July instructions document. She asked the final version remove the code of conduct and simply be parade instructions. She suggested the two-sign limit be removed as well.

Staff Report/Updates (Attachment A)

Vote on Citizens Petition at Town Meeting
To see if the Town will vote to request that the Select Board delay selling the parcel of land, with the building thereon, known and numbered as 39 Massachusetts Avenue, Harvard, Massachusetts and described in the deed dated June 2, 1982 and recorded with the Worcester District Registry of Deeds in Book 7501, Page 344 ("the Property"), and allow it to continue to be used as a residence for refugees, with utilities paid by tenants, in exchange for a monthly payment equal to the monthly cost of insurance for the Property and a fair and appropriate rent, for a period of at least five years, or pass any vote or votes in relation thereto

Oliver made a motion seconded by Minar to take no action on this warrant article. By a roll call vote McBee – aye, Oliver – aye, Ludwig - aye, Minar - aye, the Select Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Energy Advisory Committee student appointment
By a roll call vote, Minar – aye, Ludwig – aye, Oliver – aye, McBee – aye, the Select Board voted unanimously to appoint Savannah Senykoff as a student member of the HEAC.

Discuss and vote on revised Town Administrator job description
Kara Minar proposed two additions to the job description:

1) Interface with MassDevelopment and other Town Administrators in Ayer and Shirley on matters regarding Devens
2) Supervises the Assistant Town Administrator/HR Director

Don Ludwig made a motion seconded by Kara Minar to submit changes to the personnel board. By a roll call vote, Ludwig - aye, Oliver – aye, Minar – aye, McBee – aye, the board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Recognize resignation of Ira Okene from the Council on Aging
A letter of thanks will be sent.

Water Supply Interconnection Agreement with Devens
Don Ludwig made a motion seconded by Kara Minar to approve the water connection agreement. By a roll call vote, Ludwig - aye, Oliver – aye, Minar – aye, McBee – aye, the board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Authorize funds for the Town-wide clean up
Charles Oliver made a motion seconded by Kara Minar to approve funds for the townwide clean up.
By a roll call vote, Ludwig - aye, Oliver – aye, Minar – aye, McBee– aye, the board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Letter regarding the Governor's economic development bill
Don Ludwig made a motion seconded by Kara Minar to approve the letter with amendment to the Governor and Dept of Housing and Livable Communities. By a roll call vote, Ludwig - aye, Oliver – aye, Minar – aye, McBee – aye, the board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Issue the liquor license to 204 Lanes new owner
Charles Oliver made a motion seconded by Don Ludwig to issue license the on-premise wine/malt license to 204 Lanes. By a roll call vote, Ludwig - aye, Oliver – aye, Minar – aye, McBee – aye, the board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Select Board Reports
Erin McBee reported the Planning Board has rescinded their Master Plan request for the town meeting.

Kara Minar reported the Transportation Advisory Committee has voted to contact owner of the Sorrento's Plaza and St Theresa's about parking for the commuter rail shuttle.

Kara Minar reported the Climate Initiative Committee plans to support adoption of the expanded stretch code for the fall town meeting. This will increase grant funding for the town.

The board members thanked member Erin McBee for all her efforts over the years as her term comes to an end. She decided to not seek reelection.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15pm.

Documents referenced:
4th of July Instructions – dated 4.2.2024
HEAC student appointment request – dated 2.13.2024
TA job description – dated 2.10.2018 w/additions
Okene resignation - dated 3.18.2024
Water Supply Agreement – dated 4.2.2024
Town-wide clean up request – dated 2.13.2024
Letter to the Governor – drafted 4.2.2024
ABCC approval – dated 3.28.2024

Attachment A

Staff Report, April 2, 2024

Building/Facility/Project Related:

- The clock and bell re-installation in the UU will went well – it's so nice to hear the bell again.

FY24 Operations:

- Town Meeting – Reminders: we will have the electronic voting company present in addition to our I/T contractor, and there will be an explanation at the meeting explaining how to cast your vote using the clickers. We have brought in a sound company (same company as hired at outdoor and gymnasium ATMs) to address the sound.
- Potential changes by the State to the Civil Service could pose a serious problem for recruiting in non-civil service communities (such as Harvard) as there would be a drain on talent, and officials are warning that in three to five years there will not be enough staff going into public safety positions.
- We sent the attached letter to Representative Sena's office requesting help for purchasing a drone for our police and fire departments.
- The MART shuttle continues to attract riders as we had 8 one-way trips last week.
- The Fire Department is expecting delivery of the Aerial truck in late April, almost three years following the placement of the order.

Projects:

- Wireless Tower: three companies attended the non-mandatory site visit last week, an additional company confirmed they'd be submitting a bid, and Isotrope is hopeful there will be a choice of respondents at the end of the month.
- Pump Station: General Contractor bid opening will be on Thursday, April 4th.
- Bromfield House Remediation: Contractor bid opening Thursday, April 11th.
- COA Solar: Follow-up efforts continue for the finalized interconnection service agreement, following receipt of conditional approval.

Staffing:

- After 44 years of service, Tony Shaw has retired from the Harvard Fire Department. Thankfully, he will be continuing as a Community Emergency Response Team member. We are grateful for his many years of service on the HFD.

Police Report:

- Activity: Between February 20,2024 (last report) and March 25,2024, the department addressed and initiated a total of 1150 service calls. These included both self-started tasks such as radar assignments and business checks, as well as dispatched calls, summonses, arrests, and various other incidents and investigations.

This event is a fantastic opportunity for our community members to meet and engage with our officers in a relaxed and friendly setting. It's also a special occasion as Franny the Comfort Dog will be joining us, ready to greet everyone with her infectious warmth and joy. We believe that "Coffee with a Cop" is more than just an event; it's a chance to build stronger relationships between our police force and the community we proudly serve. We're looking forward to seeing many familiar faces, as well as welcoming new ones. Don't miss out on this chance to connect, share stories, and enjoy a morning together with your local law enforcement officers and Franny the Comfort Dog.

FY 24/25 Budget Update:

- The Monty Tech bill came in and it is over original expectations by approximately $49,000. We are working to get more information regarding this matter as it may not impact us as currently expected.

- There have been no changes from the Finance Committee or State regarding revenue or expenses and probably won't be until after the Town Meeting when the State's House of Representatives come out with their budget.

Legislature/Beacon Hill: (information from State House News unless otherwise noted)

- House Speaker Mariano signaled some openness regarding a local option Housing Transfer Tax. Should it pass, the Town would have to adopt it.
- Mid-March tax collections were ahead of last year's collections. They are running approximately $59 million ahead of 2023 collections. This is the first month tax collections are up since before the start of fiscal year 2024.
- Shelter costs are pushing the State budget to its breaking point which could have a serious impact on the state budget at the end of this year and for FY2025. The shelter costs are so significant that House Speaker Mariano recently warned of a bleak budget outlook and stated everything would be on the table should budget cuts be necessary. This news was followed by a report that the profits from the lottery are trailing last year's numbers.

Notices, Reminders, Dates of Note:

- Town Meeting is this Saturday (April 6, 2024) at 12 noon.
- The Town Clerk's website lists important State and Federal election dates, and deadlines here: https://www.harvard-ma.gov/town-clerk/pages/2024-municipal-and-state-election-schedule Additionally, there's info on the Annual Town Election to be held on April 9: https://www.harvard-ma.gov/town-clerk/pages/annual-town-election-april-9-2024
- Lost Shoe Brewing has submitted a one-day license request for an event being held at the Harvard Alpaca Ranch on June 1. They were granted a license last year therefore a hearing is not required however it is at the board's discretion. Action on this request will be on the next agenda
- Annual appointment responses received as of today are enclosed.