



Select Board Minutes
Tuesday, September 19, 2023
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:

Rich Maiore, Charles Oliver, Don Ludwig, Kara Minar, Erin McBee

Town Department participants:

Assistant Town Administrator Marie Sobalvarro and Executive Assistant Julie Doucet

Additional participants:

Sarah Tate, Meg Bagdonas, Margaret Murphy

Appointments

Park & Recreation Commission

Chair Sam Levine introduced Sarah Tate for appointment to the commission. Tate is excited to help and Levine said the commission is equally excited to have her. By a roll call vote, McBee – aye, Minar – Oliver – aye, Ludwig – aye, Maiore – aye, the board voted unanimously to appoint Sarah Tate to the Park & Recreation Commission.

Cultural Council

Longtime residents Meg Bagdonas and Margaret Murphy gave their backgrounds and explanation of their interest in serving on the council. By a roll call vote, McBee – aye, Minar – aye, Ludwig – aye, Oliver – aye, Maiore – aye, the board voted unanimously to appoint Meg Bagdonas and Margaret Murphy to the Cultural Council.

Preliminary review of the playing fields needs assessment

Assistant Town Administrator Marie Sobalvarro shared the draft report. Sobalvarro worked with Park & Rec Commission members Marissa Steele, Bob O’Shea and Select Board members Don Ludwig and Rich Maiore. The comprehensive study began in June and encompassed the nine playing fields in town. She explained the focus was restricted to town versus other options due to cost constraints for the study. The Gale Associates study included data that a field should not be used more than 250 times per year and currently eight of the nine fields in town are consistently over used by that metric. They proposed two potential designs for a synthetic turf conversion that would address most of the deficiencies with field usage. Sobalvarro reported a Request for Proposals (RFP) has been advertised for the land behind Harvard Park. Proposals are due by October 10th. Kara Minar asked why other undevelopable lands in town were not investigated. Sobalvarro reiterated cost restricted the study to what we have now and how to maximize that. Once the assessment is finalized it will be shared more widely and the board will begin to plan the best path forward.

Public Communication specific to fields

Board of Health member Libby Levison requested they be involved in the next steps especially as it relates to artificial (turf) fields as this may affect public health.

HCIC member Ellen Leicher requested the Climate Initiative Committee be involved as well due to concerns about artificial (turf) fields.

Harvard Athletic Association President James O’Leary encouraged the process be approached as a town wide initiative that will benefit the entire community.

Rich Maiore reported the Open Space Committee continues to seek out potential properties in town. He is targeting action on this endeavor for the 2024 spring town meeting.

Public communication

Eve Wittenberg. Prospect Hill Road, came to follow up on a letter she sent requesting the Select Board consider implementing a bylaw requiring lease or voice control of all dogs in town when off private property.

Minutes

By a roll call vote, McBee – aye, Minar – aye, Ludwig – aye, Oliver – aye, Maiore – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve minutes from 8/29, as presented.

Staff Report/Updates (Attachment A)

Harvard Climate Initiative Committee appointment

By a roll call vote, McBee – aye, Minar – aye, Ludwig – aye, Oliver – aye, Maiore – aye, the board voted unanimously to appoint Pat Natoli to the HCIC as an associate member.

Announce School Committee vacancy

Rich Maiore announced the resignation of Sharlene Cronin from the School Committee and thanked her for her service. Anyone interested in being appointed to this vacancy through the next election is encouraged to submit a volunteer form by October 10th. The Select Board and School Committee will handle the joint appointment at the Select Board meeting on October 17th.

Revised Open Space Committee Charter

Rich Maiore explained the updated charge allows for two members from the School Committee with only one vote. This will assist with meeting quorum. By a roll call vote, McBee – aye, Minar – aye, Ludwig – aye, Oliver – aye, Maiore – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve charge as revised.

Deer management on the Warilla property and on the gravel pit

The Conservation Commission has asked the Select Board to approve the use of these lands for the deer management program. By a roll call vote, McBee – aye, Minar – aye, Ludwig – aye, Oliver – aye, Maiore – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve request to include the Warilla Land the town gravel pit on Stow Road into the Deer Management Program.

Cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) recommendation from the Personnel Board

HR Director Marie Sobalvarro reported the Personnel Board decided to utilize an average of the prior 12 months instead of simply a percentage decided on at one point in time. Based on this metric they recommend at 5.48% COLA increase for non-union and non-contract town employees. Charles Oliver was not convinced by the new approach and encouraged his fellow board members to delay voting until the September CPI. No vote was taken.

Review of warrant articles for the October 21st town meeting

Sobalvarro reviewed the articles submitted to date:

1. DPW Contract
2. Planning OSC-PRD
3. Personnel
4. Police/Personnel Civilian Traffic Control Agent – create position
5. Update the bylaws allowing the Civilian Traffic Control Agent authority to direct traffic
6. CPIC/School amend # of vans from 1 to 2
7. CPIC/Emergency Generator Fire Department
8. Restrictions on access to public property during designated hours
9. Local option room occupancy article
10. Authority to negotiate via donation, eminent domain, or purchase, subject to a later appropriation to fund the takings and/or purchases for Ayer Road project.

The warrant will be finalized at the October 3rd meeting.

Recognition of Police Chief James Babu

Rich Maiore publicly acknowledged a recent letter sent to the town recognizing the dedication Chief James Babu has when it comes to serving the public.

Select Board Reports

Kara Minar reported the HCIC is interested in sending a letter regarding the Boxborough Beaver Brook Development with respect to the traffic impact in Harvard. She will share the letter.

Erin McBee announced the Permanent Building Committee needs volunteers after the resignations of Corey Dufresne and now Cindy Russo.

Charles Oliver reported the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust is working toward affordable units at Emerson Green in Devens.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00pm

Documents referenced:

Tate vol form – dated 8.18.2023

Bagdonas vol form – dated 9.14.2023

Murphy vol form – dated 9.5.2023

School Com letter – dated 9.7.2023

OSC revised charge – dated Sept 2023

Con Com letter – dated 9.13.2023

CPI Doc – dated Sept 2023

Email letter from Todd Eldridge – dated Sept 2023

Attachment A

Staff Report September 19, 2023

Building/Facility Related:

- First draft and *revised* cost estimate (with deduct alternates) for DPW will be reviewed by the Permanent Building Committee at an upcoming meeting.

Appointments:

- Please see attached page for board and committee vacancies. We seek Select Board assistance re. increasing the number and diversity of volunteers. Encourage your friends and associates to check out the list of vacancies, and submit interest via <https://harvard.seamlessdocs.com/f/volunteerform>
- Our associate on the DEC (SB recommendation to the Governor for appointment) has moved out of town. Per counsel, although the intent of Chapter 498 may have been to have Town's DEC nominee(s) be residents of the Town(s), the law does not require it. Open question for the Board whether to revisit this 1-year associate appointment or continue with current appointment (thru 6/2024).

FY24 Operations:

- The DPW union members ratified their proposed FY24-FY26 contract on Monday; an overview and vote for the Select Board will be on the 10/3 agenda.
- The Harvard Green Condo settlement has been finalized; we will be getting the final \$40k owed, with a total of \$140k going to the MAHT.
- We remain watchful regarding CPA's November funding distributions. The State's FY24 budget dropped surplus funding for the CPA, and although home prices in the Greater Boston area are up 6.2%, home sales year-on-year as of August in Massachusetts are down 23.6%.
- Our GASB 74/75 (aka 'OPEB') report as of June 30 was recently finalized; current valuation shows our net OPEB liability increasing 0.1% to \$13.58M.

FY25:

- A draft of the summarized capital plan to be discussed at Thursday's CPIC is on the following pages. For FY25, \$2.1M of projects (comparably tracking last year's FY25 projection of \$2.4M) has been submitted for small capital. Large capital for potential vote and approval in FY25 are the DPW building and the Bromfield HVAC, totaling \$9.5M. The Capital Stabilization Fund balance as of today is \$2,616,245; the General Stabilization balance is \$1,596,107.
- Reminder: FY25 Budgets are due to jmullane@harvard-ma.gov by 10/6 at 10:00 a.m.
- CPC requests for FY25 are due by the end of this week via their online form: <https://www.harvard-ma.gov/community-preservation-committee/pages/cpc-application>

Notices, Reminders, Dates of Note:

- The Lions' Club has rescheduled their event for this Saturday from 3:00 – 9:00 p.m. on the Library field.

- The next regional household hazardous waste days at Devens are October 4 and 7, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
- Covid continues to resurface locally, and we continue to follow the CDC protocols. The FDA extension dates for the ihealth rapid tests (the tests most commonly received from the Federal government) can be looked-up here via the lot number:
<https://ihealthlabs.com/pages/news#expiration>
- Mosquitoes carrying the West Nile virus were found in Ayer. Although there have been no reported human cases, prevention tips to protect you and your family from mosquito bites are available here:
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/mosquito-borne-disease-prevention#prevention-tips->