



**Select Board Minutes**  
**Tuesday, January 9, 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:**

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

**Town Department participants:**

Assistant Town Administrator Marie Sobalvarro, Executive Assistant Julie Doucet, Finance Director Jared Mullane, EMS Coordinator Jason Cotting, Building Inspector Jeff Hayes

**Additional participants:**

Julie Darling, CPIC Chair Nate Finch

**Permanent Building Committee appointment**

Assistant Town Administrator Marie Sobalvarro introduced Julie Darling for appointment to the Permanent Building Committee. She has a background and skill set that is beneficial in this role. By a roll call vote, McBee – aye, Minar – aye, Ludwig – aye, Oliver – aye, Maiore – aye, the board voted unanimously to appoint Julie Darling to the Permanent Building Committee.

**Budget update**

Finance Director Jared Mullane shared the budget roll up that still has a deficit. He reviewed the list of financial warrant articles. He continues to await the state revenue numbers expected by the end of January.

**Capital Planning & Investment Committee recommendations** (Attachment B)

Chair Nate Finch reviewed the committee's process and the reasoning used to make their recommendations. The board members thanked Finch and his fellow committee members for all their hard work.

**Minutes**

By a roll call vote, McBee – aye, Minar – aye, Ludwig – aye, Oliver – aye, Maiore – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of 12/5, as presented.

**Staff Report/updates** (Attachment A)

**Act on ambulance service write offs (uncollectable)**

EMS Coordinator Jason Cotting reported these uncollectable amounts are over two years old. He explained the look back timeframe can be lengthy due to delays with insurance companies. Moving forward they will establish a more regular right off policy. By a roll call vote, McBee – aye, Minar – aye, Ludwig – aye, Oliver – aye, Maiore – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve write offs for uncollected ambulance service bills.

**Library Trustee Resignation**

The board members recognized the resignation of recognize Davida Bagatelle from the Library Trustees. A letter of thanks for her service will be sent.

### **Fruitland’s Museum –Board of Directors change**

Executive Assistant Julie Doucet explained their liquor license requires any changes to the board of directors be submitted to the ABCC for review and approval. By a roll call vote, McBee – aye, Minar – aye, Ludwig – aye, Oliver – aye, Maiore – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve the Board of Directors change for submission to the ABCC.

### **Addendum to Fivesparks lease**

By a roll call vote, McBee – aye, Minar – aye, Ludwig – aye, Oliver – aye, Maiore – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve the addendum to the Fivesparks lease.

### **Surplus of windows**

Building Inspector Jeff Hayes described the windows that were purchased with CPC funds for the Hildreth House but were never used. By a roll call vote, McBee – aye, Minar – aye, Ludwig – aye, Oliver – aye, Maiore – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve surplus of windows as described.

### **Act on recommendation from the Insurance Advisory Committee on 100% employee paid**

HR Director Marie Sobalvarro reiterated these offerings will be 100% employee paid and will not be offered to retirees. By a roll call vote, McBee – aye, Minar – aye, Ludwig – aye, Oliver – aye, Maiore – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve recommendation to offer dental/eye insurance.

### **Police and Fire Chief contracts**

HR Director Marie Sobalvarro confirmed the contracts are as was discussed in executive session previously. By a roll call vote, McBee – aye, Minar – aye, Ludwig – aye, Oliver – aye, Maiore – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve the contracts as presented.

### **Review of the FY24 Select Board goals**

Rich Maiore reviewed the list of goals providing status on the items. They expect more information to assist in determining the future of Town Fire & EMT departments and the next steps to improve and increase Town Playing Fields. They discussed ideas to improve resident engagement. Overall, they are making advancing progress on the goals.

### **Select Board Reports**

Erin McBee reported the Planning Board has completed their survey on the MBTA Communities Multifamily Guidelines and are discussing the three locations.

Rich Maiore reported the Park & Recreation Commission will be attending an upcoming meeting to discuss the report findings on the Harvard Park location for playing fields.

Rich Maiore reported the Devens Framework Committee is working on options for Vicksburg Square development.

Rich Maiore also advised members budget discussions will begin soon.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45pm.

### **Documents referenced:**

Julie Darling vol form – dated 10.23.2023  
CPIIC recommendations – dated FY25  
Ambulance write offs – dated 12.18.2023  
Licensing Authority Cert – dated 1.9.2024  
Trustees request letter – dated 12.6.2024

IAC Memo – dated 1.24.2024  
FY24 Select Board Goals  
Fivesparks lease addendum – dated 12.14.2023

## Staff Report, January 9, 2024

### **Building/Facility/Project Related:**

- DEP has approved the Project Approval Certificate for the Harvard-Devens Water System Interconnection project and has forwarded their approval to the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust. Next step is final approval for the loan.
- The Landfill project is moving along and the next step is to schedule the geophysical work and once that is completed then Tighe and Bond will coordinate with ConCom and schedule the drilling. It is anticipated that progress will be slow at first due to weather constraints but they expect by early spring to have the test pits completed and the wells installed with a round of sampling completed. There will be up to 25 test pits and four well couplets (one shallow and one deep well at each of the four locations). They will also install four landfill gas monitoring wells.
- The Police Chief is in the process of finalizing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the new lock system in the Public Safety Building. Additionally, he is planning upgrades for the elevator, expected to take place in late spring, as the required parts have a lead time of over 20 weeks.
- The Department of Public Health recently conducted their annual inspection of our prisoner cells, which passed after addressing a few minor adjustments. The Chief has arranged for all jail cells to be repainted, as part of our service agreement with Renie Detention Systems, the company that maintains our cells. Renie Detention Systems has also addressed all necessary ADA-compliant modifications for the jail cells as outlined in the ADA report.
- The PBC will be reviewing schematic layouts of the connector building (changing areas/lockers) and mechanic's garage at their meeting tomorrow.
- Solect relayed that 14MW of their projects are currently held in utility 'studies' at present: representatives of the PBC continue to meet with Solect to confer on the status of the COA Solar.

### **FY24 Operations:**

- The DPW had everyone on hand for this past snow storm, and while it was not perfect, it was the first time most of the new personnel had plowed for the Town. The more seasoned crew members are helping the newer members, post storm, to help improve the response to future events. The next weather event on Wednesday will be mostly rain and they are watching out for downed limbs, fallen trees, and potential flooding.
- MART Drop and Ride to Littleton train station started on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November and will continue daily Monday through Friday. There were 4 rides the week before Christmas, no rides the week of Christmas, and 2 rides last week.
- 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>

➤ Police Department Update:

- Activity: Between November 28, 2023, and December 19, 2023, the department addressed and initiated a total of 791 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. By the year's end, it is anticipated that the department will surpass 10,000 calls, marking it as one of our busiest years on record.
- Grants: The new cruiser laptops, that we received under the Byrne Grant from the Executive Office of Public Safety for \$28,594, have been ordered. The delivery and installation will happen within the next 60 days.
- Officers were mobilized during December for traffic enforcement throughout the town. These shifts are being paid with overtime from the \$14,990 grant under the Municipal Road Safety Program. These grants offer a valuable resource, empowering our police department with the essential adaptability to thoroughly tackle local traffic safety issues. The allocation of these funds will substantially boost our ability to foster a safer and more secure atmosphere for our community members.
- Training Update: The Police Chief and his department are committed to ongoing training and keeping certifications current. All officers are in the process of completing their annual in-service training at various police academies. Additionally, they have participated in specialized training programs, which include courses like "Operation of the Evidence Room for Evidence Officers," "Management of the Evidence Room," the FBI First Responder Course, an Opioid Awareness Seminar, and the "Identifying the Impostor" training, which focuses on tackling identity theft crimes.

**FY25 Budget:**

- CPIC has finalized their process and FinCom continues to work toward their recommendation to the Select Board. FinCom will complete their task by the end of this month and then the first meeting in February will be for the SB to tackle their review and set the course for Town Meeting and possibly electoral action.

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

- The current year tax revenue shortfall has now grown to a total of \$750,000,000 through the first half of the fiscal year. This puts next year's predictions on less stable ground and makes the 2025 budget outlook uncertain at best. If the State only realizes a 1.7% tax revenue growth factor, current estimates are between 1.7% and 3.2%, then there will be significant cuts in FY2025. **The Secretary of Administration and Finance along with the House and Senate Ways and Means Committee Chairs announced yesterday that they agreed to base the FY 2025 budget on a consensus revenue forecast of \$40.202 billion plus \$1.3 billion in surtax revenue.**

**Budget math (FY24 Revenue Estimate \$41.41 billion - \$1 billion reduction = \$40.41 billion for FY 24. New FY 25 Revenue Estimate \$40.202 billion means there is no new growth for FY 25.**

- We are heading toward potential mid-year cuts from the State, called 9C cuts. The last 9C cuts were in 2016. The State has withheld payments from FY24, some non-profits that rely on State funds have ceased new initiatives as they are fearful cuts will be coming, and the House Speaker, Mr. Mariano, has been quoted as saying “Those of us who have been around a while have sort of expected some sort of contraction – the severity is always the question”.
- 9C cuts were announced yesterday as the Governor cut \$375 million from the current fiscal year budget (see attached list of cuts). We are checking with our Department Heads to see how, if at all, any of the departments will be impacted.
- Some of the items that are placing further pressure on the future of the state budget are the following:
  - Ongoing shelter costs – no factual number on what this will ultimately cost.,
  - \$\$\$ to fix the MBTA,
  - Long-stalled tax relief will balloon to \$1 billion in FY25, and
  - Lingering uncertainty surrounding the possibility of the State having to re-pay the federal government some or all of the \$2.5 billion in ARPA funds, which was erroneously spent on unemployment aid during covid.
- The legislature looks like it will agree with the Governor’s plan of using interest generated by the Rainy Day Fund to help the Bay State compete for Federal Dollars. The Senate is poised to vote to approve the plan this

### **Notices, Reminders, Dates of Note:**

- Julie sent out the 2023 Town Report notice to all departments, boards, and committees and the deadline for submitting the material is fast approaching - January 18, 2024.
- The Running to Class 5K was moved from this past weekend, due to weather, to Sunday, January 28<sup>th</sup>.
- Harvard’s Climate Initiative has a number of events planned for January, February, and March:
  - January 20<sup>th</sup> 1-3 – Heat Pump Coaches (at The General)
  - February 6<sup>th</sup> 7:30-8:30 PM – Solar Options (ZOOM Webinar)
  - February 13<sup>th</sup> 7:30-8:30 – Know Your Land Understanding Conservation Restrictions and Chapter 61 (ZOOM Webinar)
  - March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2:00-4:00 PM (Snow date March 16<sup>th</sup>) – HC2 Climate Stories (Harvard Public Library Volunteer’s Hall)
- The UU Church events through February 3<sup>rd</sup> include meetings on Saturday mornings and January 10<sup>th</sup> at the Fellowship Building. Concerts on the 13<sup>th</sup> (limited attendance) and 20<sup>th</sup> (appx150 people) in the Sanctuary, memorial service reception on the 20<sup>th</sup> at 11AM and a memorial service w/reception on February 3<sup>rd</sup> at 1pm.

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