



**Board of Selectmen
Minutes
Tuesday, June 6, 2017 at 7:00pm
Town Hall Meeting Room**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by Vice Chair Alice von Loesecke in the Town Hall Meeting Room. Selectmen Stu Sklar, Kara McGuire Minar and Ken Swanton were in attendance as well as Town Administrator Tim Bragan and Executive Assistant Julie Doucet. Lucy Wallace remotely participated by phone later in the meeting.

Minutes

On a Swanton/Minar motion, the board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of 5/16 & 5/23 including the executive session, as presented.

Finance Committee introduction

Moderator Bob Eubank introduced their newest associate member Jennifer Finch. Her appointment will run through June of 2018.

Independent Audit Report

CPA and partner from Roselli, Clark & Associates Terenzio Volpicelli explained their responsibility is to express opinions on the financial statements prepared by the town based on their audit. He said Harvard is a triple AAA community that has a solid management team with policies and procedures in place. He was happy to report they did not identify any significant deficiencies. They discussed revisiting the enterprise fund that was set up for the town center sewer, new OPEB (other post-employment benefits) standards, addressing the town landfill and what impact the school building project may have. Volpicelli thanked the town and its staff for the opportunity to serve.

Public communication

James Breslauer, 130 Poor Farm Road, asked about the status of the town enrolling in the state's Community Compact program. Bragan said he was waiting on one piece of information from the state and once it was received he would be moving forward.

Sue Guswa, 8 Old Meadow Lane, spoke on behalf of the Council on Aging who met earlier in the day. They understand the importance of a new school (Hildreth Elementary School HES) and supports the project. She noted the population of seniors in town is 26% and growing. This project, if approved, will have a significant impact on the senior population in town. They ask the rest of the community not to lose sight of this especially when more services are needed for seniors.

Mark Buell, 237 Littleton County Road, said he has attended a large number of building committee meetings and recalls less expensive options besides those presented to the public in the survey. He said the current options increased quite a bit in cost and the committee has not done what it was tasked with which was providing a responsible unbiased choice for taxpayers.

Jeremy Crochiere, 2 Deerfoot Trail, moved to town a couple of years ago largely because of the schools. He has two young children who will be affected by the decisions made. With all due respect he disagreed with the previous speaker. He has attended many of the meetings where options were presented without any bias while keeping in mind what is best for the children. He feels new construction will provide the best and healthiest environment with the least disruptions to educators and children. He noted as a town that believes in the next generation let's give our children an environment they can succeed in. He understands the financial piece and is hopeful a happy medium can be found. He supports a new building.

Suzanne Allen, 179 Littleton Road, spoke on behalf of the Harvard Family Association. She has served as a liaison on this project for the association by attending building committee meetings. After various conversations eight four members feel strongly a new building is the best choice. She read aloud a letter of support. Some points made in the letter were having a building that will reflect the current style of teaching, less disruption to children and more tax dollars applied toward building structure instead of spent on modular classrooms. Given the cost associated with even the minimum investment to HES they feel strongly that investing in a new elementary school is good for the whole town and urge the Board of Selectmen to vote on moving forward with a full rebuild.

Nathan Finch, 165 Codman Hill Road, said alternative options is not what the Board of Selectmen is voting on tonight. They have two options before them renovate or build new. He said we bought a lemon which should have lasted longer. He understands cost is a factor however building a new building is likely a mere \$20 more in tax dollars compared to renovation.

Jason Cole, 67 Warren Avenue, has children at HES and serves on the visioning committee. He read aloud a letter supporting the construction of a new school signed by 41 residents in town. The two main reasons they support full replacement as opposed to renovation are minimal disruption to students/faculty and it is a modest increase in cost. He noted temporary classrooms add no value however a new school is a good investment. Cole admitted his children will benefit for a minimal amount of time and that this project is really for future generations.

Dennis Coyne, 9 Babbitt Lane, agrees with earlier sentiments expressed for support of a new building versus renovation. He feels this a more prudent way to spend tax dollars. He also believes a larger project will require less contingencies than a renovation. He said displacement of children is his biggest concern.

Alex Moussouris, 56 Park Lane, has two children who would be affected by the decision to renovate HES or build new. She confessed either option will be financially burdensome to her family however she still supports building a new school. Her primary concern is for safety and to avoid any health risks to staff and children. Despite efforts to minimize risk to exposing children to carcinogens she is not willing to take that risk.

Mark Buell, 237 Littleton County Road, believes the choice between the two options being offered is a false one. He said one prior option did not use modular classrooms and only demolished the k-wing after the new wing had been built. He tried to reassure concerns that contractors know how to handle hazardous materials. Buell said the 1988 portion of the building is a sound structure therefore why rebuild if it is not necessary.

Jen Menell, said her children will be affected by this decision and she 100% supports a new building. She is afraid a renovation will take longer and could become a financial risk if it does. She said the benefits outweigh the burden.

Jennifer Finch, 165 Codman Hill Road, noted many of the “nice to haves” are required by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) as educational benefits qualifying us for grant funds. She is hesitant to throw those grant funds away. She has experienced a building committee who has worked very hard. Finch added spending five million in tax dollars on modular classrooms does not add any value to our asset.

Jeff Porter, 345 Littleton Road, said as a new resident the biggest reason he moved to town was for the schools. He has a young daughter and based on the cost difference it makes complete sense to build a new school. It is a good investment.

Suzanne Allen, 179 Littleton Road, said the Harvard Families Association has 69 members but not all of them live in town. The 84 residents who signed the letter are town residents.

Christa Anderson, 120 Bolton Road, agrees with new construction and appreciates the hard work of the committee. She will not benefit directly. She asked what exactly the board was voting on.

Sklar answered by stating with this being the biggest project the town has ever done he wanted the Board of Selectmen to get a pulse of the town. He knows how important support from elected officials can be. He also wanted the Selectmen rep. Alice von Loesecke to know where her fellow board members stand on the issue.

Pete, Brown Road, strongly supports building of a new school.

Ron Senykoff, 11 Olin Lane, supports construction of a new school.

Hildreth Elementary School (HES) building project

Superintendent Linda Dwight and School Committee Chair Mary Traphagen gave a presentation which included a timeline dating back to 2014, public outreach, considerations and reliability of cost estimates. They reviewed alternative scenarios comparing costs with respect to technical, educational and logistics and financial. They included proposed design alternatives and project cost comparisons. In closing, Dwight said the committee has considered the issues of the 'affordability' of the project to the citizens of Harvard. They have undertaken a survey as a way to collect citizen opinion on this subject. The results indicate 2/3rds of the respondents prefer a new building. They have also heard a number of ideas to address the financial challenge including: Devens off-set; increased tax revenue, non-residential; and philanthropy.

Von Loesecke outlined the cost of various construction elements, impact of new debt on Harvard's tax ranking, existing debt service and projected, average tax bill projections and impact this new debt will have on S&P ratings for Harvard.

Swanton understands the importance of a new school but questions how this debt fits into the overall priorities of the town. He is concerned about the impact a project of this magnitude will have on Harvard's taxes and how that may hinder future needs. He wondered if a different education plan could have provided a project with a more reasonable impact to tax payers.

Sklar noted the town has not had an override in nine years. Minar is not convinced a renovation is the most prudent approach considering how the renovation went last time.

Lucy Wallace participated remotely in this part of the meeting because she was out of town. She asked how the debt exclusion would be presented on the ballot.

Further discussion ensued and the following motion was made:

Sklar made a motion seconded by Minar to support option A (renovation) or B (new building).

Wallace, Sklar, Minar, Wallace and von Loesecke voted to support option B (new building). Swanton does not support either so he abstained from voting.

Town Administrator report

Bragan informed the board of a ceremony to take place at Devens for an outgoing commander.

Bragan announced a notice of intent for removal from Chapter 61 from Adam and Evelyn Horowitz, 53 Woodchuck Hill Road however their agreement did not meet the required criteria. He is working with their attorney.

Bragan reported the only method allowable to restore funds to the Rantoul Trust account is by gift funds.

Bragan said DPW Director Tim Kilhart is requesting a change from rock salt to treated rock salt. He will bring the request to the Finance Committee.

Bragan said the 4th of July Committee has invited the board to participate in the parade with a float. The deadline is June 27th.

Farmers Market license

On a Sklar/Swanton motion, the board voted unanimously to approve the Farmers Market license for Aaronap Cellars LLC.

DPW truck borrowing

On a Swanton/Sklar motion, the board voted unanimously to move length of borrowing for the DPW heavy duty truck to ten years.

Charter Commission follow up

Bragan has been invited to meet with the commission on the 15th. He will ask for more detailed information on what problem the commission is trying to solve.

DPW Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Bragan explained this agreement was outside of the contract and will bring all employment anniversary dates in line with the rest of the town employees. On a Swanton/Sklar motion, the board voted unanimously to accept the MOU.

Special Town Meeting warrant

On a Swanton/Sklar motion, the board voted unanimously to support all five articles on page 1 and articles 6 – 9 on the second page.

By roll call vote, Swanton – Aye, Sklar – Aye, Minar – Aye and von Loesecke - Aye, the board voted unanimously to go past 10:00pm.

**** On a Swanton motion, the Board voted unanimously by a roll call vote: Sklar – Aye, Wallace – Aye, Swanton – Aye, Minar – Aye, to enter into executive session at 10:00pm, as authorized by Chapter 30A, Section 21. 3, to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares. Following the executive session, the Board will reconvene only to adjourn. ****

The meeting was adjourned at 10:20pm.

Documents referenced:

Finch vol form – dated 5.17.2017

Audit report – year ending 6.30.2017

HES building project – power point presentations dated 6.7.2017 and 6.6.2017

Farmers Market License request – dated 5.20.2017

MOU – dated 5.24.2017