



**Select Board
Minutes**
Tuesday, March 3, 2020 at 7:00pm
Town Hall Meeting Room, Harvard, MA

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by Chair Alice von Loesecke in the Town Hall Meeting Room. Select Board members Stu Sklar, Lucy Wallace, Rich Maiore and Kara Minar were in attendance as well as Town Administrator Tim Bragan and Executive Assistant Julie Doucet.

Commission on Disabilities Appointment

Resident Laura Bridges submitted her volunteer for the newly formed commission. She has mobility issues and work experience in this area as well. She is pleased to have an opportunity to contribute. On a Wallace/Maiore motion, the board voted unanimously to appoint Laura Bridges to the Commission on Disability.

Release of Right of First Refusal – 33 West Bare Hill Road

Attorney Sherril Gould and her client Chris Callahan came to request the Right of First Refusal release. Gould explained the property had previously been classified as Chapter land however when a lot on the property was sold a year ago the land did not qualify under the requirements for this designation. The title company is requiring a release be signed by the Harvard Select Board to codify this. Any taxes owed have been paid. Gould will follow up with the Assessing Department. On a Minar/Wallace motion, the board voted unanimously to release right of first refusal on 33 West Bare Hill Road as amended to reflect 61 B language.

Borrowing authorization – DPW Heavy Duty Dump Truck

On a Minar/Wallace motion, the board voted unanimously to endorse advance of funds in lieu of borrowing for article 23 dated May 4, 2019.

FY21 Budget Review and Discussion

Bragan said the FY21 budget will be acted on at the next Select Board meeting. Finance Committee Chair Don Ludwig and member Jennifer Finch were present along with Capital Planning and Investment Committee (CPIC) Co-Chair Jon Seeley.

Bragan distributed the cherry sheet noting revenue is lower than expected. They are utilizing conservative numbers in an effort to align with the Governor's budget.

School Committee Chair John Ruark was present to answer school department related questions. Von Loesecke requested deeper analysis in an effort to provide a reliable estimate with respect to school choice estimates.

Ludwig reported an expected increase in local receipts based on feedback related to excise revenue.

Bragan distributed a memo on the Finance Committee's recommendation on CPIC proposals for FY21. CPIC did not support the \$900,000 for the Old Library Roof project. They did approve on a 3 to 2 vote the Hildreth House Phase II project. The Finance Committee voted to accept the CPIC's recommendations for funding of the small capital items. They also voted to approve the middle school ramp project and did not approve the old library roof or the Hildreth House Phase II project. Bragan included the 10 year excluded debt service projections for current and potential debt minus the old library roof.

Wallace asked for clarity on the transfer station figures. Bragan explained the program is in deficit of \$56,000 this year. The Select Board will need to seriously consider how this service will be offered in the future. He explained an increase on the sticker and/or bag prices is inevitable.

Wallace asked about the revolving fund for Park and Recreation field fees. Bragan explained this will facilitate field usage as a self-funded activity.

All departments and committees/boards have been informed of changes made to their budget requests. Ludwig said the Finance Committee is interested in any suggestions others may have with respect to the budget and additional revenue sources.

Bragan explained small warrant article requests have been reviewed and prioritized. These are items being requested above level service. Some of the requests have been removed for consideration for this town meeting.

Bragan and Ludwig outlined the areas within the FY21 budget that have been reduced or eliminated to decrease the deficit as much as possible. The Select Board members had questions and asked for clarification in some areas. They were agreeable with the recommendations acknowledging the need for an override question in the amount of 320,000 to balance the budget.

School Committee Chair John Ruark fielded questions on the school department budget. Ruark reported the School Committee has adjusted their budget request to reflect level services. Von Loesecke reminded Ruark additions to the budget made throughout the prior year by the school department are above the budget amount that had been approved for FY20. Ruark acknowledged that point. He indicated the school department has decided to utilize additional Devens funds to offset reductions. Bragan asked if that approach is sustainable. Ruark admitted it probably is not a long term solution therefore something they need to consider. Von Loesecke asked about retirements for the coming year. Ruark said their School Business Manager is working on these projections. Bragan cautioned waiting to address budget shortfalls will only complicate the issue in the future. Wallace asked what the school will do if the override does not pass. Ruark said there will be forced to make cuts to services and staff. Von Loesecke expressed her interest in the School committee making a commitment to not have mid-year budget additions especially those that add hours or personnel.

Von Loesecke emphasized the importance of a thorough review of all budget revenues and expenses. We must go to the taxpayers knowing we did all we could.

Bragan asked the board to vote authorizing emergency spending related to the water issue in February. On a Minar/Wallace motion, the board voted unanimously to approve emergency expenditures for water issues authorized by Chapter 44 Section 31 with language written.

Bragan received a request from the Finance Director Lori Bolasevich to increase demand fees from \$10 to \$30. This fee has never been increased. The board was supportive of this request. On a Sklar/Wallace motion, the board voted unanimously to increase collectors demand fee to \$30 effective immediately.

Bragan asked the board members to confirm the start time of the Spring Annual Town Meeting to be held on Saturday, May 2nd. On a Sklar/Maiore motion, the board voted unanimously to start the spring ATM on Saturday, May 2nd at 1:00pm.

Bragan announced all warrant articles are due by Thursday, March 12th.

Bragan reported the Assistant Town Administrator Marie Sobalvarro is investigating ways to provide health insurance cost savings, DPW Director Tim Kilhart will be at the next meeting to go over the Ayer Road Project.

Von Loesecke reported the chair of the Permanent Building Committee Cindy Russo is reviewing comments on their policies and will be following up with the Select Board.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:17pm.

Documents referenced:

Bridges vol form – dated 2.6.2020

In Lieu of borrowing form – dated 3.3.2020

Budget memo – dated 3.2.2020