Select Board Minutes
Tuesday, February 2, 2021
7:00pm

The Select Board Regular Meeting was held virtually in accordance with the Governor's Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L.c.30A. S.20.

Select Board participants:
Alice von Loesecke, Stu Sklar, Lucy Wallace, Rich Maiore, Kara Minar

Town Department attendees:
Town Administrator Tim Bragan, Assistant Town Administrator/HR Director Marie Sobalvarro and Executive Assistant Julie Doucet

Additional participants:
Board of Health Chair Sharon McCarthy, Council on Aging Chair Beth Williams, Council on Aging member Guy Oliva, HEAC member David Fay, National Grid Rep. Scott Farrar

Update on vaccination roll out in the area
Board of Health (BoH) Chair Sharon McCarthy said they fully support their mission to prevent the spread of diseases. Their goal is to facilitate the ability for as many residents as possible to receive the Covid-19 vaccination. They will ensure this happens as soon as possible and as close to home as possible. She acknowledged the vaccine doses are low and demand is high therefore when supply of doses increases the supply of injection sites could be a limiting factor. The BoH wants to develop a plan to avoid further delays once more doses are available.

McCarthy outlined the steps necessary to achieve their goal:

- Coordinated and collaborative planning with NAHB, emergency services, and Region 2 Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP)
- Identify most plausible configuration of a clinic
- Identify of all necessary personnel and equipment
- Develop logistics plan
- Conduct community outreach on vaccine and encourage participation

McCarthy asked the Select Board to endorse and support planning activities and willingness to utilize MEMA and FEMA funds for vaccination work. She said these expenses will be 100% reimbursable. McCarthy has spoken with Nashoba Board of Health Director James Garreffi several times. Nashoba has not yet begun planning for phase three when the larger population is eligible for the vaccine but will be the regional entity tasked with organizing local clinics. All local Boards of Health will help and support them in their efforts.

Town Administrator Tim Bragan reported the Council on Aging Director has recently been informed Harvard will receive 12 doses. CoA Director Debbie Thompson is working to determine eligibility and will facilitate distribution of vaccines appropriately. He indicated Harvard EMS, Fire/Police Chiefs are working with the BoH on an emergency plan. They are in agreement a regional effort is the best approach to offering vaccination clinics.

McCarthy reported Devens has a satellite site however it is not listed on the state website. She suggested residents in Devens contact MassDevelopment directly for details. She reported the Department of Public Health (DPH) has indicated more doses will be distributed. This distribution will include pharmacies as well. She noted the state's distribution plan targets areas that have been hit particularly hard by the pandemic therefore a community such as Harvard may see more of a delay in vaccine distribution.

The Select Board members agreed the Board of Health is the appropriate entity to take the lead on this initiative and will fully support their efforts.

Town Administrator Report

Council on Aging (CoA) has interest in the medical building on Lancaster County Road

CoA liaison Lucy Wallace asked Bragan to add this topic to his report. She explained that she had been approached by CoA members Guy Oliva and Beth Williams regarding the old Vanguard Medical building at 16 Lancaster County Road and has had a "for lease" sign up for several months. Guy reached out to the owner further learning the building is available for sale or lease. They believe this option could possibly save the town money while providing the additional space needed. The 20-yr old building is one-story, has a generator, air conditioning, gas, and several handicap accessible bathrooms. It also has a fairly new roof. Guy though it might be easily converted from doctor offices to a space for COA offices and senior center activities. The location is close to conservation trails, the McCurdy Track and the post office. In addition, the Planning Board's concept for a shared use walkway from Dunkin Donuts to the town line would enable seniors from Bowers Brook to walk to Lancaster County Rd and provide Foxglove residents easier access as well. Wallace wondered how seniors feel about not being in the town center. Williams and Oliva said it is rare for seniors to walk to the Hildreth House. The town procurement officer Marie Sobalvarro reminded the CoA in order for the town to buy or lease property procurement laws need to be followed, which require the first step of issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking a building to lease or buy in the C District. The RFP should be specific as to needs. Wallace with work with the CoA members on an RFP In order to proceed with considering this option, funds will be needed to cover schematic design for the building selected through the RFP should be requested at the spring Annual Town Meeting.

By a roll call vote, Minar – aye, Maiore – aye, Sklar – aye, Wallace – aye, von Loesecke – aye, the board voted unanimously for a placeholder warrant article to investigate another building in Harvard for use by the CoA.

Town Administrator Report continued

Bragan reported on the following items:

- There is a nuisance dog issue on Tahanto Trail that we have been trying to address without the need of a hearing but it seems that we will need to do something more and I am waiting for a report from Mr. Willard on this issue.
- A letter was received from Emily Ferguson requesting an appeal of the decision by the Board regarding her dog "Diesel". Bragan asked the board to review the previous issue and decide at their next meeting if they would consider revisiting.
- The Fire Chief has successfully obtained a grant for a back-up generator for Town Hall. This was originally taken out of the building project and will be a positive addition to the building. Also the Fire Chief and procurement Officer need the Select Board to surplus the tanker truck so we can dispose of it. The truck is a 1989 R Model Mack tanker truck. It holds 3,000 gallons of water, has a 750gpm pump. By a roll call vote, Sklar – aye, Maiore – aye, Minar – aye, Wallace – aye, von Loesecke – aye, the board voted unanimously to surplus the tanker truck.
- The deadline for all financial warrant articles is a week from this Friday, February 12, 2021, per the bylaw. He asked for other items.
- On another Town Meeting note, last year the Board decided to hold two Town Meetings with the one in the spring to be used for financial warrant articles and the one in the fall would be for zoning and bylaw changes. I presume this year will be the same, yes/no? The board confirmed they will continue with a split town meeting however if articles are time sensitive those constraints are flexible.
- Commonwealth Fusion Systems has filed a MEPA application for a site on Devens opposite New England Studios.
- Unfortunately the power transfer for the double pole at the rear of Town Hall did not happen last Friday due to weather and will be rescheduled.
- The University of Massachusetts in Amherst is conjunction with Indiana University is conducting a study that examines the direct and indirect impacts of Covid-19 on households. They have asked communities to post a short survey on their website which we have done.
- The Emergency Rental/Mortgage Assistance Applications are now available on-line.
- The next meeting of the Board we will have further discussion on Cell Tower; Bragan asked if Board members had any additional input prior to the next meeting. Are there things you would like to see or not see. Also, we still have a site off of Stow Road that abuts Rte. 495 (the gravel pit) and Bragan was wondering if the Board would like to have that looked at by Isotrope or another cell coverage company. Von Loesecke has spoken with David Maxant from Isotrope about a more detailed map of cell coverage. She suggested utilizing funds in the Select Board purchase of services account.

- The Town Clerk has sent an email regarding the upcoming Town election and whether or not the Select Board has decided on a Caucus or Nomination Papers to determine eligibility for the election. Given the state of the pandemic and lack of mass vaccinations Bragan recommended candidates filing Nomination Papers as to opposed holding Caucus. The Board agreed with Nomination Papers.
- A letter was received from the Chair of Conservation Commission regarding the need for a full-time Conservation Agent. This has significant budget implications and staffing issues and needs to be discussed with the Finance Committee before a response or decision is made.
- Cherry Sheet and Budget Update: Per the earlier State Consensus Revenue Forecast the anticipated increase is State Revenue is 3.5% above the FY21 adjusted budget estimates and this is what the Governor added to the Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA). For Harvard this increased this aid line by ~$55,000. The governor also provided full funding for Y1 of the Student Opportunities Act which increased our total by $27k. Due to other revenue decreases and assessment and charge increases the net impact on Harvard in a loss of ~$31,000. However we budgeted for a loss of ~$90,000 which means we are ok right now and this is just the first step of the State budget process. As a reminder we're not using the Governor's Numbers as we've already made that mistake once and the budget process will go on for months.

Minutes

By a roll call vote, Wallace – aye, Sklar – aye, Maiore – aye, von Loesecke – aye, Minar – abstain (not present at the meeting), the board voted unanimously to approve regular and executive session minutes for 1/19, as presented open session.

Select Board appointment policy

Kara Minar suggested removing political merit in second paragraph and Alice von Loesecke suggested removing geographic local in section 5. By a roll call vote, Wallace – aye, Maiore – aye, Minar – aye, Sklar – aye, von Loesecke – aye, the board voted unanimously to adopt policy as amended.

Discuss Old Library lease addendum

Wallace explained the lease should be amended to reflect an extension in lease term due to the forced closure during the Covid-19 pandemic. Town Counsel is reviewing the draft. A final version will be acted on at the next meeting.

Update on LED streetlight program

HEAT member David Fay has been working with Scott Farrar from National Grid on the energy and cost saving program. Fay indicated there are 44 streetlights in town with a few antique lights in Still River. They discussed the brightness of LED lighting and what options the town has. Farrar said the program is very flexible. He did say in the next year or two a warmer LED option will be available. The Select Board members expressed their support for the conversion waiting until the softer version is available. Fay will continue to work with Farrar to determine the best options for Harvard. He will contact the Police Chief for his input on the public safety aspect.

Select Board Reports

Stu Sklar reported Park & Recreation Chair Bob O'Shea proposed a land swap idea to accommodate the need for playing fields. He suggested land near Bare Hill Pond or other Conservation lands. This concept is being fully vetted.

Rich Maiore reported the Bromfield House Committee is currently reviewing the feedback received from their survey requesting ideas from residents on what to do with the house and property. They are planning for a recommendation to the Select Board in early March.

Alice von Loesecke will work on a draft diversity acceptance statement suggested by the local group ARM & ARM for consideration at an upcoming meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45pm.

Documents referenced:
BoH presentation – dated 2.2.2021
Appointment policy – dated 2.2.2021
Lease Addendum #5 – dated 2.2.2021