Select Board Minutes
Tuesday, December 21, 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:
Stu Sklar, Rich Maiore, Kara Minar, Erin McBee, Alice von Loesecke

Town Department attendees:
Assistant Town Administrator Marie Sobalvarro, Executive Assistant Julie Doucet, Police Chief James Babu, Police Officer Tyler Forbes, Superintendent Linda Dwight, Community & Economic Development Director Chris Ryan

Additional participants:
CRWG Chair Ellen Leicher, CPIC Chari Nate Finch, Ambulance Director Jason Cotting, Bromfield Trustee Pete Jackson, School Committee Chair SusanMary Redinger, Commission on Disabilities Chair Davida Bagatelle

Police Department announcements
Chair Stu Sklar began by congratulating Sargent James Babu on his promotion to Police Chief. Chief Babu took a moment to thank those involved in the hiring process. He expressed his gratitude for the opportunity and is extremely honored to have been chosen to lead the department. He will focus on a community style of policing and is excited to move the department forward.

Chief Babu was pleased to introduce new officer Tyler Forbes. Chief Babu is impressed with Forbes's experience in various departments from larger cities to small towns. He is also encouraged by Forbes interest in serving the elderly population in Harvard. Chief Babu expects Forbes will be a great addition to the department.

Officer Forbes thanked Chief Babu for the opportunity. Forbes grew up in Marlboro and started his career in public safety when he was 21 years old. He is looking forward to policing in Harvard and using his experience to make a positive impact. He understands the value social media can have on creating a positive outlook on policing. He is also an avid sports fan and enjoys interacting with members of the community.

Assistant Town Administrator Marie Sobalvarro presented the Select Board with a contract that adequately reflects the 18 years of dedicated service Officer James Babu has given to the Town of Harvard. By a roll call vote, Minar – aye, von Loesecke – aye, Maiore – aye, McBee – aye, Sklar – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve contract for Chief James Babu as written.

Climate Initiative Committee; finalize charge/membership
Community Resiliency Working Group (CRWG) Chair Ellen Leicher came to review the draft charge and discuss the membership. She indicated the charge as written enables the committee to continue their work utilizing state grant funds. Rich Maiore questioned the membership size as typically the Select Board does not create committees of that size. Leicher said based on the workload and the enthusiasm of the current volunteers she is confident nine members with two associates is the best way to proceed.

Assistant Town Administrator Marie Sobalvarro confirmed the committee charge will be announced seeking volunteers for the Select Board to consider. It was decided the committee membership will mirror the CRWG with representatives from the Energy Advisory Committee, Planning Board, Board of Health, Harvard Conservation Trust, Agriculture Advisory Commission, Conservation Commission, two citizens at large and a member representing public safety. In addition, two members of the Energy Advisory Committee. By a roll call vote, McBee – aye, Minar – aye, Maiore – aye, von Loesecke – aye, Sklar – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve charge for Climate Initiative Committee with makeup to mirror the CRWG including two associate members and public safety.

Capital Planning & Investment Committee (CPIC) recommendations
CPIC Chair Nate Finch reported the committee has not finalized all their votes. He noted they have voted in favor of the Fire Dept. air tanks, fire ponds and the Ayer Rd study. They voted against the DPW building design study. The Park & Rec request on the athletic fields has been put on hold for now. Alice von Loesecke spoke in favor of the Fire Dept. fire apparatus noting this item has been moved and delayed already.

School Committee Chair SusanMary Redinger explained they had difficulty attaining quotes for the Bromfield locker room therefore the facility manager will have his staff do the work in house.

Commission on Disabilities Chair Davida Bagatelle explained the accessibility self-evaluation plan analyzes the town as a whole to identify areas where accessibly improvements are necessary in an effort to set goals moving forward. She said grant funds may be available and if that is the case the request can be withdrawn.

Park and Rec liaison Kara Minar said a phased approach could be taken with the athletic fields. Von Loesecke mentioned the prior ideas for land swaps between park & rec and the Conservation Commission should be revisited prior to purchasing of other land. All agree the Select Board need to take a position on this item. Cop

The Fire Station study has been reviewed by the Permanent Building Committee. The original study was really for a larger community therefore the scope of work must be revised by the Select Board.

The CPIC will be meeting tomorrow to continue their process.

Ambulance billing rates
Director Jason Cotting said billing rates have not been adjusted since 2011. He is recommending an adjustment based on the current Medicare rates. In addition, Cotting asked the Select Board to consider reviewing rates on an annual basis. By a roll call vote, von Loesecke – aye, Maiore – aye, McBee – aye, Minar – aye, Sklar – aye, the board voted unanimously to accept proposed rates from HAS in terms of billing rates and will review these rates an annual basis moving forward.

Minutes
By a roll call vote, Minar – aye, von Loesecke – aye, Maiore – aye, McBee – aye, Sklar – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve minutes from 11/9, 11/16 and 12/2.

Staff Report/Updates (Attachment A)

Public communication
Bev Rodrigues. Old Littleton Road, encouraged the Select Board to remember a majority in town voted in October to sell and preserve the Bromfield House. On behalf of those who voted for it she asks the board to affirm this vote by making a commitment to move forward with the sale. She is excited about the plan for Afghan refugees to use the house in the interim. She understands there are legal issues to tend with as well.

Continue discussion on Bromfield House
Stu Sklar began by sharing information he learned from Town Counsel Mark Lanza that a special town meeting will not be necessary to lease the property. He explained the citizens petition voted on in October empowered the Select Board to sell or lease the property. Sklar supports leasing the property for housing Afghan refugees until a long-term plan can be decided upon. Lanza told Sklar if the town and the Bromfield Trustees come to an agreement and petition the probate judge he suspects there would not be any issues. Erin McBee offered her professional opinion that the ultimate disposition of the property must be prioritized for the town to be granted this use in the interim. Rich Maiore emphasized the importance of finalizing a long-term plan for the property instead of focusing solely on the short term. Alice von Loesecke agrees with Maiore the long-term plan must be a priority. Kara Minar added leasing the building provides the time and opportunity to finalize the longer-term decision. Maiore has spoken with the Bromfield Trustees and is confident they will support the lease if the Select Board enters into an agreement about the longer-term plans. Discussion ensued around terms of the lease and agreement between the town and the trustees for final disposition of the Bromfield House. Bromfield Trustee Pete Jackson was invited to speak and said the trustees can schedule a meeting expeditiously to discuss details of an agreement on the short and long term plans for the Bromfield House. Superintendent Linda Dwight said the school department is excited about the opportunity to educate not only Afghan refugee students but also assist their families with learning English as a second language. By a roll call vote, Minar – aye, von Loesecke – aye, Maiore – aye, McBee – aye, Sklar – aye, the board voted unanimously to have member Erin McBee meet with the trustees to draft a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the disposition of the Bromfield House with a short term lease for resettlement of Afghan refugees. Von Loesecke suggested a one year lease. The motion was amended to include lease for up to 18 months. All voted unanimously in favor of the amendment. This item will be on the January 4th meeting agenda.

Appointments
Commission on Disabilities
By a roll call vote, von Loesecke – aye, McBee – aye, Maiore – aye, Minar – aye, Sklar –aye, the board voted unanimously to appoint Sue Tokay to the Commission on Disabilities.
Revenue Ideation Committee
By a roll call vote, Minar – aye, von Loesecke – aye, Maiore – aye, McBee – aye, Sklar –aye, the board voted unanimously to appoint Jane Biering & Dan Daly to the Revenue Ideation Committee.

Finalize Liquor License conditions for 204 Lanes/Harvard Bowling Lanes
By a roll call vote, Minar – aye, McBee – aye, Maiore – aye, von Loesecke – aye, Sklar –aye, the board voted unanimously to approve sale of wine/malt conditions and issue license for 204 Ayer Road LLC.

State grant appropriations versus Select Board appropriation
Community & Economic Development Director Chris Ryan reported grant from the state has been awarded and can cover the $45,000 for phase 1 of the Ayer Road Commercial District Study. The Select Board had previously voted to use funds from the Rantoul Trust account however that may not be necessary now. Ryan wanted to consult with the board on this development. The Select Board agreed it is prudent to use the grant funds if available instead of the trust account.

Fire Chief's request for use of burning permit funds for next phase of fire station study
The Select Board members are agreeable to this request but first wish to review the scope of work. Assistant Town Administrator Marie Sobalvarro will relay this to the Fire Chief and schedule this as agenda item for the second meeting in January.

Annual license renewals
Executive Assistant Julie Doucet prepared the annual listing confirming those license holders that were in good standing with all town departments and all taxes are paid to date. Friendly Crossways located at 247 Littleton County Road is typically issued annual licenses for common victualler and innkeeper. The Board of Health (BoH) provided a memo notifying the Select Board that the facility does not currently hold all required approvals from the Board of Health. The BoH recommended the Select Board consider not issuing the requested licenses unless the above BoH approvals have been issued.
By a roll call vote, Maiore – aye, Minar – aye, McBee – aye, von Loesecke – aye, Sklar – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve annual licenses in good standing.
The board members had additional questions on the memo from the BoH and will follow up with applicants at a subsequent meeting. They decided to approve the licenses through the end of January.
By a roll call vote, Maiore – aye, Minar – aye, McBee- aye, von Loesecke – aye, Sklar – aye, the board voted unanimously to extend Friendly Crossway licenses for the month of January. They will revisit this item at a subsequent meeting.

Code of Conduct
Assistant Town Administrator Marie Sobalvarro shared an updated version of the code after feedback was requested and received from various town boards/committees/commissions. She asked the board members to read through this draft, contemplate and provide feedback for discussion at a future meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00pm

Documents referenced:
MVP summary dated – Dec2021
Climate Initiative Committee draft charge - dated 12.7.2021
CPIC rating sheet – FY23
Ambulance billing; proposed rate sheet & change chart - dated 1.1.2022
Volunteer forms: Tokay – dated 12.2.2021, Biering – dated 11.18.2021, Daly – dated 12.20.2021
Annual license renewals – dated Jan2022
Draft Code of Conduct - dated 12.21.2021

Attachment A

STAFF REPORT and UPDATE: Tuesday, December 21, 2021

- Transfer Station update:
  a. On Saturday, Christmas Day and Saturday, New Years' Day, the transfer station will be CLOSED. Saturday hours have been rescheduled for the following Monday (12/27: 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., and 1/3: 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.)
  b. Kudos to Tim Kilhart for working with the non-profit Big Brother/Big Sister, which has supplied new clothing and book donation boxes at the Transfer Stations. They will be regularly picking up for re-use the take-it-or-leave-it items remaining at the end of the day, in addition to the boxes for clothing/textiles and books.
- Health Insurance:
  a. MIIA and BCBS will be meeting with Town Hall staff in early January to discuss the logistics for the enrollment/re-enrollment process, billing, and payment remittance. Attached FYI is a list of the member communities in MIIA/BCBS; this was a component of the Trust Agreement the Board signed at their meeting on 12/14.
  b. MNHG, our current provider, had a Board meeting last week and opted to push back their FY23 rate-setting to early February 2022; the fund balance is declining more than expected as 5 months of data indicate Tufts EPO claims are outstripping Tufts premiums by $1M, Fallon EPO claims outstripping premiums by $550k.
- Surplus: Two auctions closed yesterday on govdeals.com, netting the Town $18,500. We will be putting two of the school's vans on govdeals.com this week.
- The Finance Committee approved the reserve fund transfer for the cell tower balloon test at their last meeting, logistical details with Isotrope are being worked out.
- Facilities (Permanent Building Committee-related):
  a. Old Library: MJM, the contractor for the Old Library, is working on submittals with expected on-site mobilization in April 2022.
  b. HH2: A draft scope proposal from DAI, the selected (and former) architect was reviewed by a subset of the PBC yesterday; follow-up with the architect would be during the week of the 27th
- The State held its FY23 Consensus Revenue Hearing today, a range of predictions but seemingly a slower/lower increase in revenues for FY22→FY23 (than from FY21→FY22), prior to looking at the impact of inflation.
- Grants:
  a. We'd received news that our application to the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) for $29k was not funded. These monies would have funded making the beach house handicapped accessible; although disappointed, Town admin will be pursuing dual submissions to CPIC and the MOD for FY24.
  b. We were awarded a Cybersecurity Awareness Training Grant from the state for our staff (this encompasses assessments, bi-monthly assignments, testing users via phising campaigns, and a final assessment).

- Yesterday, our Zoning Enforcement Officer served a stop-work order to Pine Hill Village until Friday 12/24. This was violated earlier today, and was enforced this morning by our ZEO (and HPD staff); the ZBA is aware of the situation.

- Electricity:

    a. Our Community Choice Aggregation provider released Q3 performance (attached); the program remains competitive for residential users.

    b. As of December 1, we have contracted with Direct Energy Business (fixed at $0.105 kwh) for 36 months due to their price and flexibility when the Solect array is operationalized. Our former 36-month contract with First Point was at $0.0986/kwh

    c. Solect Energy sent the required regulatory documents to the Town Hall for signature last night; we have completed and returned them to Solect (who are ideally also completing and returning National Grid's required documents as the Interconnecting Customer).

- Following Friday's five-minute Special Town Meeting (70 attendees, 5 minutes!), DOR approved our tax rate on Monday, 12/20. Shortly after, the Assessors office entered the bill file into Munis. The file was then sent to our third-party vendor who is doing their review of the file while the town does their review of the file. The review process is expected to be finished by end-of-day Wednesday, one day before the vendor's deadline (this is a flexible deadline). Bills will be printed and mailed by the vendor next week.

- COVID-related:

    a. We were not one of the 102 communities to receive rapid tests from the Commonwealth, but we will be able to order tests on state contract (price, vendors, and availability TBD) in late January 2022.

    b. The testing bottleneck (~3+ days for an appointment) for maybe-symptomatic staff has made things trickier. Our claims to the State's COVID-sick leave program (up to $850, up to 40 hours @max $25/hr per employee) has been used multiple times and reimburses within a week.

    c. The BOH will be mailing a notice to residents regarding the MassNotify site later this month – the QR codes are posted at Town Hall (and in this packet). The BOH coordinated (with COA & HAS) a booster clinic at Foxglove yesterday, and Nashoba BOH will be running a regional booster clinic the first week in January. Stay tuned for further news from the BOH.

- Staffing:

    a. Responses to the Town Clerk's advertised position have unfortunately been low.

    b. Four staff are being commended for their years of service to the Town of Harvard (2 @ 10 years, 1 @ 15 years, 1 @ 20 years)

- FY23 Budget for the Town: Tim distributed budget Qs this weekend to departments, answers are due back on January 4 and will be distributed to FinCom and the Select Board that day.

- Board and Committee submissions for the Town Report are due to Julie Doucet (jdoucet@harvard-ma.gov) by January 31, 2022. Select Board members are also encouraged to begin thinking of their Citizen of Note recommendation.

- Following tonight's appointments, there will be 21 vacancies on Select Board-appointed Boards and Committees.