



Select Board Minutes
Tuesday, January 4, 2022
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:

Town Administrator Tim Bragan, Executive Assistant Julie Doucet, Finance Director Jared Mullane

Additional participants:

Bromfield Trustee Pete Jackson, Friendly Crossway owners Mary Helen & Keith Turner, Resident Bill Ference perspective buyer of Friendly Crossways

Monty Tech School Committee Representative

Stu Sklar announced Amy Morton gave her resignation as Harvard's rep on the committee. Resident Jeanne Bartlett has stepped forward to fill the vacancy after speaking with Superintendent Linda Dwight. Bartlett's son attends Monty Tech and has been extremely happy there. She is excited to help spread the word on what Monty Tech has to offer. By a roll call vote, McBee- aye, Maiore – aye, Minar – aye, von Loesecke – aye, Sklar – aye, the board voted unanimously to appoint Jeanne Bartlett as the Monty Tech Rep.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Consultant

Finance Director Jared Mullane is recommending the town consider hiring a CPA firm to assist with managing the ARPA funds. Mullane has been in contact with the firm Clifton Larsen Allen (CLA). He presented the board with a proposal that includes assistance with determination of allowable expenses under ARPA, assistance with tracking and reporting of ARPA funds and other ARPA related finance support as requested. Mullane has had a positive experience working with Hannah York from CLA while employed in Andover. He recommends additional professional assistance in the event there is a federal audit later down the road. Mullane plans to utilize grant funds to pay the CPA firm. The Select Board members agreed this was a good idea and will act on the proposal after review by Town Counsel.

Minutes

By a roll call vote, Minar – aye, von Loesecke – aye, Maiore – aye, McBee – aye, Sklar – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve minutes of 12/7, as presented.

Staff Report/Updates (Attachment A)

Bromfield House – Memorandum of understanding/Lease

Erin McBee reported she met with the Bromfield Trustees to discuss their concerns and convey the position of the Select Board. She said the trustees are amenable to leasing the building for up to a year to provide a location for the resettlement of Afghan refugees in conjunction with an agreement that will determine the future disposition of the Bromfield House. McBee would expect the Attorney General's office to be supportive of the lease if an agreement between both parties has been codified. She

proposed they move forward on an agreement with the trustees to be presented to the probate court. McBee indicated as long as the parties agree to lease the property in the interim the actual terms of the lease will be under the purview of the Select Board with advisement from Town Counsel. She noted the trustees would consider an extension of the lease as long as the sale of the property is not delayed. All parties agree proceeds from the sale of the property will be utilized for educational purposes. By a roll call vote, Minar – aye, Maiore – aye, McBee – aye, von Loesecke – aye, Sklar – aye, the board voted unanimously to direct town counsel to move forward on agreement for sale of the property to the probate court with prior review by the Select Board. In the meantime, Town Administrator Tim Bragan will follow up with the Sewer and Historical Commissions related to this project. Alice von Loesecke recommended the lease not be extended past 18 months in order to protect the town as best we can. Stu Sklar will work with Bragan and Town Counsel to finalize the MOU.

Update on Friendly Crossways

Town Administrator Tim Bragan was not present at the previous meeting but after reviewing the Board of Health (BoH) memo and letter from the Turners, basically his understanding is the BoH is asking the Select Board to hold off on issuing permits to Friendly Crossways until they have satisfied requirements for food service. Owners Mary Helen and Keith Turner were present to explain without these permits they are unable to continue their operations.

Stu Sklar invited prospective buyer Bill Ference to give an overview of what he and his wife envision for the property if they do indeed purchase it. Ference intends to purchase the property and simply continue the existing use that has been done for many years. He and his wife love the beauty of the property and want nothing more than to maintain it as the Turners have done all these years. They feel Friendly Crossways is a quintessential part of Harvard and preserving the property is of utmost importance to them.

Town Administrator Tim Bragan previously distributed information to Mr. Ference with details on the “powers test” that may be required to determine if there has been a change in use at the property. Due to the potential sale of this property and questions arising related to specific permitting, the overall operations at Friendly Crossways have come under more scrutiny at this time. Kara Minar suggested Mr. Ference set up a consultation with the Planning Board and the Building Inspector to better understand how best to proceed. Alice von Loesecke pointed out a significant change in the number of events and/or size of events could trigger a change in use. In addition, von Loesecke said the Select Board must support the BoH compliance with their regulations.

Mary Helen Turner thanked everyone for their support. She expressed how happy they are to have potential buyers that will care for the property as they have. They are perplexed about what has changed with the retail residential kitchen permit they had received in the past. Turner said the BoH told her this permit no longer exists. She asked for further guidance navigating these next steps in order to continue operations until the new owners take over the business. Bragan offered to follow up with the Board of Health sanitarian Ira Grossman.

Discuss and act on the Code of Conduct

Tim Bragan reminded the board this topic is one of their goals for FY22. Alice von Loesecke was pleased with the changes in the enforcement section however continues to have questions related to the implementation portion. Bragan explained the code is an outline on how you’re supposed to act as a volunteer. He said in most cases people act accordingly and properly. The code basically codifies what is

expected of all volunteers similar to how employees have policies in place that outline what is expected of them while representing the Town of Harvard. Kara Minar asked to have a set process added in prior to the Town Administrator stage. She also suggested a reference to the policy in place for employees on conduct. They will revisit a final version for action at their next meeting.

Select Board Budgets and Overall Budget Changes

Stu Sklar asked if more items can be funded through the capital fund. He is interested in funding options that could relieve the tax burden from taxpayers and taking advantage of low interest rates while they last.

Tim Bragan reviewed the Select Board budget narrative. This included the budget goals, financial expectations, personnel and expenses. In addition, Bragan included a narrative with respect to proposed changes and opportunities due to various offices moving up to the Hildreth House.

The Select Board members will review in more detail and this topic will be revisited at the next meeting.

Select Board Reports

Erin McBee requested time on the next agenda to go over the review of the Select Board policies & procedures she has worked with Alice von Loesecke on.

Kara Minar reported Senator Jamie Eldridge and Rep. Dan Sena are encouraging MassDevelopment President Dan Rivera to continue working with towns on affordable housing.

Minar reported the Revenue Ideation Committee will meet again next week.

Alice von Loesecke reported the school teachers contract has been approved for one year with a 2% COLA for FY23. They will begin negotiations for the next three year contract in January. She said the teachers are aware a change in health insurance costs will be included in negotiations.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30pm.

Documents referenced:

Morton resignation letter – dated 12.21.2021

Bartlett vol form – dated 12.22.2021

CLA proposal – dated 12.1.2021

Code of conduct – dated Dec 2021

SB budget docs – dated FY23

Staff Report January 4, 2022

1. Town Clerk:
 - a. We are receiving applications for this soon to be vacated position with preference granted to responses received before January 14.

2. Pond Road Water Project:
 - a. The initial portion of this project (installing the temporary water main) is finishing up this week.
 - b. Tighe and Bond have submitted the technical piece for the next phase to Department of Environmental Protection Water Division in Worcester. The DEP has to review the proposed plans and provide feedback before we can put this out to bid. Their review can be lengthy and take a few months. Once we get their approval, I will let the Board know and Tighe and Bond will put it out to bid. Once we get the prices back, I will bring it to the Board for your approval of the use of ARPA funding for the project.

3. COVID
 - a. As of today, we went back to a Team A and Team B approach with one half of the staff in the building and the other half working from home. (See attached)
 - b. We have also handed out KN95 masks to employees to wear (see email).
 - c. Marie put together the latest CDC guidelines and we supplied that to employees as well (see attached).

4. Police Contract:
 - a. We received notice from the Police Union that they wish to begin negotiation on their next Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). We responded to their request and are in the process of setting up dates to meet.

5. Fire Truck:
 - a. The new Fire Truck was finalized and agreement made with the company by the end of last year and in doing so we avoided a \$160,000 increase. Cost is \$1,601,563.41

6. Budget
 - a. Attached is a copy of the Budget Meetings FinCom will be having and the Select Board members are invited to attend as you see fit. Tomorrow night's meeting is just reviewing the smaller items and I will be answering questions or getting answers for them. The real meetings begin next week.

- b. The Finance hearing happened in Boston last month and the consensus was that FY22 revenue would continue to be robust and that FY23 would be somewhat sluggish. To quote the MTF, “To sum up, the Commonwealth will enjoy robust tax revenue growth through the end of FY 2022, but revenue growth will slacken in FY 2023. This is due to labor shortages that offset inflationary wage growth, less capital gain revenues, and only modest growth in sales tax revenue. While MTF did not enumerate external threats, it is worth noting that all of this takes place against a backdrop of inflation uncertainty, a persistent pandemic, and rising global geopolitical risk, any one of which could materially impact our forecast.”(See attached documents)
- 7. Just a follow-up on the discussion about a balloon test for a cell tower. The Finance Committee approved the Reserve Fund Transfer and we are coordinating with Isotrope to have the balloon test done either this month or next month. We will keep the Board informed of the progress.