Select Board
Minutes
Tuesday, February 26, 2019 at 7:00pm
Town Hall Meeting Room, Harvard, MA

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

Park & Recreation Commission appointment
Commission Chair Doug Thornton introduced Michelle Lauria for appointment to the commission. Lauria is fairly new to town and has always volunteered in the communities she lives in. Lauria is an attorney by trade and has experience as a lifeguard and in recreation. On a Sklar/Maiore motion, the board voted unanimously to appoint Michelle Lauria to the commission.

Open Space Committee proposal
Conservation Commission Chair Don Ritchie and Harvard Conservation Trust member Tom Cotton came to propose the Select Board create a committee separate from the Conservation Commisison to fulfill their mandate of protecting open space in Harvard. This includes proactive land protection that will maintain Harvard's rural character, protect water resources, protect agriculture, and increase climate resiliency. They foresee this committee identifying possible parcels for active recreation and future municipal uses. The Select Board members were reluctant about the request asking for clarify on how this is different from what the commission already does pondering if creation of a new committee is really necessary. Ritchie explained the commission is extremely busy with wetland enforcement admitting open space does not get the attention it deserves. The membership being proposed includes a member from the Conservation Commission, Harvard Conservation Trust, Planning Board, Bare Hill Pond Watershed Management Committee and Agriculture Advisory Committee. Von Loesecke asked for a detailed breakout of how responsibilities will be divided. Wallace suggested this be a topic for discussion at the Select Board's annual strategic planning session in the spring.

Community Preservation Commission (CPC) funding decisions
Chair Didi Chadran and members John Lee and John Mark Walker came to share the committee's funding decisions and to answer questions from the Select Board. Chadran reported nine requests were received this year and the CPC is able to fund seven of those requests. The Select Board members were pleased with their decisions and thanked the CPC for their efforts.

Public Communication
Hank Fitek, 213 Stow Road, is a long term taxpayer, Harvard Help volunteer and is on the Friends of the Council on Aging. Fitek announced the Friends have purchased a van that will be wheelchair accessible. He implores the Select Board to support funding of operational costs.

Devens Enterprise Commission (DEC) annual report
Harvard DEC Reps. James DeZutter and Duncan Chapman were present along with Land Use Administrator/Director Peter Lowitt. DeZutter and Chapman took a few moments to comment on useful sections within the DEC annual report and to compliment the staff at DEC on their efforts over the past year. Lowitt highlighted 2018 projects. He also spoke about the shuttle service they are providing with MART for employees who work on Devens. The shuttle runs daily to and from Fitchburg/Leominster and to the train station in Littleton. In addition, Lowitt announced Devens has been recognized as a 4-STAR Community for national excellence in sustainability.

Harvard-Devens Jurisdiction Committee letter
Wallace distributed a draft letter prepared by herself and Victor Normand initiating a Devens Permanent Government Framework Committee. The letter will be sent to Board of Selectmen and Town Administrators in Ayer and Shirley. The Select Board members were supportive of the letter.

Minutes
On a von Loesecke/Maiore motion, the board voted unanimously to approve minutes for 1/26, 1/29 & 2/5, as presented.

Town Administrator Report

Bragan reported Colonial Power Group provided an update regarding status of Harvard's Municipal Aggregation. They informed us that we would not hear until mid-March at the earliest as DPU takes 6+ months to process them. This could take longer this time as DPU also had to divert resources to the Merrimack Valley gas situation and a water pipe burst at their building which also disrupted their processing of applications.

Bragan has a list of MMA Legislative Breakfasts which will provide FY20 budget updates and legislative initiatives He reminded board members to register. He will attend and report back.

Bragan along with the Superintendent and Police & Fire Chiefs will be meeting with Representative Benson later next month to discuss budget issues with her. He asked board members to provide him with any topics they may have to add.

Bragan has begun researching deployment of 5G networks and what can be done to protect Harvard's rights. He provided information to the board members and will add this to an upcoming meeting for further discussion.

Bragan reported Harvard has been accepted and enrolled in the AARP Age Friendly Community Program. Community & Economic Development Director Chris Ryan shared a list of grant opportunities under the AARP program.

Bragan announced the interim OPEB report has been received. He is working with the Actuary to get some answers to the question as to what caused our liability to go from $23,742,507 in 2017 to $34,003,522 in 2018. Our funding target has been 60% of the gross number which means that our target was $14,245,504 for 2017 and is $20,402,113 in 2018. Our current fund balance as of June 30, 2018 is $2,703,231. Obviously we have to wait for the final report to get any answers but we can start thinking of any strategies to increase funding and reduce our overall liability.

Bragan explained to meet the Board's goal (from last June) to add the Facilities Manager tasks to a current Building Commissioner employee position he has been working on the details. He determined that adding the Facility Manager Tasks to the Building Commissioner/Zoning Enforcement Officer Position and having the DPW Director oversee the funds and contract out for the work was the best approach. This eliminates a conflict between the Facilities Manager function and the Building Inspector function since the Building Inspector could not inspect work he was contracting for. From that point he began working with current staff to move this forward. In late January early February the Board asked if we could have this in place in March. He has learned from a Board member that this was not the case and that they thought we would be having interviews for this "new position". He asked for further guidance from the board members. It was apparent there had been a misunderstanding on how best to handle this process. Was it a new position or simply adding duties to the current position? After some debate on how best to proceed it was decided to revisit this topic at the next meeting.

Currently, Bragan said the budget status is that we are around $260+ thousand in the red and the School and Town Departments require $150,000 (each) in cuts. They are waiting for some final numbers to come in and will meet tomorrow night to see what all of their options are.

Planning Board Rep. on CPC
On a Minar/Maiore motion, the board voted unanimously to appoint Kristin Kelley-Munoz as Planning Board Rep. on the CPC.

Town Charter
Bragan asked the board members to think of areas within the Town Charter that may need to be changed. He will include those changes in the Annual Town Meeting Warrant.

Caucus Warrant
On a Maiore/Sklar motion, the board voted unanimously to endorse caucus warrant for March 18, 2019 at 7:00pm in the Town Hall Meeting Room.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:28pm.

Documents referenced:
Lauria vol form – dated 10.16.2019
Open Space Committee proposal – dated 1.17.2019
CPC funding decisions – dated FY2020
DEC 2018 annual report
Harvard – Devens draft letter – dated 2.22.2019
Caucus Warrant – dated 3.18.2019