

Select Board Minutes

Tuesday, November 3, 2020 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:

Chair Alice von Loesecke, Rich Maiore, Kara Minar, Stu Sklar, Lucy Wallace

Town Department attendees:

Town Administrator Tim Bragan, Assistant Town Administrator/HR Director Marie Sobalvarro, Executive Assistant Julie Doucet, Facilities Manager Jeff Hayes, Community & Economic Development Director Chris Ryan

Additional participants:

National Grid rep. Laura Napolitano, Park & Rec Chair Bob O'Shea, Planning Board Chair Justin Smith

National Grid upcoming pole hearing – Oak Hill Road

National Grid Representative Laura Napolitano explained this request is for two poles on a public right of way that will provide service up a private drive. The two homeowners on the private way are aware of the line going up the driveway. Town Administrator Tim Bragan has spoken with abutter Don Green who has no issues with the proposal. Bragan explained National Grid is interested in beginning the project sooner than the actual hearing that is set for November 17th thus why the discussion on this agenda. The board members agreed there would be no penalties if National Grid begins the project now.

Update on the old library roof

Facilities Manager Jeff Hayes has proposed a metal eaves water diverter instead of a tarp to stop the water infiltration to the building. He has received pricing of \$18,750. The diverters would be installed around the entire perimeter of the building. He expects this to help patch the leaks noted in the Gale Report. Hayes will utilize funds from the facilities management fund for this project. Hayes noted this is a temporary measure that can last up to a year. He reported the contractor can start the project in early December.

Senior Housing Bylaw timeline & process

Community & Economic Development Director Chris Ryan and Planning Board Chair Justin Brown provided an outline of their timeline and process moving forward. Brown reviewed their phased approach following a monthly timeline. Ryan added the phases will flow together with surveys included to assist with crafting questions for the various focus groups. As they make revisions the drafts will be posted on the town website for easy viewing. Minar noted December can be a tough month to hold focus groups and suggested maybe they start sooner. As a former Planning Board member, she recommended they focus on what is achievable as a first step with plans to continue refinement of the bylaw.

Update from the Commission on Disabilities

Commission Chair Davida Bagetelle came to discuss their draft bylaws taken from the Mass Department of Disabilities. The document was reviewed with some suggested revisions from the Select Board members and Town Administrator. They also discussed options with respect to term limits. Bagetelle explained with members maybe only available to commit for a short time having an initial one year term and then two year terms seems more reasonable than having three year terms. The Select Board members were open to this concept. In addition, Bagetelle asked if the Select Board would consider adopting Chapter 40, Section 22G which would allow

allocation of fines collected for parking in a handicapped spot for use by the commission. The board members felt this was a fair request.

Public Communication

School Committee Chair Susan Mary Reddinger read a statement from the School Committee regarding the possible changes to health care for employees. (Appendix A)

Council on Aging appointment

CoA Chair Beth Williams was please to recommend Nancy Weber for appointment. By a roll call vote, Wallace – Aye, Minar – aye, Maiore – aye, Sklar – aye, von Loesecke – aye, the board voted unanimously to recommend Nancy Webber for appointment.

Minutes

By a roll call vote, Wallace – aye, Minar – aye, Maiore – aye, Sklar – aye, von Loesekce – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve minutes of 10/20, as amended.

Town Administrator Report

Bragan reported on the following items:

- COA Director, Debbie Thompson, has been chosen, among others, as a COA Director of the Year. Everyone knows what we have a magnificent COA Director in Harvard. This is a wonderful recognition of COA Directors and Debbie in particular for the work they do and she does on behalf of “her” seniors and our Town especially during these difficult times.
- Follow-up from last meeting – The Select Board did not pick a date to implement the new fees and needs to advise what its wishes are. Jeff is looking at the Plumbing, Gas, and Electrical pay issue and that will be ready for review in December. I would suggest setting January 1st as the date to implement all of the changes that were made. The board agreed with the January start date.
- The Town received word that we have been awarded a Sustainable Materials Recovery Program Municipal (SMRP) Grant in the amount of \$6,650 (see attached) this year which is \$1,400 increase over last year’s \$5,250. The reason for the increase is that we received four (4) additional points due to implementing the SMART program.
- The meeting in Lancaster regarding the new large scale automatic machine gun range at South Post is next Monday (November 9, 2020) and when I get the meeting info I will pass it on to all of you. As stated in my email on Monday they received and incorporated the questions from the Town.
- Attorney Hank Naughton, Napoli Law, contacted me with respect to the Town joining a class action suit regarding PFAS/PFOA. I checked with Town Counsel and his recommendation is as follows, “I advise that the Town proceed with the free evaluation and investigation...” He goes on to say that “a decision can be made after that is done.” Mr. Naughton expressed the following, “I am happy to speak with you and your Board at any point to answer any questions that may exist, no obligation required.”
- A group of us (Tom Murphy (NV5), Pete Jackson (Bromfield Trustees), Manny Lindo (Historical Commission), Kara McGuire Minar (Select Board), Tim Kilhart (DPW Director), and myself) met last Thursday morning regarding the Pond Road pole location and the guide wire location which is necessary for the new school project. Everyone agreed with the location of both and the Board will get this item at their next meeting. Our next meeting will deal with the potential walkway along the inside wall along Pond Road.
- Yesterday the Governor discussed the pandemic and as Massachusetts’ numbers continue to rise he is instituting further restrictions for gatherings (indoor and outdoor) and new requirements for face coverings while in public even if social distancing can be met. (see attached orders)
 - Stay at home advisory between 10PM and 5AM unless grocery shopping, address health needs, walking, or going to or coming home from work.
 - Gatherings: (There are exceptions but this is the gist)

- Indoor – goes from 25 to 10 and nothing continuing after 9:30 PM even in your home.
 - Outdoor – goes from 50 to 25 and nothing continuing after 9:30 PM even in your home.
- Face Coverings must be worn out in public even if social distancing can be maintained. Few exceptions.
- The November budget update is such that the State is in its interim budget for five months now and hopefully by Thanksgiving the legislature will have a budget in place for the remaining seven months. The attached was a somewhat positive article from the State House News Service regarding comments made by Governor Baker with respect to the FY22 State Budget (see attached).
- The DPW has started (11/1/2020) their winter schedule, which we are trying this year for the first time. This is similar to other communities and we will evaluate it at the end of the season. The schedule is now five days per week (Monday through Friday) from 7AM to 3PM.
- The Board will be reviewing their office budget and other Select Board related budgets at the meeting of the 17th.
- Town Office, COA and Library employees will be taking the Friday after Thanksgiving off once again this year. Also, given the likelihood of smaller family and friend gatherings on Thanksgiving we anticipate that more people will be preparing for a different Thanksgiving and will close Town Offices at 3PM to allow our employees to get last minute items and prepare to celebrate the holiday.
- We will be having a hearing for Carlson Orchards on December 1, 2020 and on December 15, 2020 the board will have before them license renewals for 2021.
- This year Christmas falls on a Friday and once again we will be closing the offices at 1PM on Christmas Eve and as usual New Year's Eve day will be a regular work day for everyone.

Discuss jurisdiction over the town common areas with Park & Recreation Commission Chair

Park & Rec Chair Bob O'Shea said the commission has been discussing the idea of having the Select Board retain jurisdiction over the common areas instead of the commission. O'Shea believes this will make the process for use of the common simpler. At their meeting last night he said the commissioners were not unanimous in this idea. He said some commissioners were in favor, some against and others that did not have a preference. O'Shea noted with this possible change some budgeting areas will need to be addressed such as costs for fertilizer & lime, electricity and associated costs for use of the Civic Rec program. O'Shea shared the current rules and regulations the commission adheres to for use of the common. The board members agree with the concept and instructed the town administration staff to assist with the details.

Review report on Tax Title properties

Bragan said the list of delinquent tax payers will be advertised as in the past and these properties are currently in tax title. He said the tax taking process can take up to a year. Rich Maiore will bring the list to the Open Space Committee for their input.

Discuss noise ordinance

The town does not have a noise bylaw and most complaints are from construction projects. The Select Board members agreed to ask the Building Inspector to add verbiage on permits that states construction hours are Monday through Saturday 7:00am to 6:00pm and no earlier Sundays than 10am or what he may advise.

Discuss a Select Board policy encouraging board/committee members set up a dedicated Gmail account for town business

Kara Minar has been working on how to propose encouraging volunteers to use a dedicated Gmail account solely for town business. She explained the main reasons for this are to minimize issues with personal email addresses if a public records request or open meeting violation were to come up and to have some uniformity in addresses. Minar proposed first initial last name and then the Harvard zip code: example KMinar014511@gmail.com.

The board members liked the idea and agreed if any volunteer currently has a town business email address already they would not need to change it. An email will go out to all volunteers about the new procedure.

Discuss a Select Board policy for use of free cash/OPEB funds during financial crisis

Due to the current financial climate the board will wait until early next year to revisit this topic.

Acknowledge resignation of Brian Wickman from the Commission on Disabilities

The board recognized the resignation and will send a letter of thanks.

Select Board Reports

Stu Sklar reported the War Monument Restoration Committee is finalizing the names for the memorial this week.

Alice von Loesecke said the Capital Planning & Investment Committee has begun reviewing requests.

Lucy Wallace is working with Chris Ryan, Willie Wickman and Mark Mikitarian on the Mass Cultural grant for the old library roof.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:09pm.

Documents referenced:

Pole petition request – dated 10.12.2020

PB – timeline and process – dated 11.3.2020

Com on Disabilities – email dated 10.28.2020 and draft bylaws date Oct 2020

Draft Park & Rec article – dated 11.3.2020

Tax Title Report – dated 10.21.2020

Wickman resignation letter – dated 10.29.2020



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November 3, 2020

Dear Select Board Members,

The School Committee is asking you to not make a proposed change to the Town of Harvard's Employee Health Care Insurance Provider from Minuteman Nashoba Health Group (MNGH), to Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA) or, at the very least, to delay taking any action for a year. While we appreciate the interest in considering actions that could decrease the burden on Harvard taxpayers, it is also important to recognize the financial strain this move will impose on the majority of town employees at a time when many are already under difficult circumstances. Additionally, with only this year's contract in place for the teachers, forcing a change, that will cost more for some, adds an avoidable negative impact.

The Harvard Teacher's Association is almost unanimous in their opposition to this change with 93% of responses in a recent survey indicating their desire to stay with MNHG. The same is true of an additional 14 employees of the school district that are not part of the HTA with 12 employees opposed and only 2 in support. Many of these employees cited the following reasons for their desire to stay with the current configuration:

- Imposing a change during a pandemic adds work and stress to employees who are already highly concerned for their health due to challenging work circumstances and conditions.
- The new plan offering for Blue Cross/Blue Shield eliminates all dental coverage, a benefit currently included under the popular Fallon option offered through MNHG.
- Future rate hikes under the new plans are unknown and potentially significant.
- There is a decrease in the wellness reimbursement ranging from \$150 to \$400 per family in some instances.
- Members enrolled under the current plan who have chosen Fallon as their provider will experience an increase in costs at a time when future pay increases are unknown.
- The impact of changing practitioners, especially for families needing pediatric behavioral health care, during a time when children and adolescents are experiencing high rates of depression and anxiety and wait times for receiving care have risen to 6-12 months, could be potentially devastating.

We stand in support of the teachers and staff who are against making this change. Since the majority of the town's employees work in the school district, we felt it was important to underscore the 6-1 vote against making this change.

We thank you for your consideration and the time and effort you have made on behalf of the town's employees and its residents.

SusanMary Redinger
Chair, Harvard School Committee