



Select Board Minutes
Tuesday, May 9, 2023
7:00pm

The Select Board Regular Meeting was held virtually in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, An Act Making Appropriations for the Fiscal Year 2023 to Provide for Supplementing Certain Existing Appropriations and for Certain Other Activities and Projects, and signed into law on March 29, 2023, this meeting was conducted via remote participation.

Select Board participants:

Erin McBee, Kara Minar, Charles Oliver, Don Ludwig
Rich Maiore was absent.

Town Department participants:

Town Administrator Tim Bragan, Assistant Town Administrator Marie Sobalvarro and Executive Assistant Julie Doucet

Additional participants:

Lucy Wallace, Michele Girard

2022 Report - Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Wild & Scenic Stewardship Council

Council members Lucy Wallace and Michele Girard presented the annual report. They highlighted the community grant and land protection grant programs. They have started the conservation breakfasts which have been a great success. They encouraged everyone to visit their website.

Public Communication

Kathleen Doherty spoke on behalf of the Harvard Educators Association (HEA). Doherty explained the HEA will take every opportunity to speak publicly to settle a fair contract expeditiously.

Kellie Carlucci serves as the president of the HEA and is on the negotiators team. She also spoke briefly about their intent to settle a fair contract as soon as possible.

Staff Report/Updates (Attachment A)

Act on One Stop Growth grant letters for the DPW Director

Town Administrator Tim Bragan explained the first letter is for the Devens waterline interconnection. By a roll call vote, Oliver – aye, Ludwig – aye, Minar – aye, McBee – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve letter. Bragan explained the second letter is for safety improvement on Stow Road. By a roll call vote, Minar – aye, Ludwig – aye, Oliver – aye, McBee – aye, the board voted unanimously to approve letter.

Climate Initiative Committee appointment

By a roll call vote, Minar – aye, Ludwig – aye, Oliver – aye, McBee – aye, the board voted unanimously to appoint Stacia Donahue as associate member to the HCIC.

Ginny Thurston Scholarship

Don Ludwig and Charles Oliver volunteered to review the letters of interest.

Update on annual appointments; discuss ideas to recruit volunteers

Executive Assistant Julie Doucet distributed information on those individuals interested in being reappointed for another term. The Community Preservation Committee will require the board to interview applicants as two incumbents want to continue, and two new volunteers have expressed their interest in serving as well. This may also be the case with the Conservation Commission. The board members discussed different way to reach members of the community to increase volunteerism.

Recap from Town Meeting

The board members were disappointed with the turnout at the town meeting but pleased all went well. They discussed moving the date of the town meeting to earlier in April. Town Administrator Tim Bragan will investigate the implications with the budget schedule if this were to happen. They will discuss in more detail at their Strategic Planning Session in June.

Select Board Reports

Don Ludwig reported the HES building project was not closed out due to the granted wall. He expects this will happen soon.

Erin McBee noted the recent request from the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust on the Housing Production Plan.

Kara Minar reported the Planning Board has decided to await resubmittal of language for the Ayer Road overlay district from the developer.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05pm.

Documents referenced:

Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Wild & Scenic Stewardship Council Annual Report – 2022

One Stop Growth grant letters – dated 5.9.2023

FY24 – appointment update docs

**Staff Report
May 9, 2023**

1. Miscellaneous:

- a. Bromfield House lease enters into its month-to-month phase at the end of July and ends on February 28, 2024. During the 6 months from July to December the board has to determine details for the sale documents so that we can get that process started and ended by the end of December.
- b. The HES MSBA closeout is not moving forward at the pace it should as you can see from the attached sheet. The Town is floating the 5% retainage which is over a million dollars. I ask that the Board's rep to the committee see what they can do to move this along. It will be over a year since the school moved in and the Chair of the Building Committee, SusanMary Redinger, is stepping down from the School Committee at the end of June.
- c. Town meeting attendance was only 192 which is 89 lower than our February attendance. Looking at other area towns they all had low turnouts. We need to think of what we can do to increase attendance. We did receive a request to move Town Meeting to a weeknight in order to avoid other daytime activities. This should be a discussion during the Strategic Planning session.
- d. The Strategic Planning Session will be held on Wednesday, June 21, 2023 from 1PM to 4PM. Board members need to send Julie the top three items you wish to discuss by May 31st.

2. State Fiscal Notes of Interest: (State House News Service)

- a. On April 26th the House finished their budget and sent it onto the Senate. The final House budget has a \$3.7 billion increase and approximately \$1.1 billion in tax cuts.
- b. On May 3rd State revenue plummeted into the red due to April's tax receipts being \$2.163 billion (31.2%) less than the 2022 April receipts. April's receipts were also \$1.435 billion below what the benchmark estimate was as well. This moved the State from having an \$870 million surplus to a \$703 million deficit.
- c. The Massachusetts High Technology Council has come out and said the House's revamp of MGL 62F is unconstitutional. 62F is the law that was recently triggered that allowed taxpayers to get returns from the State because State revenue came in above the threshold amounts. The Council went on to warn Governor against adopting the rewrite of the law.

- d. The ranking Republican Senator on the Senate Ways and Means Committee said there is no urgency on tax relief in the Senate. He said the Senate is focused on advancing their annual budget bill. The Senate, he said, is also very interested in learning as much as they can about the very significant drop in April's tax revenue. The Senate President, Karen Spilka, has suggested that the Senate is not ready on tax relief. The Senate budget is due out today.

3. Building and Procurement:

- a. The new COA has attained substantial completion, and movers are being scheduled.
- b. The Community Choice Aggregation rate for the period from November 2023 --> has been set, and publicity for this was commence in late summer/early fall. The incremental 6-month by 6-month approach was not as financially advantageous for the average residential user for either the default 100% renewable or the standard optional product, so rates are locked though October 31, 2025 with Dynergy (See attached).
- c. The Field Needs Assessment document was posted in Goods & Services on Monday, May 8; responses from prospective vendors are due May 25 by 3:00 p.m.

4. Notice, Reminders, and Updates:

- a. Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study briefing is June 5th at 2PM. Senator Eldridge's office sent this out to the SB.
- b. Attached is a calendar of events from the Unitarian Universalist for May and June.