

Approved April 9, 2024

Select Board
Meeting Minutes
April 2, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.
59 Main Street, Hatfield, MA

Present: Select Board: Diana Szynal, Chair, Members Edmund Jaworski and Greg Gagnon

Also in attendance: Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator; Phil Genovese, DPW Director; Dodie Gaudet, Library Trustee; Kathy Sheehan, Library Trustee; Eliza Langhans, Library Director; David Prickett, P.E., President DPC Engineering, LLC; Eric Meals; Robert Flaherty, Chief, Fire Department; Darryl Williams, Chair and Members Kim Baker, Diane Brozowski, and Sean Barry, Finance Committee

TOPIC 1 **EXECUTIVE SESSION MGL, Ch. 30A, §21a, 3. To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares for the purpose of renewing the Department of Public Works, Laborers Teamsters Union Agreement.** Selectman Jaworski made a motion at to go into executive session pursuant to MGL, Ch. 30A, §21a, 3. To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares for the purpose of renewing the Department of Public Works, Laborers Teamsters Union Agreement and to return to regular session; Selectman Gagnon seconded; Jaworski - aye; Gagnon - aye; Szynal - aye at 5:00 pm.

CALL TO ORDER Chair Szynal called the regular session meeting to order at 5:25 p.m., just returning from Executive Session.

ANNOUNCEMENTS None.

PUBLIC FORUM No one.

CONSENT AGENDA Selectman Gagnon made a motion to approve the March 19, 2024, meeting minutes; Selectman Jaworski seconded but with two changes: the first is to add "above the new floor" after "two receptacles" in Topic 1 and it should read "mini splits" not "mini spits" in Topic 1; no further discussion; all in favor - aye; motion approved.

POSTED BUSINESS

TOPIC 2 **Library Trustees and Library Director: Request to have sick leave policy for part-time employees amended:** Dody Gaudet, Library Trustee, Kathy Sheehan, Library Trustee and Eliza Langhans, Library Director presented before the Select Board requesting the Board to allow part-time employees of the library accrual of sick time. Ms. Gaudet stated the State of Massachusetts does give part-time approval for sick time, but municipalities are exempt, and we

are asking that you approve sick leave for part-time employees. Ms. Gaudet stated we have some wonderful, hard-working part-time employees and it would be a nice way to show these people they are appreciated. Ms. Langhans stated it would only apply to set hour employees. Ms. Langhans informed the Board employees over 20 hours get PTO time which is about one accrued hour for every 30 hours worked. This would be applied to 36 staffing hours per week and the cost would be around \$1,000.00. Chair Szynal asked if this is within the library's budget and Ms. Langhans replied yes. Ms. Langhans stated someone who works 6 hours every Thursday would accrue 1 day a year to use as a sick day. Selectman Jaworski stated he would like time to look into this because it would not only affect the library, but it would be town-wide. I want to know how many employees this would apply to. Chair Szynal stated we should do our due diligence with looking into this and maybe for the next meeting Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator could have more information. Chair Szynal asked if the school has their own HR policy and Ms. Michonski stated it would not apply to the school. Chair Szynal stated we need to think about the ramifications of this before making a decision.

TOPIC 3 DPC Engineer Consultants re: Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrades Project Bid Results; Sewer Asset Management Planning Project, Stormwater Asset Management Plan, Phase 1 Project and Drinking Water Asset Management Plan Project Recommendations: Dave Prickett, Eric Meals and Phil Genovese, DPW Director presented before the Select Board. Mr. Prickett stated we had the bid opening for the project and there was only one bid. We can move forward with a two-piece approach: Part 1: to have the Board consider awarding the bid which leaves a 5.1% project contingency going into construction. Chair Szynal asked Mr. Prickett if he has experience working with the company that bid? Mr. Prickett replied yes on several projects. They have all the required certificates, and their references check out. Selectman Jaworski asked Mr. Prickett what might be unknown? Mr. Prickett replied, as with any project, when providing major electrical work, there are always electrical change orders. Also, working underground we know where we are working but adjustments may need to be made. Selectman Jaworski stated I want you to discuss the alternatives - why do them now instead of moving them down the road? We anticipated we wouldn't have enough money, but we can move forward. Mr. Prickett replied we have five alternates related to existing clarifiers; these are essential to the plant. Alternate two is safety issues with gaseous chlorine. I spoke with Schultz and asked if they would hold their pricing on alternates 1 and 2 for 90 days and they agreed. Mr. Prickett stated part 2 is to consider whether to put an article on the warrant at Town meeting. With those three additives we need to come up with another \$1,400,000.00. Mr. Prickett suggested approving tonight and then go back to Town meeting and make an ask for \$1,400,000.00. Chair Szynal asked Mr. Prickett we would have to find \$1,000,000.00 to \$1,400,000.00 what do we have for funding source options, other than another override? Ms. Michonski said she would look into the borrowing capacity. Mr. Prickett suggested applying for a supplemental loan for \$1,400,000.00 so the debt service would be around \$55,000.00 per year as well as an increase to the sewer rate. Mr. Prickett stated the second part is complicated, but I think the 90 days affords us to get to Town meeting. Selectman Jaworski asked if USDA would be able to give us information by Town meeting and Mr. Prickett thought so. Selectman Jaworski made a motion to accept the base bid as presented by Mr. Prickett; Selectman Gagnon seconded; no discussion; all in favor –

aye; motion approved. Selectman Jaworski made a motion for Mr. Prickett to pursue the USDA supplemental funding to help with the project; Selectman Gagnon seconded; no discussion; all in favor -aye; motion approved.

Dave Prickett informed the Board MassDEP has the state revolving fund, but they started an asset management grant. We submitted three applications, one for sewer, one for water and one for stormwater. This is for looking at infrastructure - you put a small amount of cash in and MassDEP meets that cash with a larger grant. Chair Szynal asked at the end what do we get? Mr. Prickett replied at the end you get know the amount of asset you have for your infrastructure. Selectman Jaworski stated from the three projects, the Town's cost is about \$81,167.00 and we get back services worth well over that amount. Chair Szynal wants to make it clear; these are not projects but rather plans. Mr. Prickett stated for the sewer - we have to do this work and it's an asset the Town has; it evaluates what you have. If we don't do it, we may not have grants available. Chair Szynal made a motion that we move forward with these plans in an effort to secure the grant funding and find sources through Town meeting articles; Selectman Jaworski seconded; no discussion; all in favor – aye; motion approved.

TOPIC 4 **DPW REPORT**

Authorize Water and Sewer Billing Commitment #2 for collection: Phil Genovese, DPW Director presented the Select Board with the sewer and water billing commitment #2 for collection: total water - \$338,133.87; total sewer – \$348,382.18; for a total commitment of \$686,516.05. Selectman Gagnon made a motion to approve the water and sewer billing commitment #2 for collection in the total amount of \$686,516.05; Selectman Jaworski seconded; no discussion; all in favor – aye; motion approved.

New full time hire for DPW Highway: Mr. Genovese informed the Select Board that he hired Paul Chapin for full time at the DPW Highway. Selectman Gagnon made a motion to approve the hiring of Paul Chapin full time for DPW Highway; Selectman Jaworski seconded; no discussion; all in favor – aye; motion approved.

Proposed Traffic Study for #151 - #130 Elm Street: Mr. Genovese informed the Select Board that a traffic study needs to be done on Elm Street. Chair Szynal stated this is on Elm Street right after Cantina where the crosswalk is located. Mr. Genovese stated the speed limit is 40 mph. To change anything, the first step is to do a study to try to bring the speed down and we will also paint a solid line. The Select Board supports this traffic study.

TOPIC 5 **TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT**

Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture bike tour fundraiser Sunday June 2nd from 9:00-12:00 pm at Hatfield Pavilion: Ms. Michonski informed the Board CISA will be holding a bike tour fundraiser on Sunday, June 2nd from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm at the Hatfield Pavilion. The Police Chief and Fire Chief do not have concerns with this. Chair Szynal asked if all the bikes go all at once or is everyone go at their own pace? Ms. Michonski does not know the answer but there will be around 50 people participating.

TOPIC 6 FY2025 Budget Review with Finance Committee: Darryl Williams, Chair of the Finance Committee made a statement before the budget review began. I want to make clear that the school is not getting everything they asked for. The school is requesting \$150,000.00 of which \$110,00.00 is contract salaries at 2.6%. Chair Szynal asked; so where are the cuts? Mr. Williams replied I can't answer that question, the school can. Chair Szynal asked they did a zero-base budget and worked from there? Mr. Barry stated they are moving things around, there are not a lot of cuts. Chair Szynal asked will they come to a meeting? Mr. Barry replied yes. Mr. Williams stated I want to make sure everyone understands this, the override was not just the school, the fire and ambulance departments received monies. Two years ago, there was ARPA and COVID funds. Two years ago ambulance/fire was moved to a 16 hour service and last year that was maintained. Mr. Barry stated fire/ambulance got the biggest increase ever. They went from \$160,000.00 to \$280,000.00. Chair Szynal stated the school got the largest part of that override. Didn't they get what they asked for and if they didn't, why? Mr. Barry replied why they are asking for more money is the same as everyone else. Chair Szynal asked they said they were going to hire a Spanish teacher, but they didn't. Mr. Barry replied there is no longer a superintendent so that money is saved. Every department in Town gets salary increases. That's what we prioritize. Basically, they are not negotiable. There are uncontrolled expenses. Chair Szynal stated you said there are cuts. Mr. Barry replied yes as they reduced the superintendent. Mr. Williams stated Conor Driscoll is a breath of fresh air. Budget wise, they started from net zero and worked from there.

The FY25 budget workbook review began. There was discussion about the 2.6% COLA for everyone. The FY25 budget workbook was reviewed by looking at departments with added expenses:

The Select Board and Finance Committee agreed with the increase for Town Administrator - merit; Assessor-reassessment; Treasurer/Collector-salary increase; Legal - increase in hourly rate; Technology; Town Clerk – postage and business travel; Elections and Registration – several elections this year; Police – Chief is requesting a contractual increase; Fire and Ambulance – the figures represent current FY24, and the Fire Chief submitted 3 proposals. Mr. Williams suggested taking the fire and ambulance budget lines and combining them. It would make it easier for everyone. Since the Fire Chief is looking for additional monies, Chair Szynal stated it is her belief that it should be up to townspeople. There should be two override questions on the warrant, one for the 16-hour shift with pay raises and the other override question will be for the 24/7 coverage. However, Chair Szynal stated that we need to be open with townspeople and they should be aware that if they vote for the override to a 24/7, there will be a requested \$14,000,000.00 safety complex coming in the next couple of years. Chair Szynal went on also, with a 24/7 shift, we will need to be looking at trailers to house personnel. Selectman Jaworski asked what constitutes the need for full-time staff? I still have a lot of questions about what constitutes full-time. Chair Szynal stated basically we get one call per day. Mr. Barry stated the call volume doesn't seem to justify full-time but then you can ask, how safe do you want to feel? How close do you want the ambulance to be? There was also discussion about posts on social media for the Fire/Ambulance. Both the Select Board and Finance Committee feel that the posts

need to stop, and that the Hatfield Fire Department Facebook page is a Town social media page. It was made clear that it would be unethical for the Fire Department to post number of daily calls on the website once the decision has been made about the override for fire and ambulance. Mr. Barry also stated that townspeople need to know that the impact from the sewer project has not been put into their real estate tax bills. This will not hit until next year.

Review of budgets for other departments resumed: Inspections is looking for increase in salary; school may increase; Public Works: current snow and ice - we will use free cash for the \$93,000.00 deficit; vehicle lease – there are no new leases; the mechanic felt because of the low mileage on Fire Chief's vehicle, he did not need a new one; tree warden – no increase; Veteran's services budget is for services from Northampton so we will not fill position; sewer – they need to add another operator; vocational tuition transportation – is in deficit which will increase.

NEW BUSINESS

UNANTICIPATED NEW BUSINESS

ADJOURN

Chair Szynal made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Selectman Gagnon seconded; no discussion; all in favor – aye; meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm.

Respectfully,
Karen Brodeur
Executive Assistant