

Present:

Selectman Brian Moriarty, Selectman Cindy Doty, Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator
Selectman Jaworski did not attend.

Selectman Doty opened the meeting at 5:38 pm and announced Selectman Jaworski is ill.

Announcements –

Selectman Moriarty reminded folks of the ballot on Tuesday, February 26th.

Public Forum

Mr. Wagner, Linseed Rd thanked town volunteers and employees who worked on the Chapter 61a Sliwoski farm protection. He thanked the Board for their commitment and thanked also the Conservation Commission, Planning Board, and Ag Committee for their interest in protecting Hatfield farmland and Mark Gelotte, of the Open Space Committee, who helped with strategy. Additionally, he thanked Ms. Michonski for all her time researching and working with town counsel.

Selectman Moriarty thanked Mr. Wagner on behalf of the Board and the townspeople, saying he had the Board's unanimous support. The Town of Whately called Mr. Wagner to learn from what we've done.

Hatfield Smith Academy presents Willy Wonka, the 5th and 6th – tickets are available at Smith Academy, Hatfield Elementary School and preceding each performance for \$10.

Minutes were taken care of at the last meeting.

Stephanie Slys – Hatfield Community Gardens

Ms. Slys thanked the Board for their unofficial approval and reported on a successful season under the auspices of the Ag Committee. It was a great collaboration with Harrison Bardwell. Information sessions are planned for Wednesday from 6-7 at the Hatfield Elementary School community room, and March 2nd also. Selectman Moriarty thanked those who got it off the ground.

Ambulance services topic was tabled until the next meeting.

PVPC Alternate –

Selectman Moriarty moved to appoint Garrett Barry, DPW Highway Foreman, as the alternate member to the PVPC Transportation Improvement Program. Selectman Doty seconded. The motion was approved. Ms. Michonski mentioned the PVPC western tier alternate election results. John Martin was elected.

FRTA Update-

FRTA is looking at alternative Route 5 & 10 stop sites, perhaps further north. A plan will have to be submitted.

Phase 2 Memorial Town Hall Renovation Project –

Ms. Michonski explained that Selectman Jaworski had asked this be on the agenda. A brief discussion centered on the need for a clerk of the works, or project oversight administrator to negotiate with the architects and builders and represent the Town's best interests. The building committee's role in reference

to the first phase of the project was mentioned. Selectman Doty expressed concern that the DPW director may be too busy to perform this function. Selectman Moriarty suggested a discussion with the 3 board members, Ms. Michonski and DPW.

Resident, Mike Cahill asked about the Phase 2 renovation and whether there would be a building committee or a clerk of the works. He suggested a voluntary oversight committee. The town was authorized to borrow up to 2.4 million for the second phase. Selectman Doty said we need someone who has the best interest of the town at heart, to make sure plans are implemented as per spec. The town did have 1 for Smith Academy and 1 for the Hatfield Elementary School. Selectman Moriarty said we need to have this conversation. Ms. Michonski is to follow up on this.

Flex Spending - Ms. Sharon Strzegowski, Treasurer/Collector's Office

Ms. Strzegowski will move forward now that the Board has had time to review this benefit. However, it won't start until July 1. There will be informational presentations in April and individual meetings with full time employees would follow. The 1st meeting will be with department heads. The Board thanked Ms. Strzegowski.

Town Administrator Items-

Ms. Michonski mentioned that Rich Abbott of the Open Space Committee would be here at 7.

Ms. Michonski said there was a meeting with representative Lindsay Sabadosa and aide, Laura Britton at which the town clerk discussed mandates. Regarding the town's Massworks grant application, we will submit one again. Ms. Michonski was expecting a response regarding why our application was not successful but we have not yet heard back.

Ms. Michonski mentioned a memo from the town clerk regarding a standard article for the election of officers. Also, ballot questions must be submitted no later than 4-12. Ms. Michonski will present articles for the Board to review at the next meeting.

Solect Energy –

Regarding solar panels on Smith Academy roof, town counsel had recommended the Board of Selectmen negotiate a pilot agreement. Ms. Michonski said we have a payment in lieu of taxes arrangement with Nexamp. Mr. Cahill asked to see the draft pilot before a contract is signed. Selectman Moriarty said the school committee did sign a purchase agreement. He said there is no cost for this and the pilot had been shared at the last meeting. Ms. Michonski discussed the contract and lease agreement. Selectman Moriarty said he thinks the school would be the appropriate entity to sign the contract.

MA Taxpayers Foundation Report-

Ms. Michonski said this report was included in the meeting packet. Tax revenues are a bit slow. She cited some of the other items included in the report.

Annual Town report notification has been sent out. She asked the Board to consider the dedication for the town report.

HR Policy – Section 19 - Grievance Procedure

Ms. Michonski said she had no recommendations but asked the Board about 7 days' notice. A brief discussion followed regarding the Human Resources policy and collective bargaining. Selectman Doty said a union contract prevails if there is a conflict. The Board did not recommend any changes.

Selectman Doty asked that the school superintendent come to a Board meeting and speak regarding the financial status of the school, Selectman Moriarty suggested the monthly school committee meeting be

recorded. He also noted that the superintendent had planned to attend tonight's meeting but it's senior night.

Finance Committee members, Ms. Betsy Rider, Mr. Sean Barry, Mr. Darryl Williams, and Ms. Diane Brzozowski arrived. Selectman Moriarty noted the town is just kicking off the budget year.

The town health insurance contribution was discussed with several individuals in attendance supporting town teachers and the teacher's association request for an increase in the town contribution. Audrey Weston read a letter critical of the town's adoption of MGL 32B, sections 21 & 22, and Joe Shea, of the Hampshire County Insurance Trust. She said the town pays the lowest percentage allowed by law and therefore town employees pay the highest percentage allowed by law. Other individuals echoed Ms. Weston's concerns, saying the town has lost teachers because of this issue. Exception was taken to Mr. Shea's alleged reference to copay increases being described as modest. Cost increases were also said to represent a hardship for retirees.

The Board was asked to reconsider adoption of MGL 32b, secs 21&22. Selectman Moriarty said there is a lot that goes into the process of town budget. He said he appreciates the letter and being a school comm member he hears this more than perhaps his colleagues. Selectman Doty said a lot of households in Hatfield are those of senior citizens on social security and towns that are more able to afford higher percentages are larger towns or those with regional schools. Mr. Williams said the Finance Committee hasn't talked about 32b, secs 21 & 22. Mr. Barry clarified that in previous years the trust has spent their reserve money to pay their bills. It seems doubtful that they can do that forever and eventually there would be changes in rates or copays. It was estimated to cost the town over \$216,000.00 to go from 50% contribution to 75% if no one new signs up for insurance. Selectman Doty said she would like John Robert to speak.

Resident, Kerry Flaherty, said though no one would say teachers or employees don't deserve it, the town can't afford this. HRA's - health reimbursement accounts were offered by an attendee as a potential sustainable solution but Ms. Strzegowski said it just comes down to money. Responding to Mr. Williams question regarding a possible vote to change the town's contribution percentage, Ms. Szych, Town Clerk said it would be necessary to have an article at Annual Town Meeting, a question on the annual town election or citizens could bring a petition.

Selectman Moriarty said it is good to have this conversation. If it happens he sees it as an incremental thing and said this is not an excuse it's a reality. A brief conversation followed regarding the town's financial situation.

Smith Academy Pavilion Update - Rich Abbott, Open Space Committee

Mr. Abbott said \$91,000.00 is the cost estimate for the pavilion according to architect, Laura Fitch. Mr. Abbott talked about funding options including a recommended \$60,000.00 from CPA and applying for a park grant for up to \$50,000.00. The project might be a 6-week job and the grant would be a reimbursable grant due in July with decision in the Nov – Dec timeframe. This would be an article at Annual Town Meeting. He also talked about soliciting donations. Selectman Moriarty said the article in May would be a perfect time to suggest the donations. Ms. Michonski noted the accountant would set up a special fund. Future discussions will be held on this subject. Mr. Williams said we would have to come up with ideas of how we could potentially fund this and that will take some time. Ms. Szych said there would have to be an article on the town meeting warrant. This would be needed by April 12.

Ms. Michonski said she reached out on Friday but there has been no update from Justin Cole.

FY20 Capital Projects

There was brief discussion between Mr. Cahill, the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen regarding Justin Cole and Baystate Municipal Accounting. FY20 is a work in progress.

Real budget numbers are expected from the state possibly in June. During discussion it was mentioned that revenues are below expectations and there may be local aid cuts. Responding to a suggestion of Mr. Barry Mr. Williams said that Chapter 70 money does not go to the school but comes to the town. Chances of an early decision are low when revenues are down. Ms. Michonski has plugged in operating budget numbers the same as last year and not including contractual expenditures. Mr. Barry noted that the senate rarely goes below the house numbers. Ms. Rider noted that a house number is a good number to play with. Mr. Williams said these may be available in late April.

Mass Taxpayers Association reports revenue growth is slow. Ms. Michonski said the Assessors are meeting later this week. Overlay allowance for FY19, is \$71,565.00 but may increase as this is a reval year. For local receipts she has plugged in the same numbers. Ms. Michonski said she would like to sit down with the Treasurer's office. FY19 is what's reported on the recap. Responding to a question from Mr. Williams about loans, Ms. Palmisano said the Memorial Town Hall Phase 2 renovation. Ms. Michonski advised that there are some interest increases.

Next steps include start meeting with departments. Ms. Michonski said John Robert indicated he would come to the next meeting. Ms. Michonski described the need for additional IT budget funds for remote backup of files through Paragus. When questioned about possibly working with the school for IT she said we have made attempts to set up something with Paul Duval.

Finance Committee asked to go through the capital plan. Discussion centered on the Ambulance which is on track to be replaced this year. Mr. Williams noted that traditionally we have replaced the ambulance every 10 years. Selectman Doty said she preferred to have the fire chief present for this conversation. Mr. Williams said this is what the capital plan presented. The jaws of life has been pushed out 3 times.

Ms. Michonski thinks the library is looking to do some improvements. Mr. Barry said he didn't think putting down new carpet should be put off because a new library might be built in the future. Ms. Michonski said the Sewer/WWTP leak detection study cannot be put off again as DEP will not allow it. Mr. Genovese needs to be asked about failing wells and the highway barn trusses, and pole. The highway building office and breakroom were being done by hand. Also, the Fire Department building porch (fronts on the small basketball area) repairs. Prospect Court would be another Massworks grant. The schools are looking for parking lot paving. Ms. Rider asked about meeting for updated information. Ms. Michonski said Mr. Cole would be back in the office at the end of next week.

The Finance Committee and Board discussed meeting with department heads regarding capital items. Mr. Williams said Mr. Genovese could give information about sewer and water, and vehicle leases. Updates are expected from Justin Cole and capital requests from John Roberts, Mr. Genovese and the Fire Chief. Ms. Michonski said we haven't directed departments to do anything specific regarding budgeting. Mr. Barry proposed there be clarity as modifications are made to the budget going along, and perhaps a column for choices. School budgeting was briefly discussed with Mr. Williams noting that level funding the school could mean layoffs. Mr. Barry noted that laying off staff doesn't save money because it impacts town unemployment. Ms. Michonski said the budget subcommittee for the school has a meeting next week. The Board of Selectmen can meet Wednesday, March 6th at 5:30pm and then with the Finance Committee, at

6:30 unless Ms. Brzozowski can meet Tuesday. Ms. Michonski will follow up with Eliza Langhans, Library Director. Mr. Williams asked to invite Ms. Langhans.

Mr. Barry moved the Finance Committee adjourn. Ms. Rider seconded the motion. Selectman Moriarty moved to adjourn. Selectman Doty seconded. The motion was approved and the meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ki J. Eno

Executive Assistant