

Board of Selectmen Meeting

April 21, 2020, 6:00pm  
Approved: May 19, 2020

Via MS Teams

Brian Moriarty, Chair

Present: Selectmen Brian Moriarty, Edmund Jaworski, Diana Szynal, Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator, Joe Lavallee, Town Moderator, Lydia Szych, Town Clerk, Patrice Squillante and Laurie Dell'Olio of Melanson Heath, John Robert, Superintendent of Hatfield Schools, Fire Chief Robert Flaherty, Finance Committee members Sean Barry, Darryl Williams, Betsy Rider, Diane Brzozowski, Kim Baker, Collector Sharon Strzegowski

#### Announcements

Selectman Szynal thanked John and Patty Hentz for organizing the candles/lights displayed on Sunday for the Night For Hope, showing solidarity.

Selectman Moriarty read the public participation policy. Ms. Michonski reminded viewers to mute their phones.

Selectman Moriarty called for people who would like to speak at public forum and hearing no one he moved on with posted business.

No minutes were approved.

#### COVID19 Update:

Selectman Moriarty hoped people have signed up to receive Monday updates as the Town is trying to keep everyone abreast of what we find out when we find it. Those interested can go to the Fire Department to sign up.

Selectman Szynal mentioned Governor Baker cancelling school for the rest of the year. She acknowledged the school department and teachers for another month of staying in touch with students. Selectman Moriarty said we do appreciate what teachers and parents are doing. It's the right thing to do for safety's sake.

Ms. Michonski said information was received today from Governor Baker, and Lt Governor Polito. Senator Comerford will host a conference call tomorrow. Selectman Szynal and Selectman Jaworski have joined Senator Comerford's calls previously. DHCD may have to reach out regarding grants, and elections.

Kerry Flaherty, Board of Health Chair said an updated letter today was posted on social media and the Town's website. There will be no sooner opening than May 18<sup>th</sup> for Town Hall. Parks, and playgrounds remain closed. Summer rec programs have not been ruled out but more information is needed from Governor Baker. Ms. Michonski referred to the MEMA report and a link to the DPH dashboard. There are lots of details available on the MA.gov page.

Ms. Flaherty said the Council on Aging is reaching out for masks, however N95 masks are only for emergency responders and hospitals and these will not be given out. Any questions or concerns can be answered by calling town hall. She said that we will get an answer back.

Ms. Szych said if people are signed up for e-alerts they will automatically get notices, depending on what they signed up for. Selectman Moriarty said if people are not getting what they wanted then they are not signed up or something's wrong and they should follow up.

Ms. Flaherty said people can call the Fire Department and leave the name and number they want to be reached at. Ms. Szych noted that e-alerts are done online.

#### Appointments:

An appointment to the Cemetery Commission must be voted jointly.

Bob Flaherty reported that the Cemetery Commission recommends Lucinda Williams be appointed to fill the spot left vacant by Joe Lavallee. He mentioned that 2 people had come forward for the position, Ms. Williams and John Pease. Selectman Jaworski moved to appoint Lucinda Williams to replace Joe Lavallee on the Cemetery Commission for 1 year. Selectman Szyal seconded. A roll call vote was conducted. Selectman Moriarty voting, aye, Selectman Szyal voting, aye, Selectman Jaworski voting, aye, Bob Flaherty, voting aye, the motion was approved. Mr. Lavallee was thanked for his years of service. Mr. Flaherty said that Mr. Lavallee has agreed to stay and help. There is 1 year remaining on this elected position.

Joe Lavallee noted that Ki Eno is working on cemetery maps so people can look up data.

#### Cultural Council

The Board appointed Debra Nimetz and Kathy Ziemer to 3 year terms on the Cultural Council on a motion by Selectman Szyal, seconded by Selectman Jaworski. Selectman Moriarty thanked them in advance.

#### Memorial Town Hall Building Renovation Update:

Selectman Moriarty said lamps, elevator, wrought iron fencing, and the ramp are all looking good. Ms. Michonski noted we are waiting on the fire pump installation. Afterwards there will be an inspection, and inspection for the elevator, however the state schedule is quite full. Ms. Michonski said they are working on a punch list. Selectman Moriarty noted that it seems like the end is in sight. Selectman Moriarty and Selectman Szyal thanked Ms. Michonski and Selectman Jaworski for their work.

Selectman Moriarty announced the Board would then meet with the Finance Committee and Melanson Heath.

All Finance Committee members were present, also Laurie Dell'Olio and Patrice Squillante of Melanson Heath.

Ms. Squillante outlined what Melanson Heath had been hired to do. She said they understood FY19 would be closed, with a balance sheet, and cash, and receivables reconciled. However, the town followed their suggestion to move forward without Baystate and do the FY19 work that was not completed. She said the balance sheet and Sched. A for FY19 have been drafted. Ms. Dell'Olio is working on this and running reports, and making adjustments. They will have the balance sheet submitted by the end of the week. They are not comfortable giving an estimate of free cash, yet. Cash is reconciled to within variances of the last few years.

By end of FY20, the plan will include trying to put in place some processes, and to make sure that Treasurer/Collector and all are using the same terms for things. Ms. Rider asked about the variance with Ms. Squillante answering that it was about \$50,000. Town receivable balances have

not been reconciled for at least several years. The plan was for Ms. Squillante and Ms. Dell'Olio to sit down with Ms. Strzegowski about reporting. Ms. Strzegowski is very busy. Ms. Squillante said we will do the best we can. Time spent working on FY19 has delayed processing of FY20 transactions.

In response to a question from Mr. Williams about school choice, Ms. Squillante said she has spent time working with the school department, and FY19 activity now agrees between the town general ledger and the school. There were some timing adjustments, and some accrued revenue wasn't taken into account correctly. She thinks issues are now resolved on school choice but also thinks variances were pre-FY19.

Ms. Squillante said some corrections were made to the general ledger and she thinks we're in agreement with the school now. Mr. Robert said an extra payroll was posted that should have been posted to a different year. He said there is no extra money but we are close to what the school thinks we should have had. Selectman Moriarty thanked Ms. Squillante and Ms. Dell'Olio, Mr. Robert, Ms. Malinowski and Brenda Keir.

Mr. Williams summarized: the balance sheet and Schedule A will be done next week – Melanson Heath will submit a free cash number and close the books on FY19. Ms. Squillante will have these numbers to roll in to FY20. Ms. Squillante will send Tony Roselli a report that can get him started and he can do 80-90% of the audit remotely. A lot of the audit centers in the Treasurer/Collector's office. Sometime in May, Melanson Heath may be able to get back in to town hall.

Selectman Szynal asked how long it would take for DOR to certify free cash, and how different this would be because of the pandemic. Ms. Squillante answered if you submit when everybody else does then it will be slower, but within 1-2 weeks. Ms. Squillante reached out to Maryjane Handy at the DOR and an audit won't be required for free cash to be certified. They are ok going with what we put together for the balance sheet. Ms. Michonski said Tony of Roselli and Clark, sent her email today. He wants to do the audit remotely. Ms. Squillante said look to Ms. Strzegowski because he will be asking a lot from her. Ms. Strzegowski said it's got to get done but we'll do what we can. Ms. Squillante said finishing FY19 is a higher priority. Ms. Strzegowski said we can shift our focus and get FY20 done. Ms. Strzegowski suggested checking with the Board of Health for access to the building because Melanson Heath are employees of the town.

Mr. Williams asked what needs to be completed if we have Annual Town Meeting in June? Can we have the meeting without having an audit done? Ms. Squillante said it wouldn't hold up your town meeting. When we submit balance sheet we will have an estimate and can give you a ballpark.

Regarding FY20, Ms. Squillante said vendor warrants are up to date. However, she said several systems are trying to talk to each other. Tyler is used for the schools. And there are 3 sets of acct numbers. We have to come up with an automated way to get systems to talk to each other. Errors can happen if you have to re-key information. Payroll warrants need to be summarized. Vadar is used for general ledger. Mr. Williams asked if it makes sense to have 1 system. Ms. Squillante said there has to be a bridge for systems to talk to each other. She said switching to Vadar was part of Baystate's thing.

Selectman Moriarty said the Finance Committee, Board of Selectmen and Ms. Squillante will have to figure out what makes sense. There was discussion about this with Ms. Strzegowski saying that Vadar has made it better from the collector's point of view. The town can't afford Munis. Selectman Moriarty said we need to do our best so that the nonsense stops once and for all. Ms. Squillante agreed and said approach it as if the collector will stay with Vadar. The Accountant, Treasurer/Collector, and Assessor, all 4 need to be able to talk with each other. Selectman Jaworski asked if other towns are trying to get multiple platforms to talk to each other. Ms. Squillante answered that it is unusual for towns to have 2 different systems. It was observed that Vadar is not so good for schools.

Receipts are entered through October. Once everything is in, they will start to reconcile and reach out to larger departments before the end of June. Selectman Moriarty thanked Ms. Squillante. Selectman Szyndal thanked Ms. Michonski and Ms. Strzegowski. Mr. Williams thanked Ms. Squillante. She has all the data for FY20, and thinks it won't take too long.

The Board then discussed Annual Town Meeting. Ms. Szych has not been given guidance that town election can be beyond June 30<sup>th</sup>. Selectman Moriarty said the election could be scheduled for Tues, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, and Town Meeting possibly the week before. It could possibly be a shorter town meeting, including only heavy hitter articles to get us rolling, and then possibly another one in the Fall. Mr. Lavalley described Southwick, which did their town meeting outside in the parking lot of their school.

He said you can slim down the articles to just what is necessary to get the town going. Once the warrant is signed with the date the Board decides, the Moderator and Town Clerk can kick it out one month at a time once the warrant is certified. But if you get past June 30<sup>th</sup> then the Finance Committee would have to approve a 1/12<sup>th</sup> budget each month. Mr. Barry said it might be a good idea to put everything on the warrant that you might possibly have to do and then immediately before you can decide what to slim down, because Fall could conceivably be worse. Selectman Szyndal said that idea gives us the most flexibility. Ms. Michonski said currently, the warrant is no different than it usually is. Mr. Lavalley suggested that articles 2, 3 and 4 be combined into one and some combined items can be tabled. Also, a rain date is needed and if a rain date is posted then you have effectively posted 2 dates. It can be posted at Smith Academy and this would allow for it to be inside or outside, if necessary. He said if people are feeling skittish about meeting you can have slimmed down articles to be the basic to keep the town going.

Mr. Williams said budgets from all departments will have to be re-examined. Meetings will have to be scheduled for the next 2 weeks to go over budgets. Mr. Barry noted the need to consider that revenue may be substantially less. State and federal revenue sharing will also be less. Mr. Williams asked Mr. Robert if any savings in heating/lighting, etc, might be realized by not having students in school. Mr. Robert answered there is probably some but all teachers are still working doing remote learning. Some contracted services might yield savings, so he will sit down with Riley Malinowski about voiding some purchase orders. They have been encouraged however to pay a portion of bus company bills so they won't go out of business.

Mr. Robert noted there will be a school committee meeting on Thursday. They will be refunding some tuition, and there are projected deficits in some accounts, lunch revolving account. There may be some savings in athletics but user fees have to be refunded. SpecEd transportation will be

a savings, and also for substitutes. He is trying to save school choice money for FY20. SpecEd reimbursement for FY20 will be less than projected because of remote learning plan. He said they may have to spend more money this summer because of concerns around regression, and there is an unprecedented situation around Chpt 70. Some federal stimulus money is coming around July 1<sup>st</sup> based on title 1 appropriations. There is not a lot of fat in the school budget. Maybe in 2 or 3 weeks he will be in better shape to present a FY21 budget. He said the State expanded the deadline to enroll at Smith Voc until May 1.

Mr. Williams said to assume collections will be down, and state money will be down. Selectman Szynal noted that none of this will be a surprise to department heads. Mr. Barry said our cuts may cost us so much that it will cut in to school choice revenue, resulting in a cascade effect. However, other schools may cut, also. It was suggested that departments submit budgets considering level funded, 2%, 5% or 8% reductions. Ms. Brzozowski suggested up to 10%. Mr. Barry said or just decide there will be certain things we just won't do. Some things are closed now, maybe leave them closed. Selectman Szynal said decisions may have to be prioritized. Mr. Williams said ask for a level FY21 budget, a 2%, 5% and 10% cut and give departments 2 weeks to turn it in. Mr. Barry asked also to see a narrative, Impact statement and also express an intent.

Ms. Michonski was asked to send something out to departments with a deadline of May 15<sup>th</sup>, and then tentatively plan on meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Barry asked if there are any big ticket items that we can't get out of. Ms. Michonski received notification of an insurance rate increase. Mr. Williams asked if it could be rebid, or maybe get rid of some vehicles. Selectman Szynal maybe look at insurance coverage on the whole.

Mr. Williams asked about the schools and Town Administrator's budgets. He said we will be asking for brand new budgets. Selectman Szynal prefers hard copy for budgets. Ms. Michonski asked for a vote to postpone annual election and annual town meeting. She said normally the Board would be signing the warrant.

Town election was discussed with the best ways to protect voters and poll workers. Ms. Szych gave parameters for voting: polls must be open by noon and at least for 4 hours. People will be urged to do early voting by mail. The possibility of mailing postcards or applications for absentee ballots to registered voters was discussed. She put up a notice online for early voting applications. A mailing to registered voters would put her over budget for this year as it would cost about \$1200. Ms. Szych said she cannot just mail everyone a ballot. Selectman Szynal said getting in the weeds about how to do this is not advantageous now as possibly some restrictions will be changed in 2 months.

Social distancing for voting was discussed. Ms. Szych said she could possibly get information to go in with a bill mailing, or just a postcard, and maybe folks can pick up applications for absentee ballots at different locations.

Selectman Szynal moved that pursuant to Section 1 of Chapter 45 of the Acts of 2020 and because of the Governor's Declaration of a State of Emergency to Respond to COVID-19, the town election scheduled for May 19, 2020 be postponed to June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020. Selectman Jaworski seconded. All voting in favor, the motion was approved.

Selectman Jaworski moved that pursuant to GL c. 39, section 9, and in light of the Governor's Declaration of a State of Emergency to Respond to COVID-19, the Annual Town Meeting scheduled for May 12, 2020 be postponed to June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Selectman Szynal seconded. The motion was approved.

The Finance Committee is to meet May 5<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Williams will work with Ms. Michonski regarding how to conduct a meeting via MS Teams. John Robert asked about the budget levels, 2, 5 and 10%, and wants to submit one based on need, level service. Mr. Williams asked Ms. Michonski to be part of their May 5<sup>th</sup> meeting. The Finance Committee left at 8:10pm.

Town Administrator –

Community Compact Best Practices –

The town's application was accepted and DLS is awarding the town with \$11,150.00 and a subscription for 1 year for a software program. An annual subscription is \$8750 and will provide long range forecasting, and will allow us to discontinue use of Excel workbooks. The program is designed for municipalities. Ms. Michonski believes the 1<sup>st</sup> year is when we will actually be using it, as our data has not been entered into it yet. She will get clarification.

Unanticipated New Business-

Ms. Michonski commented on the ongoing gravity thickener project at WWTP. The old equipment has been demolished, and the majority of the new equipment has been installed. There is a meeting with WWTP employees tomorrow. Completion is expected in 3-4 weeks. Ms. Michonski mentioned the water project out on Chestnut St. Things are moving along on the DPW side. Selectman Szynal asked for Chestnut St project completion date. Ms. Michonski will follow up with Mr. Genovese.

Selectman Moriarty thanked everybody, Finance Committee, Superintendent Robert and the public, and said he appreciates everybody's patience. Selectman Szynal said we are dealing with a lot of unknowns. We will do the best we can and appreciate department heads for their work. Selectman Moriarty thanked Ms. Michonski.

Selectman Jaworski moved to adjourn. Selectman Szynal seconded. The motion was approved. The meeting ended at 8:20pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ki. J. Eno  
Executive Assistant