

Approved February 15, 2022

Select Board  
Meeting Minutes  
February 8, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.  
59 Main Street, Hatfield, MA  
Virtual GoToMeeting

Present: Select Board Chair Diana Szynal and Members Edmund Jaworski and Brian Moriarty. Also present were Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator; Sharon Strzegowski, Treasurer/Collector; Darryl Williams, Chair, Kimberly Baker, Sean Barry, Diane Brzozowski and John Wilkes, Jr. of the Finance Committee, Michael Cahill

**CALL TO ORDER** Chair Szynal called the meeting to order at 6:31p.m.

**PUBLIC FORUM**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS** Chair Szynal announced that Bob Pelis passed away last week. He was a long time resident and was big into Town of Hatfield sports. He gave a lot to the young athletes in Town. Our condolences to his family.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**POSTED BUSINESS**

**UNANTICIPATED NEW BUSINESS**

MassDOT Speed Feedback Boards Pilot Program: Ms. Michonski informed the Select Board Mike Dekoschak explained to the Board of an opportunity to get a new speed sign. The speed signs pop up around Town. This grant offered by MassDOT would be the same type of sign as the tow-behind. The state is offering this to us at no charge. We applied for it and was awarded it. Selectman Moriarty made a motion to enter into MOU with MassDOT with regards to the sign, Selectman Jaworski seconded and thanked the Police Chief for putting this together, no discussion, all in favor, aye, motion approved. The Police Chief wanted everyone to know that it was Ms. Michonski who spearheaded this and thanked her for her efforts.

**TOPIC 1** Meet with Finance Committee, Treasurer and Accountant to begin discussions of FY2023 budget:  
Chair Szynal said that the meeting tonight is to set goals and expectations, review debt schedules, set up meetings with departments and talk about annual town meeting. Most departments have submitted their budget requests which have been shared with the Finance Committee last week. Ms. Michonski informed the Board and Committee that she will be recreating the budget workbook with the hopes of having it available for everyone very soon. Ms. Michonski informed everyone the accountant, Laurie Dell'Olio could not make it tonight because of a family medical issue. It may be quite tight when you consider 2 ½, free cash and capital which looks good because we have free cash funds using the ARPA funds. Going back to the operating budgets, I want to touch on goals and expectations and cost of living. There was discussion about new growth for FY23, increases in insurance, management contracts for department heads and employee contracts. Mr. Williams stated that would be helpful to know what that numbers will be. Sharon Strzegowski, Treasurer/Collector informed everyone she

has already done that. Selectman Moriarty brought up there are two unions in the midst of negotiations. Mr. Williams, are those contracts being done soon? Selectman Moriarty hoped that is the expectation. Teachers contracts are expiring, DPW should have a new contract that has been delayed due to concerns taking place. Officially DPW contracts expired last June 30<sup>th</sup>. The teacher contracts have not expired. Mr. Williams asked if it expired June 30 of last year, will there be money due those employees from the previous years? Mr. Williams asked if there were any other "knowns". Other things which will be coming up, the Fire Department is talking about an increase of employees so they can provide services to the Town. That will have an impact on the budget. It was discussed that Chief Dekoschak had conversations in the past about new legislation which may impact his department in FY23. Selectman Moriarty noted that the Finance Committee met with the school department and their number is \$455,000.00 of additional taxpayer money which will be needed. Selectman Moriarty noted that's a 10% increase. The school choice reserve fund is significantly less than what we are accustomed to. Things cost more, every budget is higher. Mr. Williams if we want to maintain the services, we may have to have an override to cover the budget. The school system is the foundation of our town. We want to be sure we are making the investment. Mr. Barry noted at this time there are still options. He pointed out that Hatfield is in the middle of comparable communities. In Hadley the average tax bill is \$300.00 less but they have a commercial tax base different than Hatfield. As the Select Board and Finance Committee are going through the budgets, we have had very lean years, we have the reality of economies and expenses. It will be up to the townspeople. We need to show them here's where we are and here is where we need to be and leave it up to them. Chair Szynal mentioned with the ARPA funds we are cleaning things up. The residents need to keep in mind, that's a one-shot deal. Chair Szynal mentioned we need family homes in town. Homes are too expensive, and people are staying in Hatfield and we need to keep the businesses here. Mr. Williams, the sewer project will help us out going forward. When you invest in infrastructure, you attract businesses, schools, you attract more families.

The debt schedules prepared by Ms. Strzegowski were reviewed and she informed everyone that she is in the process of doing a bond. We have had enough good audits to be able to do that. She will be short-term borrowing until July. A couple projects will be done, another couple will be done in a couple of years. She has not borrowed the \$1.6 million for the Rte. 5 water and sewer project but will be borrowing that soon. Fire, ambulance, police, we authorized \$255,00.00 for radios, etc. The Fire Chief was awarded a grant which makes this much less.

Mr. Barry, looking at the capital plan, not a ton of borrowing for this year except fire may have some items. Ms. Strzegowski mentioned we may need to rescind the borrowing and at town meeting we can do that. There was discussion about the elementary school roof which has been pushed off for a year to make it 10 years so they will become eligible for a grant for the repairs. Another project coming up is some work in the office upstairs. There will have to be some design work. Mr. Barry the school parking lots have been pushed off again.

It was suggested that they start with the school department in reviewing their budget, but Mr. Barry mentioned we want to give them more time from where they are now. The sooner we could let the school know if we can or cannot, it would be good to have them come next week.

Next meeting will be February 15<sup>th</sup> and then March 1<sup>st</sup>. The DPW, Police and Fire would be next. The Finance Committee approved the Fire Chief to hire people which would run until June 30<sup>th</sup>. This way we can see the calls offset the numbers for the hired people. Mr. Williams, going forward, if we decide not to fund some of this, we will have to fund something to the City of Northampton. It was discussed that on February 15, the Select Board's regular meeting will be at 5:30 and then the Select Board and Finance Committee will meet at 6:30 for further discussions on the FY23 budget.

There was discussion as to where to hold annual town meeting. It was decided to see what the town moderator thinks of having at Smith Academy or at the pavilion.

There was discussion about raising the limit of Capital Planning and what they look at. Currently, the capital planning bylaw states any purchase over \$10,000.00 must be reviewed by Capital Planning. It was discussed that maybe the bylaw could raise that figure to \$25,000.00 and anything that lasts longer than 5 years.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

## **ADJOURN**

Selectman Moriarty made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:52 p.m., Selectman Jaworski seconded, all in favor, aye, meeting adjourned.

Respectfully,

Karen Brodeur  
Executive Assistant