

Approved 2/6/2024

Select Board
Meeting Minutes
January 16, 2024 at 5:15 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; Michael Dekoschak, Police Chief; Robert Flaherty, Fire Chief; Michelle Kersbergen, Black Birch Vineyard; O'Brian Tomalin, Building 8 Brewing; Cindy Doty; Shawn Robinson, Friends of the Council on Aging

CALL TO ORDER Chair Szynal called the meeting to order at 5:16 p.m.

TOPIC 1 **EXECUTIVE SESSION** MGL Ch. 30A, 21a, #2. To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel for Police Chief: Selectman Jaworski made a motion to move into executive session under MGL, Ch. 30A, §21a #2. To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel for Police Chief and to return to regular session: Selectman Gagnon seconded: Szynal - aye; Jaworski - aye; Gagnon - aye.

The Select Board returned from executive session at 5:42 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS Chair Szynal thanked the DPW for their work with this long duration storm. The roads are in good shape especially with Garrett recovering at home. Brandon - thank you. Chair Szynal reminded residents real estate tax bills out and due on February 1st. Chair Szynal reminded residents the census is out. Selectman Jaworski stated drivers are not stopping for school buses with the red lights flashing. I had never heard of this before. Chair Szynal stated this is alarming and concerning. Chair Szynal informed residents we met with Treeworks last week and we are coming to an agreement with a solution to everything. We are thankful to Treeworks for working with us on this.

PUBLIC FORUM Cindy Doty appeared before the Board stating real estate taxes have gone way up. Ms. Doty stated back in the day, they used to do re-evaluations when the increase was very high. Some other towns have lowed evaluations. Ms. Doty asked does it have to be appealed to the state? Chair Szynal stated values are reassessed every couple of years. Ms. Michonski stated values increased and it will be done again next year, and real estate taxes may go up again. Ms. Doty spoke with a previous assessor who stated re-evaluations can be done. Ms. Doty stated some residents are on fixed incomes. Chair Szynal asked Ms. Michonski if there are things elderly can do to lower their taxes. Ms. Michonski stated there are exceptions, but Ms. Doty stated her relative does not qualify. Ms. Doty asked the Board if they can look into

doing reevaluations this year, I would appreciate it. Ms. Doty stated people are moving out because they can't afford to live here.

CONSENT AGENDA Selectman Gagnon made a motion to approve the Select Board meeting minutes of January 2, 2024; Selectman Jaworski seconded; no discussion; all in favor – aye; motion approved.

POSTED BUSINESS

TOPIC 2 One Day Liquor License Request: Black Birch Vineyard and Building 8 Brewing, Inc., Fundraiser for Big Brothers Big Sisters, February 8, 2024 at Paciorek Electric Factory, Elm Street, Hatfield. O'Brian Tomalin and Michelle Kersbergen appeared before the Board both requesting a one-day liquor license for a fundraiser. After reviewing the applications, Selectman Jaworski made a motion to accept the one-day liquor license for this event for Black Birch; Selectman Gagnon seconded; no discussion; all in favor – aye; motion approved. Selectman Gagnon made a motion for a one-day liquor license for Building 8 for the fundraiser on Elm Street in Hatfield; Selectman Jaworski seconded; no discussion; all in favor – aye; motion approved.

TOPIC 3 Appointments/Resignations

1.) **Animal Control Officer Designation, Division of Animal Health, MA Department of Agricultural Resources:** Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator informed the Board the Town received the notification enclosed in the packet. We are processing it although there have been ongoing communications about certifications but we are going through the process of appointing the designation. Selectman Gagnon made a motion that we designate R. Scott Pomeroy Animal Control Officer for Hatfield; Selectman Jaworski seconded; no discussion; all in favor – aye; motion approved.

TOPIC 4 DPW Report

1.) **MassDOT FY2024 Ch 90 Supplemental Funding Apportionment:** Ms. Michonski informed the Board that MassDOT has appropriated additional funds to Hatfield in the amount of \$143,121.00. Selectman Jaworski stated the DPW Director is looking at some areas which need work. Chair Szynal informed everyone that line painting has been removed from Chapter 90 funding.

TOPIC 5 Town Administrator Report

1.) **Franklin Regional Council of Gov't FY25 Collective Highway Bid Program:** Ms. Michonski informed the Board this is an annual program. The yearly cost of membership is \$3,250.00 and is funded through highway. Chair Szynal stated this program allows us to participate in larger bids for highway bids, so we get better pricing on certain things. Selectman Jaworski stated the membership costs are offset by the savings and we don't have to bid on everything. Selectman Jaworski made a motion to accept this fee of \$3,250.00 for FRCOG to

continue with a contract and information as presented; Selectman Gagnon seconded; no discussion; all in favor – aye; motion approved.

CONTINUED BUSINESS

TOPIC 6 Smith Academy Park Improvements: Approve Construction Contract Between Town and Keiter Corporation for Pavilion: The Board reviewed the Contract Between Town and Keiter Corporation for the pavilion. Selectman Gagnon made a motion to approve the Contract Between Town and Keiter Corporation for the pavilion; Selectman Jaworski seconded; no discussion; all in favor – aye; motion approved.

TOPIC 7 CT River Greenway Trail: Approve Memorandum of Understanding CT River Greenway with City of Northampton: Ms. Michonski informed the Board the Memorandum before them has been reviewed by town counsel and incorporates the requested changes. Chair Szynal stated this MOU does not have a term. Chair Szynal wants an expiration date in this agreement which is in effect until the 25% design is reached, at which time a new agreement will be entered into. This agreement does not have that clause. As it stands, Chair Szynal stated, this MOU does not expire, and I was very clear that I wanted an expiration date. I realize this was passed at Town meeting and I am not going to sign something that is not clear. Chair Szynal stated her concern is if we don't have a definite date, I don't want it to slip through the cracks. Chair Szynal stated she would like a statement in the agreement that the MOU will expire at the completion of 25% design and at that time the parties will enter into a new agreement. At this time, we don't know what we are talking about. Are there no parking spaces? Too many? We have no idea. I want to be able to renegotiate when the plans are drawn. Ms. Michonski stated she will follow up with the Open Space Committee.

TOPIC 8 FY2025 Budget Reviews with Departments @ 6:15 pm. Police Department, Council on Aging, Fire/EMS: Police Department: Michael Dekoschak, Police Chief presented before the Board with the FY25 Police Department budget. Chief Dekoschak stated the proposal for the year is no change to expenses; a change to salaries, with a 1% increase to the budget for salaries which amounts to \$4,500.00. I presume people are happy with the policing they are getting. Chair Szynal asked about increases in dues. Chief Dekoschak replied I just paid one and found it had gone up, but I didn't know the amount when I created the budget. Chief Dekoschak stated some of my dues come due in July and I don't know the amount when I make out of the budget, so I make the adjustments from other line items.

Geralyn Rodgers Council on Aging: Shawn Robinson presented the FY25 Council on Aging Budget. We have a straight forward budget. The Council on Aging serves a lot of senior, for example we take seniors to their appointments. We had 12,459 duplicate visits to the center in 2023.

Fire/EMS: Robert Flaherty, Fire Chief presented the FY25 Fire/EMS budget to the Select Board. Chief Flaherty presented three budgets to the Board: 1) 16-hour current model; 2) 16-hour

current model with rate changes; 3) 24/7 coverage. Chief Flaherty informed the Board that the budget with the rate changes includes a 15% increase for overtime to academy and additional monies for hose testing. Most fire departments are now outsourcing hose testing as it saves a lot of time and money. Chief Flaherty stated his department is below state levels for staffing and below state levels for hourly rates. Chief Flaherty's 24/7 budget is a follow-up from last year. The consultant's report came out and the consultant recommended Hatfield start working toward the 24/7. Selectman Gagnon questioned the consultant's report - I thought the consultant was supposed to give options not recommendations. Chief Flaherty replied he was going to give recommendations.

Chair Szynal stated those are big increases which cannot be absorbed. Selectman Jaworski replied I don't think we should go back to the residents for another override, but Chair Szynal disagreed. I believe we should inform the residents and then it's all up to them. This is the true democratic way. I don't think we should be afraid to ask. We have an obligation to gather all the information, present it to townspeople and then it's up to them. Selectman Jaworski wants to make sure what we throw out is exactly what we need. We are a community and we make decisions together.

Chair Szynal asked Chief Flaherty about the ALS intercept budget having only \$375.00 left. Chair Szynal asked we are halfway through the year and \$3,000.00 has already been used? Chief Flaherty said there are certain calls that automatically trigger ALS. Last year 67%-68% were ALS calls. The doctors make the call whether it's an ALS. Pioneer Valley charges \$250.00 and Northampton charges \$375.00. Chief Flaherty informed the Board if the billing on certain calls go to Medicare, Medicare only pays \$425.00 plus 8 cents per mile. We cannot balance bill on these calls. Chief Flaherty stated he may be able to move monies from another line item, but he wants the Board to be aware of where we currently are with this.

TOPIC 9 EXECUTIVE SESSION: MGL. Ch. 30A, §21a, 2. To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel for Fire Chief. Selectman Jaworski made a motion to move into executive session under MGL, Ch. 30A, §21a #2. To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel for Fire Chief and not to return to regular session; Selectman Gagnon seconded: Szynal - aye; Jaworski - aye; Gagnon - aye. The meeting was adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

CONTINUED OLD BUSINESS

UNANTICIPATED NEW BUSINESS

Respectfully,
Karen Brodeur
Executive Assistant