

Approved March 19, 2024

Select Board
Meeting Minutes
March 4, 2024 at 5:30 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; John Clark, Interim Treasurer; Tammy Wendolowski, Assistant Treasurer/Collector; Michael Ohl, CEI; David Keir, Capital Planning; Micki Sanderson and Cathy Olson, Co-Chairs, Historical Commission; Meg Baker, Curator; Phil Genovese, DPW Director; John Pease, Agricultural Advisory Committee; Rob Wilson, Historical Society

CALL TO ORDER Chair Szynal called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS Chair Szynal reminded residents the Presidential primary is tomorrow. Polls are open from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm. Chair Szynal announced the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) approval of \$2,406,000.00 agency grant funding and \$9,491,000.00 loan at 2.58% interest rate for the Hatfield wastewater treatment plan upgrade project.

PUBLIC FORUM John Pease presented before the Select Board stating that signs for the Preserve Farmland - Agricultural Advisory Committee have been taken down. The signs depict farmland in Hatfield. If anyone would like to donate to support farmlands, please do. These signs should not be removed from posts. The signs are not cheap and keep going missing. We are trying to preserve our farmland.

CONSENT AGENDA Selectman Gagnon made a motion to approve the February 6, 2024 and February 20, 2024 meeting minutes; Selectman Jaworski seconded; no discussion; all in favor – aye; motion approved.

POSTED BUSINESS

TOPIC 1 FY2025 Budget Reviews with Departments - Treasurer/Collector: John Clark, Interim Treasurer and Tammy Wendolowski, Assistant Treasurer/Collector presented the Select Board with the Treasurer/Collector FY25 budget. There was an increase in health insurance, Medicare and debt services. Mr. Clark stated the Town has no control over the cost of health insurance, Medicare and retirement. The Town integrated software also increased. Chair Szynal asked about the retirement assessment and Mr. Clark stated we need to keep our obligations to the current retirees. Selectman Jaworski asked why unemployment doubled. Mr. Clark stated the amount is a “guess” at this time as you do not know how many unemployment claims will be made. Selectman Jaworski asked which departments unemployment comes from? Mr. Clark replied mostly the school department. Chair Szynal stated the remaining budgets are nominal increases. Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator asked Mr. Clark, in the past, we have added an extra two or three employees into the health insurance lines in case the Town adds positions. Ms. Wendolowski stated she would investigate this.

Request from Finance Committee to meet March 14th and receive the Select Board’s recommended budgets for their departments: Ms. Michonski informed the Select Board Finance Committee wants to

meet on March 14th to discuss budgets. Chair Szynal stated we have not made any decisions. Ms. Michonski will contact the Finance Committee for another date.

TOPIC 2 Rt. 5 Water and Sewer Improvement Project – Meeting/discussion with Project Engineer Mike Ohl: Mike Ohl, project engineer for the Rte. 5 water/sewer project presented before the Select Board with his updated invoice. Mr. Ohl stated they went back through the original invoice of \$330,000.00 and updated the invoice. The corrected invoice is \$270,000.00. Mr. Ohl stated there has been talk of MassWorks covering that amount and the police details have been minimized. Mr. Ohl updated the Select Board on the work that has been done: the pump stations were installed last winter; the contractor put in the pump station to the south and installed the sleeve. The remaining work to be completed at the pump station is the final connections and installation of the electrical work. They have to make the final gravity sewer connection on the north side, which should be completed shortly. The remainder of work is from house #41 to where they ended on the north side; about 1,600 feet. Work will begin on April 1 and Mr. Ohl is hoping the dewatering begins sooner. There is expected to be two crews - one working northward and a separate crew doing sewer laterals. The work is expected to be done in early August. Then they will clean up the site and the final paving will be done. The system will be operational at the end of August and then property owners can plan to connect. Selectman Jaworski asked Mr. Ohl to explain to residents the added cost of \$300,000.00. Chair Szynal stated there is the issue of the \$2,000,000.00 as well as \$270,000.00. Mr. Ohl replied it was because of the change order, the soil conditions, and the dewatering. The cost of the dewatering was higher. Once reviewed, the Change Order was signed by the Town, but the Change Order costs ate into other costs. Chair Szynal stated the reason you hire engineers is to evaluate whether the project is viable and there was a failure here. We thought we had a \$1,000,000.00 project and now we are looking at a \$4,000,000.00 to \$5,000,000.00 project. Mr. Ohl stated it was going to be \$3,600,000.00, then the added \$1,200,000.00 and \$270,000.00. Chair Szynal stated this is why you hire engineers, and this is why this is hard to swallow. Ms. Michonski informed the Select Board MassWorks has been questioning the extra invoicing. MassWorks may fund the remainder, but they want to know why it was not estimated at the beginning. Chair Szynal stated the starting date is April 1st, but we heard that last year and now we hear this again; I want this done this season. Selectman Jaworski added we have been given a timeline ending in June. Mr. Ohl stated further, the contractor had to adjust and had issues with the dewatering system. Mr. Ohl's hope is that moving northward the dewatering system will continue to work. Chair Szynal asked what do we have for recourse as a Town if the contractor is not meeting expectations? Mr. Ohl stated at this time they are not getting paid. Chair Szynal made it clear that, in terms of the residents, I want a couple of things: make sure they are aware of the schedule and at least notify the residents and I want to make sure the residents are aware of the time schedule so they can tie in to the system. Chair Szynal stressed that the schedule must be adhered to. Mr. Ohl informed the Board what I propose is getting written notices to all residents (he would hand out) so everyone is aware of the plan through completion and be able to connect to the sewer. As we continue to move forward, each property owner will know the window of time when they will see equipment in front of their house. Ms. Michonski told Mr. Ohl and not the day before either! Mr. Ohl said he was looking through the police detail and the current rate is \$56.25. If we don't find police details locally, we sometimes use the sheriffs and the sheriff rate is \$67.10 hour. Chair Szynal asked if Ms. Michonski knew of the timeline with MassWorks and Ms. Michonski replied MassWorks is still looking into this. Selectman Jaworski stated we need to vote on residents not paying a hook up fee. Phil Genovese, DPW Director asked the Select Board I know we are looking at MassWorks for payment but what's Plan B? Do we put an article on Town warrant? Chair Szynal replied this conversation needs to be with the Finance Committee.

TOPIC 3 Capital Planning Committee, David Keir – FY2025 Improvement Plan: David Keir, Chair at-large of the Capital Improvement Planning Committee presented before the Select Board with the FY25 capital improvement plan. The spreadsheet shows each department and their priorities in order. Some of the items are not tax monies or CPA. Some infrastructure is getting old and we took a look at that. When there is a water main break on old pipes, the cost is very high. Regarding the lease, Mr. Keir stated there was a discussion at the Comprehensive meeting, we should be thinking about electric vehicles down the road for lease vehicles. Mr. Keir suggested if another COA van is to be leased, maybe the next van won't be wheelchair accessible. We could save some money; do we need two wheelchair accessible vehicles because we already have one? Mr. Keir stated the last van cost an extraordinary amount more because of this. Mr. Keir asked do we really need two? I'm just throwing it out there. Chair Szynal said we need to have those projects shovel ready. Mr. Keir stated we need shovel ready projects because when applying for grants, it's much better to be ready. Chair Szynal read the Capital Improvement Planning Committee priorities and stated I am at a loss why shoddy work is being done and we do not have recourse. It's just oh well and then the project has to be redone. Chair Szynal stated the COA floor was done a couple of years ago and now it has to be redone. Selectman Jaworski suggested using Treeworks money to pay for the freezer. Mr. Keir responded the freezer is not bad, it's the system that runs the freezer. Chair Szynal thanked Mr. Keir and all members of the Capital Improvements Planning Committee and said you keep us focused.

TOPIC 4 Historical Commission, Co-Chairs Micki Sanderson and Cathy Olson discussion of Town owned location for the artifactual storage/display/education space of Hatfield's historical collection: Micki Sanderson and Cathy Olson, Co-Chairs of the Historical Commission presented before the Select Board requesting the second floor of Town Hall be used for storage of the artifacts. Ms. Sanderson stated the collection is currently stored in leased space and the lease expires at the end of September. To store the artifacts is a cost of \$35,000.00. We spent \$40,000.00 in the last couple of years. The second floor of the library does not have handicap accessibility. I want to mention there are no other alternatives. We have spent three years exploring other avenues and we can't depend on funding for a building. Town meeting approved the funding for the elevator in Town Hall for Historical. Funding for the elevator was from the Historical pot. We will take any space including the second floor in Town Hall. Our commission is requesting the use of this space as we sit in it. This would be adequate space as approved by Historical Society. We have a lease that is expiring in September and I don't want to see any more money going to inappropriate storage. We cannot let the collection be at the whim of a private owner. Chair Szynal asked Ms. Sanderson, do you know that the lease will not be renewed and Ms. Sanderson replied no. Ms. Sanderson asked the Select Board why spend the money when we have the space here. Selectman Jaworski asked I thought the Historical Society wants to fix up the barn? Meg Baker, curator, stated the barn needs work and the barn is for the farm museum. The items at Diamondback are furniture, paintings, etc, and cannot be stored in a barn. Selectman Jaworski spoke, as far as the elevator, an article at Town meeting was passed to make the Town Hall ADA compliant because the State said Town Hall has to be ADA compliant. Ms. Sanderson stated we have people who cannot access the collection. Selectman Jaworski stated that since the second-floor area was nothing but a dust bowl, it was cleaned up and it looks great. Ms. Baker stated this is a working collection, people come in to look at artifacts of their family. Ms. Baker stated this is where it turns back to the MOU and the Town taking care of the collection. Selectman Jaworski stated the other problem we have is to move the TV studio from the high school here. I don't want this space turning into another dust bowl. Selectman Jaworski went on previously the museum was going to be up here but at Town meeting it was

shot down. If it's shot down at Town meeting by ballot, then they must come up with another idea. Ms. Sanderson stated this space is perfect for the collection. Selectman Jaworski stated let's put this on a ballot and let the people decide. Chair Szynal said this space would be great for a meeting room and is completely funded by the TV cable fund. John Novak, cable TV manager stated there are a lot of residents viewing the tapes of the meetings. Chair Szynal asked how much space you would need? Ms. Baker suggested 100 square feet. Mr. Novak stated the Select Board voted on September 19, 2023 to use this space as a meeting room and cable room. Two boards cannot meet in Town Hall at the same time as there is not enough space. Ms. Baker stated it occurs to me, is there any other room on the first floor of Town Hall? Chair Szynal stated there should be a ballot question at Town voting. Chair Szynal stated we need to be clear; the space will not be used as a museum but just for storage. Rob Wilson of the Historic Society stated our Board voted to support using this room. Diamondback has been a great place to work; we do not have any complaints; Tim has been a great landlord.

TOPIC 5 TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Future Meeting with Finance Committee re FY2025 Budget: Ms. Michonski stated this subject was acted on in Topic 1.

Finance Committee approval to transfer money from Reserve Fund for Veteran Services with Northampton: Ms. Michonski informed the Select Board that she received an invoice from Northampton Veteran Services and requested approval from the Finance Committee to transfer monies from the reserve fund to pay for services through the end of June 2024. Finance met last last week and approved \$4,755.00 which gets us to June 30th.

CONTINUED OLD BUSINESS

TOPIC 6 Proposed Petition to Legislature: Legalization to Use Golf Carts: Ms. Michonski informed the Select Board she has drafted a proposed by-law petition and is being reviewed by town counsel in preparation for Town meeting.

TOPIC 7 Letter of Agreement between Open Space Committee and Community Preservation for Pavilion @ Smith Academy Park – Endorsement from Select Board Chair: Ms. Michonski presented the Select Board with the Letter of Agreement between Open Space Committee and Community Preservation for the pavilion at Smith Academy Park. Selectman Jaworski asked why do we need this? Ms. Michonski stated couple of years ago we asked CPC to consider funding the money and CPC was willing to fund it; however, with each project, the CPC enters into a Letter of Agreement. After reviewing the Letter of Agreement, Selectman Gagnon made a motion to accept the Letter of Agreement between Open Space Committee and Community Preservation for pavilion at Smith Academy Park; Selectman Jaworski seconded; no discussion; all in favor – aye; motion approved.

TOPIC 8 By-Laws Review Advisory Committee Appointments for consideration: Ms. Michonski is requesting the Select Board appoint a 5-member advisory committee for reviewing and updating the Town by-laws. She informed the Board the committee should consist of a Select Board representative, the Town Clerk, the Moderator, the Building/Zoning Enforcement Officer, the Town Administrator and an at-large member. The Board requested time to review this.

Chair Szynal stated there are several employment opportunities within the Town of Hatfield as well as board and committee positions. There is an opening for a Treasurer/Collector position; administrative assistant; and Veterans Service Officer. There are many openings for boards and committees. Anyone interested can go to the Town's website for information or contact Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator.

NEW BUSINESS None.

UNANTICIPATED NEW BUSINESS None

ADJOURN

Selectman Jaworski made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Selectman Gagnon seconded; no discussion; all in favor – aye; meeting adjourned at 7:53 pm.

Respectfully,
Karen Brodeur
Executive Assistant