

'Select Board
Meeting Minutes
October 26, 2021, 5:30 pm
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; Phil Genovese, DPW Director; Robert Flaherty, Fire Chief; Dave Prickett; Claudia Sarti, COVID Coordinator; Michael Dekoschak, Police Chief; Tracey Hebert; Aubrey Weston and E. Lary Grossman

CALL TO ORDER Chair Szynal called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

PUBLIC FORUM Tracey Hebert had two public comments: First, Spooktacular will be held on Friday at the Lion's Club pavilion. Tickets are on sale at hatfieldpta.com. The last day to purchase tickets is tomorrow. Second, the PTA organized a candy drive. We need to have people on Primrose Path contact the PTA to get a head count.

ANNOUNCEMENTS Selectman Jaworski informed everyone about the major gas leak on Routes 5 & 10 and was thankful that no one was hurt. The response from the Fire Chief, Police Chief, DPW and Whately was tremendous and the Board wants to thank everyone for their hard work in keeping the situation under control, for their professionalism, quick response and keeping Hatfield safe. Selectman Moriarty thought it important for townspeople to know that Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator received a telephone call from a gentleman at Berkshire Gas who informed her that he has never been in a situation where the departments were so professional and easy to deal with. Selectman Moriarty wanted everyone to know that it's nice that others recognize the hard work our departments do. Selectman Moriarty wanted to thank the Veterans, Gerry Clark and the Legion for fixing the flags in town and getting them unstuck from telephone poles. On November 9th at 9:30 a.m the Council on Aging is holding coffee for our Veterans. If any Veteran wants to attend, please call the Council on Aging at 247-9003. Representative Sabadosa will be there. Selectman Moriarty mentioned that it was great to see everyone at the Smith Academy hockey field which was dedicated to Judy Strong. Chair Szynal hosted the event and mentioned that it was great to see so many people. Selectman Jaworski said all the speakers did a wonderful job. Chair Szynal said it was very nice, a huge turnout and the weather was great. Chair Szynal said that all three teams made it to tournament. The Board wanted to thank the Council on Aging for flu clinic taking place tomorrow.

Chair Szynal informed everyone that the 350th Anniversary commemorative photobook is for sale. This would make a nice holiday gift. You can find the sign-up sheets at Town Hall, on Facebook and on the Town's website.

Selectman Jaworski reminded everyone that halloween is Sunday so drive careful; on November 11th at 11:00 in front of Town Hall there will be a Veteran's Day ceremony if anyone can attend. Selectman Moriarty wants folks to know that Fire Chief Robert Flaherty was named as a finalist in the Readers Choice Awards for best individual responder. That's the reputation the Chief has in leading the EMS Department. Congrats to Chief Flaherty.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Selectman Moriarty made a motion to accept the October 21, 2021 regular meeting minutes; the October 21, 2021 executive session meeting minutes and the September 28, 2021 meeting minutes; Selectman Jaworski seconded, all in favor, aye, minutes approved.

POSTED BUSINESS

Traffic Control Officer Policy. Chief Dekoschak presented the Select Board with a new policy he would like to implement and would like the Board's approval. He informed the Board that it's now harder than ever to find officers for traffic detail and that there are many unfilled details. Because of police reform and a lot of officers do not make it through only because they don't have time and not for disciplinary action, this would be a great opportunity for those officers. They are trained and understand how traffic detail works. The officers who would fill this policy would be not be sworn-in personnel, uniforms are similar but they would not have a badge, gun or able to make arrests. They can be used for parades. These individuals would be responsible for buying and maintaining uniforms. Compensation for these details are paid for by the business owner or person(s) requesting traffic control details. These positions can be filled by anyone from the fire department, EMS, police but only by those individuals who have training for this type of detail. These officers are at-will per diem employees with no benefits. They would be covered under the Town's workers compensation insurance policy. Chair Szydal asked if a layperson could do this and Chief said no, only people that have been police, fire, sheriff. After consideration, Selectman Moriarty made a motion to approve the Hatfield Police Department Traffic Control Policy, Selectman Jaworski seconded, all in favor, aye, motion approved.

COVID-19 Update. Claudia Sarti, COVID Coordinator informed the Select Board that between October 18 and October 24 there were seven new cases. She informed the Board that there is not one common denominator, but these seven cases involve two households. Chair Szydal mentioned that this is an important piece to this when people realize that numerous people in one household have COVID. Chair Szydal asked Ms. Sarti how many are in quarantine and Ms. Sarti informed her tonly 2.

Appointments/Resignation. After reviewing the list of resignations and appointments, Selectman Moriarty made a motion to accept the resignation of Sean Eckler from the Police Department, Selectman Jaworski seconded, all in favor, aye, resignation accepted. Selectman Jaworski made a motion to accept the resignation of Charlie Guimond from Zoning Board of Appeals, Selectman Moriarty seconded, all in favor, aye, resignation approved. Selectman Moriarty made a motion to accept the resignation of Kathleen Zeamer from Local Cultural Council, Selectman Jaworski seconded, all in favor, aye, resignation accepted. Selectman Jaworski made motion to appoint Kathy Winters to the Local Cultural Council, Selectman Moriarty seconded, all in favor, aye, appointment approved. Selectman Moriarty made a motion to appoint to appoint Danielle Stanisewski as Recreation Committee Representative to the Community Preservation Commission, Selectman Jaworski seconded, all in favor aye, appointment approved.

@ 6:00 pm Public Hearing: Proposed Water and Sewer Rates Increase. Chair Szydal opened the hearing at 6:00 PM. Dave Prickett, who assists the Town of Hatfield with water projects, presented before the Board. Chair Szydal informed everyone about the proposed sewer and water rate increase of 5%. It was pointed out that the current sewer rate is \$8.89 hcf and proposing an increase of 5% would bring it to \$9.34 for a total cost to an average residential user of \$2.40 per month. The current water rate of \$4.67 hcf and proposing an increase of 5% would bring it to \$4.91 for a total increase of \$1.85 per

month for an average residential user. Last year the first step was made and since that time the Town has worked hard to put together a funding application to USDA to get a grant and a low interest loan to update the sewer department. These increases are driven by increases in sludge costs, electricity, inflation, etc. Waste water inflation is usually 5-7%. In order to qualify for the grants, we have to have certain rates. They offer grants to offset the costs and below market rate loans. Selectman Moriarty mentioned that the Hatfield Waste Water Treatment Plant is over 40 years old and equipment is over 20 years old. The whole town was paying for water and sewer which should only be paid by users and this will get the Town in line for USDA grants. Mr. Prickett advised the Select Board that the Application is complete and submitted. Once they hear back, the Town will have to decide whether they want these projects done.

E. Lary Grossman presented before the Select Board requesting that he be put back on an agricultural rate for his horses. He said at this time he has 2 horses and the Town switched him over and now he pays \$54.00 which he used to pay \$12.00. Mr. Grossman reiterated that it would be cheaper for him to go to one meter. Chair Szynal thanked Mr. Grossman for coming to the meeting but that the Board would not be making a decision on his matter at this time as it was not on the Agenda.

Mike Cahill presented before the Select Board about the proposed increases. He said that his main concern was that the "approximate average additional cost per month for residential users" on both the water and sewer increases outlined in the Handout – Proposed FY2022 Water & Sewer Rates were inaccurate. It will cost the average user more than a total of \$4.25 per month for water and sewer. It was his opinion that the increase would add on another \$50.00 per month to the average user and that coupled with increasing taxes, the total cost to residents would be around \$600.00+ per year. Mr. Cahill said that by his calculations, with the \$50.00 per month increase and then you add last year's increased rates and increase in taxes it's a huge increase for people on fixed incomes. By his calculation it's almost \$800.00 and next year it will far exceed that. Dave Prickett mentioned that on the water/sewer side this is based on the medium water consumer. There are some linear households. Mr. Prickett further stated that we have always been honest in our calculations. Not every user is equal.

Chair Szynal closed the hearing at 6:32 PM. After consideration, Selectman Moriarty made a motion that the proposed rate increase for water and sewer be implemented; Selectman Jaworski seconded, all in favor, aye, motion approved.

DPW REPORT:

Water & Sewer Billing Commitment: Chair Szynal read the commitment letter: The Board of Selectmen commits to you for collection the attached FY 2022 water bills (Batch #1M) in the amount of \$352,549.11. The Board of Selectmen commits to you for collection the attached FY 2022 sewer bills (Batch #1M) in the amount of \$315,815.44. The Board of Selectmen commits to you for collection the attached FY 2022 fees (Batch #1M) in the amount of \$1000.00. Total amount committed for collection \$669,364.55. Bills will be issued on 10/5/2021 and due 11/5/2021. Selectman Jaworski made a motion to accept the commitments as read, Selectman Moriarty seconded, all in favor aye, motion approved.

Water Abatement: After review of the documentation presented by the DPW Director, Selectman Moriarty made a motion to approve the water abatement of \$124.46 for 10 South Street, Selectman Jaworski seconded, all in favor aye, motion approved.

Fuel Tank Removal Bids Update: Phil Genovese, DPW Director and Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator presented to the Board the fuel tank removal bids. The lowest bid was Sovereign for \$148,838.00 not including the alternate bid. There was discussion about how to go about funding the extra money for this project. Mr. Genovese informed the Board that the insurance company has dropped insuring the Town for the fuel tanks as the communication link is not working. After discussion, Chair Szynal instructed Mr. Genovese to get in touch with the Finance Committee to make that decision.

Mr. Genovese presented before the Select Board to carry over his vacation. Mr. Genovese requested that he be able to carryover vacation until January 1st instead of October 31st. Selectman Moriarty made a motion to approve the extension of. Genovese's vacation carryover to January 1, 2022, Selectman Jaworski seconded, all in favor, aye, motion approved.

Mr. Genovese informed the Select Board that there will be a debriefing meeting regarding the gas leak very soon. Selectman Jaworski asked Mr. Genovese how the solar system is working. Mr. Genovese told him that the system still needs to be hooked up and they have been contacting Solex to no avail.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:

Financial Update: Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator updated the Select Board regarding the financial update of the Town. The accountant is continuing to close out FY21 at the end of this or next week and submit all reports. The Town audit should occur in November and we should have a free cash estimate next week. Chair Szynal thanked all involved for their hard work.

MassWorks Grant Update: Mr. Michonski updated the Select Board regarding the MassWorks Grant. The quarterly report ending 9/30 has been submitted and she should have an expenditure report which includes all expenditures applied to the grant. There is \$921,000.19 left. This grant has been paying for the Route 5&10 water and sewer project.

Hazard Mitigation Grant Update: Ms. Michonski updated the Select Board regarding the hazard mitigation grant update. The quarterly report was submitted to MEMA on September 30, 2021. The second hazard mitigation hearing will be November 2, 2021.

Conservation Commission Membership: Ms. Michonski informed the Select Board that at Town meeting in 1973 they voted to set the members of the Conservation Commission to seven. A question has come up about someone from Town who wants to serve. We thought there were two vacancies and discovered no vacancies. A vote to reduce the Commission was requested by a member in 2014, the Board of Selectmen acted on that and reduced the members to five. The Town Clerk had asked that I have a discussion if the Board chooses to put an article on Town meeting to reduce the number of members. They currently have five members but there are times when it's hard to get everyone at the meetings. Ms. Michonski reviewed the statute and a town that accepts that statute, you have up to seven members. When the town voted to accept seven members, then the Select Board could change it but because of the way it was voted, it must go to town meeting. Chair Szynal suggested that Ms. Michonski get in touch with members who don't show up and see if they would resign their seat. Then you could put that person who wants to serve on the committee.

Use of Town Hall Space: Ms. Michonski informed the Select Board that since the last meeting she has reached out to Departments and some have responded. Most are comfortable where they are would like more space to store files elsewhere.

New business: Chair Szynal informed the Board that Rebecca Bench, Chair of the School Committee reached out to her and would like to begin negotiations for the school teachers contracts. Selectman Moriarty agreed that he would be the liaison for these negotiations,

Selectman Jaworski made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:24 p.m., Selectman Moriarty seconded, all in favor, aye, motion adjourned.

Respectfully,

Karen Brodeur
Executive Assistant