

**SELECT BOARD  
MINUTES  
January 3, 2023  
Town Hall, 17 Main Street and via ZOOM**

**Members present:** Michael-Ray Jeffreys, Chairman; Tom Alonzo, Vice Chairman; Lou Franco, Clerk; Todd Dwyer, Heather Sroka  
**Also Present:** Heather Lemieux, Town Manager

Chairman Jeffreys called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. He announced in accordance with the requirements of the Open Meeting Law, please be advised that this meeting is being recorded and broadcast live over the Lunenburg public access channel and Facebook Live and it will be uploaded to the Lunenburg public access YouTube channel within 24 hours after the meeting. The agenda lists all the topics which may be discussed at this meeting and are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair. Votes may be taken as a result of these discussions. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by the Open Meeting Law.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ms. Sroka noted a Facebook page independent of the Town sponsored Facebook page generated resident complaints about trash pickup, taxes going up, etc., but is not a town sponsored forum. The administrator of the FB page is unknown. She encouraged anyone with a complaint to go to the source to get it resolved.

Mr. Dwyer announced the Lunenburg Water District will be meeting tomorrow and they are going to address some of the concerns that have been raised regarding the Hickory Hills well study. Discussion ensued about the holiday trash pickup schedule and the recent real estate tax bills that went out.

Mr. Jeffreys noted Governor Baker will be ending his term tomorrow. It's a tremendous responsibility and Governor Baker has done a wonderful job over his tenure and we look forward to what comes next with Governor Healey. Mr. Alonzo echoed Mr. Jeffreys and added Governor Baker and Lt. Governor Polito have done an excellent job in staying engaged with communities. We've gotten lots of communications from them about policies and programs that they're doing and leading us through the pandemic was a very trying time. I think they did an excellent job and I wish them both the best in their future endeavors.

Dave MacDonald, 155 Island Road, thanked the Police and Fire Chiefs who came out and rang the bell for the Salvation Army on Christmas Eve. He also wanted people to know they can apply for a tax abatement with the Board of Assessors until February 1<sup>st</sup>.

**TOWN MANAGER REPORT**

**Announcement on Existing Vacancies**

The following is a list of current vacancies on the following committees:

- 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee (8 vacancies)
- Council on Aging (2 vacancies)
- Finance Committee (1 vacancy)
- Green Communities Committee ( 1 Associate vacancy)
- Historical Commission (2 vacancies)
- Open Space Committee (1 Member at Large vacancy)
- Zoning Board of Appeals (1 Associate vacancy)

Interested persons can find application forms on the Town Website and completed forms can be sent to the Select Board's Office. Anyone that has any questions on volunteer opportunities can contact the Select Board's Office at (978) 582-4130 x 144.

### **Current Employment Opportunities with the Town**

The following is a list of current employment opportunities with the Town:

- Administrative Assistant IT (Part Time Non-Benefitted)
- Heavy Equipment Operator (Full Time Benefitted)
- Facilities Director (Full Time Benefitted)
- Library Assistant (Part Time Non-Benefitted)
- Police Officer (Full Time Benefitted)
- Production Technician (Part Time Benefitted)
- Public Safety Front Desk Clerk (Full Time Benefitted)
- Recreation Director (Part Time Non-Benefitted)
- Videographers (Part Time Non-Benefitted)

### **FY 2024 Budget Process**

Departments were sent target budget forms for FY 2024 the third week of December and requests are due back next week. I will present the Five Year Financial Forecast and Capital Plan recommendation the week of January 16th and the FY 2024 Preliminary Budget will be presented the week of February 13th. The Finance Committee will begin their budget meetings with departments on February 23rd and end on March 23rd. The Finance Committee public hearing will be on March 30th. The Annual Town Meeting this year is Saturday, May 6th.

### **Meetings, Events, and Other Announcements:**

- The Lions Club will be holding their annual Christmas Tree Recycling event on Saturday, January 7th from 8 am until noon at the Ritter Building rear parking lot. Lakeview Landscaping will be conducting the event on their behalf and will have a dumpster for the trees.
- The ZBA will be holding a continuation of the public hearing for the Pond View Commons project on Wednesday, January 11<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m. in this meeting room.

### **COMMUNICATIONS FROM OTHER BOARDS**

Mr. Jeffreys reported he received an email from Conservation Commission Chair Bob Pease regarding encroachments on the Cowdry Conservation Area that were identified by the Dillis and Roy survey. The abutters have removed everything without the Town having to resort to any legal action. The Commission appreciates the support shown by the Select Board and funding the survey. The commission will now be requesting that Town Counsel send encroachment letters to another batch of abutters to the large Town Forest, Clarkes Hill, Laurel Bank and the Rayno Conservation area.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

#### **1. Status Update on Town Manager and Select Board Goals**

Ms. Lemieux reported the Land Use Director and I met with Mass Development representatives regarding 925 Mass Ave. in December. They do have a program that consists of Requests for Proposals for when we're at that that stage. I did state that we would like to utilize that program and their services. She added long-term staffing discussion was part of her pre-budget meetings. She is working on that process of putting that together.

Mr. Jeffreys reported for their first goal they are working on overseeing the hazardous material abatement and demolition of the old Primary School which should be occurring this spring and going out to bid on that this month. Every other action is related to follow-up seeking public engagement to review landscaping and architect plans. I expect that we will substantially complete this before the year is up.

Our second objective is to work with the Town Manager and the Finance Director to establish a means-tested senior citizen property tax exemption or abatement. Mr. Franco reported Mr. Alonzo and I met to discuss what was discussed in the last tax relief group discussion. We're trying to synthesize that using some other towns' models but incorporating some of the calculus that Principal Assessor CJ Carroll has done into this. I suggest we bring it to the tax relief group first; refine it more and then bring it here with a more refined version of what's being drafted.

Mr. Jeffreys stated our third objective was to review Select Board bylaws and propose updates for the 2023 Annual Town meeting. Our first action was to review our policies and procedures which we have completed. Our second action is to review all Select Board bylaws and prepare modifications and updates to improve clarity and consistency with the Town Charter. We will be working on that a little bit later today or at least starting that. The third action is holding a public hearing to present any proposals, get feedback from the public and then preparing the actual warrant article.

#### **Open Meeting Law –Permanent Changes (cont.)**

Mr. Jeffreys stated this is a placeholder, I don't realistically expect that we'll have much discussion on this. It sounded last week as if we may just want to keep the opportunity to meet remotely but we don't want to be encumbered by mandated requirements to host them.

**Motion: L. Franco**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: T. Alonzo**

**To allow each board or a committee to use remote technology and have hybrid meetings but not as a requirement that has to be enabled**

**Vote: All in Favor**

#### **Town Manager Report on FY24 Budget Priorities**

Ms. Lemieux read from her memo to the Board:

Each year, prior to my presentation of the preliminary budget proposal to the Town, I review with the Board foreseeable budget priorities for the next fiscal year. In line with prior years, there are always more needs than resources and the fiscal approach is to balance the needs of the schools, town departments, and capital needs while adhering to our financial policies and maintaining strong reserves.

To date, departments have been sent target budgets and I had meetings with various department heads to discuss their needs for next fiscal year prior to sending out the target budget. After receiving each department's budget request in mid-January, the Finance Director and I will meet with every department and have more thorough discussions about their budget requests.

On the projected revenue side, currently the target budget includes a 2 ½ percent increase from the prior year's levy limit, an estimated new growth figure of \$200,000, the debt exclusion amount for FY24, level funds state aid, and includes a \$50,000 increase to local receipts. By the end of January, we will receive the Governor's budget proposal, which will amend our state aid estimate until the state budget is finalized.

At this point in the budget process, I foresee staffing needs to be addressed conservatively in Fiscal Year 2024. In prior years, the ten-year staffing plan for the Police Department and the five-year staffing plan Fire/EMS were part of the preliminary budget presentations. The five-year Fire/EMS plan was realized this fiscal year and the Fire Department obtained their Paramedic License on January 2, 2023.

A new three-year collective bargaining agreement for Police Officers went into effect this fiscal year, with a market adjustment in year 2 of the agreement (FY 2024) that may impact our ability to fund an additional officer in FY 2024. In different departments, there are needs to increase hours for existing positions due to the workloads and changing nature of the positions that will have a nominal impact.

Across departments, the challenge that we all face right now is the lack of office space. As we have slowly added positions over the last six years based on need, our space limitations have become more apparent. Given this limitation, needs such as Trash and Recycling Coordinator and ARPA related reporting and oversight will be a need that we will look to outsource. Trash and recycling are one of the top resident complaints we receive and the goal of having a coordinator is to address these complaints and resolve ongoing pick-up issues. Once the Board approves the pending ARPA funding requests, federal reporting requirements, procurement, and oversight of projects will be added responsibilities that we currently do not have the staff resources for. Outsourcing grant writing services would also be another beneficial need that would have a positive return on investment.

Another area I will be recommending resources be allocated is training for staff. We currently have a very limited budget for staff training and try to utilize all available free training through our insurance company or grants. As we have on-boarded various employees, it has become obvious that additional training resources would acclimate employees more quickly to their roles.

Operationally, there are several requests I expect to receive, including:

- Additional funding for ADA public rights of way improvements
- Hazardous tree removal expenses
- Drainage improvements across town
- Cemetery improvements that were below the \$20,000 capital project threshold
- Facilities and grounds expenses
- Internet costs for fiber at various buildings
- IT equipment including camera upgrades and replacement of work stations
- Constructing small kennel for vicious dogs behind the Public Safety Building
- Library programming expenses

The target budget also includes increases for non-discretionary expenditures such as health insurance, liability and workers compensation insurances, debt payments, and our retirement assessment. The renewal rate increase at this point in the budget for health insurance is an 8.5% increase, liability and workers compensation are estimated to increase 5%, and our retirement assessment will increase 13% next fiscal year. We will receive the rate range for health insurance at the end of January and our actual renewal rate in March. This is one of our largest "unknowns". Fortunately, we created a health insurance stabilization account that we could tap into to stabilize this cost if required.

Lastly, we will be negotiating the clerical union contract this year and a consultant is currently undertaking a compensation and classification study that will impact all proposed salaries for non-contractual, non-union employees. The impact of both will need to be borne through the FY 2024 Salary Reserve appropriation.

It is still relatively early in the budget process and there are many moving parts that become known later in the fiscal year. As budget developments come about or needs are identified, I will keep the Board updated.

### **Requests to Legislators for Fiscal Priorities for FY24**

Ms. Lemieux suggested sending correspondence to other town elected bodies to see what their needs are. Mr. Alonzo noted there are needs that would be advantageous for us to apply for grants for and try to get assistance with the Flat Hill Road drainage as well as some infrastructure/stormwater, water conservation/protection. Ms. Sroka suggested ADA compliance needs. Mr. Jeffreys noted facility support for our aging buildings. Mr. Jeffreys did report the requirement for brownfield assistance has changed and Lunenburg is now eligible for funding. He recommended continuing to request facility funding for small towns. Mr. Alonzo requested expanding broadband infrastructure/support for internet accessibility. The board will continue the discussion at a later time.

### **Acceptance of gift of New Sign at McNally Field**

Ms. Lemieux reported communication from the Parks Commission that they voted to accept the donation of a new sign for McNally Field. The Select Board needs to vote to accept the gift. The board requested a photo of the sign be provided before voting.

### **Workshop-Bylaw Review**

Mr. Jeffreys directed the board members to their meeting materials. We have a section of the Charter that goes into the role of the Select Board. The purpose of this workshop is to align the Charter with our bylaws. The Select Board has a lot of policies so there may not be a need for a lot of revisions, but the idea is to look at the actual bylaws that we have and identify if there's a need for any kind of changes. It was suggested to look over everything and continue the discussion another time. The goal is to familiarize ourselves with what's here and then to be prepared at our next workshop to discuss changes.

### **Vote to open the Annual Town Meeting warrant on January 10, 2023 and close the warrant on March 20, 2023 at 4:00 p.m.**

**Motion: T. Alonzo**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: L. Franco**

**To open the Annual Town Meeting warrant on January 10, 2023 and close the warrant on March 20, 2023 at 4:00 p.m.**

**Vote: All in Favor**

Ms. Sroka presented a photo of the McNally Field sign to the board.

**Motion: M. Jeffreys**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: T. Alonzo**

**To accept the new sign donated to the Park Commissioners for McNally Field**

**Vote: All in Favor**

It was clarified the donation was from friends of the McNallys.

### **Approval of December 13 and 20, 2022 Minutes**

**Motion: T. Alonzo**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: L. Franco**

**To approve the December 13 and December 20, 2022 minutes as submitted**

**Vote: All in Favor**

### **Warrants**

The board signed an accounts payable warrant in the amount of \$1,737,128.07; a payroll warrant in the amount of \$956,240.90 and a payroll deductions warrant in the amount of \$61,236.91.

### **Action Items**

Mr. Alonzo reported there has been a back and forth discussion between the Town Manager and a Capital Planning Committee member about the property lines around the TC Passios building and the ownership/custody of not just the building but the property. We should try to get it out there about where the property lines are. There seems to be confusion depending on who you talk to, when you talk to them, and what they're talking about as far as a project.

Mr. Jeffreys stated the Municipal Building Design Committee has raised is a possible need for there to be an ANR (approval not required) plan to subdivide the property. Right now the way it's listed is that the property was transferred to the Select Board. There was no official change in lot lines so it's still all one big parcel. However when you look at the Village District Overlay, it only includes part of the property as being in the Village District which includes TC Passios and the Brooks House. But the rest of the parcel is not in the overlay. Ms. Lemieux showed the May 2019 town meeting warrant article and the map of what was transferred. She added if it's a transfer between agencies within a town you're not required to record it the Registry of Deeds although for many people history gets lost and especially town meeting votes versus if it were recorded. The first building design committee did do survey work related to the building so there was a survey done at that time.

#### **Committee Reports**

Mr. Alonzo reported after our final Capital Planning meeting while there's no requirement that all the requests be rated distinctly, we removed from consideration one item, so that caused a blank area in some people's report and then some people wanted to rework it. So I asked the committee to rank them uniquely and that's what we did. We re-met via Zoom only on Wednesday and re-voted and resubmitted and voted to supersede the previous final one to the new one and that is now with the Town Manager. Mr. Franco reported Economic Development Committee was canceled due to lack of a quorum. Ms. Sroka reported School Committee meets here and on ZOOM tomorrow night.

#### **UPCOMING MEETING/EVENTS SCHEDULE**

Mr. Jeffreys reported their next meetings are on January 10, 17, and 24.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** there was none at this time.

**Motion: L. Franco**  
**To adjourn the meeting**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: T. Dwyer**  
**Vote: All in Favor**

The meeting adjourned at 8:19 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,



Elaine M. Peterson

Executive Assistant to the Town Manager