

**SELECT BOARD
MINUTES
January 24, 2023
Town Hall, 17 Main Street and via ZOOM**

Members present: Michael-Ray Jeffreys, Chairman; Todd Dwyer, Heather Sroka

Members not present: Tom Alonzo, Vice Chairman; Lou Franco, Clerk

Also Present: Heather Lemieux, Town Manager; via ZOOM

Chairman Jeffreys called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Motion: T. Dwyer

2nd: H. Sroka

To enter into Executive Session and enter back into Open Session after exiting Executive Session pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30, Section 21, Paragraph 3, to discuss strategy with respect to litigation, where an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the government's litigating position and the Chair so declares. (Pond View Commons, LLC)

Vote: Ms. Sroka- aye, Mr. Dwyer-aye, Mr. Jeffreys-aye

PUBLIC COMMENT: There was none.

ANNOUNCEMENT:

Mr. Jeffreys read the statement released earlier today regarding the investigation into the tax FY23 tax assessments.

"On January 17, 2023, the Lunenburg Select Board voted to initiate an investigation as authorized by section 3-2(e) of the Lunenburg Town Charter into the process that contributed to the FY23 property valuation and tax assessments. Over the last week the investigative team comprised of Chairman Michael Jeffreys, Vice Chairman Tom Alonzo and Town Manager Heather Lemieux finalized an investigative framework and will be published and we'll be publishing a request for proposals to solicit independent tax assessors and analysts to assist an independent review and investigation. The Chairman of the Select Board and Town Manager have also worked with members of the Board of Assessors and the Assessors' office to identify support required to process a significant amount of abatements and solicitation for services will be published this week. The Select Board and Town Manager will continue to work with personnel from the Department of Revenue and external partners to expeditiously look into concerns identified by residents as part of the investigation. The investigation seeks to answer a variety of core questions and will focus on establishing a timeline and identifying facts supported by evidence. The Select Board will provide regular updates to the public twice a month on the investigative process and will provide its next update on February 7, 2023."

- **Ratification of the Town Manager's Appointment of Public Safety Desk Clerk- Kennedy Jackson**

Ms. Lemieux stated this appointment is for the public safety desk clerk. She read the letter from Police Chief Tom Gammel:

"As you are aware our desk position has been vacant since August of 2022. The position had been posted, but we were unable to identify a candidate at the time of the posting. During the month of December we were about to begin the process again when our Fitchburg State University Intern, Kennedy Jackson, expressed an interest in the position. We met with Kennedy, and at the end of the meeting we were confident she would be a good fit for our Community and Department.

I am pleased to recommend Kennedy Jackson for the full time Public Safety Desk Clerk position. Kennedy is a lifelong resident of Fitchburg, and is a graduate of Oakmont Regional High School. She graduated from Fitchburg State University in December of 2022 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice, and a minor in Sociology. Kennedy also comes from a family of Law Enforcement professionals, her father is a retired police officer and her mother is a retired correction officer. Kennedy possesses the skills and knowledge to successfully fulfill this position. During her internship with our department she was given several tasks, and was able to complete the tasks with minimal direction. Kennedy has met all of the requirements for this position, which included passing a full background Investigation. I request that Kennedy Jackson be appointed to the full-time Public Safety Desk Clerk position to be effective January 25, 2023. Thank you for your consideration of my request."

Motion: T. Dwyer

2nd: H. Sroka

To ratify the Town Manager appointment of Kennedy Jackson to Public Safety Desk Clerk

Vote: All in Favor

OLD BUSINESS

1. Sign NEPBA, Local 353 Collective Bargaining Agreement (Police Union)

Mr. Jeffreys stated the board had previously approved the collective bargaining agreement and would be signing it tonight.

CURRENT BUSINESS

1. Discussion and Vote on funding for Tax Assessment Investigation

Mr. Jeffreys reported that one of the things that we've been working on as noted in the release is coming with a framework. We are classifying a lot of the documents that we're currently creating as confidential. We will make sure that the framework is available for the Select Board on a routine basis to be able to come into the office to look at. All the supporting documents are confidential and not available for public release until the actual investigation is complete. We're going to need to bring in some assessment assistance. Town Manager Lemieux and I have been working on an RFP to be able to go out and procure these services; there's going to be funds needed for that and on the investigative side there may be a need for administrative support. We are going to need to have someone other than the Town Manager gathering a lot of the documents that we're looking for so there's also the need to significantly bump up the assessment Office. Currently a high volume year of abatements is about 50 and we are projecting that we're likely going to have around 500. We need to procure people to be able to assist in that process. What we asking for at this point is for the Select Board to commit \$150,000 for these needs. We will provide the Select Board with itemized lists of how this is being spent. The finding will be coming from ARPA.

Motion: T. Dwyer

2nd: H. Sroka

To allocate \$150,000 from ARPA funds for the tax assessment investigation and staffing for the assessment office

Vote: All in Favor

Mr. Jeffreys stated their next meeting will be on January 31st and continue to meet through February.

There was no public comment at this time.

Motion: H. Sroka

2nd: T. Dwyer

To adjourn the meeting

Vote: All in Favor

The meeting adjourned at 6:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elaine M. Peterson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Elaine M. Peterson

Executive Assistant to the Town Manager