

Select Board Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, January 23, 2024
Stow Town Building & Zoom

Present in the Warren Room: Cortni Frecha, Megan Birch-McMichael, Hector Constantzos, John “JT” Toole, and Assistant Town Administrator/HR Director Erin Mulcahy

Present via Zoom: Ingeborg Hegemann Clark

Chair Frecha called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

Public Comment

Chair Frecha stated that comments are limited to items not on the agenda; speakers should state their name and address, and limit comments to two minutes or less.

Mary Schofield said she attended the last Board meeting about flooding on her property, and the next day her basement flooded for a second time. Ms. Schofield said this is due to the blocked culvert under West Acton Road and requested that this be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

Board Member Comments

Ms. Birch-McMichael explained how the Board is required to run the meetings per MA General Law, and that they could not respond to Ms. Schofield at the prior Select Board meeting. Only agenda items can be discussed in detail. Ms. Birch-McMichael said there is correspondence about this issue and that it may be discussed later in the meeting during the correspondence section of the agenda.

Mr. Toole suggested a public hearing on culverts and getting all the parties that need to be involved at that one meeting.

Mr. Constantzos attended the induction of the Holocaust Memorial Rail Car at the American Heritage Museum. It was a moving and timely event as this Saturday, January 27 is International Holocaust Remembrance Day. He encouraged people to visit the memorial at the museum.

Town Administrator (TA) Report

Ms. Mulcahy provided Town Administrator Denise Dembkoski’s report:

- Meetings with department heads are in progress to discuss budgets and capital requests.
- The Randall Library received the \$500,000 Green Communities Grant for decarbonization of the library as part of the overall renovation project. This was a very competitive grant and the TA thanked Arnie Epstein for his assistance with the application.
- The MART shuttle service will begin in Stow on Monday, February 5. The full schedule will be posted on the website, on our social media sites, and in the monthly newsletter.

Boy Scout Request for Permanent Parking at Pompositticut Community Center

Ms. Birch-McMichael recused herself from the discussion.

Gary Bernklow, Assistant Scoutmaster for Troop 1 Stow, was present in the Warren Room.

Mr. Bernklow said he also represents the Troop Chartering Organization which charters four scout units in town which all meet regularly at the Pompo Community Center. The scouting unit has over 112

years of history with the town. They are requesting the use of dedicated parking spaces in the Pompo lot for their equipment trailers that are used at their weekly meetings.

COA Director Alyson Toole said that the long parking spaces are still used daily by the COA vans as they return and leave the center. The carport is for overnight storage of the vans. Ms. Toole said that there are numerous groups, including non-profits, that would like to have dedicated parking in the lot and dedicated storage space inside the building but this is not done.

Board members discussed the request and said it would be using taxpayer municipal property for a private not for profit purpose, even though this non-profit serves the community. If this were allowed the Board would have to set up a policy and a rental agreement. Also, it is assumed that part of the rental agreement for renting a room inside includes use of the outside area for parking. The lot is full for many events at Pompo. The Board did not make a decision on this request and tabled the item.

Ms. Birch-McMichael returned to the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Appointments

Appointment of Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Coordinator

The title of ADA Coordinator follows the Building Commissioner position and the name needs to be changed to the current Commissioner, Frank Ramsbottom.

Mr. Constantzos moved to appoint Building Commissioner Frank Ramsbottom as the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Coordinator for the Town of Stow.

Ms. Birch-McMichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Appointment of Police Junior Detective

Lt. Kellie Barhight and Officer John Fantasia were present in the Warren Room.

There has been some movement of personnel in the department, and there are two officers interested in the open position of Junior Detective. A three-month trial period will be assigned to each officer and when both trials are completed, Lt. Barhight, the Sergeant in charge of detectives, and the current Senior Detective will select the person for the position.

Mr. Constantzos moved to approve the assignment of John Fantasia as a Junior Detective for the Stow Police Department through May 1, 2024.

Ms. Birch-McMichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (TSAC) Request for a Safety Zone

Fire Chief JP Benoit, Chair of TSAC, and Police Chief Michael Sallese, a member of TSAC, were present in the Warren Room.

Chief Benoit said that since its formation, TSAC has heard safety concerns about Sudbury Road in the area of Pine Bluff Recreation Area. They began to research this a year ago and after investigating this issue, TSAC is requesting a Safety Zone which is set by the state at a 20 MPH speed limit.

Chief Sallese said that because the area is not thickly settled, to switch the speed limit from 35 MPH to 25 MPH would require a complete traffic study of the area and then approval from MassDOT (MA Dept of Transportation). He said there would be new signage and tools to educate the public and that his

department educates before enforcing. Town Clerk Linda Hathaway asked if the Traffic Rules and Orders will be amended.

Frank Bemis, 310 Sudbury Road, lives across from Pine Bluff and said the traffic speed increases every year. He has witnessed vehicles passing the school bus when its red lights are flashing, and many near misses when vehicles are entering and exiting Pine Bluff.

Mr. Constantzos moved to approve the request by the Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (TSAC) to install a safety zone on Sudbury Road in accord with the plan presented at this meeting.

Ms. Birch-McMichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Election Matters and Authorize Warrant for State Presidential Primary March 5, 2024

Vote By Mail cards were sent out and are being returned to the Town Clerk's office. The last day to register to vote or make changes is Saturday, February 24. In Person Early Voting for the Presidential Primary will be Saturday, February 24 and Monday, February 26 through Friday, March 1 in the Whitney Room on the first floor of Town Building. Additional information regarding the election and voting is on the Town Clerk's Meeting and Elections page on the town's website. Election day is Tuesday, March 5 with voting at The Center School, the State Primary is Tuesday, September 3, and the Presidential Election is Tuesday, November 5, 2024. Once the Warrant for the Presidential Primary is signed by the Select Board, the Constable will post it at Town Building and seven (7) places in town.

Mr. Constantzos moved that the Board authorize and sign the March 5, 2024 Presidential Primary Warrant, as presented by the Town Clerk on January 23, 2024.

Ms. Birch-McMichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Donation of a Carport from the Friends of the Council on Aging

The Friends of the Council on Aging donated a carport and this vote will formally accept the donation. The Town used ARPA funds for the sitework and the installation. This was a long process and thanks go out to Bill Byron and Charlie Aronson of the COA Board, Alyson Toole and Dave Ashman of the COA, Doug Hyde and the Facilities Department, and to the Highway Department.

Mr. Constantzos moved to accept the donation of a carport from the Friends of the Council on Aging.

Ms. Birch-McMichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Evaluation Form for the Town Administrator's Review

Chair Frecha wanted to start a conversation about the evaluation form as the review will be earlier than in past years due to the terms of the TA's contract. In a recent MMA workshop that the Chair attended, the idea of having fewer grading options was discussed. The current form used in Stow has five options, and the three that are most needed are below average, average, and above average. This would necessitate more elaboration in the comments.

The Board discussed how they cannot speak to the Town Administrator's interactions with her staff. Some Board members were fine with not having this on the review as there is a hierarchy, and some suggested a comment period to get feedback from staff through the HR Director, or to meet with staff directly. One of the main reasons that the Asst TA/HR Director position was created is so that employees have a place to go to discuss issues. The Board will check with the MMA to see if they have

any advice in this area and will also get input from Ms. Dembkoski. The Board tabled this discussion until they receive more information.

Select Board Representation on the Town Hall Building Reuse Committee

After discussion, the Board decided that Mr. Toole could best represent the Board on this committee.

Mr. Constantzos moved to appoint John Toole to represent the Select Board on the Town Hall Building Reuse Committee.

Ms. Birch-McMichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Meeting Minutes

Mr. Constantzos moved to accept the meeting minutes of the January 9, 2024 meeting as drafted.

Ms. Birch-McMichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Board Correspondence & Updates

The Board discussed the emails regarding the culvert on West Acton Road. Chair Frecha said that the highway crew has been out a few times to clear the culvert.

An inspection of all the culverts in town was performed by an engineering firm last year and the final report was delivered on May 2, 2023; this report stated that this culvert was in good order.

Ms. Mulcahy will reach out to the homeowners tomorrow.

Adjournment

At 8:58 p.m. Mr. Constantzos moved to adjourn. Ms. Birch-McMichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Sampson

Executive Assistant

Documents used at this meeting:

Documents can be found in the Select Board Office in the meeting folder.