

Select Board Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, April 09, 2024
Stow Town Building & Zoom

Present in the Warren Room: Cortni Frecha, Megan Birch-McMichael, Hector Constantzos, John “JT” Toole, Town Administrator Denise Dembkoski, and Asst. Town Administrator Erin Mulcahy.

Absent: Ingeborg Hegemann Clark

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

Public Comment - none

Board Member Comments

Mr. Constantzos said it is the Town Administrator’s birthday today and wished her a happy birthday. Mr. Constantzos noted that it is Neurodiversity Month and encouraged people to learn more about how we are all different.

Town Administrator (TA) Report

- Thank you to the facilities and highway departments for their work at the Randall Library, which is helping to get the building prepped for construction.
- A huge ‘shout out’ to the library staff for Library Appreciation Week!
- April is National Volunteer Month - thank you to all who volunteer for the town and throughout the community.
- Thank you to Chief Sallese and members of the Police Department for their work last week with the situation on Friday night, to Captain Evers and members of the Fire Department who responded, to officers from Boxborough and Maynard who were on the scene, and to the State Police and the DA’s office for their work on this case.
- Last night’s discussion with the Do It For James Foundation, sponsored by the Randall Library and the Police Department, was a very moving and educational presentation. It was filmed by Stow TV and will be available on YouTube. The TA encouraged anyone with children, especially those younger than 18, to watch it.
- Thank you to Laura Greenough, Kathy Sferra, and everyone who worked on the Open Space and Recreation Plan. It has been officially approved by the state and is good through 2030.

Appointments

Fire Chief JP Benoit, Olivia Liang, and Camden Herlihy were present in the Warren Room.

Chief Benoit said it has been a goal of the department to increase staffing levels for emergency response. The 2023 town meeting approved funds to add two full-time firefighters to the daytime staff, and after a lengthy recruitment process two members of the department have been selected.

Ms. Liang is a Stow resident and joined the department as an EMT two years ago after seeing what the Fire Department did at the Wheeler Road fire. She has worked per diem shifts and excelled in the department’s program. Mr. Herlihy has been an active and engaged call firefighter for nine years. He took a leave for a National Guard deployment and is dedicated to public service and the community.

Olivia Liang to the Position of Firefighter/EMT

Mr. Constantzos moved to appoint Olivia Liang as a Firefighter/EMT for the Town of Stow Fire Department through June 30, 2024.

Ms. Birch-McMichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Camden Herlihy to the Position of Firefighter/EMT

Mr. Constantzos moved to appoint Camden Herlihy as a Firefighter/EMT for the Town of Stow Fire Department through June 30, 2024.

Ms. Birch-McMichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Meredith Wood to the Stow Cultural Council

Mr. Constantzos moved to reappoint Meredith Wood to the Stow Cultural Council for a term ending June 30, 2027. Ms. Birch-McMichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

FY25 State Update with Representative Kate Hogan

Rep. Hogan gave an overview of the current fiscal year, and an update on the upcoming fiscal year for the state and the district. It has been two wonderful years with ARPA funds but FY25 will be a cooling off year and a more conservative year. Important legislation has been enacted during the current session, including the Healy administration's allocation of \$20M to farms due to significant crop loss as a result of severe weather. A total of 347 farms applied for aid, including four farms in Stow. The House recently passed An Act to Improve Quality and Oversight of Long-Term Care, among other bills. Rep. Hogan's personal bill is the MA PFAS Act, which is still in progress.

One Day Liquor License – St. Isidore Church Trivia Night April 26, 2024

Thomas Spataro, representing St. Isidore Church, was present via Zoom.

Ms. Dembkoski said the application is in order, and Mr. Spataro said the church is continuing to offer more events to the people of Stow beyond the weekly liturgy.

Mr. Constantzos moved to approve a one-day liquor license for St. Isidore's Church, 429 Great Road, for Friday, April 26, 2024 from 7 to 9 PM for a Trivia Night, provided all necessary permits and documents have been received.

Ms. Birch-McMichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

FY 2025 Budget Discussion

Ms. Dembkoski reviewed the FY25 Budget. Full department requests and details of the budget recommendation are in book form on the Town Administrator's webpage in the budget section.

Ms. Dembkoski stated that the municipal budget is only increasing 2.5%, and highlighted some municipal changes as follows: the Procurement/Grants Administrator was previously funded by ARPA funds and for FY25 the full salary is contained within the general fund budget; additional expenses previously paid by ARPA have been rolled into the IT budget; and the cost to maintain the buildings has increased the facilities line item. The schools have a 6.71% increase.

Department Heads did a great job with their budget requests and their spending. The Board praised Ms. Dembkoski for the work she puts in when developing the budget.

Annual Town Meeting Warrant Review & Vote Ballot Question

Ms. Dembkoski began the discussion by stating that Article 49 in the draft, the Moderator's requested bylaw change, has been withdrawn. Ms. Dembkoski went through the other 50 warrant articles and explained each to the Board. The draft warrant is available on the town's website.

Ms. Dembkoski said a draft article of the bylaw requested by the Board regarding the recording of meetings was not included in the warrant. Town counsel recommended that the Board hold off on this as everyone is still operating under the temporary COVID measures for the Open Meeting Law. The Board discussed the draft and decided to not put this forth at this time.

The last article is the ballot question. The Charter Review Committee wanted one ballot question to encompass all the charter changes that were approved at the last two town meetings.

Mr. Constantzos moved to approve the ballot question for the Stow Annual Election on May 18, 2024, as presented at this meeting.

Ms. Birch-McMichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Intent to Layout Joanne Drive

This is a request from the developer. Ms. Dembkoski said tonight's vote is to refer this to the Planning Board, and then it will be back on the Select Board's next agenda.

Mr. Constantzos moved that the Select Board vote its intention to lay out Joanne Drive as a public way, all as shown on a plan entitled "Definitive Subdivision Plan, Joanne Drive, A Planned Conservation Development, Stow, Massachusetts" dated August 4, 2017, prepared by Stamski and McNary, Inc., and recorded with the Middlesex South District Registry of Deeds as Plan 195 of 2020, which plan is on file with the Town Clerk, and to forward this vote and the plan to the Planning Board for its comments and recommendations pursuant to G.L. c. 41, §§81G and 81I.

Ms. Birch-McMichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Meeting Minutes

Mr. Constantzos moved to accept the meeting minutes of the March 26, 2024 meeting as drafted.

Ms. Birch-McMichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Board Correspondence & Updates

Ms. Birch-McMichael said she will attend the Eagle Scout Court of Honor on April 28, 2024.

Adjournment

At 9:02 p.m. Mr. Constantzos moved to adjourn. Ms. Birch-McMichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Sampson, Executive Assistant

Documents used at this meeting:

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