


[Site Search](#)
[RESIDENTS](#)
[BUSINESSES](#)
[VISITORS](#)
[HISTORY](#)
[Home Page](#)
[About Stow](#)
[Minutes & Agendas](#)
[Department & Boards](#)
[How Do I..?](#)
[Town Calendars](#)
[Town Documents](#)
[Council on Aging](#)
[Recreation Department](#)
[Stow Public Schools](#)
[Public Safety](#)
[Library](#)
[Stow TV](#)
[Opportunities](#)
[Town Meeting & Election](#)
[Online Tax Payments](#)
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2016-09-27 Selectmen's Minutes

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Minutes
Stow Board of Selectmen
September 27, 2016
Town Building

Present at the meeting that was held at Town Building were James Salvie, Brian Burke, Donald Hawkes, Thomas Ryan and Ingeborg Hegemann.

Also present were William Wrigley, Town Administrator. Maureen Trunfio, Administrative Assistance was absent. Ingeborg Hegemann took the minutes.

Public Input: None.

Chairman's Comments: Mr. Salvie announced the 8th annual Recycle Reuse on October 15 at the Ayer Shirley Middle School from 9 to 2 pm.

Meeting Minutes:

Mr. Hawkes moved to accept the meeting minutes of the September 13, 2016 meeting. Mr. Burke seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

Mr. Hawkes moved to accept the meeting minutes of the February 23, 2016 meeting. Mr. Ryan seconded the motion. Minutes were passed unanimously with Ms. Hegemann abstaining.

Discussion of Boxborough Road Traffic

Residents of Boxborough Road discussed current traffic concerns on the road, as well as concerns regarding future changes. Mr. Atli Thorarensen and Mr. Patrick Holmes were present and discussed the current condition of 3 feeder streets with 87 homes which exit onto Boxborough Road: Trefry, Hickory and Wheldon Lanes.

In addition, the Regency development will add 67 new homes. The 2007 traffic study indicated the new development will add another 203 trips per day. Mr. Thorarensen and Mr. Holmes provided a hand-out.

While the police have been more active, a permanent solution has not emerged. There have been 200 citations in last 5 years. The average speeds tend to be 44 mph. It was discussed that lowering the speed limit most likely will not provide a solution. The road is curvy with limited sight distance and is narrow. In some areas there is no center line.

Highway Superintendent Mike Clayton was present and noted the road was 18 to 24 feet wide, with the narrowest portion at the top of the hill. Stow doesn't have a standard traffic calming procedure. Mr. Thorarensen and Mr. Holmes are hoping for a permanent solution.

Police Chief Bill Bosworth was present and noted that there are two items that need to be resolved: a town-wide policy and a solution to Boxborough Road speeding.

Mr. Salvie asked Jesse Steadman, Town Planner who was present, whether there are any other traffic surveys. Mr. Steadman responded that Stow has some traffic speed counters. The highest traffic numbers on Boxborough Road was 1200 vehicles. Mr. Salvie asked how that compares to other roads, for example, is 1000 a lot? Mr. Steadman responded that that number is probably fairly typical for county layouts, but he would need to see the data. Mr. Steadman agreed that the traffic concerns are not solely Boxborough Road issue.

Mr. Salvie asked whether Boxborough Road could be considered one of the worst concerns. Mr. Steadman responded: "I don't know". He noted that the Town has conversations about traffic issues almost every day. The town needs to understand both the actual problem as well as the perception of a problem. And added that additional review of numbers is important.

Chief Bosworth noted that the Police Department has been working on traffic issues starting in 2011. The Department has implemented high visibility and enforcement across Stow. Once per shift, radar is used. There have been 339 stops on Boxborough Road with 130 verbal warnings. He provided the number of man-hours assigned to traffic management. Boxborough Road management is combined with the airport visits. Chief Bosworth is not in favor of a truck restriction on Boxboro Road. He noted that Boxborough Road is a new road, well-constructed, and wide. He has spoken with Boxborough officials about truck restrictions. The restriction would have to back up all the way through Boxborough to Route 495. He believes police enforcement is sufficient. Stow doesn't have truck enforcement equipment (e.g. weight), however, the town could reach out to MassDOT.

In response to suggestions regarding placement of a 3-way stop sign, Chief Bosworth stated that he is not in favor at this time. He said he would need to review plans and if there were properly engineered plans, he would review them and provide the department's opinion. As to sidewalks and crosswalks, he is fully in support of these anywhere, but they are out of their realm.

Mr. Salvie asked how 200 citations compares to other roads. Chief Bosworth responded that that number may be higher than some other roads. Mr. Bosworth is not in support of traffic calming devices and is more in favor of doing more enforcement. The Town could paint SLOW signs on the road. There was discussion about the new electronic sign boards. Permanent fixtures tend to be a liability, and make it more difficult to plow and sand. Additionally, other residents will notice them and will want them too. Chief Bosworth is more in favor of signage – electric, painted, permanent.

There was discussion about starting to implement the Complete Streets standards with the planning department. Town representatives meet on a regular basis. Since Boxborough Road is a public way, vehicles, including trucks, have a right to come in to Stow. If restricted, would just move the problem to another road.

Ms. Hegemann asked if tickets could be issued via a camera. The answer was, "No." In MA, an officer must see the operator to issue a ticket.

Mr. Holmes noted that speeders seem to be mostly commuters.

Mike Clayton presented data on the new speed signs. They were purchased in July. The 85th percentile speed is 37 mph. He provided the Board with a handout. Average of all traffic is 30 mph with the majority going 31 to 35. But 650+ are going 40 plus MPH. Mr. Clayton also spoke with the Town of Boxborough and agrees it is not in anyone's best interest to restrict truck traffic (4% vehicles are trucks per last year's data). He agrees that sidewalks and crosswalk are valuable. Complete streets will help. Enforcement is important.

Mr. Burke requested that the Town get more info on trucks. Mr. Ryan noted that trucks are probably being more cautious because drivers can't afford tickets on a commercial license.

Mr. Steadman said the town is working on a variety of traffic issues. They are trying to understand the issues, integrating the Complete Streets information and including traffic calming measures, which are used throughout MA. Complete Streets Policy allows a town to develop a working group to analyze roads – width, usage, etc., so they can assess and put together a prioritization plan. Likely consultants would be used to prioritize 12 to 15 locations for traffic management,



Stow, MA

80 °F

Partly Cloudy
at 10:56 AM



including integration of bikers, walkers, etc. The Town will go through and look at each of the roads, put together a priority plan and assess what they need. It may turn out that Boxborough Road may not be top priority. Provision of sidewalks is huge. The Town will come up with a process that reaches out to certain neighborhoods re: sidewalks and organize amongst themselves to evaluate impacts, e.g. stonewalls, wetlands, need for easements.

Public Comment:

Planning Board Chair Lori Clark noted that besides the Regency Development, there is also an earth removal permit for the airport that will impact number of trips along Boxborough Road for the next year or two.

Warren Nelson, Boxborough Road – The Globe published a survey 5 years ago for the number of tickets given. One of the highest was in Bolton – they give out tickets. We gave out 200 tickets in 5 years. Width of the road is 18 feet. 1,000 pound truck too heavy. Mr. Clayton responded that 1,000 pounds was not too heavy. Chief Bosworth noted that there were 2000 tickets total for the town. 200 were issued on Boxborough Road alone, plus 135 verbal citations.

Don MacFarlane, Boxborough Road – The road is too narrow for two large vehicles. Should they be labeled “wide load” with an escort. Crane takes up more than ½ of the road.

Mr. Clayton noted that perhaps when the Regency gets constructed, maybe consider widening BB Rd.

Don MacFarlane – Packard Road also too narrow for trucks, school buses. Put a truck restriction on Packard Road. Cars have to stop to let other vehicles pass.

Mr. Thorarensen - Long term planning is not satisfactory to residents now. I need the solution to my road right now. Enforcement will impact size of police force.

Mr. Steadman discussed the new bill that allows towns to set their own safety zones, thickly settled, speed limits, instead of having to go to the state. Planning Board is working with other boards to set some criteria. Mr. Steadman and Mike Clayton will be working on it, or some collection of decision makers. Hasn't gotten in to that yet. Bill Wrigley noted that the board would have to approve any recommendation.

Mr. Ryan noted that things can be done, including enforcement, or looking at widening a couple of areas. With complete streets policy, wouldn't expect sidewalks in next 5 years. Don't think there will be speed bumps, no limit below 30 mph. Regrettably won't see major changes in the near future.

Mr. Burke asked whether a traffic impact study would be required for the Regency? Mr. Steadman noted that one was done in 2007. The Planning Board is in the process of writing the decision. The 3 way stop sign and an additional study not requested. He expects that a new committee will be formed for complete streets that will have room for citizen input. Will be reaching out to different neighborhoods. Right now meetings aren't posted because they are staff meeting. Mr. Burke suggested that the boards reach out and post them. As an intermediate step,, the town should get more data on trucks; citizens are entitled to knowing what the town is going to do.

Mr. Hawkes commented that the Regency hearing is closed. He wanted to clarify that there is no mechanism to go back.

Ms. Hegemann noted that there appear to be three key issues: construction impacts to Boxborough Road, speeding on Boxborough Road and a need for a town-wide policy.

Mr. Salvie suggested that the action item would be to bring this topic (and update) to the BoS again before Town Meeting. Mr. Clayton can meet with Police Chief and Mr. Steadman regarding adding painting on the road. He will check on widening. Lori Clark discussed prioritization of sidewalks noting areas of high traffic and use by students.

Don MacFarlane – walks on Boxborough and Packard – real thing that we'd appreciate is much more police patrolling 15 minutes every morning/every evening for a month.

Police Chief responded that the Department looks at facts and statistics and we spend a fair amount of time on Boxborough Road, but there are other roads as bad.

Drought Information:

Merrily Evdokimoff was present for the Board of Health (BoH) and Fire Chief Joe Landry was present.

The Board of Health has been discussing the drought and working with Lake Boon data regarding lake draw down, which would determine potential well failures.

They are concerned about who may be losing water. The numbers aren't huge, but there are some. The BoH doesn't have the data to tell if this is drought related. They are working on a procedure for people to call, educating the public and developing an information sheet. Mass General Law has provisions to allow the BoH to declare a water emergency and set regulations. C 111, ss 122 & 122A (?)

People are calling different departments. The BoH typically get 2 to 3 well failures a year. They don't have good information. If people start to have problems, they don't necessarily tell the BoH.

Lake Boon Commission is going to be discussing this issue next week, and they will be getting much needed rain this week. There have been no massive failures at the 18" drawdown.

Chief Joe Landry discussed emergency management. It is similar to when power goes out. The Town has an arrangement with Shaw's to get bottled water. If a home loses water, there are steps in place to provide a solution and the plan can be ramped up in response to need. In the short term, the Department could stretch out a 2K tank for non-drinking water. Also, a local orchard will provide plastic bottles to get water to residents. The Town will be working with the local newspapers to get the word out – the drought is real, so prepare for this. Residents should have a reasonable amount of bottled water on hand..

Mr. Ryan noted that people should be cautious: don't overstress your well.

Ms. Evdokimoff noted that people are aware of the drought. The BoH is working on an article for the paper.

Chief Joe Landry discussed firefighting. There are 30K underground tanks (cistern) that are not affected by the drought. The Department also re-wrote the specs on how to maintain the water holes. He worked with the Conservation Commission to maintain them and will have a better resource than prior to this drought. The Department is used to adversity. The Department still has river water, and lake water. The Collings pond is fantastic, an example of a good fire pond – ample water.

Nancy Arsenault noted that she knows of several well failures.

Ms. Evdokimoff would like people to call the BoH and all town departments if they hear anything. Cindy Colosi said that they have good records for wells installed after 1980s.

Discussion on Traffic during Apple Picking Season – Since Chief Bosworth was present, he provided a quick update on traffic management associated with apple picking. They met with Shelburn Farm, Honey Pot, and Carver Hill. They posted no parking signs, sign board, Andrew Martin ordered his police details. There were extra patrols. This past Saturday was manageable, but on Sunday things went downhill. The traffic lights at the Gleasondale Bridge contributed. There were just too many people and the roads were at capacity. Met with the Collings Foundation to develop a public safety plan for him. Honey Pot was overwhelmed.

Housing Production Plan Update from SMAHT – Michael Kopczynski provided an update on the Housing Production Plan. Every 5 years the Town has to update the Housing Production Plan. SMAHT started a year ago, with a survey. They received excellent input from planning board; a lot of work was done by Laura Spear. The Plan was prepared by MetroWest Community Development. The Plan is one of the 3 things required to have safe harbor from 40B developments. The others include progress toward that plan, and ½ % per year. MAPC keeps info about the region that all the towns can use. The draft was sent to DHCD already – their recommendations were integrated. There is a preference for 3 BR and up, for family units. Plan is fairly comprehensive, not a big change, showed progress (including Pilot Grove). The Plan has to be approved by and submitted by the Board of Selectmen.

The Planning board is in support.

Mr. Hawkes made the motion: *I move that the Board approve the Housing Production Plan prepared by the Stow Municipal Affordable Housing Trust dated August 2016, and to authorize the Chairman to sign a letter of submission to DHCD.* Mr. Ryan seconded. All were in favor and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Salvie signed two copies of the transmittal letter for submission of the Plan.

Town Administrator's Report – Mr. Wrigley discussed the districtwide election outcome for the Minuteman High School; 4 of the 7 towns that voted down are leaving. The school has received approval for full design and construction cost.

He summarized the new municipal modernization bill which allows a town to reduce speed limits and identify safety zones. The town's permit team is meeting already. Several other areas within the 100 options that he's been looking at.

Mr. Wrigley left at 9:12 pm.

Liaison Reports:

Mr. Burke discussed his meeting with the CPC, which is working with the Library Rebuilding Committee, progress on cemetery marking using Ground Penetrating Radar; doing a registry of municipal historic properties; will be coming back to us with thoughts regarding dropping some of the required members of the CPC – e.g. assessor's office never came, making it difficult to get a quorum.

Next Wednesday the Tri-town meeting is being held in Lancaster. Any agenda items, let him know.

Mark Jones noted that all towns would be interested in all school department facilities.

Mr. Hawkes went to the Minute Man Airfield Academy ribbon cutting. Well attended, with state senator and state rep; Attended Council on Aging board meeting; Lake Boon Commission will meet next Monday – boating season is slowing down. Anticipating a report from Det. Sergeant Selise. Consider moving a buoy that was an issue of contention this summer.

Mr. Salvie reported that the Fire Department is moving into Pompo on Oct 11. Council on Aging moving in on Oct 20. Tentatively planning Dedication on Thursday October 27. Former Selectman Kern may be visiting.

Mr. Ryan reported that Chief Bosworth talked to DOT to change the light cycle at Gleasondale Bridge to make it easier to get out: Priority moving south to north. Push them out to Route 62.

Ms. Hegemann said that the first perambulation will be this Saturday, if no rain.

At 9:24 p.m. Mr. Hawkes moved to adjourn. Mr. Ryan seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Ingeborg Hegemann, Clerk

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