

Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes
January 12, 2021, 7 pm
Stow Community Center & Via Zoom

Physically present at this meeting at the Stow Community Center were board members:

Thomas Ryan, Chair

Jim Salvie

Cortni Frecha

Megan Birch-McMichael

Also Denise Dembkoski, Town Administrator

Board members present remotely via Zoom: Ellen Sturgis

Mr. Ryan called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

Public Input: There were no comments.

Chairman's comments: Mr. Ryan wished everyone a Happy New Year, and said that he is grateful to have great colleagues on the Board, and he appreciates the contrast to the tragedy in Washington DC last week.

Recognition - Certificate for Retiring Library Page Rosemary Bawn

Mr. Ryan read a Certificate of Appreciation for Rosemary Bawn, noting her hard work and attributes. Tina McAndrew, Library Director, was present and also thanked Ms. Bawn and said that she will be missed. Board members offered their thanks.

Megan Birch-McMichael moved that the Board approve and sign a certificate for retiring Randall Library Page Rosemary Bawn. Cortni Frecha seconded and the motion was approved unanimously (5-0) on a roll call vote.

Appointments of Barry Evers and Jonathan Gray as Call Fire Lieutenants:

Chief Joe Landry was present and Tom Ryan read his written recommendation to appoint Barry Evers and Jonathan Gray as Call Fire Lieutenants, noting they had gone through the process to be promoted. He noted the qualifications of both candidates.

Megan Birch-McMichael moved to appoint Barry Evers as Call Lieutenant for the Stow Fire Department, effective immediately, for the remainder of a one-year term expiring June 30, 2021, and subject to reappointment at that time. Cortni Frecha seconded and the motion was approved unanimously (5-0) on a roll call vote.

Megan Birch-McMichael moved to appoint Jonathan Gray as Call Lieutenant for the Stow Fire Department, effective immediately, for the remainder of a one-year term expiring June 30, 2021, and subject to reappointment at that time. Cortni Frecha seconded and the motion was approved unanimously (5-0) on a roll call vote.

7:15 pm – Public Hearing – Ken’s Liquor Shoppe Liquor License Transfer

Mr. Ryan read the hearing notice. *Megan Birch-McMichael moved to open the hearing, Jim Salvie seconded and the motion was approved unanimously (5-0) on a roll call vote.* Present was the applicant, Tony Buscemi with Counsel Christopher Yates. Mr. Buscemi said he was looking forward to running the business and noted his past and current business enterprises in the area. Mr. Salvie clarified that their approval is contingent on the ABCC’s approval and that the ABCC will do the CORI checks. There were no comments from the public. Megan Birch-McMichael wondered if we are now eligible for a third liquor license due to population. She knows that there are other businesses that are trying to get a package license. Dembkoski is looking into this. Tom noted that Larry Manosh, the retiring current owner, was present. Members thanked Larry for his years as a businessman. *Megan Birch-McMichael moved that the public hearing for the transfer of the liquor license for Ken’s Liquor Shoppe, Inc. be closed. Cortni Frecha seconded and the motion was approved unanimously (5-0) on a roll call vote.*

Megan Birch-McMichael moved to approve the transfer of the liquor license of Ken’s Liquor Shoppe, Inc. to AL&BC Inc., as described in the application received November 16, 2020, and subject to final approval by the Massachusetts Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission (ABCC). Megan Birch McMichael further moved that the Board sign the Local Licensing Authority Review Record for submission to the ABCC with the application. Cortni Frecha seconded and the and the motion was approved unanimously (5-0) on a roll call vote

Accept Donation to Cemetery Committee

The Cemetery Committee has voted to accept a donation that was offered in appreciation the staff’s good work.

Megan Birch-McMichael moved to accept a donation of \$100 from William Shrader for the cemetery perpetual care account. Cortni Frecha seconded and the and the motion was approved unanimously (5-0) on a roll call vote.

Discussion - Finalist Candidates for Police Chief: Richard Briggs, Edward Lee, and Michael Sallese Appointment of Police Chief

Tom Ryan summarized the search process to date, noting that two finalists – Richard Briggs and Michael Sallese were interviewed – and a third, Edward Lee, had dropped out after taking another position. He noted that by charter the Selectboard acts on the recommendation of the Town Administrator. Mr. Ryan asked Ms. Dembkoski for her recommendation.

Ms. Dembkoski said she was impressed with both in-person interviews. She said her recommendation is for Acting Chief Michael Sallese. She believes that he is rational, fair, supportive of employees, and ready to grow. While she has heard stories that he was “tough” during his early years on the police force, there are no disciplinary actions and no letters in his personnel file. She said that over the course of his career he has grown dramatically. Since she came on board in September she has personally seen him grow further. She feels that Sallese is ready to be chief, and is the right person for the job.

Tom Ryan also spoke in favor of Sallese, highlighting his background with the department and years of service as well as some of his accomplishments as Acting Chief. He noted that about 30 letters of

support have been received for Mike from residents, employees, police employees, some from out of town, and the Nashoba Superintendent. He noted that he liked the comment at Mike's interview that he wanted to ask employees "who did you help today?"

Megan Birch-McMichael noted that she was a member of the Screening Committee. She wanted to be a part of the process and get input from people in Town. She came out of Saturday's interviews feeling confident and comfortable in choosing Sallese. She liked the statement that Sallese wants to continue mentoring other officers. He already has on the ground knowledge. She is happy to recommend him and thinks he is ready to listen and learn.

Cortni Frecha also stated that she favored Sallese though she thought both candidates were very well spoken. She said that she felt Acting Chief Sallese has done an excellent job. She feels that the tone of his interactions is very kind and compassionate. She commends him for his ability to act that way under pressure and in all kinds of interactions.

Jim Salvie stated that he based his decision on five factors including technical competence, ability to bring about systemic change, ability to reintroduce and redefine the role of Chief, the individual's heart -- who they are as a person -- and consistency of character. He noted that on all of these, he felt Sallese was superior. Sallese had specific examples for how he would infuse change into the culture of the Department, and seems like he would do a good job as an outward facing Chief. Salvie noted that the wide diversity of letters received tell a remarkably consistent story of Sallese's personal growth, attitude toward community policing, and his willingness to show up.

Ellen Sturgis said she strongly supports the members of the Police Department and believes in the importance of community policing. She went into the process believing that we needed an outside person to bring in new perspectives. She is grateful to the people who commented, and noted that there are a large number of residents who have concerns about Sallese's actions from more than a decade ago. She believe that people mature and grow and believes that Sallese is the right choice today.

Megan Birch-McMichael moved that the Board offer the position of Police Chief for the Stow Police Department to Michael Sallese, contingent upon successful contract negotiations and a final background check. Cortni Frecha seconded. Dembkoski said she doesn't think we need a background check, she has been though his personnel records. Mr. Ryan suggested a friendly amendment to strike the background check. Megan and Cortni accepted this. The motion was approved 4-0-1 on roll call vote with Ms. Sturgis abstaining.

Sallese thanked the Board and said he is more than happy to have follow up conversations with anyone in the community.

Annual Town Meeting and Annual Town Election Dates/2021 Annual Town Meeting Warrant Opening

Denise Dembkoski proposed to reschedule Town Meeting to a Saturday. She recommends keeping the election on May 8th and then holding Town Meeting on a subsequent Saturday. Town Clerk Linda Hathaway was present and supported these recommendations. Dembkoski noted that the Moderator is supportive of a Saturday and would like to use electronic voting. She thought the indoor/outdoor set up last year worked well. The Board discussed various options for Town Meeting dates. It was noted that candidates elected on May 8th will not be seated until after Town Meeting per provisions in the Town Charter.

Jim Salvie moved to hold Annual Town Meeting on May 22nd. Cortni Frecha seconded and the vote was unanimous (5-0) on a roll call vote.

Megan Birch-McMichael moved that the Annual Town Election be held on Saturday May 8, 2021 at Center School, 403 Great Road, with the time to be determined

- *Board of Assessors – One 3-year term*
- *Board of Assessors – One unexpired 3-year term, expiring 2023*
- *Board of Health – One 3-year term*
- *Nashoba Regional School Committee – One 3-year term*
- *Planning Board – One 5-year term*
- *Trustee, Randall Library – Two 3-year terms*
- *Board of Selectmen – Two 3-year terms*
- *Housing Authority – One 5-year term*

Cortni Frecha seconded and the motion was approved unanimously (5-0) on a roll call vote.

Megan Birch-McMichael moved that the Board open the May 22nd 2021 Annual Town Meeting warrant on January 12, 2021 and close the warrant on April 16, 2021. Cortni Frecha seconded and the motion was approved unanimously (5-0) on a roll call vote.

Discussion and Approval of Policies

Dembkoski presented three policies that she has put together on Harassment, Workplace Violence and Fraud. She described the policies and stated that the plan would be to distribute them to employees, have each employee sign an acknowledgement, and keep it in each personnel file. They will also become part of the normal onboarding process and will be posted on the website. There was a discussion on how to make volunteers aware of these policies and it was agreed that they will get them when they are sworn in.

Harassment and Sexual Harassment Policy: *Megan Birch-McMichael moved to approve the Harassment Policy as presented by the Town Administrator. Cortni Frecha seconded and the motion was approved unanimously (5-0) on a roll call vote.*

Workplace Violence Policy: The Board discussed the policy. Mr. Ryan asked for a clarification of weapons. Can an employee have a weapon in the workplace if they are legally allowed to possess it? Ms. Dembkoski said in a previous community this was allowed, but she was aware of each instance. Mr. Ryan thought there should be more clarification in the policy. *Jim Salvie moved to approve the*

Workplace Violence Policy as presented by the Town Administrator. Cortni Frecha seconded and the motion was approved 4-0-1 on a roll call vote with Mr. Ryan abstaining.

Anti-Fraud Policy: *Megan Birch-McMichael moved to approve the Anti-Fraud Policy as presented by the Town Administrator. Cortni Frecha seconded and the motion was approved unanimously (5-0) on a*

Town Administrator's Report:

- The Walking Tour of Lower Village with Legislators has been scheduled for 1/25 at 1 pm.
- A new Townwide SMART 911 notification system has been put in place and allows people to register to receive email, phone calls, or texts. She encouraged everyone to sign up.
- Stow has been elevated to a Red Status for COVID. The vaccination process is still being worked on. Public safety vaccinations are starting and scheduled for the 20th and 23rd of this month. She noted the Covid-19 tab on the website.
- Public Meeting mid-February regarding the future of Stow Acres. Details TBA.
- Attorneys and ZBA will be representing Stow at an upcoming mediation for Plantation Apartments. She will keep the Board posted.

Liaison reports

- Ms. Sturgis noted that Maureen Hogan is leaving the Recreation Dept. and will not be replaced in the short term. She noted the good work done by Deb Woods and her crew with holiday wreaths at Brookside Cemetery. She hopes that becomes an annual event. She noted COA events over the holidays.
- Mr. Salvie noted that the Library Building Committee met and Denise attended. They were encouraged to look at expanding use of the upstairs space. Nothing is expected at the next Town Meeting. Fin Comm has started to meet on budgets. Capital Planning meets Thursday.
- Ms. Frecha noted that Community Preservation Committee met last night to talk about bonding with the Community Preservation Coalition. SMAHT met with the developer who is interested in Stow Acres and discussed housing needs. Town Hall Restoration Committee is putting together a public survey. Tom said he is not personally in favor of CPA bonding.
- Ms. Birch McMichael noted that the Lake Boon Commission has gotten a Municipal Vulnerability Grant from the state. The hearing for Stow House of Pizza has been continued. Tri-Town may meet in February.
- Mr. Ryan noted the appointments made tonight for Police and Fire. Board of Health is meeting Thursday.
- Ms. Sturgis added that she would like to have a meeting with CPC to talk about how decisions are being made and whether more strategic planning is needed. Dembkoski said they will be coming to the Board on Feb. 23rd.

Meeting Minutes

- February 25, 2020 Executive Session: *Jim Salvie moved to approve as written and release, Cortni Frecha seconded and the motion was approved unanimously (5-0) on a roll call vote.*
- June 6, 2020: *Megan Birch-McMichael moved to approve as written, Cortni Frecha seconded and the motion was approved unanimously (5-0) on a roll call vote.*

- June 18, 2020 Executive Session: Minor corrections were made. *Jim Salvie moved to approve as amended and release. Cortni Frecha seconded and the motion was approved unanimously (5-0) on a roll call vote.*
- June 26, 2020: *Megan Birch-McMichael moved to approve as written, Cortni Frecha seconded and the motion was approved unanimously (5-0) on a roll call vote.*
- June 29, 2020: *Megan Birch-McMichael moved to approve as written, Cortni Frecha seconded and the motion was approved unanimously (5-0) on a roll call vote.*
- December 8, 2020: Ms. Frecha made a correction to the reference to the easement. It is for the equipment, not the shed. Other minor revisions were made. *Megan Birch-McMichael moved to approve as amended, Cortni Frecha seconded and the motion was approved unanimously (5-0) on a roll call vote.*

Correspondence

Tom noted the Notice of Responsibility received from DEP with regard to PFAS. Denise said that a firm has already been hired and has begun work. Town Counsel is working on an access agreement, we are taking over the bottled water distribution and the sampling.

Signatures Needed – State House Note – PFAS project – Dembkoski asked the board to sign.

Adjournment: *At 8:57 Megan Birch-McMichael moved to adjourn. Cortni Frecha seconded and the motion was approved unanimously (5-0) on a roll call vote.*

Respectfully submitted

Kathy Sferra

Materials Used at Meeting

Draft Minutes

Meeting Packet:

- Certificate of Appreciation Language
- Fire Department Appointment Recommendation
- Police Chief Materials and Letters
- Cemetery Donation Letter
- Liquor License Application Materials, Legal Notice
- Draft Policies Prepared by Town Administrator
- DEP Notice of Responsibility