

Select Board Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 25, 2022

Stow Town Building & Zoom

Present in the Warren Room: Chair Ellen Sturgis, Megan Birch-McMichael, Zack Burns, Cortni Frecha, James Salvie, and Town Administrator Denise Dembkoski

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

Public Input:

Mark Forgues, 9 White Pond Road and 39 Adams Drive, said that the correspondence to the Select Board was not part of the online packet and asked if this is permanent or if it will be revisited. Chair Sturgis said the Board receives all the correspondence and the policy for now is not to have it online.

Abby Morgan thanked the Board for discussing the correspondence from several NASJA members at the last meeting. As NASJA president, she read a statement reiterating some of the points that were discussed.

Board Member Comments:

Chair Sturgis said she will present the Nashoba Regional Agreement Amendment draft to the Board after the final meeting of the subcommittee.

Member Salvie read a draft statement in recognition of Black History Month. Chair Sturgis said it will be added as an agenda topic for the next meeting.

Board member Burns moved that the Board place the approval of this letter into the "Discussion and Possible Vote" section of the next agenda. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Town Administrator (TA) Report

- The TA thanked those who worked with her on Saturday at the COVID at-home test kit distribution: Chief Sallese and Lt. Thraen of the Police Department, and Chief Benoit, Ryan Boyd, Bryan Kiley, and Tim Landry of the Fire Department. She thanked Bose for allowing the use of their parking lot, and said a special thank you to Library Director Tina McAndrew and to the Ruderman family who brought them coffee and snacks. They gave out 400 kits and delivered some to two of the congregate housing settings in town and some to the COA for the 85+ residents.
- The current COVID rate is 216, which is a 20.5% positivity rating as of today. The municipal buildings reopened yesterday and all visitors are required to wear a mask.
- The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) will meet on February 7th to discuss the Town Hall project, the Library project, and the SMAHT Red Acre project. They also have a meeting scheduled for February 14th.
- The TA met with Minuteman Superintendent Edward Bouquillon regarding the school's budget. Stow's increase of 36% is the highest increase of all the communities. She does not have any information from the Nashoba Regional School.
- The TA will be on vacation beginning Friday, February 25 and will return to the office on Monday, March 7.

Planning Board Update

Present via Zoom: Planning Board Chair Lori Clark; members Karen Kelleher, Meg Costello, Nancy Arsenault, John Colonna-Romano; associate member Mark Jones; Town Planner Jesse Steadman and Assistant Planner Malcolm Ragan.

A summary of the Planning Board workplan and projects was reviewed, highlighting Lower Village water feasibility, a sign bylaw update, zoning enforcement, Athens Lane, Stow Acres, and the Master Plan.

Planning Board member Karen Kelleher was present via Zoom, and feels that the priority for a Master Plan should be the implementation of the plan.

Planner Jesse Steadman said that LIP (Local Initiative Program) Applications for Stow Acres will be presented to the Select Board at the February 8, 2022 meeting. The applications show the entire concept of what is being proposed by the prospective developer for the housing aspect of Stow Acres.

Library and Library Building Project Update

Library Director Tina McAndrew was present via Zoom.

Ms. McAndrew gave an overview of operations during the past year, including how the Library kept up its statistics during that time. Regarding the renovation, the struggle with Randall is the 1800s library and the 1970s addition don't give the feeling of one building, and there are problems structurally where the two buildings meet. They want to reinstate the original entrance on Library Hill. They hope to preserve renovations in the historic building that were funded by the Community Preservation Committee in 2017 and 2018.

It will cost \$4.1 million dollars just to bring the building up to code. The total project cost estimate is over \$8 million dollars. There are financial commitments from several funds, and a request for \$1 million dollars over the course of three years has been made to the CPC.

Transfer of Ownership of Former Highway Barn on Crescent Street

SMAHT Chair Mike Kopczynski was present via Zoom.

According to the 2017 Stow Town Center Building Reuse Report, there is little interest in the former Highway Barn among Town boards, committees, and departments. Mr. Kopczynski reviewed the steps necessary for SMAHT to be able to take ownership of the former Highway Barn. These steps were proposed by town counsel and used a few years ago when SMAHT acquired other properties in town. The first step is for the Select Board to distribute a memo of intent to all Town boards and committees to solicit feedback. Discussion ensued about the process of declaring the building surplus and about a timeline.

Board member Salvie moved to authorize the Town Administrator to begin conversations with SMAHT, along with any staff she thinks is appropriate, to dispose of the Crescent Street highway garage/Fire Station and if appropriate to begin the surplus property disposal process. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Donation Account for Animal Control and Accept a \$1000 Donation

Board member Frecha moved to open a donation account for Animal Control, and accept a \$1,000 donation from Peter K. Rhoads, to be deposited in said account. Board member Burns seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Request to Advance Sick Time

The Town Administrator and Assistant Town Administrator/HR Director Dolores Hamilton are in support of this request from Highway Superintendent Steve Nadeau.

Per the request of the Highway Superintendent, Board member Frecha moved to advance 30 days sick leave to Highway Department employee Brian Taranto, in accordance with the Town's Personnel Administration Bylaw (Article 11, Section 11, Item f). Board member Burns seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

ARPA Projects and Approval Discussion

The Town received \$2,162,000, and some funding has been allocated with the largest portion going to PFAS. There is approximately \$1,477,292 remaining. The deadline to allocate funding is December 31, 2024. Discussion ensued about having a deadline for the projects being submitted, having a reserve for community-initiated projects (sponsored by a Town department), and a reserve for capital projects.

Board member Frecha moved to allocate \$600,000 to the fiscal 2023 capital program, \$100,000 towards community-initiated projects, and remaining funds to be held in reserve, and for the deadline for applications for the first-round review to be March 1, 2022. Board member Burns seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Meeting Minutes

Board member Frecha suggested corrections to the correspondence section of the minutes. She asked that the second line be clarified to state, "In response to a request to discuss bonding..." and in paragraph three, to change a sentence to "... in a timely fashion so we can recognize and acknowledge various groups and topics."

Board member Frecha moved to accept the January 11, 2022 minutes as amended. Board member Burns seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Personnel Policies - COVID Vaccine Mandate Policy (continued discussion)

Board member Burns recused himself from the discussion.

The mandatory mask policy that was voted in at the last Select Board meeting has been adhered to by employees. The Board received a copy of the petition against a vaccine mandate and some correspondence from employees who are in favor of a vaccine mandate.

Discussion ensued about having a vaccine mandate policy. According to the Town Administrator, Town operations would not be able to function properly if a vaccine mandate policy is implemented.

Correspondence

The Board thanked the TA for writing the letter requested by Don McPherson in support of the Net Zero Transportation Infrastructure Project at Minute Man Air Field.

Adjournment

At 9:18 p.m. Board member Frecha moved to adjourn. Board member Birch-McMichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Sampson

Executive Assistant

Documents used at this meeting:

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