

Select Board Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 22, 2022
Stow Town Building & Zoom

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

Absent: Zack Burns

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

The Chair noted that if there is a vote that is not unanimous she will ask for a roll call vote. She also advised everyone participating in the meeting remotely that Stow TV is recording this meeting.

Public Input: None.

Board Member Comments

Chair Sturgis thanked the Town Administrator and her team for the series of posts for Black History Month. The Nashoba School budget hearing is Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. The Zoom information is posted on their website.

Appointments

Barry Evers to the position of Fire Captain

Fire Chief JP Benoit was present, in addition to Barry Evers and his family. Chief Benoit discussed Evers' experience with the department during the past 21 years, including being a training officer, a Call Lieutenant, and his work for the Recruit Program. He is the current water hole coordinator working on the cistern project.

Board member Salvie moved to appoint Barry Evers to the position of Fire Captain for the Stow Fire Department, effective immediately, for the remainder of a one-year term expiring June 30, 2022, and subject to reappointment at that time. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Matheus Alves to the position of Call EMT

Chief Benoit said that Mr. Alves completed his EMT training at Nashoba Regional High School. The Town Administrator noted that he is nationally and state certified.

Board member Salvie moved to appoint Matheus Alves to the position of Call EMT for the Stow Fire Department, effective immediately, for the remainder of a one-year term expiring June 30, 2022, and subject to reappointment at that time. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Colin Taranto to the position of Tree Worker

Board member Salvie moved to appoint Colin Taranto to the position of Tree Worker in the Highway Department, effective February 25, 2022. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

Jackie Spataro and Carole Ann Baer to the SpringFest Committee

Board member Salvie moved to appoint Jackie Spataro and Carole Ann Baer to the SpringFest Committee for the remainder of two-year terms expiring June 30, 2023. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Town Administrator (TA) Report

- The COVID-19 count is 20 cases in Town, which is a 4.63% positivity rating. The rate is dropping.
- The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) met last week and voted to support the Library request for \$1 million and the SMAHT (Stow Municipal Affordable Housing Trust) request for \$1.1 million. The CPC did not approve the Town Hall project but will work with the committee before the next round opens in December to see how this can be funded.
- Capital Planning met last week with the Police Department and the Highway Department.
- Last week's Masters Academy presentation is available via the TA or the Planning Board webpages. Their timeline shows that they will most likely be applying for permits after April.
- The TA and Conservation Director Kathy Sferra are working with counsel and Stow Acres on the Purchase and Sale and the Retained Rights Agreement for the North Course.
- Town warrant articles are due on Friday, April 1, 2022.
- The TA explained Article 5, Section 3 of the Town's bylaws regarding private roads and private ways in response to calls and complaints about major road repairs on private ways. Main roads and accepted roadways take precedence with highway resources.
- The TA will be on vacation beginning Thursday afternoon and will return on Monday, March 7, 2022.

Town Administrator's Presentation of the Fiscal Year 2023 Financial State of the Town

The Town Administrator began her presentation by reminding everyone that this is the snapshot of what Fiscal 2023 will look like given what we know today; there are still a lot of unknowns.

Stow's certified free cash is \$2,049,610. The goal is for free cash to be at or above 5% of the annual budget, and for FY22 Stow is at 6.9%. Stabilization is currently at \$739,085, and with the TA's FY23 appropriation recommendation of \$200,000 we will be back at the FY19 level. The target range for available funds should be 10%-15% and we are at 9.44%.

The pie chart of the FY22 budget will look the same almost every year, with 67% going to education, followed by public safety, general government, public works, and "other". The pie chart for FY22 revenue will look similar in future years, with 90% from the tax levy, followed by small amounts from state aid, local receipts, and "other". FY23 estimated new growth is \$270,000, up from \$200,000 in FY22.

Stow is expected to receive a total of \$2,162,292 in federal funds through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

The FY23 department budget requests are at \$31,863,342 which is a 6.56% increase. The proposed increases from Minuteman High School and the Nashoba Regional School District make up \$1.1 million of the increase.

Capital requests are up 1,548% with an approximate total of \$15.7 million in requests, which includes \$6.5M for the Library, \$4.5M for the Lake Boon Dam, \$2.5M for Stow Acres, repairs and upgrades to the Town Building water system, and other capital projects to be funded through ARPA funds.

Health insurance is increasing by 8.5% overall. Assistant Town Administrator/HR Director Dolores Hamilton is comparing our current group, the Minuteman Nashoba Regional Health Consortium, to other plans and groups.

The TA gave an overview of her FY23 budget recommendations including: annual appropriations to the OPEB Trust and the Stabilization Account, improvements to the Facilities Department by budgeting for regular building maintenance and adding custodial hours, creating a part-time front desk person at Pompo, investing in the Fire Department's hybrid call model and supporting the SAFER Grant to bring in 4 additional full-time Firefighters, redesigning the pay scale for Recreation summer staff, continuing to work with our state and federal legislators on earmarked funds for Stow, and continue to seek out and apply for grants in all municipal areas.

Steve Jelinek, Chair of the Capital Planning Committee, was present via Zoom. Mr. Jelinek spoke about how CPC spending has increased over the years, most significantly in FY20 and now in FY23. We are not in a normal capital year. Some things have been delayed and are being addressed now, and overall costs have increased.

Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (TSAC)

Police Chief Michael Sallese and Town Planner Jesse Steadman were present via Zoom to represent the TSAC.

The Chief discussed the memo presented to the Select Board seeking authorization (in accordance with MGL c90 s17C) of a 25 MPH speed limit throughout Stow for thickly settled areas that do not have a posted speed limit, and for town-maintained private ways that meet the MassDOT definition of thickly settled. There are 28 roads that are thickly settled town-owned public ways and about 30 roads that are town-maintained private ways.

Member Salvie asked if the 25 MPH speed limit might be too fast for some small roads; Chief Sallese said this would lower the speed limit from 30 MPH, which is the speed limit if none is posted.

Select Board member Salvie moved to approve an amendment to the Traffic Rules and Orders, to reduce speed limits on applicable public and private ways, as proposed by the Traffic Safety Advisory Committee, and further, to support the following ARPA funding requests put forward by the Traffic Safety Advisory Committee:

- *Signage to implement creation of new speed zones as proposed*
- *Delineation of a "Safety Zone" along Crescent Street in the vicinity of Town Center as proposed*
- *Funding for traffic engineering for studies and/or peer review of potential traffic mitigation measures as directed by the Traffic Safety Advisory Committee*

Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The Board discussed the TSAC vacancy for a resident-at-large with an engineering background and the necessity of the position.

Board member Salvie moved to rescind the Resident-At-Large/Engineer seat on the Traffic Safety Advisory Committee. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Lighting for Autism Awareness Month

Melissa Whalen was present via Zoom.

Melissa and Kevin Whalen are requesting approval for indoor access to the Community Center and have already spoken with Recreation Director Laura Greenough about booking the function room. They also plan on having a drive-through as they have done previously.

Board member Salvie moved to approve indoor and outdoor events for Light It Up Blue – Autism Awareness on April 2 from 6-9 p.m. at the Pompositticut Community Center, including the parking area, as proposed by organizers Kevin and Melissa Whalen. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Select Board 2021 Annual Report

The Board reviewed the draft of the 2021 Annual Report. Member Frecha asked for two corrections, and member Birch-McMichael asked for one correction.

Board member Salvie moved to approve the 2021 Annual Report for the Select Board as amended, for inclusion in the 2021 Town of Stow Report. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Capital ARPA List

The allocated amount was adjusted from \$500,000 to the \$600,00 that was voted in January, and a new phone system for all 4 buildings has been added to the list. There are items on the list for the Police, Fire, Facilities, Highway, Recreation, Planning, and Building Departments, in addition to one item for the School Department.

Discussion ensued about the widening of Hartley Road. The Board asked the TA to have someone from the school attend the next Select Board meeting for a discussion on this item.

Board member Salvie moved to approve the capital ARPA list as presented by the Town Administrator at this meeting with the exception of the Hartley Road Widening item. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Municipal Employee Face Covering Policy

The TA reiterated that the COVID numbers are decreasing, and we are at a 90% vaccination status with employees. The Board discussed having a “masks optional” sign at the front door. The Board discussed if staff that need to enter private homes for non-emergencies should continue to wear a mask. The current policy is for the Town buildings only.

Fire Chief JP Benoit said that the Fire Department has OEMS (Office of Emergency Medical Services) protocols that require them to wear masks for all medical calls even if the policy is discontinued.

If needed, the Town Administrator can implement a temporary policy as she has done previously.

Board member Salvie moved to discontinue the Town’s Municipal Employee Face Covering Policy enacted on January 11, 2022 effective at 11:59 p.m. on February 28, 2022. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Meeting Minutes

Board member Salvie moved to accept the minutes of the February 8, 2022 meeting as written. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Correspondence: No comments.

Adjournment

At 9:10 p.m. Board member Salvie moved to adjourn. Board member Frecha 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’s Office in the meeting folder.