

Select Board Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, January 10, 2023
Stow Town Building & Zoom

Present in the Warren Room: Megan Birch-McMichael, Cortni Frecha, Hector Constantzos, and Town Administrator Denise Dembkoski

Present via Zoom: Ellen Sturgis

Absent: Ingeborg Hegemann Clark

Chair Birch-McMichael called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. The Chair noted that Public Comment is limited to items not on the agenda and anyone speaking should state their name and address. Comments are limited to two minutes or less and should be polite and productive. The Board does not respond to public comment and will take any comments under advisement.

Public Comment

Bob Collings, 137 Barton Road, said that there has been communication from Dan James requesting a review of the status of the Lake Boon dam project, and asked if there is something scheduled for this.

Board Member Comments

Ms. Sturgis thanked Hudson Light & Power for their outreach regarding the recent planned power outage, and for dealing with the problem.

Ms. Sturgis noted that the Nashoba Regional School District Agreement is moving forward and they will be asking to have it on this year's town meeting warrant.

Recognition for Eagle Scout Andrew Sears

Chair Birch-McMichael said she will be presenting a certificate and letter to Andrew Sears on Sunday at his Court of Honor on behalf of the Select Board.

Board member Constantzos moved to recognize Boy Scout Andrew Sears for achieving the rank of Eagle Scout, and to sign the letter and proclamation for his recognition ceremony on Sunday, January 15, 2023. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

Town Administrator (TA) Report

- As of December 8 there are 10 cases of COVID-19 in Stow for a 6.29% positivity rate. These are results that are reported to medical providers; at home tests do not count toward this tracking.
- The Randall Library Building Committee 2.0 had its first meeting last week and will be finalizing the contract for the design services with DesignLAB. This Thursday there will be a full kick-off meeting with the two library committees, the Owner's Project Manager, and the design firm.
- The TA announced the first Municipal Citizens Academy that will give residents a glimpse into all municipal departments. It is an eight-week class beginning on Thursday, February 2. There is no cost but registration is required. Information will be on the website, our social media pages and in the Stow Independent. The TA acknowledged all the work that Dolores Hamilton did to organize this. If it is a success and more folks are interested we will run more sessions.

- There is a new phone number associated with our reverse 911 system. If someone calls the number back, there is an automated message stating that this was a reverse 911 call and directs the caller to the website for more details. The number is listed on the Smart 911/RAVE webpage.
- With approval from the Board, the TA will make her budget presentation at the first meeting in March as opposed to the last meeting in February. The Finance Committee Chair has asked the TA to attend their February 28 meeting as the Superintendent will be presenting the school budget to all three towns. Moving her presentation will allow the TA to have more budget numbers when she updates the Select Board.
- The Select Board has decided to meet with the existing members of the EDIC about attainable goals. The office will wait to post the remaining EDIC vacancies until a later date.
- There will be a special Select Board meeting on Tuesday, January 31 regarding the Lake Boon dam project. This is not a public hearing; it will be a public Select Board meeting and information will be made available soon.

Appointment of Interim Highway Superintendent

Brian Hatch was recently appointed as the Acting Highway Superintendent, and now that Steve Nadeau is retiring on Friday, January 20, Ms. Dembkoski requested that Mr. Hatch be appointed as Interim Highway Superintendent effective January 21, 2023. This will allow time for administration to reevaluate the department and the position with the expectation that a permanent person will be in place by or around July 1. Ms. Dembkoski said that Mr. Hatch has been doing a fantastic job.

Board member Constantzos moved to appoint Brian Hatch as Interim Highway Superintendent effective January 21, 2023, and until a permanent Highway Superintendent has been hired.

Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

2023 Annual Town Meeting and Town Election Dates, and Open Town Meeting Warrant

Moderator Jim Salvie was present via Zoom. Mr. Salvie agreed to the dates and times discussed by the Select Board.

Board member Constantzos moved that the Annual Town Meeting be held on Saturday, May 13 at Hale Middle School, 55 Hartley Road, starting at 9 AM.

Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

Board member Constantzos moved that the Annual Town Election be held on Saturday, May 20 at The Center School, 403 Great Road, between the hours of 10 AM and 4 PM. This is for elected positions as certified by the Town Clerk's office.

Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

Board member Constantzos moved that the Board open the 2023 Annual Town Meeting warrant on Tuesday, January 10, 2023, and close the warrant on Monday, April 3, 2023.

Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

Stow Green Advisory Committee (SGAC)

SGAC Chair Arnie Epstein was present via Zoom and Clerk Carol Lynn was present in the Warren Room.

Ms. Lynn, who is also the Select Board representative to the SGAC, gave an annual update. The primary focus of the committee has been creating a Climate Action Plan, and they are also working on a policy for fossil fuel free new municipal buildings. The SGAC is also sponsoring a warrant article for Town Meeting to adopt a Specialized Building Energy Code to align Stow with the state goals for greenhouse gas targets. The committee continues to work on outreach to residents and has recently concluded a climate awareness assessment survey that had 304 responses. The SGAC is working with MassEnergize and has begun development of an EnergizeStow website, with the hope of launching it at SpringFest.

Ms. Sturgis asked if the SGAC is working with SMAHT (Stow Municipal Affordable Housing Trust) on solar for its affordable housing project on Red Acre Road. Mr. Epstein said the target is to make those homes energy efficient and all electric but he has not worked with them yet on incentives for solar. Mr. Epstein added that the primary financial incentive for residential solar, SREC (Solar Renewable Energy Certificates), is no longer in place. They would have to look at the state or federal level to make residential solar a win for the homeowner.

Mr. Epstein gave a presentation on the Climate Action Plan, which focuses on aligning Stow with statewide greenhouse gas emissions reduction limits for 2030. The MA Clean Energy Plan and Climate Plan for 2050 has a final emissions target of net zero in 2050 with interim targets along the way.

Mr. Epstein gave an update on electric vehicle (EV) charging stations in town and heat pump incentives. At the state level, the Mass Save program is being looked at and may be restructured and put under a state agency which would make it available to all state residents.

Mr. Epstein gave an overview of their warrant article to adopt the state's Specialized Building Energy Code which encourages energy efficient, all-electric new construction. This would not impact additions or renovations for existing homes and buildings. If the town does opt in, we would qualify for additional incentives and grants when a new Green Communities program becomes available in 2023.

Joint Board Meeting with the Planning Board (PB)

Hudson Road/Great Road (Route 117) Intersection Improvements

Stow Planning Director Valerie Oorthuys was present in the Warren Room, along with Project Manager Tom Bigelow and engineer Steve Sacco of Green International Affiliates, Inc.

Ms. Oorthuys said this intersection is a top priority for traffic considerations and is listed as a dangerous intersection on our existing Master Plan and included in the Complete Streets Prioritization Plan. Improvements to the intersection will include traffic signals and pedestrian enhancements. Funding for the project is coming from the Town's allocation of ARPA funds for the design and we will be applying for a MassWorks grant for construction funding.

Mr. Sacco discussed the reasons why the project is needed. In addition to the intersection operating at a below industry acceptable standard, three "signal warrants" have been met (two for vehicular volume and one for reported crash history), there are no bicycle accommodations, pedestrian facilities are substandard, and access management (driveways in close proximity) is substandard.

Mr. Bigelow presented the three alternatives for the conceptual design:

Alternative 1 proposes a left turn lane on Great Road westbound. Due to the proximity to the Elizabeth Brook Bridge, Hudson Road would need to be realigned which requires a full depth reconstruction. This alternative is infeasible.

Alternative 2 also proposes the left turn lane and full depth reconstruction but would also widen Great Road by 4 feet to the north which would include additional modifications to the intersection. This plan is also infeasible.

Alternative 3 proposes one travel lane in each direction on Great Road with no westbound turn lane, and a “lead green” phase for westbound traffic. The signal would be synchronized with the light at Harvest Road.

Alternative 3 is Green International’s recommended design and is the lowest overall project cost with the fewest impacts to existing utilities, infrastructure, right-of-way, environmental resource areas and traffic operations. The total estimated cost is \$750,000. Discussion ensued about the options as Board members and residents had questions about the proposals.

Police Chief Michael Sallese, also the Chair of the Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (TSAC), was present via Zoom and said that this project will help to keep people safe, and will reduce traffic accidents at this location and the amount of time that the department spends there after an accident. Most accidents occur with traffic heading west on Great Road and turning left onto Hudson Road. The TSAC has installed signs stating “caution: cars stopped for left turn” as a short-term, low-cost solution.

Board member Constantzos moved to support Design Alternative 3 for the Hudson Road/Great Road intersection, as presented at this meeting by Green International.

Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed 3-1 by a roll call vote: Sturgis -aye, Frecha -aye, Birch-McMichael -aye, and Constantzos -nay.

Town Meeting Warrant Articles/General Workplan Priorities

PB Chair Lori Clark was present via Zoom and gave a brief outline of the workplan priorities and the upcoming zoning amendment changes. The anticipated zoning warrant articles include the Lower Village Business District, the Active Adult Neighborhood Overlay District, the Phased Growth Bylaw, and a Wireless Service Facility Overlay District. The Planning Board will be holding a forum for all board and committees to go through the Lower Village zoning in detail.

Ms. Dembkoski informed the Planning Board that the Select Board had decided to invite EDIC members in to discuss goals before posting vacant positions, and asked Ms. Oorthuys and PB Chair Clark to send any suggestions for goals.

Comprehensive Plan Timeline

PB Chair Clark said an overhaul and an update of the 2010 Master (Comprehensive) Plan is needed. They want to begin with outreach and asked that a Comprehensive Plan Committee be formed. The Select Board agreed and the two at-large vacancies will be posted.

Deed Acceptance and Retained Rights Agreement for Stow Acres North Course

Ms. Dembkoski said both the Conservation Commission and the Recreation Commission met earlier this evening and have approved and signed the deeds. Ms. Frecha said it was amazing how all the moving pieces came together for this and it is a real work of art. Chair Birch-McMichael said this is a gift to the Town of Stow. Conservation Director Kathy Sferra was present in the Warren Room and said that due to statewide interest in this project, it will be presented by her and Bob Wilber (President of the Stow Conservation Trust) at conferences across the state. There is a webpage for the Stow Acres project on the Town’s homepage at www.stow-ma.gov.

Board member Constantzos moved to execute and sign the Deed Acceptance and Retained Rights Agreement for Stow Acres North Course, as presented at this meeting.

Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

Deed Acceptance for 0 Great Road

The Town accepted this donation at last year's town meeting and there was no cost as it is a donation.

Board member Constantzos moved to execute and sign the Deed Acceptance for 0 Great Road, as presented at this meeting.

Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

Bond Anticipation Note Renewal (PFAS)

This is the note that was approved by two town meetings, the annual in 2020 and the annual in 2021. The Board asked Ms. Dembkoski about the PFAS remediation and she provided a brief update.

Board member Constantzos moved to authorize and sign the Bond Anticipation Note Renewal (for PFAS), as presented at this meeting.

Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

Accept Donations to the Fire Department, Police Department, and Animal Control

Board member Constantzos moved to accept the following donations:

Fire Department - \$550; Police Department - \$500; Animal Control - \$1,000

Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

Meeting Minutes

Chair Birch-McMichael said that on page 5, it is Hudson Road not Hudson Street.

Board member Constantzos moved to accept the meeting minutes of the December 13, 2022 meeting with amendments.

Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

Correspondence

Chair Birch-McMichael said the Board received a letter from Dan James regarding the Lake Boon dam and there will be a special meeting on January 31 and any questions should be sent in advance.

Ms. Sturgis thanked Ms. Dembkoski for following up on Great Road Fuels and Stowaway Golf Course.

Adjournment

At 9:30 p.m. Board member Constantzos moved to adjourn. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Sampson, Executive Assistant

Documents used at this meeting: *Documents can be found in the SB Office in the meeting folder.*