

Select Board Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 14, 2023
Stow Town Building & Zoom

Present in the Warren Room: Megan Birch-McMichael, Ellen Sturgis, Cortni Frecha, Ingeborg Hegemann Clark, Hector Constantzos, and Town Administrator Denise Demboski

Chair Birch-McMichael called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

Public Comment

Debbie Woods was present in the Warren Room and said she supports hybrid and remote work situations, and now that COVID-19 is winding down she asked that the Board review the employee policy to see if working remotely is addressed and is fair and equitable across departments.

Leigh Hilderbrandt, 196 Great Road, was present via Zoom and said she sent a letter to the Select Board and the Planning Board about boundaries for the Lower Village Business District, and that there was a land court judgment regarding a property that was next to 194 Great Road.

Board Member Comments

Ms. Frecha is on LACAC (Local Access Channel Advisory Committee) and said Stow TV is now streaming in HD (high definition). More information is available on their webpage on www.stow-ma.gov.

Mr. Constantzos commended the Fire Department and other town agencies who came out to the Meeting House building when the sprinkler system malfunctioned during the deep freeze and emptied out and flooded the lobby.

Mr. Constantzos shared his thoughts about the human cost of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria, with over 35,000 dead and thousands more displaced.

Mr. Constantzos acknowledged NASJA's stand against Asian-American racism which was a result of recent hate crimes that happened earlier this month.

Ms. Sturgis reported that the Regional Agreement Amendment Advisory Committee has finished their work and its recommendations are going to the School Committee. She asked if this Board should have a presentation before it is placed on the warrant for town meeting. The Board was invited today to the School Committee meeting to hear an overview and have questions answered.

Ms. Sturgis noted the passing of resident Tony Todesco who owned One Main Street Florist, saying that he was a true artist. Ms. Frecha added that Tony did the seasonal arrangements in Town Building since it opened and said his beautiful work was sculptural and considered all of the elements of art.

Town Administrator (TA) Report

- As of February 9, there are 14 COVID-19 cases in town, which is an almost 16% positivity rate. At-home testing kits are available in the Town Building lobby, the Board of Health office, the Library, and at the Council On Aging.
- The school budget is being presented to the Finance Committees on February 28 via Zoom. The TA asked that her budget presentation to this Board be pushed to the March 14 meeting.

- At the request of Linear Plaza, Planning Director Valerie Oorthuys and the TA are meeting with their representatives next week about their concerns, which include drive-throughs at the plaza.
- The Open Meeting Law (OML) provision for remote meetings is set to expire. There is pending legislation to extend the current provisions through June, 2024. She will keep everyone posted.
- Regarding the OML, the TA reminded boards to not conduct business via email; everything must be discussed in a posted open meeting. Also, there are many boards without minutes posted timely on the website. The Town Clerk is looking to put together an OML seminar.

Appointments

Robert Webster to the Board of Registrars

Robert Webster was present via Zoom. Mr. Webster comes highly recommended by the Town Clerk's office and helped out at the election last year. Mr. Webster said he and his family have lived in Stow since 2006 and said it is a wonderful community where they have raised their two children. His children are older now and he wants to give back with public service.

Board member Constantzos moved to appoint Robert Webster to the Board of Registrars, to complete the remainder of an unexpired three-year term expiring June 30, 2024.

Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Daniel Gesell to the position of Laborer for the Highway Department

Daniel Gesell was present via Zoom. Ms. Dembkoski said that Dan has a lot of varied experience and will be a great fit for the Highway Department.

Board member Constantzos moved to appoint Daniel Gesell to the position of Laborer for the Stow Highway Department. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Donation from Stow Community Chest

Police Chief Michael Sallesse was present in the Warren Room, and Fire Chief JP Benoit and Adrienne Hoey from the Stow Community Chest¹ were present via Zoom.

In speaking with the police chief and the fire chief, a need for Narcan cabinets to be placed next to the AED cabinets in town buildings was identified and the Stow Community Chest purchased 10 cabinets at a cost of approximately \$80 per cabinet.

Ms. Hoey said they were very interested in supporting this important project. She said they hope they "just gather dust" and are never used, but they are there if needed. The Fire Department will monitor the expiration dates of the Narcan.

Chief Benoit said they fully support the police chief in this effort to keep the public safe, and this life-saving measure is a good addition to everything that has been done for the safety of the community.

Board member Constantzos moved to accept the donation from Stow Community Chest of 10 Narcan cabinets to be placed in municipal buildings.

Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

¹ The Stow Community Chest is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization which raises and allocates money to various organizations that provide social service, healthcare, and human services to Stow residents.

2023 Annual Election

Town Clerk Linda Hathaway was present in the Warren Room.

Chair Birch-McMichael recused herself as she will be on the ballot for reelection to the Select Board.

Ms. Sturgis presided over the 2023 Election agenda items.

Slate of Candidates

Board member Constantzos moved to approve the following slate of candidates on the ballot for the 2023 Annual Town Election, scheduled for Saturday, May 20, 2023:

Board of Assessors - One 3-year term

Board of Health - One 3-year term

Nashoba Regional School Committee - Two 3-year terms

Planning Board - One 5-year term

Trustee, Randall Library - Two 3-year terms

Trustee, Randall Library - One 3-year unexpired term, expiring May 2025

Select Board - One 3-year term

Select Board - One 3-year unexpired term, expiring May 2024

Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously 4-0.

Public Hearing on 2023 Election Options

Ms. Hathaway reported that vote by mail is a very expensive 12-step process and she shared data which reflected that it did not increase voter turnout in Stow in 2022. Ms. Hathaway recommended, and the Board of Registrars voted the same at their January 3, 2023 meeting, that the Select Board opt-out of vote by mail and opt-in to early voting for the Annual Town Election. Voting by absentee ballot will remain an option to those who qualify.

Katherine West, 8 High Street, was present via Zoom. She has been an election volunteer for many years and said she would like to see vote by mail continue to provide more options to voters.

Board member Constantzos moved to opt-in to In Person Early Voting in Stow for the Annual Town Election of 2023 with the hours of Monday, May 15 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Tuesday, May 16 from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Wednesday, May 17 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously 4-0.

Board member Constantzos moved to opt-out of Vote by Mail in Stow for the Annual Town Election of 2023. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously 4-0.

Chair Birch-McMichael returned to the meeting.

Ms. Hathaway said nomination papers will be ready tomorrow, Wednesday, February 15, and candidates will only need 39 signatures. The Town Clerk office will be closed next week.

ARPA Funding

The Board discussed the reallocation of the \$100,000 that had been allocated for community projects. It was suggested that the \$100,000 be rolled into the unallocated balance of \$294,000, which is being held to close-out existing ARPA funded projects which are coming in higher than estimated. There may also be an opportunity to apply some of the funds to capital items.

Board member Constantzos moved to roll the \$100,000 into the revenue loss category of ARPA funds for the projects and purposes described at this meeting.

Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Select Board 2022 Annual Report

The Board praised Office Assistant Phoebe Haberkorn's draft of the Annual Report. Mr. Constantzos asked that the Hometown Heroes project presented by the Girls Scouts be included in the report in the paragraph featuring recognition.

Board member Constantzos moved to approve the Select Board 2022 Annual Report as amended.

Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Buy Recycled Policy

The town is seeking to qualify for the Sustainable Materials Recovery Program through DEP (Department of Environmental Protection). One of the action items is to adopt a Buy Recycled Policy. If implemented tonight by the Board, we would qualify for the full Recycled Dividend Program which can be applied against recycling and composting programs.

Board member Constantzos moved to approve the Buy Recycled Policy as presented at this meeting.

Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Meeting Minutes

Board member Constantzos moved to accept the meeting minutes of the January 24, 2023 meeting as drafted. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Board member Constantzos moved to accept the meeting minutes of the January 31, 2023 meeting as drafted. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Correspondence - The Select Board reviewed correspondence.

Executive Session

At 8:15 p.m. Board member Constantzos moved to move into Executive Session Pursuant to MGL Chapter 30A, section 21(a) (3) for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to litigation if the Chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body; and Section 21 (a) (7) to review Executive Session minutes per MGL Chapter 30A, sections 22(f), (g) for the meeting on October 12, 2022, and to adjourn thereafter.

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

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.

Select Board Minutes

February 14, 2023

Approved: February 28, 2023