

Select Board Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, March 14, 2023  
Remote Meeting via Zoom

Present via Zoom: Megan Birch-McMichael, Ellen Sturgis, Cortni Frecha, Ingeborg Hegemann Clark, and Town Administrator Denise Dembkoski

Absent: Hector Constantzos

Chair Birch-McMichael called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. and noted that the meeting is fully remote via Zoom and therefore all votes will be by roll call. Stow TV is recording the meeting for YouTube and Facebook. Participants who would like to speak need to use the “hands up” virtual function.

**Public Comment** – none.

**Board Member Comments** - none

**Town Administrator (TA) Report**

- As of March 9, there are 10 COVID-19 positive cases in town, which is a 11.22% positivity rate. At-home COVID-19 tests are available from the Board of Health.
- Nomination papers are available from the Town Clerk’s office for all elected positions. Papers can be picked up through March 29 and must be returned by March 31, 2023.
- Remote and hybrid meeting options are due to expire March 31, 2023. Until the governor signs pending legislation into law, which would extend the options until March 31, 2025, any meetings or public hearings that need to be posted and are scheduled for after March 31, 2023 should have specific language on the agenda which would allow the meeting to be fully remote in case the legislation passes after the meeting is posted. If the legislation does not pass, boards meeting remotely will need to do so in accordance with Stow’s Remote Participation Policy.
- Congratulations to the Nashoba boys’ hockey team who will be playing Scituate in the Division III State championship finals this Sunday at TD Garden in Boston.

**Reappointment of Joe Jacobs as Veterans’ Services Officer**

*Board member Frecha moved that the Select Board reappoint Joseph Jacobs as the Town’s Veterans’ Services Officer, to fill a one-year term from April 1, 2023 through March 31, 2024.*

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

**Nashoba Regional High School (NRHS) Building Project Update**

Building Project committee member (and School Committee Chair) Leah Vivirito was present via Zoom. Ms. Vivirito reviewed the NRHS Board Brief No. 3 which included some of the conceptual images from the architect. Final designs will be available in mid-May. The building project website has a comprehensive explanation of all the stages, details, and materials relating to the project. NRHS tours have been scheduled for 10 a.m. to 12 noon on the following Saturdays: April 1, April 29, and September 9, 2023. A reservation must be made on the building project website.

## **Town Administrator's FY 2024 Financial State of the Town**

The presentation detailed where we are in FY 2023 and what to expect for FY 2024. The full report can be found on the Town's website on the Town Administrator's webpage. Highlights included:

- Certified free cash for June 30 was \$1,876,404 and has decreased over the last few years because we started making annual investments into other, more stable, reserve accounts. The goal is to be at or above 5% of the annual budget. For FY23 we are at 5.97%.
- The Stabilization Account, the newly created Capital Stabilization Account, and the OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) Trust Fund have all grown. OPEB is 11.32% funded.
- Real estate tax allocation was explained, with 66% of taxes going towards education.
- Our tax rate decreased 7.89% in FY23 and the tax rate of \$18.13 is the lowest since 2012.
- For FY23, the average single family home tax bill is \$11,617 and the average single family home value is \$640,760, which is an increase from the FY22 average value of \$556,907.
- For FY24, estimated new growth is \$250,000, which is less than the \$351,005 in FY23.
- The Town received \$2,162,292 in American Rescue Plan Act Funds (ARPA) and the remaining amount to be allocated is \$394,077.34.
- FY24 department requested budgets total \$33,061,973, which is up \$1.65M (5.26%) from the FY23 budget. Proposed increases from the schools are currently \$952,961 of the increase.
- FY24 capital requests total approximately \$3,047,925.
- FY24 health insurance has a 13.75% increase.

Ms. Dembkoski shared her FY24 budget recommendations, which include adding two full-time firefighters and one full-time police department patrol officer. Procurement of regular services will be combined to ensure best cost at highest quality, and we will continue to seek out and apply for grants. We will continue to work with state and federal legislators on earmarked funds for Stow, which total \$3,185,000. The Board appreciated the easy-to-understand presentation.

## **Establish Economic Development & Industrial Commission (EDIC) Goals**

EDIC Chair Tom Farnsworth and members of the EDIC were present via Zoom.

The Select Board and the EDIC discussed the three goals suggested by the EDIC and the six goals suggested by the Planning Board. Mr. Farnsworth said the EDIC members felt that three well-defined goals would keep them busy during the year.

Chair Birch-McMichael proposed that two of the EDIC goals be the short-term goals and the goal of advocating and educating on the results of the water study for Lower Village be the long-term goal. Ms. Hegemann asked if some of the Planning Board goals, which are more specific, could be part of the discussion of the needs and issues that business owners are facing. Mr. Farnsworth agreed that there are some opportunities in those ideas and they may be reasonably achievable if refined.

*Board member Frecha moved to set the following list of goals for the Economic Development & Industrial Commission:*

- 1) *Coordination, creation, and evaluation of a Needs Survey;*
- 2) *Create a Stow Business Forum meeting for the purpose of bringing together Stow business owners to get real-time feedback on issues they may face or topics of concern.*

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

### **Select Board MAGIC Representative**

Ms. Hegemann is the current representative but is unable to attend the Tuesday morning meetings because she teaches on Tuesdays. Ms. Frecha volunteered to be the representative.

*Board member Sturgis moved to appoint Cortni Frecha as the Select Board representative to the Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC).*

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

### **Disposition of Surplus Goods and Equipment – Highway Department and Building Department**

The respective department heads submitted written requests asking the Select Board to authorize the disposition of surplus goods and equipment, per the Town of Stow Disposition Policy.

*Board member Frecha moved to declare as surplus, the goods and equipment on the list provided by the Acting Highway Superintendent, valued at less than \$10,000 and belonging to the Town, and to authorize the disposal of these surplus items, and*

*to declare as surplus, the goods and equipment on the list provided by the Building Commissioner, valued at less than \$10,000 and belonging to the Town, and to authorize the disposal of these surplus items.*

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

### **Meeting Minutes**

*Board member Frecha moved to accept the meeting minutes of the February 28, 2023 meeting as written. Board member Hegemann seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by a roll call vote.*

### **Correspondence**

Ms. Frecha commented on the email from Leigh Hilderbrandt and would like a future agenda item, about six months prior to license renewals, to have a conversation about Stow House of Pizza not being responsive to enforcement requests about permitting. Ms. Hegemann endorsed this suggestion.

Chair Birch-McMichael thanked the people who emailed about the anti-hate statements. It is important to hear from residents, and she reminded people that emails are encouraged and with election season upon us they can have a seat at the table due to our democratic process.

### **Adjournment**

*At 8:25 p.m. Board member Frecha moved to adjourn. Board member Sturgis 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 Select Board's Office in the meeting folder.*