

Select Board Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, August 8, 2023
Stow Town Building & Zoom

Present in the Warren Room: Cortni Frecha, Megan Birch-McMichael, Ingeborg Hegemann Clark, John “JT” Toole, and Town Administrator Denise Dembkoski

Absent: Hector Constantzos

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

Public Comment - none

Board Member Comments – none

Appointment – Brian Hatch to Superintendent of Streets

Brian Hatch was present in the Warren Room.

The recommendation letter from the Town Administrator was read into the record by Chair Frecha:

“I am thrilled to recommend Brian Hatch to the position of Superintendent of Streets. Brian has been a hard-working, dedicated employee of the Town for 26 years and is ready to take the next step in his career. Over the last six months, Brian has continued to prove his readiness for the Superintendent's position and has the support of his department. Having Brian as the Superintendent will bring knowledge, experience, and stability to the Highway Department. I respectfully ask for your ratification of this recommendation.”

Mr. Hatch thanked the Board and the members of the department who showed up to support him, adding that the great crew of guys make him look good. He also thanked everyone in the other town departments that he has worked with, especially Denise and Dolores Hamilton for their support during this transition. Mr. Hatch thanked Tracy, “the other half,” for her support through the years which included being woken up by 2 a.m. telephone calls, and expressed his appreciation for her.

Board member Toole moved to appoint Brian Hatch to the position of Superintendent of Streets for the Town of Stow through June 30, 2024.

Board member Birch-McMichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Hatch was sworn in as Superintendent of Streets by Town Clerk Linda Hathway.

Recognition – Tye and Julie Morancy of Taylor Road

Tye and Julie Morancy were present via Zoom.

The Morancys were recognized for their heroic actions on Sunday, July 23, 2023 when they responded to a plane crash in their yard and assisted the pilot and passengers prior to the arrival of public safety responders. Several folks took part in the virtual recognition.

Police Chief Michael Sallese thanked them for going above and beyond by starting the chain of survival on that day. He presented them with a Certificate of Accommodation and an Accommodation Ribbon.

Fire Chief JP Benoit presented them with a Certificate of Recognition and firefighter Challenge Coins and said what they did at the time of the incident was very valuable. Their call to 911 enabled the department to call immediately for helicopters and additional ambulances.

Chair Frecha presented the Morancys with a MA House of Representatives Citation from State Representative and Speaker Pro Tempore Kate Hogan.

On behalf of the Select Board and the community at large, the Morancys were presented with a plaque in grateful recognition of their brave and selfless actions, and heroic assistance, on July 23, 2023.

Julie Morancy said they were amazed at the quick response from Stow and first responders from other towns, and said they felt that they did what anybody else would have done. She said that Chief Sallese and his offices have continued to check in on them. They feel blessed to live in Stow.

Town Administrator (TA) Report

- The Town Building will be closed tomorrow from 12-2 p.m. for an employee appreciation lunch.
- In response to many inquiries, the TA reported that there is no movement on the Bose property. The Planning Director and the TA have had several meetings with Bose personnel and they are actively marketing their property. The private school is still interested.
- The TA will be on vacation next week, returning to the office on Monday August 21st.

Permit for Stow Firefighters Association “Touch-A-Truck”

Erick Benoit was present in the Warren Room.

Mr. Benoit provided details on this year’s Touch-A-Truck which will be held at the Bose property on Saturday, August 26, rain or shine, and will be bigger and better than the previous two years. Ms. Dembkoski said that the application is complete and there are no outstanding items.

Board member Toole moved to approve a permit for the Stow Firefighters Association “Touch a Truck” on Saturday, August 26, 2023, from 10 AM until 2 PM, pending receipt of all necessary permits. Board member Birch-McMichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Town Meeting Discussion with the Town Moderator

Town Moderator Jim Salvie was present in the Warren Room.

Mr. Salvie thought he and the Board should share any important conclusions from the spring Annual Town Meeting (ATM) before they head into the fall Special Town Meeting (STM). Town Clerk Linda Hathaway always provides town meeting feedback forms, and the ATM had a lot of appreciation for Kid Town Meeting. Other comments fell into three buckets: the sound system; the clickers; and the length of town meeting, and in particular the number of articles on the warrant. Mr. Salvie wanted the Board to know that they have complete discretion over the warrant except for petition articles, which gives them the ability to control the number of articles and the length of the meeting. Mr. Salvie said that the clickers were tested multiple times before town meeting and they did work.

Ms. Dembkoski said that the STM will now be held at Center School. The set-up is different and the sound and the clickers should not be an issue. The combined cafeteria/auditorium/ gymnasium has a capacity of 1,100 people in one space and participants can bring a snack if they would like to eat during the meeting. The downside is that the entire set-up has to be done around the school’s schedule, and this involves renting and setting up chairs. Clickers have been borrowed from Sterling for a total of 960

clickers, which includes our 500, and we will acquire about 200 more. The clickers are already being thoroughly checked. Mr. Salvie added that if the clickers do not work there will be tellers ready to do a hand count of the vote. There will be babysitting services offered by the Kid Town Meeting folks, but they are not planning activities.

Ms. Dembkoski said that she and the Town Clerk will be issuing a formal press release with details for the STM, with guidelines urging people to check in early beginning at 6 p.m., and possibly earlier. Mr. Salvie said that the meeting will start promptly at 7 p.m. even if people are waiting to check in.

Charter Review Committee (CRC) - Update on Articles/Changes for Special Town Meeting

CRC Chair Deb Woods was present in the Warren Room. CRC members were present in the Warren Room and via Zoom.

Ms. Woods updated the Board of the proposed changes to the charter by reviewing each article:

- Article 4: Moderator; changes to clarify and simplify sections 2-2, 2-10, and 3-5(c)(d);
- Article 5: Investigations; the change will eliminate publishing the investigation report summary;
- Article 6: Town Administrator; changes to clarify and simplify sections 4-1, 4-2(h) 4-4, and 4-6;
- Article 7: Elected Officials, Town Administrator, General Provisions; changes to sections 3-2, 3-6, 4-2, and 7-7 regarding the Planning Board and the Master Plan Committee;
- Article 8: Removal and Suspensions; clarifying language in sections 5-4;
- Article 9: Select Board Appointments; general updates in section 5-5;
- Article 10: General Provisions; updates to procedures governing multiple member bodies in section 7-8;
- Article 11: Elected Officials; update to recall of elected officers in section 3-1;
- Article 12: General Provisions; changes to definitions in section 7-5;
- Article 13: Administrative; updates to sections 5-1, 6-2, 6-5, and 6-6;

Ms. Dembkoski reviewed Article 14, which is in tandem with Article 3 (change to the bylaws regarding a Director of Public Works), and affects Article 9:

- Article 14: Charter Change - Vest Authorities for Cemeteries and Streets in Director of Public Works; changes to section 5-5.

Review Draft Special Town Meeting Warrant

Ms. Dembkoski reviewed the remaining articles:

- Article 1: to incur debt for the Nashoba Regional High School Building Project of \$241,714,926;
- Article 2: additional funds for the renovation of the Randall Library; this will not increase taxpayer contribution or ask the taxpayers to fund this;
- Article 3: combine authorities for the cemeteries and streets in Director of Public Works;
- Article 15: acceptance of a portion of Box Mill Road as a public way;
- Article 16: amend General Bylaw Article 4, Section 9, which is a “clean-up” from the Municipal Modernization Act;
- Article 17: Special Election question; there is no dollar amount on the ballot because state statute does not allow it. This would authorize Stow’s portion of approximate \$64M for the NRHS project. A “yes” vote means you want to pay for the school.

The Board will get the final warrant at the next meeting and can vote on any recommendations.

Ballot Question for the September 23, 2023 Election

Board member Toole moved to approve the Nashoba Regional School District (NRSD) High School ballot question as presented at this meeting.

Board member Birch-McMichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Making Common Road One-Way & Approve Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (TSAC) Public Hearing

Ms. Dembkoski displayed photos of Common Road at the entrance to the Library and discussed the outside plans for the library renovation which include a true sidewalk and the refiguring of parking on Common Road. Drivers park on both sides of the road which is hazardous to drivers and pedestrians.

Chief Sallese said that making Common Road a one-way has been considered a safety issue for many years. The road, which has a 25 mile-per-hour speed limit, has a lot of traffic. Common Road will be closed for a few years during the library renovation and could be re-opened in a safer way as a one-way in the westbound direction. Allowing a public hearing gives the abutters and residents a chance to be heard. Ms. Hegemann wants to make sure that all options will be available for discussion, including both options for a one-way on Common Road and not just a one-way off Great Road (westbound).

Ms. Dembkoski said that if the Board allows the TSAC to move forward with a public hearing and we continue to move forward with making Common Road one-way, it will coincide with the Planning Department's Town Center Study Project. The goal is that both would be happening at the same time and when the library reopens there could be a new traffic pattern with a potential new light timing pattern, a new one-way, better stop signs, and better crosswalks. They are different projects but they feed into the same area.

Board member Toole moved to support continued exploration of changing Common Road to a one-way street, and allow the Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (TSAC) to hold a public hearing on this issue to gather further feedback.

Board member Birch-McMichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Amendment to the Stow Acres Retained Rights Agreement

Stow Acres has asked to extend its retained rights agreement for another year as the developer has not yet applied for their permits. Ms. Dembkoski and Conservation Director Kathy Sferra met with Peter Brown from Stow Acres to discuss terms for the extension and the agreement includes other items which are advantageous to the town.

Board member Toole moved to approve the amendment to the Stow Acres Retained Rights Agreement, as presented at this meeting.

Board member Birch-McMichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Meeting Minutes

Board member Toole moved to accept the meeting minutes of the July 25, 2023 meeting as drafted.

Board member Birch-McMichael seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Board Correspondence & Updates

Mr. Toole asked when the discussion on a policy for other boards to be recorded would be put back on the agenda, adding that it is not feasible to attend every board and committee meeting. Discussion

ensued about the need for more transparency and accessibility. A policy would not be enforceable across all boards as the Select Board cannot dictate to elected boards, but they could ask all boards and committees to follow a policy. Ms. Birch-McMichael agreed with Mr. Toole, adding that she wants this on an agenda this fall as things have been brought to her attention that she has not had the opportunity to review or rebut because the meetings are not out there. Chair Frecha said she does not want to confuse the Open Meeting Law with the intent to be transparent. This will be on a future agenda as a discussion of a potential policy.

Ms. Hegemann asked about the former gas station in Lower Village; someone is interested in building an automobile detailing shop.

Ms. Hegemann asked about the status of Dunkins; they are having some difficulties with the DEP.

Ms. Demboski said there is much discussion about gun manufacturers. On Tuesday, August 15 the Planning Board is holding a public hearing on an application for the Gleasondale Mill to add 20-25 art spaces and 10 gun manufacturing spaces. This is not something that the town is advocating for; the business owner is trying to rehabilitate the mill and the location is zoned for industrial use which allows manufacturing.

Adjournment

At 8:46 p.m. Board member Toole moved to adjourn. Board member Birch-McMichael 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.