

Select Board Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, October 24, 2023
Stow Town Building & Zoom

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

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

Public Comment - none

Board Member Comments

Mr. Toole thanked Jacquie Goring, Bruce Trefry and the trail team who did a phenomenal job with the new 370-foot boardwalk from Captain Sargent Conservation Area to the Red Acre Woodlands. Special thanks to Jacquie for spearheading this project and moving it along.

Mr. Toole asked when the topic of having boards and committees film and upload their meetings will be back on the agenda. Ms. Dembkoski is working on a draft policy to present to the Board.

Town Administrator (TA) Report

- Stow’s free cash was certified last week at \$3,276,056 with \$1M being a result of the Lower Village settlement.
- The monthly MAGIC meeting was held today; they discussed resiliency and safety concerns in each region, and also the state’s Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Communities are not submitting projects to the TIP because it is taking so long. The state thinks that communities are losing interest and is now rolling out additional grant programs to offer design funds to get ready for a TIP project. (MAGIC = Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination)
- The TA will be at a regional meeting in Framingham on Friday with the Lt. Governor to discuss the feedback that the administration previously requested. She will give an update at the next meeting.
- On Saturday, October 28 the Police Department is taking part in the National Take Back Day. Expired or unused prescription medications can be dropped off at the station for disposal.
- Sunday, October 29 is the Fall Festival at Stow Acres from 1-4 p.m. which is organized by the Stow Conservation and Recreation Departments.
- The Randall Library will reopen in its temporary location on October 31 at 9 a.m. They encourage people to come by in costume to the lower level of Town Building.
- Recommended hours for trick or treating on Tuesday, October 31 are 5-8 p.m.
- There will be an in-person forum discussion on a vision for housing in Stow on Tuesday, November 7 at the Pompo Center from 7-8:30 p.m.

Comprehensive Permit Policy and Appointing a Task Force

A comprehensive permit is for a “40B” (affordable housing projects governed by MGL Chapter 40B) which can bypass certain requirements because they are an affordable housing project. Ms. Dembkoski said that in 2013 there was a Comprehensive Permit Policy Task Force which produced a policy that was adopted by the Select Board.

Regarding the Stow Acres project, we have employees that are actively involved and can guide the process. A task force would be another layer added to the process, and we would have to find volunteers to serve on it. Stow Acres is a friendly 40B with monthly meetings between the TA, the planning and conservation directors, and the developer of the project. The Board discussed some of the wording of the policy and thought that the policy should be reviewed every 5 years by staff members of the 2013 task force.

The Board discussed the current policy and made the following changes:

- change “Board of Selectmen” to “Select Board”
- change “shall” to “may” in Appendix B, section 1
- add in a 5-year review

Mr. Constantzos moved that the Select Board Comprehensive Permit Policy be amended as discussed in this meeting.

Ms. Hegemann seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Constantzos moved that the Select Board not create a Comprehensive Permit Policy Task Force for the Stow Acres project.

Ms. Hegemann seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

License Fees for 2024 – Liquor, Common Victualler, Class II

Mr. Toole did some research on annual fees in surrounding communities. The fees in Stow have not changed in years. The Board discussed the fees and some members wanted to keep the fees the same as charged in 2023 until more research has been done. The Board decided to raise all fees this year, except for the all alcohol package store fee, and want a broader survey and review of fees next year.

Mr. Constantzos moved to change liquor license fees for 2024 as follows:

Restaurants – All Alcohol - \$2,400

Restaurants – Wine & Malt - \$1000

Package Stores – All Alcohol - \$2,000 (remained the same)

Package Stores – Wine & Malt - \$1000

Ms. Hegemann seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Constantzos moved that Common Victualler license fees for 2024 increase to \$40.

Ms. Hegemann seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Constantzos moved to change Class II/used auto license fees for 2024 to \$200.

Ms. Hegemann seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Goals Discussion

The Board reviewed the goals they discussed at the August 22, 2023 meeting.

Financial responsibility, or forecast planning, as it relates to anticipating and understanding big projects that are coming in the next 5-10 years led to a lengthy discussion about how to meet with other boards and committees. Having a predetermined agenda for these types of meetings should make the process smoother. The Board discussed how to encourage more people to volunteer for committees.

The Board discussed visioning for Stow, and helping more businesses come to town. They discussed creating vibrancy in a rural community, and how Stow looks in the 21st century as a rural town. The Board wants to reestablish the EDIC (Economic Development and Industrial Commission).

Mr. Toole wanted to add a goal for the Board to establish an anti-nepotism policy, or to make a directive that becomes a goal. It is currently a best practice but there is nothing formalized. The Board decided to review existing policies and determine what policies may be missing.

Topics discussed that will become TA goals included starting a monthly newsletter, forming a Town Hall Building Re-Use Committee, and providing an annual “where does your money go” press release. There is a link on the TA’s webpage for ClearGov, which is budgeting software that also shows a snapshot of town demographics and education, as well as a financial overview of revenue, expenses, and projects.

Mr. Constantzos moved to accept the following Select Board goals for fiscal 2024:

- *Forecast planning*
- *Establish a better relationship with Boards & Committees by inviting them to SB Meetings on a regular basis with a predetermined agenda*
- *Investigate better ways to communicate with residents*
 - *to learn about their concerns*
 - *and encourage more volunteerism*
- *Re-establish the EDIC*
- *Review policies and what may be needed*
- *Recommend bylaw changes to respective boards for review*

Ms. Hegemann seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Small Jet Expansion at Hanscom

There is a proposed project to build 27 new hangars for private jets at Hanscom Field. The Board discussed why and if they should discuss development in a different town. They would like to see what other Select Boards in the communities surrounding Bedford are doing. Hanscom is a state-owned airfield, and the Board briefly discussed the state’s newly released ResilientMass Plan which outlines the need for state agencies to develop plans to improve climate resiliency. Although this Board cannot affect this project, the Board could, on behalf of the town, send a letter to ask the governor to restrict it. Concerns are that this will have a climate impact or cause a carbon footprint issue. Mr. Constantzos said there is more to investigate as some reports are giving false and misleading information. Ms. Dembkoski will compile information and this topic will be revisited at a future meeting.

Select Board Policy – Statement of Ethics

Ms. Dembkoski said that older policies will be brought before the Board each meeting to see if revisions are needed. The Board discussed the Statement of Ethics adopted in 2009 and compared it to the Board’s Code of Conduct adopted in 2021. Last month the Board adopted a Board and Committee Code of Conduct which does include the Select Board so the 2021 policy could be rescinded.

Mr. Constantzos moved to keep the 2009 Statement of Ethics, changing Board of Selectmen to Select Board, and take section four from the 2021 policy and make it section five of the 2009 policy.

Ms. Hegemann seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

*Mr. Constantzos moved to rescind the 2021 Select Board Code of Conduct policy.
Ms. Hegemann seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

Meeting Minutes

*Mr. Constantzos moved to approve the minutes as written for October 10, 2023.
Ms. Hegemann seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.*

Board Correspondence & Updates

Ms. Birch-McMichael would like a policy put forward for the use of alternate text (“alt text”) for images to be more inclusive with social media postings.

Adjournment

At 9:26 p.m. Mr. Constantzos moved to adjourn. Ms. Hegemann 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 Office in the meeting folder.