

Select Board Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, August 24, 2021
Stow Town Building & via Zoom

Present in the Warren Room: Chair Ellen Sturgis, Megan Birch-McMichael, Zack Burns, Cortni Frecha, James Salvie, Town Administrator Denise Dembkoski

Also present: Dolores Hamilton, Fire Captain JP Benoit, Karen Benoit, Asst. Town Clerk Deb Seith, Phil Beltz, and Gordon Schaubhut

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

Public Input: none

Board Member Comments

Chair Sturgis acknowledged that the last meeting was challenging. She sent an email to all Board members asking for feedback, and said her intent was not to violate the Open Meeting Law. A copy of the email will be added to the correspondence for the next meeting.

Board member Burns expressed his appreciation for the Chair's comments. He will be attending the MAGIC meeting on September 14th and will update the Board at a future meeting.

Board member Birch-McMichael reported that she and Chair Sturgis, along with Conservation Director Kathy Sferra, Town Planner Jesse Steadman, and the Town Administrator, met with Rep. Kate Hogan and Sen. Jamie Eldridge about how and when they can help us, in terms of what resources they can provide. They discussed Lower Village, housing choice, energy efficiency, transportation, and other topics.

Appointments

Assistant Town Administrator

Dolores Hamilton will be Stow's first Assistant Town Administrator. She started her career in health care, then transitioned to human resources (HR) and was the HR Director in Newton for 15 years. Most recently, Ms. Hamilton has been the HR Director in the city of Framingham. Her first day in Stow will be Monday, September 13, 2021.

Board member Birch-McMichael moved to appoint Dolores Hamilton to the position of Assistant Town Administrator through June 30, 2022 and subject to annual appointment thereafter. Board member Salvie seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Dolores Hamilton was sworn in as Assistant Town Administrator by Assistant Town Clerk Deb Seith.

Acting Fire Chief

John Paul "JP" Benoit has lived in Stow for almost 45 years. He has been with the Fire Department since 1986, became full-time in 1994 and has moved up the ranks to become Captain, a rank he has held for almost 15 years. Also, this is his 33rd year as the Scoutmaster for Troop 1 Stow.

Board member Birch-McMichael moved to appoint John Paul Benoit to the position of Acting Fire Chief until a permanent Chief is appointed. Board member Salvie seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

John Paul Benoit was sworn in as Acting Fire Chief by Assistant Town Clerk Deb Seith.

Lion's Club "Orchard Days Food Truck Festival" for 2022

Phil Beltz and Gordon Schaubhut, of the Stow Lions Club, were present. The third member of their event team is Linda Gothie. Mr. Beltz and Mr. Schaubhut presented their plan for a food truck festival, originally planned for fall 2021 but delayed to fall 2022 due to Covid-19. They anticipate having 6 food trucks. They developed a parking plan due to the location of Lions Field at the intersection of Hudson Road and Great Road. They are aware of the feedback from various departments of the Town. They need to seek approval from the MA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) due to the presence of a well in the east side of the field. They are hoping to staff the event with students, the Rotary Club and Friends groups, and the Boy Scouts. They will offer \$10 per hour per person to those 501c3 organizations.

Board member Salvie thanked the men for their advanced preparation and suggested that the Lions Club seek approval by reapplying 6 months prior to their event. All members of the Select Board agreed.

Stow Film Permit Guidelines and Application

There is a company wanting to film in Stow, using a private residence and some Town-owned property. Town Administrator Dembkoski has recommended that the Town have formal guidelines and an application. Ms. Dembkoski provided a draft which has already been approved for a neighboring community by KP Law, which is also our town counsel. The Board discussed the section for exemptions and suggested that some flexible language be added to exempt student projects and those who would be filming for Stow TV. The Select Board would approve the initial Permit Guidelines and Application, and then any permit requested by a production company to use town property. Because this is a permit and not a license the Charter allows the Town Administrator to approve all other permits for, and be the facilitator with, the production companies.

If approved to film, the company currently wanting to film in Stow would make a sizable donation to the Town. As a 'sneak preview,' Ms. Dembkoski said the company wants to build a drive-in movie theater in town.

Board member Birch-McMichael moved to approve the application and guidelines for filming permits in Stow, as presented at this meeting with the fee for application set at \$100, plus any Town expenses for Police, Fire, or Highway services. After Select Board approval to utilize Town property and signoffs from identified departments, the Town Administrator will have discretion to approve/disapprove any applications submitted. Board member Salvie seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Town Administrator Evaluation Form

Ms. Dembkoski provided the Board with Stow's current form and with evaluation forms from other municipalities. The Board discussed the various options and although some preferred Shrewsbury's form, all members had Bolton as a first or second choice. Section three of Bolton's form is the evaluation of the prior year's goals, which could be incorporated into the Shrewsbury form if the Board changes to Shrewsbury's form going forward. The Board discussed and agreed to add a section on the pandemic.

Each Board member will meet individually with the Town Administrator. For this year, Chair Sturgis will compile the individual Board members' remarks into a summary to be presented at the next Select Board meeting as part of the meeting packet. Future evaluation compilations will be done by the HR Director.

The Board hopes to have goals set for the Town Administrator and the Select Board by November. Board members can submit a short list of goals to Ms. Dembkoski and a compilation will be added to the upcoming agenda as a discussion topic, not as part of the evaluation.

Board member Salvie moved, for evaluation of the Town Administrator's performance, to prepare a new Town of Stow evaluation form based on the example provided by the Town of Bolton and modified to add evaluative criteria regarding the coronavirus pandemic. Board member Burns seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Strategic Planning

Civility and the Role of Board Members

Chair Sturgis acknowledged the difficulties of the previous meeting and is grateful for the helpful feedback she received regarding her role as Chair. All members were appreciative of the comments made by the Chair at the beginning of this meeting. Chair Sturgis opened the floor to Board comments to continue the discussion begun at the last meeting, and to discuss adopting a code of conduct for the Board.

Board member Birch-McMichael liked Sudbury's policy, as it was grounding and explained what they are entrusted to do. Board member Frecha added that she liked Sudbury's policy also, and said she will probably not agree with everybody all the time and her goal is to be as gracious as possible. Board member Birch-McMichael shared her appreciation of being on this board where they can have a civil conversation on how to disagree.

Board member Burns thinks the best civility policy lets people disagree in a meaningful way and provides the Chair with rules that they can use. He liked the policies of Sudbury and Holden, and asked that a draft policy be ready for the Board at the next meeting. He shared advice that he received from another elected official, "take your time, don't rush." It is okay to table a discussion.

Board member Salvie wants a policy meant for the public, with clarification regarding public comments and public hearings. He hopes that the Board does not need a written policy on how to be civil to one another. As a Select Board member for 11 years, he thinks the Board goes wrong when the language of accusation is used (declarative sentences that cast fault) and has seen this happen many times over the years.

Board members discussed the code of conduct policies from other towns, and chose the policy from Holden to use as a template for Stow. If necessary, Board members will send portions from other policies to Ms. Demboski for inclusion in Stow's new policy.

Policy and Work Plan Discussion, continued

The Board will be meeting with the finance team -the Finance Committee, Capital Planning, and the Community Preservation Committee (CPC)- at a date yet to be determined. The Chair has invited SMAHT, at their request, to the next Select Board meeting to discuss their plans for the next year. Board member Frecha suggested, and Board member Birch-McMichael agreed, that they should meet with the Planning Board soon, and possibly twice a year. Board member Burns reminded them of Board member Salvie's 3 ways in which they should invite boards and committees to come before the Select Board: a general update, a targeted financial message to the Town, or an issue is happening. The invitation should explain that it is a way for the board or committee to share their goals with the Select Board. The Board discussed meeting soon with the Planning Board to discuss Track Road, and the CPC to have an opportunity to speak collaboratively about what the Town is facing.

Town Administrator (TA) Report

- The TA thanked Rep. Kate Hogan who ear-marked \$100,000 for PFAS remediation for the municipal building complex.
- The TA recognized the members of the Police Department, specifically Officer Fitzpatrick, Detective Scott, and Chief Sallese, and everyone who responded to the stand-off situation on August 16th which ended peacefully after many hours. The officers did an amazing job assessing the situation and responding accordingly. The SWAT team was called in as a precaution.
- The TA recognized Highway Superintendent Steve Nadeau, Acting Fire Chief JP Benoit, Police Chief Michael Sallese and all of their staff who handled the situation at the Lake Boon dam. There was a sinkhole in the dam last Friday evening and the Emergency Action Plan for the dam was immediately implemented; engineers were called and they made repairs overnight.
- The TA advised that for incidents that occur in Town, the true and accurate information is kept up to date on the Police Department's and the Town's social media pages and the Town's website.

- There was a confirmed tornado in Stow on Monday August 23rd with a tree coming down on Great Road.
- Chair Sturgis asked for a Covid update and if there will be an indoor mask requirement. The TA said that falls under the Board of Health, which takes its guidance from the Nashoba Associated Boards of Health. Stow is at a 76% vaccination rate, and the infection rate is low. Masks are required for visitors to all Town buildings.

Board member Burns thanked Ms. Dembkoski, noting that she thanked all of her staff, and on behalf of the Board he wanted to thank her. He praised her communication, especially how she gets accurate information out as soon as possible to stop rumors. He said she is the leader, and how she handled the recent trifecta of events was fantastic.

Meeting Minutes

August 10, 2021: Board member Birch-McMichael moved to accept the meeting minutes of the August 10, 2021 meeting. Board member Salvie seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Correspondence: Board member Burns stated his appreciation for the First Amendment.

Executive Session

At 9:06 p.m. Chair Sturgis moved to convene Executive Session pursuant to MGL c. 30A, sec. 21(a)(7) for the purpose of reviewing Executive Session minutes, and under sec. 21 (a)(6) for the purpose of considering the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property if the Chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body: purchase and value of Stow Acres, and to adjourn thereafter; votes may be taken.

Board member Salvie 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.