

Select Board Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 14, 2021
Stow Town Building & via Zoom

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

Also present: Police Chief Michael Sallese, Detective Cassandra Scott, Acting Sergeant David Goguen, and Katie Fisher

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

Public Input: none

Board Member Comments:

Chair Sturgis made a personal plea to encourage people to wear masks indoors. She congratulated pre-school and kindergarten parents whose children began school this week.

Condolences were sent out to the family and friends of Andrew St. Denis who died recently in an automobile accident.

Recognition

Stow Police Department

On August 16, 2021 the Stow Police Department responded to a call from a residence on Rt. 117. Due to the actions of the two officers on duty, Detective Scott and Officer Fitzpatrick, there was no violence and nobody got hurt. Scott and Fitzpatrick took a 'step back', assessed the situation via their training, and then proceeded to end the stand-off. They kept the community and themselves safe. At the station, Dispatcher Fantasia provided continuity of service and Sergeant Goguen came to the station to coordinate the logistics. Chief Sallese said he was extremely impressed and the outcome could not have been any better. He has a great department; the officers are incredible and it was a team effort. All four will receive a Letter of Commendation and Scott and Fitzpatrick will receive Ribbons of Distinguished Service for their uniforms.

4Paws 4Wheels 4Hunger

Mark Roberts and his labradoodle, "Mocha", are journeying across the state with their 4Paws 4Wheels 4Hunger project to raise awareness and money to combat hunger. He wants to take the wonderful spirit of the people of Stow and transform it into people caring about hunger and having a discussion about the issue. As a self-described "crazy man in an electric wheelchair with a really cute dog" he will raise money for Save the Children and the 4 major food banks in the state. He plans to roll for 7 weeks from West Stockbridge to Boston to Provincetown, accompanied by his wife Susan Crane, "Mocha," and a safety car. He thanked Melissa Rollins who volunteered for hundreds of hours, Frank Patterson of Patterson Auto Body for fixing his wheelchair for no cost, Dave Bundy at Stow Fitness who donated and challenged the members of Stow Fitness to donate, and Doug Tierney at TSS Graphics who will wrap his car with his logo and the logos of the organizations that he is supporting. The 501c3 charity can be found at the website 4Hunger.org.

Appointments

Zoning Board of Appeals

Board member Salvie moved to appoint David Hartnagel as a full member of the Zoning Board of Appeals for the remainder of a five-year term expiring June 30, 2024. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Conservation Commission

Holly Clack was present via Zoom. Preserving natural spaces is one of her passions. She has always wanted to get more involved in that and wants to learn more and grow in that area. Her family has resided in Stow since 1995.

Board member Salvie moved to appoint Holly Clack to the Conservation Commission for the remainder of a three-year term expiring June 30, 2024. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Open Space Committee

Board member Salvie moved to appoint Laurie Burnett to the Open Space Committee for the remainder of a three-year term expiring June 30, 2023. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Green Advisory Committee

George Peterman was present via Zoom. He has been a resident of Stow for over 40 years and loves everything about the Town. He has been involved in environmental issues since the days of President Jimmy Carter. He would like to contribute to the Town in areas of environmental issues and sustainability.

Board member Salvie moved to appoint George Peterman as Member At-Large of the Green Advisory Committee for a term expiring June 30, 2022 and subject to annual appointment thereafter. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

John Sangermano was present via Zoom. He has been a resident of Stow for about 35 years and has volunteered on many committees. He feels the timing is right for a climate plan.

Board member Salvie moved to appoint John Sangermano as Member At-Large of the Green Advisory Committee for a term expiring June 30, 2022 and subject to annual appointment thereafter. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Economic Development & Industrial Commission

Board member Salvie moved to appoint Mary Bradt Mintz to the Economic Development & Industrial Commission for the remainder of a five-year term expiring June 30, 2023. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Set Special Town Meeting date and Open Warrant

At the last meeting the Board discussed having a Special Town Meeting (STM) this fall for the Stow Acres article. Last night the Community Preservation Committee voted unanimously to support the funding. The recommended date is Saturday, October 30 at 10 a.m. The STM will be fully indoors at Hale School with everyone wearing a mask. There will be other articles on the Warrant, including one regarding PFAS and other items that are still in the planning stage.

Town Moderator David Walrath and Deputy Moderator Laura Spear were present via Zoom. Mr. Walrath fully supports having the STM.

Board member Salvie moved that the Board set a Special Town Meeting for Saturday, October 30, 2021, to be held at Hale Middle School starting at 10 a.m. Further, he moved to open the Special Town Meeting warrant on September 14, 2021 and close the warrant on Monday, October 4, 2021. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

SMAHT FY22 workplan and goals

Stow Municipal Affordable Housing Trust (SMAHT) Chair Mike Kopczynski and member Laura Spear were present via Zoom. The other members of SMAHT are Cynthia Perkins, Quince Papanastassiou, and Select Board member Cortni Frecha.

Mr. Kopczynski gave an overview of SMAHT's workplan for the year. He spoke about the Habitat for Humanity project, the Red Acre land, the former Highway Barn on Crescent Street, and the affordable aspect of Stow Acres:

- The Habitat project is ready to go forward, possibly in the spring, even though there is a private lawsuit against Habitat and the Town.
- Pre-engineering work has been done on the Red Acre property, and SMAHT held a public forum in June. They will be putting in an application with the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) for subsidy funding. Mr. Kopczynski asked for the Board's support of the CPC funds.
- A few years ago, there was a task force for the use of municipal buildings. It was recommended that SMAHT explore whether the former Highway Barn on Crescent Street would be a potential site for housing. The Board discussed keeping Town Hall in the discussion of facilities that have aged out.
- Some residents have asked why SMAHT continues with small projects if there are potential larger developments. It is important to show progress on a continual basis for their Housing Production Plan (HPP). Continuing to have small units to supplement a large project, which can phase in over a number of years, is a good strategy.

Laura Spear explained that Safe Harbor provides a variety of housing for all income levels in Town. There is a state mandate that encourages having 10% certified affordable housing across the town in order to meet certain levels of control, which includes the ability to say 'yes' or 'no' to developers. Affordable housing is not "cheap" or "bad" housing, it is housing to accommodate a variety of income levels across the Town. Stow does not currently have Safe Harbor status.

Stow's Housing Production Plan expires in October, and SMAHT needs to have an updated plan certified and approved by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). In previous years, SMAHT has worked with the Planning Board on the plan. The HPP is then submitted to the Select Board, who then submit it to the DHCD.

Town Administrator's Performance Evaluation

The evaluation period for Denise Demboski was from September 1, 2020 through August 31, 2021. A new evaluation form was selected at the last meeting and was used this year, and each Board member met with the Town Administrator individually to discuss the specifics. The Chair received the 5 evaluations and compiled the numeric section and summarized the comments. The overall summary of the Select Board's comments included that she is a great asset to the Town and the leader we need to move us forward. She is creating an environment that thrives instead of just survives. Her overall evaluation was a 4.73 out of a possible 5.0, and the Board could not be more satisfied with the Town Administrator.

Board member Salvie said it was a great year and this is where he hoped they would be. He wants her to have a more active role at meetings and her voice should be heard. He added that her response and her planning during the pandemic was perfect.

Board member Frecha said she had no doubt about Denise during her initial interview and that Denise has exceeded her expectations.

Board member Burns said he conducts many reviews and this was the highest score he has ever given, and that she has earned it. This is also the first time he immediately eliminated numbers 1, 2, and 3 from the evaluation.

Town Administrator Demboski thanked the Board for their support during the past year.

Board member Salvie moved to approve the performance evaluation summary of the Town Administrator as presented at the meeting of September 14, 2021. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Town Administrator Goals

Through the process of combining similar goals and eliminating those that are either completed or already in process, the twenty goals for the current year for the Town Administrator were narrowed down to twelve. Some that are listed as long-term goals will not have a conclusion within in a year, such as the Lake Boon dam and Lower Village, which is a top goal for many Board members. These projects will be worked on during the year but will not be completed due to the scope of the work. Having short-term and long-term goals will assist with the year-end evaluation.

The Board discussed having a section for Town Administrator Initiated Goals so as not to overstep the Charter. This could include items that may seem day-to-day, but Board members want the Town Administrator to get credit for these. The Board also wants an area for a narrative of self-evaluation by the Town Administrator.

Board member Salvie moved to approve the Town Administrator goals as defined at the meeting of September 14, 2021 with a completion date of August 31, 2022. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Disposition of Surplus Goods and Equipment

The Planning Department would like to recycle, with a certified recycling company, 3 printers that are not working and are discontinued by the manufacturer.

Board member Salvie moved to declare as surplus, the goods and equipment on the list provided by the Planning Board, valued at less than \$10,000 and belonging to the Town, and to authorize the disposal of these surplus items. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Select Board Green Advisory Committee Appointee

The Board can appoint a member of their board to the Green Advisory Committee (GAC), or they can choose one of the residents who has submitted a letter of interest to the Select Board. Discussion ensued.

As this is similar to being a liaison, which the Board moved away from this year, the consensus was for the Board to appoint a resident. This Board can set the example of selecting someone from the community, as it may not have been clear to the other committees that this Board preferred they nominate a resident as opposed to a member from their committee. An outside representative invites more people to the process, as opposed to having it be members who are already on an existing board. The consensus was to interview the candidates who have shown an interest in being a member of the GAC.

Board member Salvie moved to table this matter, pending interviews in a manner to be determined by the Chair and the Town Administrator at the next meeting, of all residents who applied for this Select Board representative position and/or the at-large position on the Green Advisory Committee through tomorrow end of day (Wednesday, September 15, 2021). Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Strategic Planning

Code of Conduct

The Board reviewed the draft of the Code of Conduct. Discussion ensued regarding section 4C (Enforcement of the Code of Conduct), section 2C (Responsibility to Town Administration), and sections 1B, 1C, and 1F (Community Responsibility). Edits were made to the draft, and a final Code of Conduct was agreed upon.

Board member Salvie moved to accept the Select Board Code of Conduct policy as amended. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Planning Session

The Board had previously discussed having two additional meetings. One is a second planning session after Town Meeting, to review their progress from July to December and to check in on how the Board is progressing on its work plan. The other meeting is the joint boards budget season kick-off meeting. The Board selected Tuesday, December 7 as the date for their next planning session.

Discussion ensued about the joint boards budget meeting and the Community Preservation Committee (CPC). The Town Administrator (TA) thinks the CPC does not need to be part of the budget meeting as they have separate funding and a separate budget. The budget season kick-off meeting should be between the Select Board, the Finance Committee, the Capital Planning Committee, and the TA. Budget requests are submitted beginning in mid-December so having the meeting in early December would have more hypothetical scenarios. When there is a joint boards meeting about policy making, goal setting, the overall big picture, and master planning, then the CPC would be included.

Discussion continued regarding the CPC. The TA suggested that the CPC should come to the Select Board, not the other way around. The CPC needs to define what their role is and how they see the Select Board interacting with them, and then ask for that. This should then be the roles going forward. January could be a good time for these two boards to meet.

The Board decided to have the December 7 meeting be in two parts, a full hour for the Select Board planning session and an hour for the budget kick-off meeting.

Town Administrator's Report

- Asst. Town Manager Dolores Hamilton began yesterday, Monday, September 13, and hit the ground running in her first hour! She has met most of the Department Heads and will be touring locations and meeting with off-site Department Heads and staff soon.
- The TA attended a meeting with Eversource today for the Sudbury to Hudson line project; only 300 feet impacts Stow. They will send her a project page, and they will have Constant Contact email updates and will go door-to-door for outreach.
- Stow meets President Biden's vaccination mandate for employers with over 100 employees. She is waiting on guidance from OSHA and the Dept. of Labor Relations regarding implementation and deadlines to create our policy. Although several states are suing, the TA expects it to move forward in our state.

Board member Burns noted that he would have to recuse himself from any policy discussion that comes before the Board for this topic due to his employment and financial stake in the company he works for.

- The Board of Health has scheduled a Flu Clinic for Saturday, October 16 indoors at the Community Center.
- The 2020 census lists Stow with 7,174 residents. There will be no re-precincting.
- PFAS is moving forward quicker than planned. Additional funding will be requested at the Special Town Meeting, to meet DEP requirements in a timely fashion. The American Recovery Plan Act Funding (ARPA Funds) can go towards coronavirus relief and also infrastructure projects, including PFAS. The funds are a federal grant that allows for the hiring of full-time or part-time staff to administer the ARPA Funds. She is considering hiring someone to share with Bolton. We will receive close to \$1.5 million in ARPA funding.
- A movie will be filming in town on Friday, and there may be delays on Crescent Street from 1 p.m. to 3 a.m. Saturday morning. There will be large equipment near the former Fire Station, and fog and misting overnight. The neighbors have been notified.
- The Collings mediation will be this Friday, September 17, 2021.

Meeting Minutes

August 24, 2021

Board member Salvie moved to approve the minutes of the August 24, 2021 meeting. Board member Frecha seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Correspondence

The Chair thanked Board member Birch-McMichael and the Planning Board for sharing their Public Hearing Guidelines.

Adjournment

At 10 p.m. Board member Salvie moved to adjourn. Board member Frecha 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.