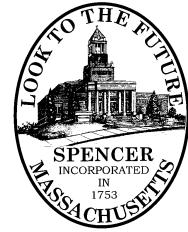


Board of the Board of Selectmen



Date: February 12, 2024
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Place: McCourt Social Hall
Present: Chairman Howard, Vice-Chair Grigg, Clerk Hicks, Selectman Pepe and Woodbury, and Administrator Bridges
Remote: None

Call the Meeting to Order

At 6:00 pm Chairman Howard called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance

Announcement Any members that are participating remotely in accordance with Regulation 940, CMR 29.10 of the Open Meeting Law

None

Citizens Input

Matt Defosse, 7 Pauls Drive:

- The discussion on the DPHS project at the recent Selectmen's meeting with Superintendent. Haughey and the District's attorney regarding was confusing and the information being presented lacked clarity; if the MSBA is providing a grant, why does the Town have to vote to borrow funds. Dr. Hicks said MSBA has requirements which necessitate the Town vote to borrow the entire amount in the event the State is unable to fulfill its obligations.
- A survey crew has been behind his property for the N. Brookfield Road solar project and although it is under the purview of the Planning Board, he requests that the Board of Selectmen also be involved as he does not want to rely on information provided by developers.

Bob Cirba, Summit Street:

- The recent meltdown by a school official was outrageous
- Expressed concern over roadblocks encountered by businesses to obtain ARPA grants
- Thanked Selectmen Woodbury, Pepe, Hicks, and Representative Berthiaume for looking out for the taxpayers with regard to the MSBA reimbursement for the DPHS project.

Announcement: the Board of Selectmen is accepting nominations for the 2023 Meritorious Service Award – Nomination Forms are available on the Town Website or in the Administrator's Office and are due by March 5, 2024

Chairman Howard announced that the Board of Selectmen is accepting nominations for the 2023 Meritorious Service Award.

Meeting Minutes

Review & Act on the Minutes of January 29, 2024

A motion to approve the minutes of January 29, 2024 as amended (Woodbury/Pepe) passed 5/0.

New Business:

Review & Possible Action on the Fish & Game Club Alcohol License Amendment Application for a Change of Officers/ Directors

Cristy Morrisson was present to request approval for the annual Change of Officers.

A motion to approve the application of the Fish & Game Club for an Alcohol License Amendment for a Change of Officers/ Directors (Grigg/Hicks) passed 5/0.

Review & Act on the Request of Rev. William Schipper, Mary Queen of the Rosary Parish for a 1-day Wine and Malt Beverages License on March 16, 2024, from 5:30 to 10:00 pm

A motion to approve the request of Rev. William Schipper, Mary Queen of the Rosary Parish for a 1-day Wine and Malt Beverages License on March 16, 2024, from 5:30 to 10:00 pm (Hicks/Grigg) passed 5/0.

Review & Possible Action to Open the May 4, 2024, Annual Town Meeting Warrant

A motion to open the May 4, 2024, Annual Town Meeting Warrant (Woodbury/Pepe) passed 5/0.

Consider Leadership Hall Induction per the Board's Policy for Leadership Hall Induction

Chairman Howard stated that the Board reviews their Leadership Hall Induction policy annually to determine whether to induct an individual into to Leadership Hall.

Review & Possible Action on Transfer Station Fees and Charges

U & F Superintendent Pete Boria introduced ideas for proposed changes to some of the Transfer Station fees for the Board's review and consideration.

Mr. Boria would like to add a \$500 non-residential sticker fee for businesses which would allow them access to the Transfer Station and also ensure they are paying the associated fees for disposal. The Rules and Regulations do not allow for that type of use and there are currently two businesses that pay the regular sticker fee which is not enough to cover the cost of the amount they are disposing of. Mr. Pepe asked if other towns have similar fees for businesses. Mr. Boria will reach out to other communities to obtain information about rates for businesses. Dr. Hicks noted that some businesses use black bags and pay a \$3 fee for these large bags, which also does not cover the cost of disposal.

Mr. Boria noted that single stream recycling is a direct expense to the Town at \$40,000 per year to dispose of; some businesses are disposing large volumes of cardboard and other recyclables and there is no fee to do so which presents a financial strain on the operations of the Transfer Station. Mr. Boria suggests quantifying the amount of recyclables and charging an amount similar to demolition debris disposal fee.

Mr. Boria will research further and bring additional information to the Board for consideration.

Review & Possible Action on a Minimum ARPA Business Grant Amount

Administrator Bridges relayed that some of the small businesses are eligible for an ARPA grant, however since their expenses went down during the pandemic, the amount of the grant award was reduced; he suggests a minimum grant amount of \$3,000.

A motion to approve a minimum grant of \$3,000 (Grigg/Pepe) passed 5/0.

Review and Possible Action on a Settlement and Full and Final Release Agreement with Strategic Municipal Services, LLC.

Strategic Municipal Services was hired to manage the Town's expected revenue of \$200,000 for the Cares Act Funds and it was not properly managed. Mr. Bridges contacted Strategic Municipal Services and initiated the process to recover the funds. A settlement was reached with Strategic Municipal Services who will pay \$113,990 and FEMA will reimburse the remaining \$94,000.

A motion to approve the Settlement (Hicks/Woodbury) passed 5/0.

Town Administrator's Report:

State Forecasted Revenues & Budget Outlook

Administrator Bridges reported that the Worcester Regional Retirement System (WRRS) pension assessment has significantly increased and is up by \$147,000. Health insurance will increase by 4.7%. The numbers from the SEBRSD and capital items are not yet available. The estimate for new growth is \$120,000. The Town is likely to face a shortfall with new growth outpacing expenses. He provided information for the Board's consideration for an override to cover operational services.

Selectman Pepe asked about the primary cause for the loss and Mr. Bridges said the minimum local requirement to the SEBRSD consistently exceeds the allowed 2 ½, coupled with the pension increases making it unsustainable. A Proposition 2 ½ Override will allow the Town to keep with expenses and restore services which were previously reduced. Dr. Hicks would like a breakdown on items that restore services versus items that are new. Mr. Bridges indicated that the Override question will be to pay the State's required local assessment for education. Mr. Woodbury stated that an Override request requires that specific information be provided to the public on the reasons for the request. Mr. Pepe pointed out that in the past the approval of budget was contingent upon the passage of an Override, if this is the route the Board decides to take, he suggests reevaluating the FMPC study. Mr. Bridges indicated that he presented the Override for discussion purposes, noting from a management perspective, the conditions which contributed to the budget shortfalls will not resolve on their own.

Review FY2025 Budget Calendar

The calendar outlining meeting dates leading up to the ATM was reviewed.

Review & Possible Action on the following Contracts / License Agreements / Change Orders / Bids:

Contract with Pare Corp. for Dam Inspections

A motion to approve the contract with Pare Corp. as noted in the amount of \$10,400 (Hicks/Woodbury) passed 5/0.

Commonwealth of Mass Standard Contract Form – Planning Grant

A motion to approve the Planning Grant (Grigg/Pepe) passed 5/0.

Commonwealth of Mass Standard Contract Form – Spencer Fire Department Earmark Grant

A motion to approve the Earmark Grant (Hicks/Grigg) passed 5/0.

Commonwealth of Mass Standard Contract Form – FY24 Firefighter Safety Grant.

A motion to accept the Firefighter Safety Grant (Grigg/Pepe) passed 5/0.

Citizen's Input

Kurt Nordquist, Gale Drive: the Transfer Station fees are residential fees therefore, the use of black bags is a violation. Since the Town pays to dispose of recyclables, a fee should be established. A public hearing should be held prior to making changes to any of the fees.

Board Member and Staff Comments

Mr. Bridges announced that Town Offices will be closed on February 13th due to the impending storm and the Special Town Meeting has been rescheduled to February 15th.

Request for Executive Session under Mass General Laws, Chapter 30A, 21(a) (3), to discuss strategy with respect to potential litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigation position of the Town and the Chair so declares: Massachusetts Broken Stone

A motion to enter Executive Session under Mass General Laws, Chapter 30A, 21(a) (3), to discuss strategy with respect to potential litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the Town and the Chair so declares: Massachusetts Broken Stone and to reconvene only to adjourn (Grigg/Hicks) passed 5/0 with a roll call vote: Grigg-yes, Hicks-yes, Howard-yes, Pepe-yes, Woodbury-yes

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm all were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Savoie,
Executive Assistant

Referenced documents: meritorious award nomination forms, license applications, Transfer Station fees, ARPA grants, contracts as listed above