



## **Board of the Board of Selectmen**

Date: March 25, 2024  
Time: 6:00 p.m.  
Place: McCourt Social Hall  
Present: Chairman Howard, Vice-Chair Grigg, Clerk Hicks, and Selectman Pepe, and  
Administrator Bridges  
Remote: Selectman Woodbury

### **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**

Chairman Howard announced that Selectman Woodbury will be participating remotely in accordance with Regulation 940, CMR 29.10 of the Open Meeting Law, and as such all votes will be by roll call.

### **Citizens Input**

Matt Defosse, Paul's Drive: the installation of water, sewer, and electricity should be considered on the east side of Powdermill Park with the Meadow Road project; submitted information relative to large scale solar.

### **Meeting Minutes**

#### **Review & Act on the Minutes of March 11, 2024**

*A motion to approve the minutes of March 11, 2024 as amended (Hicks/Pepe) passed 5/0 by roll call: Grogg-yes, Hicks-yes, Howard-yes, Pepe-yes, Woodbury*

### **Introduction of new Firefighters and Police Officer**

Chief Parsons introduced new Firefighters Shannon Latour and Cayla Hurley.

Chief Befford introduced new Police Officer Nicholas Nuttall.

The Board welcomed Ms. Latour, Ms. Hurley, and Mr. Nuttall.

### **Presentation: Draft Municipal Electricity Aggregation Plan**

Paul Gromer with MassPowerChoice presented an overview on the process for a Spencer Municipal Electricity Aggregation Plan called Spencer Electric Choice. The group program will allow the Town to use collective buying power to lock-in long-term electricity supply prices for Spencer residents and businesses. Before launching, the Town must develop an Aggregation Plan and submit it to the State for regulatory review and approval. The public will have an opportunity to review and comment on the draft Plan and associated documents before the regulatory review

process. After State approval, the Town will go out to bid for electricity supply and the public will be informed prior to launching the program.

The Spencer Municipal Electricity Aggregation Committee (MEAC) will work with Mass Power Choice to ensure the Plan reflects the goals of the Town. Once complete, there will be two options for electricity: 1) Standard Option with the minimum electricity allowed by law with a fixed price, and 2) Renewable Energy Option with electricity provided by 100% renewable sources at a higher cost. Enrollment in the Standard Option is automatic for residents with National Grid's basic service, however anyone not wishing to participate may opt out. A public presentation is scheduled for April 17<sup>th</sup> to review the Plan in detail.

Mr. Pepe questioned the opt out option and asked if the State will require a renewable energy option in the future, noting the higher cost. Mr. Gromer said customers may opt out at any time, and the State is leaving the options up to the Towns.

Dr. Hicks asked about customer service. Mr. Gromer said there will be a customer service phone number available which will go to his company and the Town Administrator's Office number will be provided for folks who choose to contact the Town directly.

Mr. Woodbury said he appreciates the efforts of the MEAC members which includes Jared Grigg, Roger Foss, Dick Varney, and Michael Krochmalny. Mr. Grigg noted that the goal of the program is to lower electricity costs for Spencer residents.

### **New Business:**

#### **Review & Possible Action to Re-appoint Brenda Cloutier as a member of the Board of Registrars for a term to expire on March 31, 2027**

*A motion to reappoint Brenda Cloutier as a member of the Board of Registrars for a term to expire on March 31, 2027 (Hicks/Pepe) passed 5/0 by roll call: Grigg-yes, Hicks-yes, Howard-yes, Pepe-yes, Woodbury-yes*

### **Town Administrator's Report**

#### **Review FY2025 Budget**

Administrator Bridges submitted the FY2025 draft budget and indicated that there is a \$155,000 deficit. The use of one-time funds or reductions are necessary in order to fully fund.

The SEBRSD relinquished the \$95,300 in ARPA funds back to Town.

Dr. Hicks recommends forming a subcommittee to work with the Administrator and Department Heads to determine how to move forward for the next few years and stated that reductions were made in 2014 need to be restored, including opening the Town Hall for four full days per week.

Selectman Pepe noted that the FMPC began this process a few years ago and that information may be used as launching pad and any Proposition 2 ½ Overrides should be listed as separate requests to allow the voters to decide. Dr. Hicks said separate requests do not work and stated it must be all or nothing, otherwise some departments will get approved over others. Administrator Bridges said

an Override is required by law to be specific and since there are a lot of smaller requests, he advised framing a Question towards the required minimum local distribution to the SEBRSD. Mr. Grigg stated that additional discussion will take place and in the meantime, suggests the use of one-time funds for the FY2025 budget and work towards a better solution going forward. Mr. Woodbury asked if the deficit includes the Town Administrator's salary. Mr. Bridges said it does not include his salary; he will prepare options for one-time use to cover the \$155,000.

### **Review Draft May 2, 2024, Annual Town Meeting Warrant**

Mr. Bridges reported that there are twenty-nine warrant articles. Town Counsel has reviewed the zoning articles and will review the remaining articles.

There was discussion on the request of Roger Foss to place a referendum on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant to adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA). Dr. Hicks asked Mr. Foss if he would be willing to reduce the proposed 1.5 % tax surcharge; Mr. Foss said he is willing to go to 1 %. Mr. Bridges noted that there are State funds available for a CPA match. Mr. Woodbury asked if there would be a ballot question noting his concern over adding additional taxes with potential Overrides coming. Mr. Bridges will determine whether the Board is required to place a Question on the Ballot if it passes at the Town Meeting.

*A motion to place the Community Preservation Restriction Act on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant (Hicks/Pepe) passed 3/2: Grigg-yes, Hicks-yes, Howard-yes, Pepe-no, Woodbury-no*

### **Review FY2025 Budget Calendar**

The calendar was reviewed.

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

#### **Change Orders: Pleasant Street and Smithville Road Improvements**

*A motion to approve the Change Orders as reviewed by U & F Superintendent Boria in the amount of \$117,612 from the FMPC funds to cover the cost of Change Order #2 and Chage Order #4 (Grigg/Pepe) passed 5/0 by roll call: Grigg-yes, Hicks-yes, Howard-yes, Pepe-yes, Woodbury-yes*

#### **Order of taking: North Spencer Road Bridge Improvement Project – Easements**

*A motion to approve (Grigg/Pepe) passed 5/0 by roll call: Grigg-yes, Hicks-yes, Howard-yes, Pepe-yes, Woodbury-yes*

#### **Major Crimes and Narcotics Task Force Mutual Aid Agreement**

*A motion to approve the agreement with Leicester for Major Crimes and Narcotics Task Force Mutual Aid Agreement (Hicks/Pepe) passed 4/1 by roll call: Grigg-yes, Hicks-yes, Howard-yes, Pepe-yes, Woodbury-no*

Selectman Woodbury would like more communities to be involved. Chief Befford said he will open it up to other communities after the program is up and running.

## **Requests for Proposals – Cherry Street Fire Station**

Mr. Bridges reported that the RFP's for the former Cherry Street Fire Station were opened on March 14 and only one proposal was received which was from Robert Ceppi. It did not meet the minimum amount in the bid, therefore 30b Procurement Law requires it to be rejected. Mr. Bridges advised the Board to reject the proposal and solicit bids again without a minimum bid, and include a preservation restriction.

Bob Ceppi stated the while he did not meet the requirement for the minimum bid amount, he did meet other requirements and asked if he could be awarded the bid, if not, he requests his proposal not be made public until the next bid round. Mr. Bridges said he will avoid publicizing to the best extent possible.

Mr. Grigg was advised by the State there would be a conflict of interest for him to bid on the Cherry Street Fire Station because he serves on the Board and questioned whether Mr. Ceppi would be allowed to bid since he serves on the Building and Property Reuse Committee (BPRC) and was involved in the RFP process. Mr. Woodbury noted that the Selectmen are the authority for the RFP, therefore a conflict should not exist with the BPRC since they do not have authority over the RFP. Mr. Bridges will contact the State and report back.

*A motion to reject the bid as it did not meet the minimum requirement (Grigg/Pepe) passed 5/0 by roll call: Grigg-yes, Hicks-yes, Howard-yes, Pepe-yes, Woodbury-yes*

A motion to rebid the RFP by Selectman Woodbury was not seconded since it was not on the agenda.

## **MassDOT Standard Contract – Route 31 over Seven Mile River #609179 – Utility Force Account Agreement (relocating fiber optic lines)**

*A motion to approve the MassDOT Stand Contract as presented (Hicks/Pepe) passed 5/0 by roll call: Grigg-yes, Hicks-yes, Howard-yes, Pepe-yes, Woodbury-yes*

## **Discussion: Community Preservation Act**

This item was covered under the review of the Warrant.

## **Citizen's Input**

Carl Kwiatkowski: Dr. hicks mentioned opening Town Hall for an additional day yet there is not enough money to cover the current budget; he asked if the potential for future Proposition 2 ½ Overrides over the next three years would be permanent. Dr. Hicks said Overrides are being discussed for the future and if approved, they will be permanent; opening Town Hall for an additional ½ day will restore the hours to the level they were prior to the 2014 budget reductions.

Matt Defosse, Pauls Drive: concerned the developers of the N. Brookfield Road solar project may have cleared more than 50% of the site.

## **Board Member and Staff Comments**

Selectman Woodbury: viewed the N. Brookfield Road project site and said it appears to be cleared beyond 50%. Mr. Bridges said Mr. Amos and Ms. Vivier will continue to follow the project.

Selectman Pepe:

- unfunded liabilities need to be considered for the budget in the future, including OPEB
- kudos to the Police, Fire, and Spencer Rescue Squad for their quick response to care for an individual having an emergency medical issue

Selectman Grigg: all liabilities need to be considered for future budget planning.

**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**

*At 7:30 pm 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 (Hicks/Grigg) passed 5/0 by roll call: Grigg-yes, Hicks-yes, Howard-yes, Pepe-yes, Woodbury-yes*

**Adjournment**

The Board reconvened from executive session at 8:14 pm only to adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 8:14 pm all were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Savoie,  
Executive Assistant

Referenced documents: FY2025 budget draft, ATM warrant, contracts and agreements as listed.