



Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Selectmen

Date: March 9, 2020 – Business Meeting
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Place: McCourt Social Hall, Memorial Town Hall, Spencer, MA
Present: Chairman Pepe, Clerk Berthiaume,
Members Hicks & Woodbury, and Administrator Gregory
Vice-chair Monette was absent

Chairman Pepe called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance

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

None

Minutes:

Vote to approve the Meeting Minutes of February 24 & Executive Session Minutes of February 10, 2020

A motion to approve the meeting minutes of February 24, 2020 and Executive Session of February 10, 2020 (Hicks/Berthiaume) passed 4/0.

Communications:

Mr. Gregory announced:

- The Town was awarded a \$500,000 grant from the MassDOT Municipal Small Bridge Program, which will fully cover the cost for repair of the Donnelly Cross Road bridge.
- Coronavirus update – the Massachusetts Department of Public Health has advised the risk to the general public remains low. A meeting with Department Heads is being held to discuss the response if Town employees needs to be quarantined.

Citizen Input

None

New Business:

Review & Act on the Request of Tara Donohue to hold a Toll Booth for DPHS Athletic Boosters on May 2, 2020, with a rain date of May 9, 2020

Amy Perro was present to request permission to hold the annual toll booth for the DPHS Athletic Boosters from 8 am to noon at the Transfer Station and from 9 am to 1 pm at the intersection of Elm and Main Street.

A motion to approve the request to hold a Toll Booth for the DPHS Athletic Boosters on May 2, 2020, with a rain date of May 9, 2020 (Hicks/Berthiaume) passed 4/0.

Review & Act on Topics for the Annual Meeting with the Legislative Delegation on March 23, 2020

The Board agreed on the following discussion topics for the annual meeting with the Delegation being held on March 23rd:

- Marijuana Legislation
- Local Aid.
- Student Opportunity Act
- Pension Cost Control
- Retiree Health Insurance Costs – OPEB Reform

Mr. Gregory noted that municipal retirement systems are required to have an actuary determine their pension liability and reviewed a list of those funded by ratio. Shrewsbury has own retirement system and are 92.4% and this year and will be fully funded by the end of the year. Worcester retirement is at 45.3% and will not be fully funded until 2035.

Initiate Town Administrator Evaluation Process

Board members will complete the Town Administrator evaluation forms and provide to Chairmen Pepe by March 23rd. The Chair and Vice-chair will meet with the Administrator to discuss the evaluations.

Discussion: FY2019 OPEB Valuation

Administrator Gregory reported that a recent actuarial analysis saw an increase in the Town's cost for retiree health insurance from \$7.4 million to \$ 8.2 million. Currently, retirees receive a health insurance benefit for the remainder of their life after providing ten or more years of service to the Town. This obligation will continue to grow until state law changes. Some communities are bargaining with employees to contribute a percentage of their salary to OPEB. Upton, for example deducts 2% from employee paychecks to put towards OPEB. Discussion will take place with at the meeting with the State Representatives.

Town Administrator's Report

FY2021 Budget Update

Mr. Gregory reported there is still \$243,000 difference between the District's request and the Town's ability to fund. The only new item in the Town's budget is \$70,000 for a new highway employee including salary and benefits. He indicated there is nothing else to recommend on the Town side and asked the Board for direction.

Mr. Woodbury pointed out the that highway employee is not a new position, it's a newly funded request to restore a previous budget reduction.

Dr. Hicks left a message for Comptroller Suter to discuss the budget. The School Committee will hold a budget hearing on March 10th.

Chairman Pepe asked if Worcester Regional Retirement can require the Town to contribute additional funding for the pension plan. Mr. Gregory indicated that they can. Mr. Pepe would like to discuss further with the Financial Management Planning Commission (FMPC).

FY2021 Budget & Capital Requests

Mr. Gregory reported:

- The Capital Improvements Planning Committee and Finance Committee will discuss FY21 capital and budget details at their meetings on March 10th.
- The Bid for the Maple Street project is on track for the Board to sign the Annual Town Meeting Warrant on April 27th.

Review Budget Calendar

The calendar was reviewed.

Board Liaison Reports

None

Citizen Input

Matt Defosse, 7 Paul's Drive, questioned the process for providing bid estimates prior to vendors placing a bid since it may encourage a higher bid than without the number. Mr. Gregory explained that the public bidding process is extremely competitive, therefore, vendors want to bring their best bid forward and are required to place a dollar value next to each line item.

Jonathan Viner, 34 Donnelly Cross Road asked about the status of the road improvement project. Mr. Gregory said Superintendent Krukowski will present an update on the project at an upcoming meeting and will include work completed, work to be done, and any changes that have occurred. There are enough funds on account from the previous two borrowing phases and there will not be a need to borrow for Phase 3 until May of 2021.

Mr. Viner also asked why the Board has an Executive Session to discuss the Administrator's contract renewal when his current contract does not expire until June 30, 2021. Chairman Pepe said the decision to begin at this time was mutually agreed upon. Mr. Viner continued to question the timing and Selectmen Berthiaume stated that it is the Board of Selectmen's decision to determine when to begin negotiations.

Board Member and Staff Comments

Dr. Hicks wants to invite Town Clerk Laura Torti to the next meeting to discuss making voting safer due to the Coronavirus.

§21(a), ¶3: to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining for the Police Officers, Police Dispatchers, Utilities & Facilities and Town Hall Clerks Bargaining Units.

At 6:46 pm a motion to meet in Executive Session in accordance with MGL Chapter 30A, §21(a), ¶3: to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining for the Police Officers, Police Dispatchers, Utilities & Facilities and Town Hall Clerks Bargaining Units (Hicks/Berthiaume) passed with a roll call vote: Woodbury-yes, Berthiaume-yes, Hicks-yes, Pepe-yes,

§21(a), ¶2, for the purpose of discussing Contract Negotiations for Non-union Personnel (Town Administrator)

At 6:46 pm a motion to meet in Executive Session in accordance with MGL Chapter 30A, §21(a), (2), to conduct strategy in preparation for contract negotiations with non-union personnel (Town Administrator) (Hicks/Berthiaume) passed with a roll call vote: Woodbury-yes, Berthiaume-yes, Hicks-yes, Pepe-yes.

Chairman Pepe announced that the Board will not reconvene in Open Session.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:46 pm. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Savoie
Executive Assistant

Referenced documents:

OPEB FY2019 Valuation, FY2021 Budget and Capital Requests & Calendar