



Board of Selectmen

Date of Meeting: Monday, March 13th, 2023
Time: 6:30 PM – 8:48 PM
Members Present: Chair Seth Ridinger and Selectmen Matt Mecum, Town Administrator, April Steward, Town Counsel, Stephen Madaus, and Alison Kennedy, Administrative Assistant to the Board
Not Present: Selectmen Jamie Underwood

The meeting commenced at 6:30 PM.

Financial Warrants were signed in agreement.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Meeting minutes: 01/17/23

- Add last name of EMTS to meeting minutes.

Big motion on page 4: Back deck at Dragon 88: Structurally sound. In motion, Seth believes they stated that if the Building Inspector does not feel it is structurally sound, then the Dragon 88 would have to hire a structural engineer. Believes it was in the motion.

Matt Mecum made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of 01/17/2023 with edits, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.

Town Administrators Report to the BoS:

1. *Mill Rd Parcels:* There is a resident who lives on Mill Road and is interested in purchasing two town-owned parcels of land. One is adjacent to their property, and the second is on the other side of that parcel. The land was deeded over to the Inhabitants of the Town of Boylston in 1953. If the board is interested in making these parcels available for sale, we will need to seek authorization to sell the parcels at the town meeting.
The Board asked for more information before moving forward with a decision.
2. *Accrual of Vacation Hours Policy:* In order to implement electronic timesheets, the Treasurer/Collector is requesting that the town adopt a clear Vacation Accrual Policy. I have attached what we have in our Employee Handbook. I believe it is clear with this policy that vacation time is not to be front loaded on January 1st but is accrued over the calendar year. If there is a way to make this policy clearer, please advise and I will draft up a new policy for your approval.
3. *Camp Harrington:* The P&R Coordinator has reached out to three vendors for quotes on Phase II of the PARC Grant. Two vendors have gotten back to them. There are no outstanding conditions on the parcel, however, ConCom would like to meet with them to discuss what is planned for the land. The P&R Coordinator had a walkthrough with the two vendors and a member of the Conservation

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Commission. April has been in discussion with the Parks and Recreation Coordinator regarding this grant and its requirements. June 1st is the deadline to complete some of the requirements.

4. *Upcoming Storm:* We had a call with MEMA this afternoon and were advised that the Northeaster that is due to hit tomorrow morning, has the potential to bring 2” to 20” of snow. If the weather does in fact bring us snow in the morning hours, I plan on closing the Town Hall for the day on Tuesday, March 14th. Town employees will be notified by text message and a notice of closure will be posted on the town’s website.
Parks and Recreation should be telling residents that the gym is closed and all events are cancelled if the Town Hall is closed.

Police Chiefs Report: On File in the BoS Office

- conducted 20 investigations
- Worked with the school district to update camera system
- Memorial Day: Scott Larkin: going to have a presence there and get a fundraiser going
- BES: Reading Day
- Are you okay program: service to seniors and others who don’t have a consistent schedule
- Speed Trailer –
- Dragon 88 – surrendered their license on 02/2023
- March 8th: Detectives made an arrest in Morning Dale area - \$60,000 copper left in Leominster.

Fire Chiefs Report to the BoS:

February – 92 calls in Feb

- mutual aid calls
- Commercial building fire – 1
- station coverage for Clinton and Sterling
- attended two Feasibility Study meetings

Full time Fire Department has completed GovHR

- Rate study: need more info from other departments; not complete

Budgets – submitted to TA

- 2 warrant articles:
 - ambulance receipts reserve account transfer to cover some supplies and equipment. More than what was expected.
 - 5% grant match for the Assist Firefighter grant

Grants:

Received more updates on FEMA reimbursement – unfortunately it depends on who looks at numbers.

- none of the full-time employees – salaries are not eligible for reimbursement

First Shipment of smoke alarms and fire alarms are in from Home Depot.

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Ambulance: Currently there is enough money in the ambulance receipts account. If we order it soon, we can lock in the pricing.

SCBA – Replaced 12 bottles. Packs are all out of date. We have enough: 2 for each person.

Highway Superintendent Report to the BoS: On file in BoS Office.

Matt Mecum made a motion to overspend on the snow and ice budget, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.

Seth asked Steve about the culvert on Central Street being clogged by beavers; he received notice from residents. He stated it hasn't been an issue in years but can look into it this week.

Snow and Ice Budget: Resident Howard Drobner who is also on the Finance Committee stated that he was under the impression of the snow and ice budget that it does not require specific Selectmen approval for overspending, it's the one budget that's allowed to be overspent. Town Administrator April Steward stated she was under the impression that it did need to be voted on, but it isn't subject to appropriation at town meeting.

Discussion on H-Intersection:

Chief Annunziata, Steve Mero and Chief Flanagan joined the board at the table. Seth addressed that one of the reasons that potentially triggered reopening the H-Intersection at least as an off ramp only (Northbound on 140), exit only onto School Street, is due to the amount of traffic on North Sewall and people speeding.

Speed Trailer was out from Feb 14th-22nd: Captured traffic from Route 140 to School Street, 2,469 cars in total. Of those vehicles, 141 were considered over the speed limit. The average speed was 27.5 mph, and the highest speed was 56 mph. 5,000 cars on that street, the Chief would consider that to be a lot.

Highway Superintendent Mero stated that especially at the beginning, he would probably lean more towards it being an exit only towards school street, going north, until we can see what we can do for the Northbound turning lane. Breakdown lane would become a merge lane. Strictly and exit only lane for the time being. Town Counsel Stephen Madaus stated that once the site is completed, the board will need to vote to reopen the H-Intersection.

Resident Mark Anttila asked if we have contacted Google Maps to tell them this route isn't an option for traveling. It takes away the option and maybe that will limit the cars going down this route. Matt added that people commuting now know the way.

Discussion on draft warrant with Finance Committee:

Frederick Brose, Karen McGahie, and Howard Drobner attended the meeting in person. David Butler attended the meeting via zoom. Inflation went up about 6.5%, so that will increase some costs and inch the budget up. Frederick Brose stated they put all the requests

in, and they were about 10% increase on the town budget; trying to keep the town spending as low as possible and trying to be reasonable for the average taxpayer.

School Side: They started with level funding and then they went to level plus and that was a shock. Level funding in and of itself was high. They showed us the level funding budget and then the level minus budget which would affect some of the teachers recently hired. The school noted things they really needed to avoid cutting. The Finance Committee tried to limit the increase that we could in the town.

Finance Committee is still waiting on the classification study information as well as the Police negotiations. April stated that dispatch is close, and we have an executive session tonight to go over everything else. The step program was instituted for employees. The Town Planner position is being increased from a part-time planner to a full-time planner; this position will help us, not just cost us. There were a few Police positions that were asked for as well as extra hours asked, and the Finance Committee felt that they should not be the ones determining the staffing and will leave that up to the Board of Selectmen. At this point, there was about a 7% increase on the town. David Butler added that the fire truck numbers needed to be added in (\$165,000). Frederick Brose stated that with everything he just laid out, we are at a 4% tax impact on residents in Boylston; for every hundred thousand dollars added to the budget, another half percent is added.

Matt asked how Berlin was handling the school budget on town floor and Frederick stated that from what he understood, the school is presenting one budget and the town finances recommending is recommending one (5% increase for the town), they are giving significantly less than the level funding budget request from the school. If Berlin has to level fund, they are looking at a 9% increase on taxes for their residents. Special Education is a major factor in the increased costs. For Boylston 75% of the increases to the level service budget was special education.

Matt reminded everyone that we are concerned about seniors and people on fixed income; it doesn't help anyone having to pay a higher tax bill. Reaching out to our state reps in an official capacity; we have to pressure them to do more. Boylston is classified as this wealthy town, yet we don't qualify for grants. We seem to get forgotten. Matt has spoken with Representative Kilcoyne and Senator Kennedy and looped in Nancy and Carol from the school department since they asked the schools for a detailed description of what our challenges are around so they can go back and kind of fight for it.

The Finance Committee decided their best bet was to lease the new fire truck or borrow it for five years. They don't need a debt override because we can fit in in the budget. The Finance Committee will leave that up to April and the Town Counsel to discuss. Chief Flanagan has asked to place a new ambulance on order; two and a half wait time This would not be borrowing; we have sufficient funds in the ambulance receipt account to completely pay for the ambulance when it arrives.

Howard Drobner mentioned to April that they have a few questions on why people are asking for certain things but will follow up with her. Seth stated one item is the treasurer and asked for more hours. He spoke with Cheri, and she said that all the new growth has put more time on her plate as well as the CPA adoption.

The Board of Selectmen has a meeting on April 10th for the final review of the warrant. The Finance Committee should be meeting on Monday, April 3rd to get everything finished up.

Discussion on drafting a letter to our State Representatives regarding Town budgetary needs:

Matt has looped in State Reps and School Department. He would like it discussed with the schools in an organized fashion. Discussing special education, towns standpoint on the housing crisis, and infrastructure.

- Rep Kilcoyne is on the ways and means committee

The Finance Committee would like to write a letter or join the Board of Selectmen on writing this letter describing the financial impact. The Board asked for a letter to be drafted with the schools and finance committee and the Board can review their letter prior to sending it out.

Discussion on purchasing 85 Sewall Street:

This discussion is regarding the plot of land referred to as 85 Sewall; 30.5 acres that was brought to potentially be purchased by the town at the 2021 Annual Town Meeting. It required two thirds vote and it was shy by a handful of votes. Seth stated the owner of that property had approached the planning board with plans to develop it and it was thrown out there to see if the owner had any interest in potentially selling it to the town again, in which the owner responded yes. The last conversation, it was appraised at around \$980,000, so we would be looking at borrowing of about \$1,000,000. Residents have been vocal about trying to preserve some of the rural characteristics of the town, open space and conservation land. Seth stated he doesn't know if all the information was perhaps readily available at the last time, we offered it to the town and now that there is new information, does it make sense to at least present it to the residents; a tough year, but this is an opportunity. The downside would be the additional tax impact. Matt mentioned that originally, he was the one who brought it up and given what's going on with the schools we are going to be in a tough position, bad timing. Seth stated that he goes back to the fact that not all the information was available and at the town meeting someone stood up and stated nothing could be done with that land and here we are now, and plans have been drawn up. Matt asked if it would be worth talking to the Greater Worcester Land Trust or groups like that looking to invest in something like this; the only way we could move forward would be to find alternative funding.

Resident Bill Manter asked the Board if they have any comments on the warrant article that would change the zoning on that parcel from rural residential to residential; which would potentially allow 60 55 plus houses to be built. The board agreed they have their opinions on it, but it needs to go before the Planning Board first with a public hearing and then they will make a determination or not whether they want to support it and then it will go before town meeting for the residents to decide.

Feasibility Study – Brief Update:

Matt provided a brief update. Catlin Architecture did a tour of the town and looked at all the sites including existing buildings. The initial suggestion was to build a public safety building at the 140/70 intersection and then reuse the fire station as the senior center. The initial numbers we are seeing are not in the realm of possibility. As of right now, we have a lot of questions and need to regroup. We need to dial it back in more ways than one; cost and what are we going to do. The next step is the design phase and there are questions on the price for that as well. Still a lot of work to be done and questions to get answered. Seth asked to make sure we are looking at every angle; finding a second location if the primary location doesn't work. Matt responded that if we were to build everything new, there is really only one piece of town land that we could do that on. It looks like we are moving towards renovations to old buildings instead of brand-new buildings. The Committee needs to discuss this in more detail and decide if they would like to change direction. The current architect discouraged reusing current buildings.

Flagg Estate: Looked at it. Wasn't the number one location. It may come back into the conversation based on the conversation today. If we want to move forward with this, we are going to have to get creative with using everything that we have to keep costs down.

Matt added that he wants to make sure that we don't let the senior center discussion fall behind in this conversation. It started with the senior center discussion and the Police and Fire have been looped in and we need to keep that focus.

Waste and Recycling Committee Questions: George Barrette:

George Barrette, 54 Twin Spring Drive joined the board at the table. He has been asked to chair the Waste and Recycling Committee and get appointed this evening.

The Board is looking for some direction from the Board of Selectmen. They are currently doing research of different towns in the area and comparing what they can do and offer. They plan to come back before the BoS soon to present what they have found in their research.

Questions:

1. Is it our goal to find a tax and/or a fee-based solution, using one or more trash haulers? *Information gathering: any combination. Ideally: Fee based structure to defray the residents tax burden. What will work best?*
2. Is the Goal just financial? Or other considerations? *The board doesn't know what will work best. Not simply just financial. Looking for the best impact for the community.*
3. What kind of clout can we have as a community if we are able to narrow it down to less haulers than we have?
4. What is the timeline? *No timeline. Pressure is off. Gather information and when you are comfortable; 6 months to a year would work to check back in with the Board of Selectmen.*

Review/Approve BoS Meeting Schedule April – August 2023:

Seth stated that May 22nd would not work for him and proposed if May 15th would work instead.

Matt Mecum made a motion to approve the Board of Selectmen meeting scheduled for April-August 2023 with edits, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.

Review/Approve Dept Head Reports Schedule April – August 2023:

Matt Mecum made a motion to approve the Board of Selectmen Department Head Reports schedule for April-August 2023 with edits, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.

Review/Approve The Haven Country Club for “music seven days” license:

The board decided to hold off on approving this. They would like to make sure they are doing it the correct way regarding zoning. Town Counsel is going to look into it.

Vote to appoint George Barrette to the Waste & Recycling Committee:

Matt Mecum made a motion to appoint George Barrette to the Waste & Recycling Committee, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.

Vote to appoint members to the Affordable Housing Committee:

Matt Mecum made a motion to appoint Mark Anttila and Beth Wilson to the Affordable Housing Committee. Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.

Vote to appoint members to the Community Preservation Committee:

Matt Mecum made a motion to appoint Mark Anttila, Corrina Javier, and Eric Hoffses to the Community Preservation Committee, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.

Vote to appoint Michael Alfego to Historical District Commission:

Matt Mecum made a motion to appoint Michael Alfego to the Historical District Commission, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.

Vote on Annual Town Report dedication:

Matt Mecum made a motion to dedicate the 2022 Annual Town Report to Gary Anderson and Hazel Jacsowiscz, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.

Vote to close the warrant:

Matt Mecum made a motion to close the warrant for the 2023 Annual Town Meeting. Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.

Vote on one-day liquor license for a beer/wine truck for BES fundraiser on Saturday, May 13th 3PM-6PM and to waive the fees:

Stephen is going to look into some information and report it back to the Board.

At 8:48 PM, Matt Mecum made a motion to go into EXECUTIVE SESSION (closed to the public): Per MGL c.30A, §21, (3): To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body and the chair so declares – Police Union and Dispatchers Union. Not to return to open session. Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor. Matt: Yes and Seth: Yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Kennedy, Assistant to the Board of Selectmen

Meeting Materials

Agenda	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office
Sign – In Sheet	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office
Memoriam 2022	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office
BoS Meeting Schedule 2023	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office
Highway Superintendents Report	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office
Town Administrator Report	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office
H-Intersection Traffic Flow Chart	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office
85 Sewall Street Appraisal Report	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office
01/17/2023 Meeting Minutes – DRAFT	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office
Waste and Recycling VTS Form	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office
Affordable Housing VTS Forms	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office