



## Board of Selectmen

Date of Meeting: Monday, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
Time: 6:30 PM – 8:48 PM  
Members Present: Chair Matt Mecum; Selectmen Jamie Underwood and Seth Ridinger;  
April Steward, Town Administrator, Town Counsel Stephen Madaus, and  
Alison Mack, Administrative Assistant to the Board

The meeting commenced at 6:30 PM.

Financial Warrants were signed in agreement.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **Approval of meeting minutes: 10/17/2022, 11/07/2022, and 11/14/2022**

Nov 14<sup>th</sup> – Seth made the motion to adjourn and believes it was Jamie.

*Matt Mecum made the motion to approve the 10/17/22, 11/07/22, and 11/14/22 with edits, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.*

### **Senator Kennedy and Representative Kilcoyne Meet and Greet:**

Seth congratulated Senator Kennedy and thanked her for coming out to Boylston.; representing Boylston and other communities in the great and very historic Massachusetts General Court.

She thanked the board for the opportunity to be here and dove into her background and how she got to where she is now. She hopes to know the ins and outs of all her communities as Senator Chandler did and this is just the beginning. She expressed her support for workforce development and investing in the infrastructure of these services.

Matt mentioned that his company has a large need for employees in the summer and a lot of those employees speak English as a second language and looked into classes for employees to learn English to help them out. Senator Kennedy stated that the status quo is not working and that we need to start looking at innovative strategies to be able to develop and build up and invest in our workforce.

Matt brought up the need for access to trade schools, apprenticeship programs and having access to mentors. If college is not the right thing for some students, then having access to these trades earlier on could be beneficial instead of them getting lost after high school. Representative Kilcoyne stated herself and Senator Kennedy have discussed the need for vocational education and how Assabet changed to a blind lottery system which doesn't leave any spots for Boylston, Clinton, and other communities. Rep Kilcoyne spoke about the Millionaires Tax and anticipating about a billion more in tax revenue within the next year that hopefully can be invested towards vocational ed, ongoing long-term conversation. Seth thanked both Representative Kilcoyne and Senator

Kennedy for coming out tonight and advocating on behalf of Boylston. Representative Kilcoyne thanked the Board of Selectmen and April for all their hard work and being so ready to communicate with them; knowing the nuts and bolts of the community and being able to voice those facts when needed.

#### **FY24 Budget Documents and Capital Requests; School Committee and Finance Committee:**

The school dept members who attended the meeting: Meghan Grill, Carol Costello, acting Superintendent, Nancy Koniski, Michael Toteman, Janel Fitzpatrick, and Jessica D. Eric Brose from the Finance Committee attended as well. Michael brought up workforce training and that they see similar issues in schools. The budget proposal they have reflects the changing needs of the community with recovering from the response to the pandemic; additional pay for teachers (social needs), and buildings needing updating to name a few. He mentioned different challenges they are facing such as growing classrooms and the budget they are proposing is not a wish list, but resources they need for the students.

Acting Superintendent Carol Costello stated that it's their fourth year being a regionalized school district and the budget submitted reflects their district improvement plan and outlines the needs of all our schools. The district improvement plan is divided into four objectives: Personnel, Equitable opportunities for all through teaching and learning, technology advancement, and maintaining long term financial stability and sustainability. Nancy Koniski dove into enrollment numbers and data, stating that we need to be competitive with what other schools are offering and try to keep our students within our own district, offering new programs and opportunities. The school committee is seeking the above level service budget, which addresses the changing needs and education, adding educators, enhancing our curriculum, offering new programs, having additional support services and advanced technology. Nancy went into detail explaining the cost of the level service budget requests and the above level service budget requests for the Boylston Elementary School as well as Tahanto Regional Middle/High School.

Finance Committee chair, Eric Brose stated that Finance Committees job is to help advise the Selectmen and speak with them about what seems reasonable in terms of the towns budget, and then for them to figure out what the voting population can afford to handle. Matt Mecum added that Boylston gets looked at as an affluent community and we certainly do not want to cry poor, that's not the case, but being a small town, we don't have the resources that larger towns do have; we are starting to get some industrial tax base in but have not seen the full force of that yet. It is a tough spot to be in since we do not have access to a lot of the other funds and other programs because they look at the median income and they say we do not qualify for a lot of the grants. Representative Kilcoyne stated she looks forward to continuing to network and once the administration is in place, maybe trying to bring some folks out to Boylston so they can see on the ground what some of the unique needs are. Once they get rolling with the new session with the new governor's office they can hopefully keep moving in that direction, as they want to make sure they are giving Boylston all the tools they need to serve the communities as well. Nancy went on to discuss the three-year capital budget plans for BES and Tahanto; including facility assessment. On File in the Board of Selectmen's office.

Chair Ridinger asked if one town was to not vote in favor of the Tahanto budget or try to reduce the final amount on town meeting floor, what is the reconciliation process for the budget. Nancy responded that it did not pass. Town Counsel, Stephen Madaus stated that the district would call a

joint meeting, like a town meeting but believes it would be after three failures. For two town districts, if the budget fails, but believes they have three goes at it and then the regional school committee can call a district wide meeting. There would be a majority vote at the district meeting to approve the budget. If it gets approved, the towns must fund it. If it doesn't get approved, the town would have to operate on a 1/12<sup>th</sup> budget. If both towns don't approve it, the regional school committee must reconvene and consider the basis under which the budget was not approved and then set a new budget, which sometimes has been the same budget, and reassess. Then the towns have a number of days to call their town meetings to see if that assessment would be approved, and we go through it again. It does not have to appear in the regional agreement, it's statutory. School Committee member, Megan Grill, asked if Boylston votes it down and Berlin votes for it, the school committee can keep pushing the same budget if they want. Stephen Madaus stated that you don't have an approved budget until both towns approve it. Seth stated that the answer to her question is that yes, you could still put the same budget forward and get a different group of people, more people come out to vote. Matt stated that the point is communication and getting as much information out there. The Finance Committee must tell the board what they think and recommend, and everyone must share that information prior to the town meeting. Carol Costello stated that they are doing all sorts of meetings and really trying to help folks understand what the plan means and some of the language in it. Matt added that any tax increase, any spending, proportionately affects the seniors; they don't have kids in school anymore and they are looking at the money they have with most of them being on a fixed income. Those are the people that you will want to talk to since most of the people who have children in the schools are going to say yes. Senator Kennedy stated that she will take this information and certainly do some recon at the state level, see what's happening and bring it back as the budget process there happens too. Representative Kilcoyne stated that she had the opportunity to meet the students in the Civics Engagement class at Tahanto and the students were so engaged, asking serious questions and incredibly mature questions about complex policy. Seth thanked Senator Kennedy and Representative Kilcoyne for sticking around for the budget discussion and thanked the school committee and finance committee for all their hard work.

### **Building Inspector Report to the BoS:**

Building Inspector Tony Z stated that things are moving along. The trailer with Vinacasas project is that they are coming in for a foundation. They need to do a couple things for Conservation. Mike May is looking to progress on his building, but only half of it. Rand Whitney is going to have equipment brought in and it's supposed to be the most advanced cardboard making facility in North America. The building department is still bringing in permits. The Northbridge site is complete; Selectmen Mecum took a tour through it. The intermunicipal agreement has been finalized and should be all squared away.

### **Discussion on Board of Selectmen's 2022 Annual Town Report:**

Matt asked to add that the Football team won the Championship. Seth stated that he will also add the Feasibility Study for the Public Safety Complex.

**Vote to approve Town Planner job description:**

CMRPC thought it was a heavy lift. If we go back to the Town Planner role, it's going to be a more focused role and more people may be interested in it.

*Matt Mecum made a motion to approve the Town Planner job description, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Vote to accept the 5% local COLA option proposed by the Worcester Regional Retirement System:**

Seth suggested getting Finance Committee Approval before voting. Moved to next meeting.

**Mass DEP Sustainability Material Recovery program:**

April stated that for Boylston to be able to qualify to use these funds, there are certain steps that municipalities have to have in place and one of them is a buy recycle policy, and otherwise we pretty much meet the rest of the criteria.

**Vote to approve Town of Boylston's Buy Recycled Policy:**

*Matt Mecum made a motion to approve the recycled product procurement policy, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor. Roll call vote: Matt: Yes and Seth: Yes.*

**Vote on early in-person voting and vote by mail options for 2023:**

Dawn stated that voting by mail is something towns can opt-out of doing and her concern was that taking away something that's an option for voters. She polled the town clerks google group today and there are a lot of towns opting out so if they decide to go that route, they wouldn't be alone, which was one of Dawns concerns. Seth stated that he would rather see more options for voting and understands it does place more of a burden on the Town Clerks office. Matt stated that he believes we should pick one; in person early voting or vote by mail. Dawn believes voters prefer vote by mail. Dawn added that this has not been budgeted for and they have already used up staffing hours. Matt stated that if we are going to commit to it, we need to make sure that Dawn has the extra resources to do it. Seth asked how we would fund it. April stated that in the last thirty days, they can move money around; it takes authorization from the board of selectmen and finance committee. Dawn stated that the state has not made recommendations and towns are having to make decisions on how to handle this at the moment. Seth asked if it was reasonable to not do the in person voting but do the early mail in voting. Dawn stated that people seem to prefer it. April added that the Board of Registrars had mentioned making the Town Clerks position appointed instead of elected and believes it would be a good idea; over 50% of the municipalities in the Commonwealth have already gone this path.

*Matt Mecum made a motion to re-affirm Town Hall, 221 Main Street, as Boylston's official polling location for both Election Day and Early In-Person Voting, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor. Roll call vote: Matt: Yes, Seth: Yes.*

*Matt Mecum made a motion to re-affirm the Boylston Town House, 599 Main Street, as Boylston's alternate polling location for both Election Day and Early In-Person voting, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor. Roll call vote: Matt: Yes, Seth: Yes.*

*Matt Mecum made a motion to re-affirm Boylston's Municipal Town Election Voting Hours as 12 noon to 8:00 PM, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor Roll call vote: Matt: Yes, Seth: Yes.*

*Matt Mecum made a motion to confirm that Boylston is not opting in to In-Person Early Voting for the May 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Town Election or any other municipal elections that may be held during the 2023 calendar year, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor Roll call vote: Matt: Yes, Seth: Yes*

*Matt Mecum made a motion for the Town of Boylston to opt in to Mail-In Voting for the May 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Town Election and any other municipal elections that may be held during the 2023 calendar year, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor Roll call vote: Matt: Yes and Seth: Yes.*

**Vote on waiving Parks and Rec fees for using the Town House:**

Continuation of waiving fees at the Town House.

*Matt Mecum made a motion to waive the Parks and Rec fees for using the Town House, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor. Matt: Yes and Seth: Yes.*

**Town Administrators Report to the BOS:**

**1. Housing Choice Communities ADA Requirement:** One of the requirements of the Housing Choice Designation is that communities either have an ADA Self-Evaluation or Transition Plan or are willing to execute an MOU between DHCD and MOD to do one in the coming 5 years. We do not have either plan on record for Boylston, so we need to sign an MOU and get connected to CMRPC for the resources to complete a plan. I was able to speak with Chris Kluchman at the DHCD booth last weekend to discuss this issue. If we do not have one of these plans in place, we will not be able to take advantage of any grants associated with being a Housing Choice Community. Once the MOU has been signed, I will try to see if we can have either the ADA self-evaluation or Transition Plan paid for by a grant.

**2. Joslin's Lot RFP:** We received one response to the RFP for Joslin's Lot. I have reviewed the submission and recommend that the board approve the sale of the parcel to the Worcester County Historical Society, and to Authorize the Town Administrator to enter into the P & S Agreement with the Worcester County Historical Society, on behalf of the town.

**3. CPA Article:** Article 4 from the December 12th, 2022 Special Town Meeting has been approved by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General. It is in effect as of January 24th, 2023. The posting of all related documents may be viewed on the Town Clerk's webpage under "News and Announcements". The Town of Boylston General By-Laws have been

revised to reflect this amendment and are now available for viewing on the Town Clerk's webpage under "By-Laws (General)". Any resident who is interested in being appointed to the CPA Committee should submit a completed Volunteer to Serve form to the Board of Selectmen's office for consideration. This information is also available on our website.

**4. CMRPC Updates:** I reached out to CMRPC for assistance with planning needs while we are without a town planner. Dr. Baker from the Planning Board had a few suggestions of planning needs the town would be interested in pursuing and I wanted to recap existing grants that are in play, making sure we are not letting grants timeout while the planner position remains open. We discussed the following:

- *Existing Shared Streets and Spaces and PARC Grants:* April will contact Eve Tapper from Planners in a Pinch concerning interim planning and grant assistance. If this option does not work out, we may be able to pull a one-day/week interim planner from the CMRPC to assist. They agreed it would be a good idea for us to move away from the Land Use Director position and focus on a Town Planner position instead.
- *Route 140 traffic affecting feeder streets:* CMRPC can put out traffic counters this spring and prepare a District Local Technical Assistance Program (DLTA) application focused on Route 140 traffic. The project could include a meeting with MassDOT, buildout analysis, and traffic modeling. Possibly a multi-phase project that later includes visioning and planning. Could pursue EEA funding in May for Phase II to start in the new year.
- *Hillside:* CMRPC is going to help the town pursue Community One Stop funding for a Hillside Master Plan. Expressions of Interest are due now. CMRPC can assist with the Expression if desired, the Planning Board just needs to authorize our use of LPA hours for this purpose. Full application is due in late May with awards in November/December. I have reached out to the Planning Board to see if they will support the use of LPA hours.
- *ADA Plan:* The Town needs an ADA Self-Assessment and Transition Plan. CMRPC can assist.

**5. MMA Conference:** There were many workshops available this year that Ali and I were able to attend. Using Public Communications to Build Community and Trust was one that I would like to discuss with you today. The workshop had three presenters, all who work in municipalities in communications. All three of them spoke highly of utilizing a robust town website and email newsletters. With the unfortunate decline in local news coverage, many communities are taking on the task of becoming their own news outlet. Needham uses the e-subscription services of Mailchimp. I have included the PPT presentation that was given in the meeting. This is a large undertaking, and although I can see the great value this would have for our community, I believe we need to take this on in small steps.

**6. WBAC Board:** The WBAC Board would like to discuss meeting recordings and the request for a kill switch with the Board of Selectmen. They will be attending an upcoming meeting within the next month.

**7. Sterling IMA:** Building Commissioner: I received the fully executed IMA from Sterling for the FY23 Building Commissioner shared position. Sterling would like to renew the agreement for FY24 once we have the COLA increases set for both communities.

**Review of Proposal(s) Received in Response to RFP for Sale of Property known as Joslin's Lot – Vote to award sale of property and enter into Purchase & Sale Agreement:**

Minimum was set at \$10,000 at Annual Town Meeting.

Stephen Madaus stated that counsel for the responding asked him if there was room if you will on the terms of the CR because they may want some sort of kiosk or something on the trail. He believes it is permitted under the CR but that is the only open item on the CR. It is permissible to award if there is only one respondent if they meet your criteria.

*Matt Mecum made a motion to award the sale of Joslin's Lot to Worcester County Horticultural Society and authorize the Town Administrator to enter into the purchase and sale agreement, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Vote to approve the WRRS Additional 2% COLA:**

If a majority of the towns vote to approve it, it wont matter what we do. Seth suggested getting Finance Committees approval before moving forward. Add to the next Agenda.

*At 8:48 PM, Matt Mecum made a motion to adjourn, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor. Matt: Yes, Seth: Yes.*

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Mack, Assistant to the Board of Selectmen

**Meeting Materials**

Agenda	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office
School Department Preliminary Budget	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office
Meeting Minutes Draft 10/17/22	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office
Meeting Minutes Draft 11/07/22	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office
Meeting Minutes Draft 11/14/22	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office
RFP For Joslins Lot	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office
Boylston's Buy Recycled Policy	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office
Town Administrators Report	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office
Building Inspectors Reprot	On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office