

Board of Selectmen

Date of Meeting: Monday, January 29th, 2024

Time: 6:30 PM – 9:42 PM

Members Present: Chair Jamie Underwood, Selectmen Matt Mecum and Seth Ridinger; April Steward, Town Administrator; Town Counsel Stephen Madaus, and Alison Kennedy, Administrative Assistant to the Board

Members Absent:

The meeting commenced at 6:30 PM.

Financial Warrants were signed in agreement.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Town Administrator Report to the BoS:**

1. **Vacation:** I am reporting to the board that I am going to be out of town on vacation February 25th through March 3rd with no access to email.
2. **Assistant Facilities Technician:** Bob has been able to complete several town projects with the help of his part-time assistant, Scott Kneeland. Scott has been involved with snow removal, furnace maintenance at the Flagg House, updating the police report and equipment room, and has drawn up the plans for the 2ndmeans of egress at the Fire Department. Without Scott’s help, that project would not have been able to be completed. Bob would like to thank the board for getting him the help he has needed to push these projects over the finish line.
3. **Clear Gov:** Going forward with it as of FY25. Going to streamline more of our financial information. Residents will be able to go online and access a lot of financial information, so we are more transparent.

**Vote to appoint Bruce Bender to the ADA Committee:**

*Seth Ridinger made a motion to appoint Bruce Bender to the ADA Committee, Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**PACE Program presentation and discussion:**

PACE stands for Property Assessed Clean Energy. Program that incentivizes commercial business to energy efficiency improvements, boilers, heat pumps, etc. Dan, PACE Representative spoke to the board about the program and how it can be utilized; commercial property owners to finance energy efficiency upgrades to their property. It looks and feels like a loan, but it’s structured as a better assessment. The capital provider provides funding to the commercial property owner. The Commercial Property owner then finances the energy efficient upgrades to their building and then pays it back, not directly to the capital provider, but you have a betterment assessment on the tax bill. The town then informs mass development, and they then forward it to the capital provider and that’s the difference between a capital loan and PACE; it requires a municipal opt in.

Some key elements of PACE are the following. The maximum financing term allowed is 20 years by state statute. If the property is sold, the PACE assessment stays with the property. Each application must be approved by the DOR. Seth asked for an explanation on the tax implications for the municipality and Dan responded that they understand every city and town has a different bandwidth, so they engage in unicap to help cities and towns with any questions. It shouldn’t be a heavy lift because of the way the program is structured, there’s no ad hoc billing, so the payment is determined at the very beginning. Matt asked Dan to walk through the financing again. Dan explained that if our commercial property owner wants to fund energy efficient upgrades to their building, their first option is cash, and most people don’t want to do that because there’s an opportunity cos and some people can’t do that because it’s too much. This is just another option on the table when it comes to financing that the commercial property can look at. The capital provider sets the terms with respect to rate and payback. Seth stated that he would like to explore it a little more before voting on it; having the assessors look at it as well as the tax collector. Matt stated that he would like to speak with some of the larger developers in town as well.

**Discuss Library staffing request. Vote to approve proposed job title and job description changes:**

Erica submitted the fiscal year 2025 staffing requests with some job description changes. They are looking to change the senior library assistant to a coordinator for circulation and adding on some youth service duties to help with our teen populations. Matt stated that the library is being used for many more things than just a library. The statistics that were included in the packet resulted in 30,000 visits to the library this year. Seth added that he supports this, but as far as the financial increase, the finance committee is putting together all the information and Matt agreed they need all the data; in support of it, but they are in the process of going through the budget.

*Matt Mecum made a motion to approve the job title and job description changes as presented, contingent on the financial component. Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Library building project update:**

Erica joined via zoom. The Library Trustees attended the meeting in person. The library is in bad repair. This project will replace the library gable ends, remove the existing and rusty vents that are a part of the previous ventilation system, repair the eaves, and repair some of the original windows. They had a potential list of add alternates to ensure they are able to utilize all the existing funds. Regarding the windows, they must decide if they want to repair them, or replace them before going out to bid. The vendor for replacing the windows also stated they will work with the library around not closing. Discussion continued on building issues and projects that need to be handled. Erica thanked the Library Trustees for all their hard work and volunteering their time. Matt mentioned that Governor Healy spoke about literacy and increasing those funds; suggested paying attention to those funds.

**BBRSD Discussion on new roof for BES. Approval of Statement of Interest to the MSBA:**

Carol Costello and Megan Grille joined the meeting. They are looking to find ways to pay for different items for the school; how do they get these things taken care of over a period of time and come together and have those discussions. The roof is the top priority for BES. Megan suggested sitting down and figuring out what the plan is for the next ten years; what direction do they want to go in and then work from there. Megan presented the study to the board and said it’s a great starting point, however it’s showing that over the next couple years it’s showing they need to spend $14 million on the building. Jamie stated that finding out what the roof is going to cost from Northbridge Partners is one of the first key components. Matt stated that BES is a town owned building, so at some level, the town has some responsibility to provide a proper building. Matt would like to see the roof in a more detailed study and also address it at the Annual Town Meeting in some capacity. Between the roof study and Elements Management, they should be able to make an educational decision on what the issue is. Discussion/suggestions continued on ideas for Capital Planning.

Matt asked if Megan and Carol could look into finding the plans for the drainage system for the soccer and track at Tahanto. He spoke with the Highway Superintendent Steve Mero and he believes that there are some valves in that drainage system that are not open, which is one of the reasons that water isn’t draining. Steve couldn’t find the plans to find out where the manholes were located to drain the fields. April stated that at the completion of Tahanto being built, there should have been an owner’s manual provided to the town and would assume they would be in the facility techs office. Counsel added that the architect or whoever that GC on the project was should have an electronic copy of it.

Matt suggested determining between now and then who’s going to take ownership of what on this building. We need a document that is very clear regarding what the town is responsible for and what the school is responsible for, a regional agreement. Megan stated they have drafted a lease with Berlin and are waiting for them to sign it. Once they figure it out with them and get all the kinks out, they can start the discussion with Boylston. Town Counsel Stephen Madaus stated that a regional agreement usually specifies that one, you shall maintain an elementary school in both towns, but then for capital projects over a certain threshold, the member town of that school owns the project to pay for it, it’s not part of the regional assessment. More discussion continued on the regional agreement, and bonds, which brought up a lot of questions that Megan and Carol plan to ask the Finance Committee. Seth quickly mentioned the idea of having a Capital Planning Committee and how that may get implemented in the future. The Board thanked Carol and Megan for coming in tonight.

**Discussion on Longley Hill Road: Letter to developer:**

Stephen presented the letter to the developer and the Board reviewed it; drainage on Stiles Road. Highway Superintendent Steve Mero and a ConCom member went up there recently and did a swale to deter the water. The board agreed to send the letter and Seth asked Stephen if the letter would put the town in any legal jeopardy. Stephen did not believe so.

*Seth Ridinger made a motion to approve sending a letter to the developer of Longley Hill Road, Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Discussion with Parks and Recreation:**

* + - 1. Fundraising for gym bleachers; alteration of Town Hall gym.
         1. Parks and Rec is looking to fundraise outside of Parks and Rec; get two rows of bleachers to allow for more seating. Looking for approval to move forward. The Board approves of the fundraising.
      2. Disc Golf kiosk and steps request.
         1. Jeff, from DISC Golf stopped in to give a brief update. They are proposing to put up a sign to bring more attention to the course. Jeffs group would fundraise and pay for the sign. The sign would be located at the upper parking lot.
         2. Town Planner, Paul Dell’Aquila advised them to work with the building staff to see if an additional permit is needed.

*Seth Ridinger made a motion that Parks and Recreation be allowed and authorized to place a sign at Hillside, as long as it’s in accordance with town sign bylaws and to waive any applicable fees associated with installing the sign, Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor.*

* + - 1. Apply for CPC/PARC Grants for Manor Park (to improve the tennis courts/add pickleball
         1. A request was submitted to the Community Preservation Commission for money towards this project; updating the tennis court area and painting it for both tennis and pickleball.

Hoping 60% will be covered by the PARC grant.

* + - * 1. Parks sand Rec is looking for help from Town Planner, Paul Dell Aquila. Paul agreed he can be a resource for them throughout this process.

Parks and Recreation has been relying on volunteers or the Highway Department regarding maintenance. The board suggested building a maintenance line item into their budget; tracking what their expenses would be. Matt stated an ongoing theme is the lack of maintenance he is seeing throughout boards; we need to look ahead on spending money on maintenance and not relying on volunteers. Discussion continued regarding trail maintenance. Matt suggested looking into AmeriCor as a great resource for helping with the trails.

* + - 1. Apply for a Trails Grant for Harrington Park improvements and then to make those improvements (design concept will be part of the grant)
         1. Arielle – Looking for permission to apply for a trails grant.

Looking to do ADA style trails. There is a different type of trail system (accessibility wise). We would be the most proximal trail to Worcester.

Hoping to take the preexisting trail and make it into a loop. Looking to connect shorter trails to the longer trails. Looking to do a viewing platform where the old bathhouse was at Camp Harrington.

Would like it so that everyone can have access to that water in some type of way.

Jamie stated the design cost is all a part of that grant so the town would not be responsible for that.

Arielle showed maps of the possible trail routes and believes we need to prioritize the FSTAG portion of the trail. Parks and Recreation will need to put in for a free cash article towards the funds.

Chair of Parks and Recreation, Eric Hoffses added that the parking situation at Manor Park is atrocious. It is something they are looking into this year and something they would like to address.

* + - 1. Citizen fundraising for center court parks
         1. Looking to fundraise money for the Center Courts, kids playground.

Seth stated if Parks and Rec sees a need for something like that, he believes the Board of Selectmen would be in support of it. Jamie and Matt agreed.

**Fiber Project update:**

Matt added that production has begun; switches installed at the Police Station and district office. Boylston Light Department have started to put the hardware on the poles, and Phoenix is going to pull the wire. Should have the fiber in the next couple of weeks; assuming they will start at the Elementary School back to 140/Route 70, then tackle Tahanto to Berlin Elementary School; going to tie in Police and Fire. April requested the weekly certified payroll information and who the contact would be to get that information.

**Review and approve 5 Financial Policies from Financial Policy Committee:**

Five financial policies were submitted to the BoS:

1. Reconciliation
2. Financial Reserves
3. OPEB – Other post-employment benefits
4. Debt Management
5. Turn In Policy

Templates were taken from other towns and tweaks were made.

Seth reviewed each policy. Jamie had some issues with the OPEB policy, and the board decided to gather more information on it and review it during the next round of submissions from the financial policies committee.

*Matt Mecum made a motion to approve the debt management, financial reserve, reconciliation, and turn in policy policies, from the financial policies committee, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.*

Seth asked the other Board members to submit representatives to him of who they would like seen on the Capital Planning Committee. Discussion continued on the Capital Planning Committee, and it will be discussed more at a future date.

**Discussion on dog waste bylaw:**

Boylston Town bylaws currently cover noise and aggression but do not cover dog waste. In the past, enforcement has been an issue. Kristen is a resident and suggested adding in this bylaw since it covers the arguments and holds people responsible for their dog’s waste; whether they are leased or not. The bylaws should state that dog owners are responsible for picking up their dog’s waste and disposing of it. Seth read over the policies and believes they are straightforward and does not mind support this bylaw at the Annual Town Meeting. Jamie stated it’s going to be difficult to enforce, however putting it out there, people will be more cognizant of it. The board suggested sponsoring the article; Seth will review the documents and advise Stephen on items he would like in the bylaw for Stephen to put together.

**Town Planner Report to the BoS:**

Planning Board:

At their January 8,2024meeting, the Planning Board approved a Special Permit for a freestanding ladder sign with a digital message display at 290 Shrewsbury Street (corner of Rt. 140 and Pine Hill Drive). The sign will contain signage for Rand Whitney, FedEx, and future tenants of the 80 Pine Hill Drive warehouse. The hearing for an application for an Accessory Apartment at 395 Cross Street was continued until the March meeting to allow the applicant to provide additional information on the proposed plan.

Zoning Board of Appeals:

At theirJanuary30, 2024meeting, The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)will hear an application for a variance for a setback for a garage addition at15 Mill Road.

Grants:

* On January 9, I meet with Parks & Rec staff and Commissioners regarding their upcoming application to the Mass Trails program for Harrington Park.
* On January 18, we held the second Planning Team meeting for our Hazard Mitigation Plan update. A public survey will be released the week of 1/29/24.
* On January 22, I attended the Conservation Commission’s meeting where CMRPC briefed the Commission on their planning efforts around incorporating Low impact Design updates to our Subdivision and Zoning regulations. The Planning Board received a grant for this project last year and the project will run through the summer.
* On January 23, I attended the latest web briefing from the Massachusetts Federal Funds Partnership.
* Also on January 23, I attended a webinar regarding the RAISE grant program, which funds transportation projects in rural communities.

Office/Other:

* On January 8, I attended a meeting of the Boylston Water District to keep them informed about the Town’s efforts around MVP action grants and Hazard Mitigation Plan update.
* On January 10, April Steward and I met virtually with GFI Partners, who are proposing a large warehouse development at 142ClintonStreet (Rt. 70) in Shrewsbury. I also attended a virtual public forum on January 17.
* On January 17, I attended a virtual CMRPC webinar on a new model cottage housing bylaw they are creating. This could inform the efforts of both the Planning Board and Affordable Housing Committee as they explore ways to promote the creation of more affordable housing in Boylston.
* On January 19, I attended a virtual APA webinar on Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS).
* On January 26, I attended the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Planning Association’s (APA-MA) monthly meeting and lunch in Hudson.

**Review Shared Streets Grant Project and authorize TA to send out RFP:**

April believed we already had an RFP drafted or bid doc submitted to us through SANTEC, however we did not. April took a template for Chapter 90 and sent it over to Stephen to get the scope of work together. An engineer will usually prepare the specs. Matt asked if we should ask for another extension to give us more time as it’s pretty clear they need a light there. Discussion continued on the timeframe of the project and the direction they should take. Town Planner, Paul Dell’Aquila stated that this has been ready to go since August and is questioning why we aren’t moving forward and what we would do with the extended time if given. More discussion occurred regarding adding a traffic light and Paul made it clear that the grant was for a specific purpose that was identified in the grant. Seth asked if it’s possible to get this plan to accommodate a traffic light or a way to make sure that they are able to add a traffic light in the future. There are some funds available for engineering work, and they are looking into where that money is. April suggested putting out the documents with an add alternate to add a traffic light, going forward with the pedestrian crosswalk, and making sure that it would be compatible for a future build out. Paul added that Stantec, who was mass DOT’s contractor, advised them in August it would be around $60,000 for the engineering fees. Discussion continued on what information should be added to the RFP; making the site compatible for a potential future traffic light. The board agreed to see if an extension was possible, but to proceed in the meantime.

**Vote to become a PACE Community:**

The Board would like a little more time gathering information on PACE before making a decision.

**Vote to approve the request from Worcester County Horticultural Society for Change of DBA:**

Updating information on their name.

*Matt Mecum made a motion to approve the request from Worcester County Horticultural Society for Change of DBA, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.*

*At 9:42 PM, Seth Ridinger made a motion to enter into* ***EXECUTIVE SESSION: (closed to the public):***

***Per MGL c.30A, §21, (3):****To discuss strategy with respect to litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares. – “Mary K. Cutter v. Town of Boylston and Boylston Water District, Civil Action No. 2385CV00178” and “Mary K. Cutter et al. v. Town of Boylston Zoning Board of Appeals, Civil Action No. 2385CV00264*

***Per MGL c.30A, §21, (2):****To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel or contract negotiations with non-union personnel, if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body and the chair so declares– Police Chief*

*Not to return to the open session. Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor. Matt: Yes, Seth: Yes, and Jamie: 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

Department Head Reports

Dog Waste Bylaw samples

Library project documents

PACE Community Documents

Financial Policies Committee Documents

BES Facility Condition Assessment Documents