

Board of Selectmen

Date of Meeting: Monday, February 26, 2024

Time: 6:30 PM – 8:12 PM

Members Present: Selectmen Matt Mecum and Seth Ridinger, Town Counsel Stephen Madaus and Alison Kennedy, Administrative Assistant to the Board

Not Present: Town Administrator April Steward and Selectmen Chair Jamie Underwood

The meeting commenced at 6:30 PM.

Financial Warrants were signed in agreement.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Approval of meeting minutes: 01/29/24**

*Seth Ridinger made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from 01/29/2024, Matt Mecum seconded, voted all in favor.*

**Town Administrators Report to the BOS:** No report provided: on vacation.

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

Building Inspector Tony Zahariadis, asked to speak while Finance Committee was present. Tony showed the board the process he uses to find more money through contracts. The project he showed was a beginning permit amount of $61,000 and after digging into it and requesting documentation he notified them that permit was for $114,000. Another project was submitted costing $500,000 and after review Tony stated it was a $1.7 million dollar project, so it turned the permit fee from $6,000-$7,000 to $23,000. Tony stated it’s something he does that no one else does, finding money for the town.

**Report of the Town Planner to the BoS:**

*Planning Board*

At their March 4th, 2024, meeting, the Planning Board will address the following:

* Accessory Apartment at 395 Cross Street (continued hearing)
* Barnard Hill-Phase IV (13-lot subdivision–new hearing)
* The Board will also be scheduling a public hearing regarding potential zoning changes.

*Zoning Board of Appeals –* No meeting this month

*Grants*

* On February 14, I met with EEA Central Region Coordinator Hillary King to discuss potential MVP Action Grant ideas for the upcoming round.
* On February 15, we held the third meeting of the Hazard Mitigation working group. The focus of this meeting was identifying critical infrastructure. There was also discussion about getting more responses to the HMP survey that was released at the end of January.
* OnFebruary20, I attended the Conservation Commission’s meeting to discuss required paperwork that needs to be submitted regarding reimbursement on the LAND grant used to acquire the 30-acre property off Sewall Street and School Street earlier this year. In the spring we will also need to install signage and a small parking area to comply with grant requirements before we can submit the reimbursement package.
* On February 20, I submitted an Expression of Interest to the One Stop for Growth portal regarding a potential application for funding for a Hillside Master Plan.
* On March 5, we will hold a kickoff meeting with CMRPC regarding our grant award to update Boylston’s ADA Self Evaluation and Transition Plan. The proposed planning project will result in the development of a plan that will comply with current state and federal accessibility regulations. One goal of the plan is to provide an evaluation of the Town’s operations to determine whether they are on the whole accessible to people with disabilities. A second goal is to identify physical barriers to public buildings, sites and services owned or operated by the town. The plan will identify recommendations on making programs or services accessible and will provide general estimates of cost for the removal of architectural barriers. Through the completion of the planning document, the Town will be in compliance with certain provisions of the ADA and will give people with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in the mainstream of public life offered to all citizens.

**Finance Committee updates on budget:**

Karen McGahie, Greg Cusimano and Eric Brose attended the meeting in person while Howard Drobner attended via zoom. Howard stated that we probably have about $1.2 million dollars available for our operating budget, split between the town and the schools. Each side is looking at $600,000 of available growth in our operating budgets that we can do. This is independent of free cash, which we would try to use some of the capital improvements, including something at the elementary school, that’s very limited than what we had. After that point, you are basically at our max ley limit. After the 2.5% property tax that’s allowed per year at the state level. So if we want to spend more on the operating side of the town level, you will be looking at doing some overrides. The schools are in the same boat and that message was communicated to them a week and a half ago. Going to be a tough year from the operating budget perspective.

One the free cash side, he believes we have about $1.33 million for free cash and their working assumption is that they are going to try to address some of the capital improvement items that are needed at the elementary school. Number one is the roof and after that they need to decide where they want to spend their free cash. Matt stated he will have that report on the school roof this week and that will hopefully give them some good answers on numbers for that. Karen put it into perspective and stated that with everyone’s requests in the budget, we have about $1.3 million in asks from the town side and $1.3 million in asks from the school side. The operating budget estimate of $1.2 million is pretty set, and the new growth may change but they estimate it to be around $550,000. The apartment complex is not fully assessed at this point and that could knock off a little bit more money available from the new growth figure, but they believe $600,000 is a good starting point. Ninotchka pulled the numbers together for FinCom.

If an override were to occur, it would have to be voted in at town meeting to get it put on the ballot. Then it has to be voted through on the ballot. The approval of the override is at the ballot, the selectmen would set it as a ballot question. The information/text must be sent to the clerk 35 days prior so she can print it on the ballot. The warrant doesn’t necessarily list prop two and a half override because the motion would be to approve the budget contingent upon approval of proposition two and a half override at a ballot election, that would be the motion, not necessarily on the warrant article. It’s also possible to do separate overrides with the town and school. Matt added that if we can avoid that on the town side, we would like to do that.

Potential ideas for prop two and a half:

* Regional Dispatch: Do people want to keep it local; they could consider funding that as a prop two and a half override.
  + - Right now, if you go regional dispatch, there’s three years of grants opportunities from the state that are basically zero costs to us, other than having a person in the police department to answer questions when people walk in.
      * That would take $500,00 out of the budget. FinComs thought on this was if they all vote on that and agree that we recommend we take it out of the budget and if the town wants it, then it has to be an override.
* Town Hall Hours

The Finance Committee has two more weeks of meetings with Department heads. The Board and FinCom may hold a separate meeting to have more time to discuss the budget.

Matt asked if the school has submitted or will be submitting their letter of interest to the school building authority, as he believes its due Friday.

**Vote to open the Annual Town Meeting Warrant:**

*Seth Ridinger made a motion to approve the Annual Town Meeting warrant, Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**PACE Discussion continued:**

The Board of Selectmen previously discussed gathering more information on the program as well as reaching out to developers/larger buildings in town and gathering additional research. This discussion has been moved to the March 11th meeting.

**Boylston American Legion Post: Wreaths Across America Discussion and request for assistance: Warren Leach**

Warren Leach came before the board to discuss Wreaths Across America. He stated the Legion doesn’t sell anything, so there is no real way for them to generate funds. They have a raffle at the Memorial Day parade but that is basically the only way they can raise funds. They have about $900 in their account currently and have a $700 bill due soon for a program they have been in for forty years and do not want to stop it. They can finance that, but can’t finance other items that they are looking at. They are involved in the Memorial Day parade that doesn’t cost the town or the Legion everything besides want is already given from the town.

*Wreaths Across America*

The Legion feels like its an interesting program and the town would be favorable towards it, but financially, they can’t afford it. They are looking to see if they can incorporate something within the Memorial Day fund and have it cover Wreaths Across America. They do not want to take money away from that fund but would like money to be added to it.

Brian Pierce, 49 Hotel Road, President of IBW Local 104, power lineman. Being president, they do a lot of 503© donations and one of his goals was to honor the Browns Wreaths Across America. He has asked his board if they would support Wreaths Across America in Boylston. The fundraising normally starts in January. The total cost for 660 wreaths is $10,000. By Boylston putting two different cemeteries on the map for Wreaths Across America, they pick up a third of the cost so we would pay $6,600. There are a lot of logistics to this, and they are wondering if the town would okay them to continue it and help finance it. Brian stated his local usually gives Norton $1,500 so they would also be willing to give Boylston $1,500 towards the expenses. Boylston would be looking at $5,000. Matt responded that it’s going to be a tough year around and may be a tough sell at the town meeting, however he feels they can raise the $5,500 in donations through businesses on route 140. Town Counsel mentioned that there could be two ways to do it: Private organization that can solicit for donations a lot easier than the government can. It’s highly regulated; a gift account must be set up. Highway Superintendent, Steve Mero stated it’s not a walk in the park and someone needs to organize the whole event. There has to be a head liaison that is going to do the office part of it. His guys volunteered their time to help out last year. Matt added that he would be happy to make those introductions to the business on route 140 to collect donations but doesn’t believe increasing the budget this year is something that will be able to happen. They will circle back with Matt regarding when they would like to set up meetings with businesses. The American Legion would hold the funds.

**Discussion and possible vote on sponsoring an ATM 2024 warrant article to repeal Senior Residential Development bylaw:**

Seth stated this bylaw was created about six years ago and it has led to some very thickly settled development. Residents have not been very pleased with this style of development in town and those developments have been the source of three lawsuits in town. Seth suggested temporarily repealing it, reexamine that bylaw, and decide if it’s something we want to revise and put back on the books – revise it and put it back on the books. It would give residents time to review it and determine what aspects we think are important moving forward. Then, there are no more of these developments in the meantime, and we can reexamine it and move forward.

Paul stated he is open to having that discussion. The Planning Board was planning to have a discussion about making some changes to the existing bylaw based on the two projects that have improved under the bylaw. Paul has started to look at language to make some tweaks to the existing bylaw. Paul advised the board it would take longer than a month to analyze those details more fully. Paul asked if it was possible to do a moratorium. Town Counsel Stephen Madaus stated, it would be a moratorium; it would be a bylaw amendment that we would add to the SRD, say no special permits shall be issued for the period of the next 12 months, or 24 months, giving the town time to study revisions that would be required. Then no one could get a special permit under that period. Moratoriums are permissible if you have a legitimate study of issues you’ve identified, which I think we have identified with the SRD. It would give the Town Planner and the Planning Board time to consider what revisions would be appropriate to make it a better bylaw. Discussion continued on a moratorium. Resident Gerry Quam asked what the town really wants, more housing for families, or more housing for seniors. Paul will intend to discuss it with the Planning Board at their next meeting and suggested having something in writing from the Selectboard saying that you are recommending a moratorium that needs to be studied further.

Seth stated he would like the Board of Selectmen to sponsor this article. Matt stated based on the conversation tonight, he would support a moratorium but added that he is uncomfortable with the Selectmen putting a zoning article on the warrant without the support of the Planning board. Seth stated he is 100% comfortable with sponsoring a moratorium on that bylaw. The board will discuss this topic at the next meeting when a full board is available. Paul will communicate to the Planning Board that the Board of Selectmen are talking about either repealing or putting a two-year moratorium on this and are going to discuss it at their next meeting, and if they vote in favor of those options, then you can expect a formal letter to schedule a public hearing. If the BoS decides to not move forward, that is the end of it.

**Discussion on funding Hillside Master Plan:**

Seth believes that Paul was looking at different ways to help fund the towns matching portion of the Master Plan. Paul responded that we would be looking for around $75,000 for a project worth doing a more dedicated study. His intent would be for the town to apply for the One Stop program this year. He would propose to reallocate the $22,000 that was set aside for the Planning Board Master Plan process; that ultimately, they did not use all those funds because they received some additional grant funding. Paul would propose to reallocate those funds towards the Hillside Master Plan, which would be a significant match for a $75,000 project.

Many communities have language in their enabling bylaws for revolving funds that can pay for plans and studies. The way our current bylaw is written, it only says it allowed for applications that are being processed right now, and Paul would change it to say, for current applications and implementation of the Boylston Master Plan, or some words to that effect.

Discussion continued on how much money would go towards the match for the grant. Reframing the language and putting some skin in the game may be the change they need to get this grant approved. Stephen and Paul will work together on the wording, and Seth asked them to make sure it was all together prior to the warrant closing.

**Review/Approve one day liquor license request: Knights of Columbus Event 03/09/2024 – St. Mary of the Hills 5:30 PM – 8:00 PM and to waive the fee:**

*Seth Ridinger made a motion to authorize the Knights of Columbus Event 03/09/2024 – St. Mary of the Hills 5:30 PM – 8:00 PM and to waive the fee, Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Vote to become a PACE Community:** Moved to the March 11th meeting

**Vote to approve and sign Highway Superintendents Contract:**

*Seth Ridinger made a motion to approve and sign the Highway Superintendents contract that was presented to the Board, Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor.*

Steve asked the board to confirm how they would like his overtime hours submitted. Seth suggested submitting it normally in payroll. Matt stated that when Steve gets close to hitting his general overtime budget, to give the board a heads up. The board congratulated Steve on his contract.

**Vote to approve OPEB financial policy:**

Seth mentioned that Boylston as a town is hundreds of thousands of dollars below where we should be with OPEB. The Financial Policy Committee is unanimously in favor of it and the chair of the Finance Committee was also in favor of it. To be clear, the escalator of $5,000 annually, once it reaches $50,000, it stops.

*Seth Ridinger made a motion to approve the OPEB financial policy as presented, Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Vote to appoint Special Town Counsel for Clinton Street project: Adam Costa:**

*Seth Ridinger made a motion to appoint Special Town Counsel, Adam Costa, to oversee any impact that the Clinton Street project in Shrewsbury may have on Boylston, Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor.*

*Traffic Study:*

Seth questioned if there was anything that could be done to Route 140/70 to prevent the truck traffic and will discuss with Adam Costa when he is before the board. Town Counsel, Stephen Madaus represented Shrewsbury in this matter.

1. Selectmen’s Miscellaneous: (topics submitted by individual Board members)

Matt suggested that we should investigate different ways towns generate finances. Tony Z had previously discussed battery back up storage that the town of Sterling looked into.

*At 8:12 PM, Seth Ridinger made a motion to adjourn, Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor. Matt: Yes and Seth: Yes*

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Kennedy, Assistant to the Board of Selectmen

**Meeting Materials** On File in The Board of Selectmen’s Office

Agenda

Sign In Sheet

Knights of Columbus Event Request – 03/09/24

American Legion Post 0398 Documents – Wreaths Across America

Highway Superintendents Contract

Building Inspectors Report

Town Planners Report

01/29/24 Meeting Minutes

OPEB Financial Policy document