

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES –February 12, 2024

7:00 p.m. - Chair's Introduction to Remote Meeting

Chair Cohen read the current remote meeting notice and confirmed the following Select Board members and others could hear and be heard.

Select Board (SB)

Mitch Cohen, Chair

Kristen Wixted, Vice Chair

Laura Ziton, Clerk

Julianne Hirsh

Lisa Maselli

Others

Timothy McInerney, Town Administrator

Diane Wackell, Assistant Town Administrator

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Cohen invited comments from the public.

Ginny Lemmerman – 176 Howard Street: member of Sustainable Northborough. The committee is trying to organize a series of environmentally-related educational walks and talks in April and Ms. Lemmerman would like to know who they should contact to coordinate this with. She noted that she had sent a list of these walks to the Chair. The Chair suggested that she reach out to the Town Administrator. Ms. Lemmerman also had questions regarding the status of the EPA report on 432 Whitney Street. The Town Administrator will provide an update under his report.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

December 18, 2023 – Wixted moved the Board vote to approve the meeting minutes as presented; Ziton seconded the motion. The roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	“aye”	Maselli	“aye”
Wixted	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”
Ziton	“aye”		

January 8, 2024 – Postponed

MUNICIPAL ELECTRIC AGGREGATION PROGRAM PRESENTATION

Marlana Patton and Paul Gromer with MassPowerChoice, the Town's Aggregation Consulting Company were present for this discussion. Ms. Patton stated that this presentation will kickoff a 30-day public comment period. The period will be open to accept comments starting tomorrow until March 13, 2024.

In summary, Northborough Power Choice program is an electricity aggregation program offered by the Town of Northborough. Key Features will include:

Price Stability and Competitive Pricing

The Town will seek to provide greater stability when compared with the electric distribution company's Basic Service. The Town will also seek to provide competitive prices and possible cost savings, but savings cannot be guaranteed.

Customer Choice

The Town will offer program options, giving customers a choice in their electricity supply.

All retail electricity customers within the town will have the right to participate in the program. Eligible customers will be enrolled automatically unless they opt out. All customers have the right to leave the program and return to electric distribution company's basic service or enroll with another competitive supplier at any time with no penalty or fee.

Products to be offered include:

1. Northborough Economy – This will have the state-required minimum amount of renewable energy content.
2. Northborough Standard – This option will have more renewable energy content than Northborough Economy.
3. Northborough Green – This option will have 100% renewable energy content, including both the state-required renewable and additional renewable energy added by the Town.

National Grid will still deliver electricity. They will continue to send bills. Any discounts will still be applied (i.e. low income discount). If you have National Grid's basic service, you will be eligible for automatic enrollment in the program. You will be notified, but you will have the opportunity to opt out if you wish.

Review of Next Steps:

- Aggregation plan development & public review stage (we are in this process now)
 - Regulatory review of aggregation plan (currently a 12-month process)
 - Northborough chooses an electricity supplier & signs an electricity supply contract
 - Public education & outreach efforts
- Program launch

Public Comment:

Michael Tietjen, 30 Auger Ave – would prefer the lowest option as the default

Dick Swee, 230 Brewer Street – major objective is to come up with the lowest prices for electricity so would prefer the default be the cheapest option

Jeanne Cahill, 1 Thayer Street – new renewable sources are coming on cheaper so this may actually be in our price interest.

Following a discussion of the options and public comment, the Board, by consensus chose to go with the 3 options, with the lowest set as the default, and to review after receiving public comments.

FIRE CHIEF DAVID PARENTI – REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF AMBULANCE FEE ADJUSTMENTS

The Chief indicated that the ambulance fees have not been changed since 2020. In December of last year, he did a review of the current rates and provided a memo to the Board with his recommendations, which was to increase the fees based on an increase of 4.78% Medicare Medicaid rates. Based on the Chief's analysis, it is his recommendation that Select Board increase the Ambulance fees by 4.76% to stay consistent with the previous policy decision and to increase the mileage charge from \$35.00 per mile to \$36.00 per mile.

Wixted moved the Board vote to increase the ambulance fees effective March 1, 2024 as presented by Fire Chief Parenti and further outlined in a memorandum dated January 19, 2024 as follows:

BLS Emergency Base Rate	From \$1,398 to \$1,465
ALS Non-Emergency Base Rate	From \$1,048 to \$1,098
ALS-1 Emergency Base Rate	From \$1,660 to \$1,739
ALS-2 Emergency Base Rate	From \$2,402 to \$2,517
Mileage	From \$ 35 to \$ 36

Ziton seconded the motion. The roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	“aye”	Maselli	“aye”
Wixted	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”
Ziton	“aye”		

TOWN CLERK ANDREW DOWD – REQUEST FOR ARPA FUNDING FOR ELECTRONIC VOTING DEVICES FOR TOWN MEETING

Hirsh moved the Board vote to approve the use of ARPA funds in the amount of \$16,425 for the purchase of an electronic voting system for use at Town Meetings, and for expenditure of such sum by the Town Clerk pursuant to Massachusetts General Law Chapter 44, Section 53A. Wixted seconded the motion. The roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	“aye”	Maselli	“aye”
Wixted	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”
Ziton	“aye”		

DISCUSSION REGARDING DUTIES OF MUNICIPAL CODE & BYLAW COMMITTEE

Also present for this discussion was Megan Robbins, a member of the Municipal Code & Bylaw Committee.

Chair Cohen provided some background regarding the traditional way the Committee has functioned in the past. They would meet once a year prior to the Annual Town Meeting and they would review the bylaw changes and provide their recommendations for Town Meeting. At Town Meeting, the Moderator would ask the Committee for their recommendations on these articles.

The current Town Meeting warrant has no new General Bylaws, and as such, would not need to anticipate the Municipal Code & Bylaw Committee needing to meet prior to the upcoming Town Meeting.

After discussion, the Select Board set the following policy direction for the Municipal Code and Bylaw Committee subject to Town Counsel review:

The Municipal Code and Bylaw Committee shall advise Town Meeting on new General Bylaws. The Committee shall not advise on amendments to existing General Bylaws, new Zoning Bylaws, nor amendments to existing Zoning Bylaws.

The Board also made note of other duties of the Municipal Code and Bylaw Committee, such as to organize the Municipal Code and to annually report recommendations for future legislation to the Board.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR TIMOTHY MCINERNEY – REQUEST FOR ARPA FUNDING FOR STREETLIGHT CONVERSION PROJECT

Mr. McInerney referred to his memo to the board regarding a streetlight proposal and cost reduction strategies to convert streetlights to LED, offering potential cost savings for the community. The estimated return on investment is less than 2 1/2 years, and considering recent increases in electricity costs for streetlights, this project could provide significant long-term savings. Mr. McInerney was hoping to seek ARPA funding to reduce the ongoing operational cost that impacts the budget annually.

Maselli moved the Board vote to approve the use of ARPA funds in the amount of \$376,015 for the purpose of upgrading streetlights to LED as a cost reduction strategy and for expenditure of such sum by the Town Administrator pursuant to Massachusetts General Law Chapter 44, Section 53A.; Hirsh seconded the motion. The roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	“aye”	Maselli	“aye”
Wixted	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”
Ziton	“aye”		

REVIEW AND CONSIDERATION OF SELECT BOARD POLICY REGARDING MEETING MINUTES

The Town Administrator presented the Board with a draft policy regarding meeting minutes. This was an attempt to standardize the format and process for creating meeting minutes for the various boards and committees. The proposal aims to streamline the process, improve transparency, and reduce staff workload involved in documenting meetings.

Board members expressed support for the initiative. However, they had some concerns and the consensus was to solicit feedback from other boards and committees that would be affected by this policy to ensure it meets their needs. The discussion was to be continued after feedback was received.

VOTE TO AUTHORIZE SUBMISSION OF THE ACCELERATED REPAIR PROGRAM (ARP) STATEMENT OF INTEREST (SOI) FOR THE MARION E. ZEH SCHOOL ROOF PROJECT

Mr. McInerney referred the Board to a memo in the packet from School Superintendent Greg Martineau. The Massachusetts Building Authority’s (MSBA) grant program is a non-entitlement, competitive program. Its grants are distributed by the MSBA Board of Directors, based on need and urgency. The MSBA completes a review of available information regarding all districts that submit a Statement of Interest (SOI) for the Accelerated Repair Program (ARP) each year.

Wixted moved the Board vote to authorize the School Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated during the month of February in 2024, for the Marion E. Zeh Elementary School located at 33 Howard Street which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future for replacement of the EPDM and shingled roofing system under Priority #5 and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application,

the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the Town of Northborough to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority; Ziton seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	“aye”	Maselli	“aye”
Wixted	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”
Ziton	“aye”		

EXECUTION OF ELECTION WARRANT FOR THE MARCH 5, 2024 PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES

Hirsh moved the Board vote to execute the Election Warrant for the March 5, 2024 Presidential Primaries; Wixted seconded the motion; The roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	“aye”	Maselli	“aye”
Wixted	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”
Ziton	“aye”		

REPORTS

Laura Ziton

- Attended the Community Preservation Committee meeting where they discussed 432 Whitney Street in great detail
- Highlighted one of the police department’s website posts on a grandparent’s scam and urged anyone who has experienced this to contact the police department before doing anything.
- Attended kindness week kickoff by the Community Affairs Committee.
- Acknowledged the Dull Men’s Club’s 10th Anniversary on February 2st at the Senior Center

Julianne Hirsh

- Referenced correspondence from Mr. Swee regarding changing the cable committee to advisory committee to update their tasks and referenced projects for them to do. Chair Cohen responded by saying that we have a cable department which handles the projects.

Lisa Maselli

- Extend condolences to Adrienne Cost family. Council of Aging Vice Chair, calling hours Wed 14th from 10:00 – 11:45 am at Hays Funeral Home.
- Attended Mass Legacy Tree presentation by the Garden Club.
- Discussed several issues where she would like to meet with the Town Planner and Town Administrator

Kristen Wixted

- Acknowledged and congratulated the Police Department on receiving their 7th Accreditation Award
- Noted and thanked that the Fire Department and Police Department for submitting monthly reports to the Board
- Mentioned the Fire Department Building Committee has a webpage and asked if the Town Offices Feasibility Study Committee could also have a page.

Mitch Cohen

- Attended the Mass IT CISO Council remote meeting on cyber security threats to municipalities.
- Fire Station design phase is complete, next meeting is Wednesday
- Town Library has won an award for the 7th highest in the state for program attendance.
- Thanked Isabella Caruso for updating the odor complaint form on the website.
- Attended Mass Legacy Tree presentation by the Garden Club.
- Asked DPW and safety officials to be safe in the storm tomorrow.

Town Administrator Report

- We have an appraiser for 432 Whitney Street – James Daly- Massachusetts Commercial Real Estate Appraiser | Daly Appraisal Services
- As a reminder, if appraisal does not come in at \$1.7 million- we will have to seek delta from other sources if TM approves purchase.
- Survey on web and in the community for FYS- this is part of study CMRPC is doing for Health and Human Services Health and Human Services Survey | Northborough MA.
- Power choice info is on website Northborough Power Choice | Northborough MA.
- Many updates to web site- chipping away it.
- Green communities grant for COA and Library for:
 - \$20,212, Northborough Senior Center — Duct Air Sealing
 - \$72,867, Northborough Free Library — Weatherization and insulation
 - \$29,115, Northborough Senior Center — Weatherization and insulation
- Called Jeff Nutting about a goal setting retreat for the SB- waiting on return call.
- Toured white cliffs with prospect.

EXECUTION OF CEMETERY DEED 1183

Maselli moved the Board vote to execute Cemetery Deed 1183; Wixted seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	“aye”	Maselli	“aye”
Wixted	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”
Ziton	“aye”		

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT

SB Chair Cohen invited comments from the public. There were none.

ADJOURNMENT

Hirsh moved the Board vote to adjourn; Wixted seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	“aye”	Maselli	“aye”
Wixted	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”
Ziton	“aye”		

The meeting adjourned at 10:57 pm.

A recording of this meeting is available at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lS_PiJ1qcM&list=PL2mWMhvXDP2jbO2c8kLs09TR8zry9oUyV&index=3

Respectfully submitted,

Lynda LePoer
Executive Assistant to the
Board of Selectmen

Documents used during meeting:

1. February 12, 2024 Meeting Agenda
2. Meeting Minutes December 18, 2023
3. Municipal Aggregation program presentation
4. Memo from Fire Chief
5. Memo from Town Clerk
6. Memo from Town Administrator
7. Draft minutes policy
8. Election warrant
9. School ARP SOI document
10. Cemetery Deed 1183