

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES – March 27, 2023**

6:15 p.m. - Chair's Introduction to Remote Meeting

Chair Cohen stated that this Open Meeting of the Board of Selectmen was being conducted remotely consistent with the July 16, 2022 Act Relative to Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency and that all members of the Board of Selectmen are allowed and encouraged to participate remotely.

Chair Cohen noted that the Order allows public bodies to meet entirely remotely so long as reasonable public access is afforded so that the public can follow along with the deliberations of the meeting. He added that ensuring public access does not ensure public participation unless such participation is required by law. Chair Cohen noted that this meeting will allow for Public Comment throughout the agenda. He indicated the various ways that the public may view or participate in this meeting as listed on the posted agenda.

Chair Cohen confirmed that the following members and persons anticipated on the agenda were remotely present and could be heard.

Board of Selectmen

Mitch Cohen
Julianne Hirsh
Kristen Wixted
Jason Perreault
T. Scott Rogers

Others

John Coderre, Town Administrator
Becca Meekins, Assistant Town Administrator
David Parenti, Fire Chief
William Lyver, Police Chief
Scott Charpentier, DPW Director

Any votes taken this evening will be by roll call.

Chair Cohen announced that the Board will enter into Executive Session and will return to the open meeting at 7:00 p.m.

6:20 p.m. – EXECUTIVE SESSION

Selectman Perreault moved the Board vote to enter into Executive Session pursuant to M.G.L., Chapter 30A, Section 21, Subsection 3 (collective bargaining successor contract MOA with Sergeants Union); (litigation update regarding SA Farms); and Subsection 2 (to conduct strategy sessions and/or contract negotiations with the Assistant Town Administrator for temporary Interim Town Administrator services) due to the Chair's determination that a discussion regarding these matters in an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the Board. Selectman Hirsh seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Perreault	“aye”	Hirsh	“aye”
Rogers	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”
Wixted	“aye”		

7:00 p.m. – OPEN MEETING

PROCLAMATION FOR TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

Members of the Board read aloud a proclamation presented to Mr. Coderre in recognition of his 20 years of service to the Town of Northborough as both Assistant Town Administrator and Town Administrator.

Selectman Wixted moved the Board vote to approve the proclamation as presented to Mr. Coderre; Selectman Hirsh seconded the motion; all members voted in favor.

Mr. Coderre thanked the Select Board, volunteers on the various Boards and Committees and most importantly the staff for their support.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MARCH 13, 2023 MEETING

Selectman Wixted moved the Board vote to approve the March 13, 2023 meeting minutes as presented; Selectman Rogers seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Perreault	“aye”	Hirsh	“aye”
Rogers	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”
Wixted	“aye”		

JOINT PUBLIC HEARING

Board of Selectmen and Appropriations Committee on FY2024 Proposed Budget

Appropriations Committee Chair Tim Kaelin called the meeting of the Appropriations Committee to order. Appropriations Committee members George Brenckle, Anthony Poteete and Rick Nieber were also present.

Mr. Coderre provided an overview of the FY2024 Budget, including the following:

FY2024 Revenue Assumptions

- Tax Receipts increase 5.98%, or \$3.44 million
- Local Receipts reduced to \$4 million
- State Aid estimated at \$5.87 million

FY2024 State Aid Forecast

- State Revenue Consensus Hearing agreed on an estimated revenue increase of 1.6%
- Governor’s FY2024 Budget includes 2% increase for Northborough
- Chapter 70 Education Aid represents 72% of State Aid
- Unrestricted General Government Aid represents only 22% of State Aid

Mr. Coderre reported that the overall FY2024 General Fund budget increase includes the proposed budgets for the key departments as follows:

- Northborough K-8 Schools increase \$1,308,274 or 4.9% to \$28,001,227
- General Government (Town) increases \$974,569, or 3.98% to \$25,476,532
- Assabet Valley Vocational HS combined Operating Assessment and debt service is an overall increase \$16,276, or 1.27% to \$1,301,581
- ARHS combined Operating Assessment and Debt Service increases \$585,973 or 4.34% to \$14,072,539

Mr. Coderre indicated that the General Government highlights of the FY2024 budget include the following:

- All FY2024 Collective Bargaining Agreements are settled with 2% COLAs
- Additional Police Officer budgeted \$95,000 due to unexpected return of officer on leave
- New Deputy Fire Chief budgeted \$117,000
- MIS/GIS increase of \$45,000 cyber security upgrades
- New DPW Facilities Division created to centralize building maintenance costs
- Recreation back to 100% self-sufficiency with program fees
- Family & Youth Services includes \$16,500 for INTERFACE mental health referral service to provide counseling to anyone in need
- Health Insurance Budget increases 0%
- Return of \$550,000 appropriation into the OPEB Trust Fund from taxes
- Pavement Management Plan requires minimum of \$1.1 million annually
- Sidewalk Management Report: Over \$2.1 million in backlog repairs for existing sidewalks; requires minimum annual contribution of \$200,000-\$300,000 to maintain or improve overall existing rating of 72; the Complete Streets Prioritization Plan Grant is underway

Mr. Coderre briefly reviewed the FY2024 capital projects, as well as the significant capital projects coming up over the next couple of years, including the new Fire Station, location of Town Offices and renovations to the Peaslee Elementary School.

Mr. Coderre noted that the FY2024 estimated tax impact is \$536 (6.25%) on an average single-family home value of \$608,789. The tax impact is based on a 5% estimated increase in FY2023 on the single-family home value of \$579,799. He added that the tax impact could be less once more detail regarding final State Aid is known.

Following Mr. Coderre's presentation, Selectman Rogers asked when the Select Board will consider the allocation of the remaining ARPA funds. In response to a question from Selectman Wixted, Mr. Coderre further explained the need to budget \$95,000 due to an unexpected return of a Police Officer who has been on leave. Selectman Perreault added that as the longest-serving member of the Select Board, the inclusion of the Deputy Fire Chief position is of no surprise to him.

Public comments were heard from the following:

Lisa Maselli of 13 Maple Street suggested that the \$100,000 included in the FY2024 budget for the Be Well initiative instead be used to help fund the Deputy Fire Chief position. She also asked if there was a plan in place to take care of the needed repairs to the 4 West Main Street building once the reacquisition takes place.

School Superintendent Greg Martineau noted that there is no additional tax impact in FY2024 in regard to the potential passing of the ARHS Athletix Complex.

Selectman Perreault moved the Board vote to close the Joint Public Hearing on the FY2024 Proposed Budget; Selectman Rogers seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Perreault	“aye”	Hirsh	“aye”
Rogers	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”
Wixted	“aye”		

PUBLIC HEARING

To consider an application to transfer the Wine & Malt Package Store License from Kilti, Inc. d/b/a Paired, Poured & Plated to Gather Provisions LLC for premises located at 290 West Main Street, Unit 8.

Erin Anderson, the owner and chef of Gather Provisions was present. She informed the Board that Gather Provisions is a cafe and wine shop featuring a one stop shop for lunches, prepared foods, including easy dinners and charcuterie boards and retail sales of beer and wine.

Detective Sergeant Brian Griffin indicated that Ms. Anderson is TIPS certified. He added that he has conducted a background check and has no concerns to report as to the suitability and character of Ms. Anderson.

Selectman Rogers moved the Board vote to close the public hearing; Selectman Hirsh seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Perreault	“aye”	Hirsh	“aye”
Rogers	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”
Wixted	“aye”		

Selectman Hirsh moved the Board vote to approve the application as submitted by Gather Provisions LLC to transfer the Wine & Malt Package Store License from Kilti, Inc. d/b/a Paired, Poured & Plated to Gather Provisions LLC for premises located at 290 West Main Street, Unit 8 and to approve the application for a Common Victualler License with the condition that the applicant receive satisfactory inspections from the Fire, Building and Health Departments. Selectman Rogers seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Perreault	“aye”	Hirsh	“aye”
Rogers	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”
Wixted	“aye”		

CHARTER COMMUNICATIONS – APPROVAL OF CABLE LICENSE RENEWAL

Attorney William Hewig and Cable Access Director Kathy Dalgliesh were present. Attorney Hewig reviewed the highlights of the cable license renewal as follows:

- Includes income from home shopping and advertising revenues that is generally considered to increase the total value of gross revenues by approximately .5%.
- The term of License Renewal is 10 years, the maximum available for a renewal license.
- Charter will provide CGL insurance in the amount of \$1M per occurrence, \$2M aggregate; Auto Liability coverage in the amount of \$1M, and Workers’ Comp coverage in the statutory amount.
- Charter will carry a performance bond in the amount of \$10,000, which will include coverage for breaches of the renewal license.

- Charter will maintain toll free customer service call-in lines, and will comply with the FCC Customer Service Standards and the Massachusetts Billing and Business Practice standards.
- Charter will cable all areas in town with densities of 20 homes per mile, and up to a 150 foot setback.
- Charter will continue to provide 3 SD PEG Access channels to the town, and will, upon request, substitute one SD PEG channel for an HD channel, 270 days following written request from the town.
- Charter will give the town an annual operating grant of 5% of its GAR of cable sales within the town and a capital grant in the total amount of \$64,400, in ten annual instalments of \$6,440.
- The town may conduct a public hearing, following written notice for any claim of license violation. If, following the hearing, the Issuing Authority determines that an ongoing and unexcused violation continues, it may pursue remedies of seeking legal action, filing a claim against Charter's bond, or seeking termination.
- Charter will continue to provide complimentary Expanded Basic service to 10 public buildings and schools.

Attorney Hewig indicated that the proposal meets the town's future community cable-related needs as established during the ascertainment period, and recommended that it be approved and executed.

In response to a question, Ms. Dalgliesh explained the trend in cable subscriber count and its impact on revenues. She indicated that in the last five years, although Charter has lost 438 subscribers and Verizon has lost 1310 subscribers, the revenues have remained consistent for both companies.

Chair Cohen thanked Attorney Hewig and Ms. Dalgliesh for their efforts in bringing this license renewal forward.

Selectman Rogers moved the Board vote to approve the 10-year Cable License renewal between the Town and Spectrum Northeast LLC d/b/a Time Warner Cable Northeast LLC in Massachusetts, an indirect subsidiary of Charter Communications, Inc., effective March 13, 2023 as presented; Selectman Perreault seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Perreault	"aye"	Hirsh	"aye"
Rogers	"aye"	Cohen	"aye"
Wixted	"aye"		

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE CHAIR JOHN CAMPBELL

Presentation on CPC Warrant Articles.

Mr. Campbell reviewed the Community Preservation Act (CPA) fund allocations from FY2006 – FY2023. He reported that the Town has exceeded \$3 million in State matching funds since the Town began collecting revenue and started receiving State matching funds in FY2007.

Mr. Campbell indicated that should all of the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) recommendations be approved at Town Meeting, the amount unallocated from projected new revenue would be \$0 and the amount remaining in the Unreserved Fund would be \$591,653. The Affordable Housing Reserve Fund would increase to \$279,863 for a total of reserves of over \$800,000. He reviewed the following projects:

CPC Projects – Approved

White Cliffs Bond Payment (\$188,000): The Town has a prospective partner in Metrowest Collaborative who has proposed to invest more than 10 times the original purchase price to not only renovate and restore the historic mansion but also create a sustainable housing community around it and the revenues to maintain the buildings and the grounds. The contribution requested from the Town is affordable through the CPA reserves. The project conforms to CPA guidelines and serves the goals of Northborough's Master Plan to preserve historic resources as community centers and create more affordable housing within walking distance to businesses and services. The CPC urges the Select Board to consider the proposal in the context of the overall Master Plan and Downtown Revitalization and to allow time for the applicant and Town staff to address concerns and areas for compromise.

Northborough Dog Park (\$347,500): Phase 1 of this project for the design study was approved at last year's Town Meeting. The CPC believes this application for the construction phase is a top priority to bring to Town Meeting 2023. This project also covers the minimum 10% allocation required for open space and recreation. The CPC voted 7-0 to fund this from new revenue.

Construction of ADA Accessible Trail at Senior Center (\$370,000): Phase 1 of this project for the design study was approved at last year's Town Meeting. The CPC believes this application for the construction phase is a top priority to bring to Town Meeting 2023. The CPC voted 7-0 to fund this with \$119,000 from new revenue and \$251,000 from the Unreserved fund.

Affordable Housing Reserve Fund (\$77,000): Since there is no other application this year for Affordable Housing, the CPC voted 7-0 to allocate the required minimum of 10% of new revenue toward the Affordable Housing Reserve Fund.

Library Historic Marker (\$5,060): The CPC feels that historic markers contribute to enhancing the community and support the goals in the Master Plan and Historic Preservation Plan at a relatively low cost. The CPC voted 5-2 to fund this from the Unreserved Fund.

CPA Administrative Expenses Account (\$38,500): The CPC may allocate up to 5% of new revenue to the administrative account for expenses such as legal fees, appraisals and consultant fees related to CPA projects. Unused amounts from a given year go back to the CPA Unreserved fund. The CPC voted 7-0 to allocate 5% of the projected \$770,000 new revenue.

CPC Projects – Denied

First Parish Church Steeple Repairs (\$200,000): The scope of work and cost estimates for this project are not fully defined at this time, and that there is not the same urgency to fund the project this year compared to several other projects and obligations. The CPC voted 7-0 to deny funding for this application.

Window Restoration and Preservation of Historical Society Building (\$71,300): There is not the same urgency to fund this project this year compared to several other projects and obligations. The CPC voted 7-0 to deny funding for this application.

Funding the Historic Reserves Account (\$350,000): The CPC feels it is wise to keep reserves in the Unreserved Fund at this time rather than allocating to just one fund. The CPC voted 7-0 to deny this application.

ARHS Athletic Complex Project – Tennis Court Restorations (\$352,701): The CPC feels that there is not the same level of urgency and community support to fund the project compared to several other projects and obligations. It was also compared to the CPC's goal of maintaining adequate reserves for the potential needs for White Cliffs and the Downtown Revitalization project. The CPC voted 7-0 to deny funding for this application.

Conservation Fund (\$77,000): The CPC feels it is wise to keep reserves in the Unreserved Fund at this time rather than allocating to just one fund. In addition, the Conservation Fund currently has a balance of approx. \$664,000 from CPA funds approved at prior Town Meetings. Therefore, the CPC voted 7-0 to deny this application.

CPC Project – Withdrawn

Aqueduct Multi Use Trail Feasibility Study (\$100,000): A recent communication from the Mass. Water Resources Authority states that they will not allow pavement or stone dust surface improvements to the aqueduct at this time. Since the surface improvements are a major element of proposed trail design study, the applicants withdrew this application.

Mr. Campbell answered questions by members of the Board and from the following residents under public comment relating to the use of CPC funds:

Laura Ziton – 17 Franklin Circle
Lisa Maselli – 13 Maple Street
Henry Squillante – 72 Crestwood Drive

Chair Cohen thanked Mr. Campbell for tonight's presentation and to the CPC for their continued efforts to benefit the community.

SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT GREG MARTINEAU

Approval of Peaslee School Statement of Interest (SOI) to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA).

School Superintendent Greg Martineau was present to request the Board's approval of a Peaslee School SOI to the MSBA. He indicated that the School Committee approved submitting the Peaslee School SOI. The Select Board must also approve the SOI as part of the submission.

Superintendent Martineau noted that submitting an SOI to the MSBA does not commit the Town of Northborough or the School District to move forward with a project; instead, it gets the Town in the queue to be reviewed and considered by the MSBA Board. He added that it can take several years before a community is invited into the eligibility phase. Typically, it is a five to seven-year process from the eligibility phase to a completed project. The SOI needs to be submitted by April 15, 2023.

Members of the Board expressed their support of the Peaslee School SOI submission.

Selectman Wixted moved the Board vote to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated February 2023 for the Marguerite E. Peaslee Elementary School located at 31 Maple Street, Northborough, MA,

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. The School District identified priority #5 and priority #7 as the rationale for this statement of interest. This determination supports the modernization and programming needs; further, the Select Board 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; Selectman Rogers seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Perreault	“aye”	Hirsh	“aye”
Rogers	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”
Wixted	“aye”		

APPROVAL OF TOWN ADMINISTRATOR’S APPOINTMENTS OF ASHLEY DAVIES, FRAN BAKSTRAN, AARON HUTCHINS AND LINDA BRENCKLE TO THE TOWN OFFICES FEASIBILITY STUDY COMMITTEE

Mr. Coderre noted that the Select Board created a Town Offices Feasibility Study Committee (TOFSC) to be charged with reviewing the programmatic space needs of the Town Offices operation and assessing the pros and cons of the various options, including renovation of the existing building, possible relocation or building a new facility. The Committee will take into consideration the possible sale or reuse of existing facilities and will consist of a member of the Board of Selectmen and four at-large town residents.

In addition to a Select Board representative, Mr. Coderre requested the Board’s approval of the following appointments to the TOFSC.

Town Offices Feasibility Study Committee Membership

Board of Selectmen Representative

Citizen – Ashley Davies (member of the Master Plan Implementation Committee)

Citizen – Fran Bakstran (former member of the Master Plan Steering Committee)

Citizen – Aaron Hutchins (former Select Board member and an Attorney)

Citizen – Linda Brenckle (has a background in project management)

Board members expressed concern with not seeing any of the applications that were submitted.

Selectman Hirsh moved the Board vote to postpone the approval of the Town Administrator’s appointments to the TOFSC to the Board’s next meeting in order to allow Board members an opportunity to view the submitted applications; Selectman Wixted seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Selectman Rogers stated that he understands the needs to review all applications if the appointments were decided by the Select Board. In this case the appointments are made by the Town Administrator who has the discretion to go through his own process and bring forward the best candidates for the Board’s approval. Chairman Cohen responded that he was surprised to not see any details of the four recommended applicants included in the meeting packet, adding that the

Select Board should not be in the practice of approving appointments without having the opportunity to review their applications.

As there was no further discussion, the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Perreault	“no”	Hirsh	“aye”
Rogers	“no”	Cohen	“aye”
Wixted	“aye”		

APPROVAL AND EXECUTION OF THE APRIL 24, 2023 TOWN MEETING WARRANT

Mr. Coderre noted that the Warrant as presented this evening will be reviewed by Town Counsel. He added that the complete Warrant will include motions for each article, amendments to the Personnel Bylaw, as well as the final report of the Financial Planning Committee. The report of the Appropriations Committee will be available as a handout.

George Campbell of 38 Sunset Drive indicated that he supports renovating the athletic complex at ARHS, but without artificial turf. He asked if it would be possible to add a warrant article that will allow a vote on the renovation without artificial turf? Mr. Coderre responded that the Select Board has no authority over the actions of the Regional School Committee and the warrant article relating to the ARHS Athletic Complex.

Selectman Hirsh moved the Board vote to approve and execute the April 24, 2023 Town Meeting Warrant; Selectman Rogers seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Perreault	“aye”	Hirsh	“aye”
Rogers	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”
Wixted	“aye”		

APPROVAL AND EXECUTION OF THE MAY 9, 2023 TOWN ELECTION WARRANT

Selectman Rogers moved the Board vote to approve and execute the May 9, 2023 Town Election Warrant; Selectman Perreault seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Perreault	“aye”	Hirsh	“aye”
Rogers	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”
Wixted	“aye”		

REPORTS

Jason Perreault

- Thanked the Northborough Education Foundation for hosting their annual Trivia contest fundraiser.
- Noted that the Algonquin PTO is looking for volunteers for both fundraising and the junior prom post party on Saturday, May 13th at the New England Sports Center.

Kristen Wixted

- Visited Peaslee School recently and met with a great group of kids.
- Attended a recent meeting of the Algonquin Booster Club. She is looking forward to helping with fundraising efforts along with this great group of volunteers.

- Extended best wishes to Mr. Coderre.

T. Scott Rogers

- Thanked Health Agent Kristin Black for her update on Be Well and Greater Boroughs Partnership programs. Noted that an update on these programs would be a great future Select Board agenda item to highlight the work that is being done in terms of health and wellness in our community.

Julianne Hirsh

- Thanked Town Clerk Andy Dowd for ordering the signs to promote Town Meeting.
- Noted that the Cultural Council is busy working on their annual spring programs: “Go Out Doors” and CultureFest.

Mitch Cohen

- Noted that the Fire Station Building Committee has begun to meet and will soon interview potential project managers.
- Noted that the Governor is expected to extend the ability to hold remote meetings for two more years.
- Noted that the Temporary Traffic Safety Committee continues to meet and is working on a recommendation that a permanent Traffic Safety Committee be established. Thanked DPW Director Scott Charpentier who has been tremendously helpful.
- Participated in the Northborough Education Foundation’s Trivia contest fundraiser.

John Coderre

- Extended his thanks and appreciation to everyone that he has had the pleasure of working with during his 20 years of serving the Town of Northborough.

EXECUTION OF CEMETERY DEED 1166

Selectman Perreault moved the Board vote to execute Cemetery Deed 1166; Selectman Hirsh seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Perreault	“aye”	Hirsh	“aye”
Rogers	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”
Wixted	“aye”		

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

ADJOURNMENT

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

Perreault	“aye”	Hirsh	“aye”
Rogers	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”
Wixted	“aye”		

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Diane M. Wackell
Executive Assistant to the
Board of Selectmen

Documents used during meeting:

1. March 13, 2023 Meeting Agenda
2. February 27, 2022 Meeting Minutes
3. Information packet – Legislative Priorities
4. Information packet – White Cliffs Committee Status Update
5. Information packet – Metro West Collaborative Development
6. Information packet – Mass Development’s Underutilized Properties Program
7. Memorandum – Amendment to Senior Tax Deferrals
8. Draft Town Meeting Warrant
9. Information packet – Interview Subcommittee Recommendations for Appointment