

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES – May 22, 2023

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

Julianne Hirsh, Vice Chair

Kristen Wixted, Clerk

Lisa Maselli

Laura Ziton

Others

Robert Reed, Interim Town Administrator

Rebecca Meekins, Assistant Town Administrator

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MAY 8, 2023 MEETING

SB Member Hirsh moved the Board vote to approve the May 8, 2023 meeting minutes as amended;

SB Member Wixted seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Chair

SB Member Hirsh moved the Board vote to nominate SB Member Cohen to the position of Chair;

SB Member Wixted seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

Vice Chair

SB Member Hirsh moved the Board vote to nominate SB Member Wixted to the position of Vice

Chair; SB Member Maselli seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

Clerk

SB Member Maselli moved the Board vote to nominate SB Member Ziton to the position of Clerk;

SB Member Hirsh seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

7:00PM – PUBLIC HEARING

To consider the Transfer of the Wine & Malt Package Store License from Padmavathi Mohanraju to Helen's Variety Corp d/b/a Helen's Variety for premises located at 292 Main Street.

SB Chair Cohen opened the public hearing at 7:10pm. Attorney Matthew Porter and Prakashkumar Patel were present. Mr. Patel is the owner of Helen's Variety Corp and will be the manager of record. He is also the owner of two package stores, one in Medford since 2020 and one in Lynn since last year. Mr. Patel has an extensive background in the package store industry and is TIPS certified.

Chief Lyver indicated that Detective Sergeant Brian Griffin conducted a background check and has no concerns to report as to the suitability and character of Mr. Patel.

There were no comments from the public. SB Member Hirsh closed the public hearing; SB Member Wixted seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	"aye"	Maselli	"aye"
Wixted	"aye"	Cohen	"aye"
Ziton	"aye"		

SB Member Maselli moved the Board vote to approve the application to transfer the Wine & Malt Package Store License from Padmavathi Mohanraju to Helen's Variety Corp d/b/a Helen's Variety for premises located at 292 Main Street; SB Member Wixted seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	"aye"	Maselli	"aye"
Wixted	"aye"	Cohen	"aye"
Ziton	"aye"		

WEGMANS

To consider an application as submitted by Wegmans for a One-Day Special Liquor License for multiple dates (6/21, 7/19, 8/16 & 9/20) on premises located at 9102 Shops Way.

Attorney Tyler Henseler and Wegmans Manager of Record Richard Boscia were present. The events will include beer and cider tasting, live music and outdoor games. The alcohol will be served by several breweries, with TIPS certified staff. Those that are 21 years or older will be given 8 tickets, with each ticket enabling them to obtain a 2 oz pour. Wegmans staff will monitor the service and event area.

The Police, Fire, Building and Health Departments have reviewed the application and have no concerns to report.

SB Member Wixted moved the Board vote to approve the application for a One-Day Special License as submitted by Wegmans for events to be held at 9102 Shops Way per the approved floor plan as submitted with the application. The event dates are June 21, July 19, August 16 and September 20 from 5-8pm with no rain dates.

1. The license shall include the 24-hour period immediately before and after each event in order to allow for the proper delivery and disposal of all alcoholic beverages.
2. Guests shall have identification on their person and those who are 21 years or older will be given wrist bands.
3. Proper signage posted and approved barriers installed notifying guests that alcohol must be contained in the designated area only.
4. Satisfactory inspections shall be performed prior to the start of the first event by the Fire, Building and Health Departments.

SB Member Hirsh seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

JASON LITTLE, FINANCE DIRECTOR

Approval and Execution of Bond Anticipation Notes

Mr. Little was present to request the Board’s acceptance of the winning bids and execution of the required documents related to \$4.378M in Bond Anticipation Notes (BANs) for the following:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Article</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Principal Amount</u>
4/25/2016	42	White Cliffs Acquisition	\$ 732,000.00
4/25/2019	20	Fire Station Land/Design	\$2,100,000.00
7/18/2020	23	Assabet Water Tank	\$ 651,000.00
5/1/2021	17	Water/Sewer SCADA	\$ 450,000.00
5/1/2021	18	Dam Compliance	\$ 45,000.00
4/25/2022	12	Fire Dept. Ambulance	\$ 400,000.00
Total			\$4,378,000.00

Approval and Execution of Advances in Lieu of Borrowing.

Mr. Little indicated that the Town can internally fund projects using “Advances in Lieu of Borrowing,” however advances cannot cross fiscal years, therefore the request is being made to approve an advance effective with the start of the new fiscal year (FY2024) for the following:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Article</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Amount Authorized</u>
4/24/2023	17	Fire Engine	\$ 900,000.00
4/24/2023	20	DPW Garage Tight Tank	\$ 475,000.00
Total			\$1,375,000.00

SB Member Ziton moved the Board vote to adopt the vote as prepared by Locke Lord, as bond counsel, relating to the approval of the Town’s June 2023 notes as presented by Finance Director Jason Little; SB Member Wixted seconded the motion.

SB Chair Cohen noted that the 2-page vote is available in its entirety in the Select Board’s Office.

The roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

SB Member Maselli moved the Board vote to approve and execute advances in lieu of borrowing effective July 1, 2023 relating to the borrowing authorizations approved at the April 24, 2023 Town Meeting and as presented by Finance Director Jason Little; SB Member Hirsh seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

THE ITEMS AS LISTED ON THE MEETING AGENDA WERE ACTED UPON IN THE FOLLOWING ORDER FOR THE CONVENIENCE OF STAFF

CONSIDERATION AND VOTE ON ADDITIONAL 2% COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENT (COLA) FOR RETIREE PENSION BENEFITS

Finance Director Jason Little noted that in order to provide additional relief to retirees on fixed incomes, the Governor signed into law an act allowing local retirement systems to grant a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) increase of up to 5% in FY2023 only, rather than the typical 0-3% voted on by the Retirement Board.

Mr. Little indicated that the Worcester Regional Retirement (WRR) Board already approved a 3% COLA for FY2023. If the Board chooses to grant the additional 2% COLA, the increase to the Town is approximately \$40,894, which would not be realized until the FY2026 assessment. He added that the deadline to act on this one-time increase is June 30, 2023. If two-thirds or at least 34 of the participating communities in WRR do not vote, no additional increase will be granted.

SB Member Wixted moved the Board vote to approve a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) increase of an additional 2% for retirees receiving a pension from Worcester Regional Retirement System for FY2023; SB Member Hirsh seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

METRO WEST COLLABORATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Discussion and vote on reuse proposal for White Cliffs

On the advice of Town Counsel and to avoid any appearance of a conflict of interest, SB Member Maselli recused herself from any discussion regarding the Metro West Collaborative Development's (MWCD) proposal for White Cliffs due to her close proximity to the White Cliffs property. Before she left the meeting for this discussion, she noted that she is awaiting a definitive

opinion from the Massachusetts Ethics Commission in regard to any future discussions regarding White Cliffs.

SB Chair Cohen noted that representatives from MWCD were not expected to be present for tonight's discussion, adding that Planning Director Laurie Connors was present to answer any questions. He provided a brief summary of the RFP process and the extended opportunities for public input leading up to tonight's discussion and decision on the reuse proposal for the White Cliffs.

To start, Board members shared concerns expressed by residents, including the affordability of moving forward with this proposal and its impact on taxpayers; the impact that affordable housing will have on this area and its neighbors considering the existing pedestrian and traffic safety conditions and the need for improvements on Route 20 at the driveway to the property; the proposed use versus the original intent of Town Meeting when it was first purchased by the Town in 2016; and its impact on the downtown revitalization project.

In addition to the receipt of a petition in opposition of the reuse proposal for the White Cliffs, signed by approximately 250 residents, the following residents provided public comment, also in opposition of the reuse proposal based on the same concerns mentioned above, as well as the negative impact that the proposal would have on the neighborhood, downtown revitalization project and the schools.

Brian Zeiger – 2 Stratton Way
John Maher – 44 Wesson Terrace
Michael Hirsh – 19 Smith Road
Anthony Servidio – 26 Stratton Way
Christine Maxfield – 222 Church Street
Eric Martin – 32 Wesson Terrace
Kerri Martinek – 16 Hemlock Drive
Anthony Servidio – 26 Stratton Way
Richard Scotland – 15 Stratton Way

The following residents provided public comment in support of the reuse proposal based on the research and findings during the lengthy RFP process, resulting in its positive impact on filling the need for affordable housing and on the downtown revitalization project. Also noted was the cost implications if nothing is done without a Plan B.

Scott Rogers – 26 Tomahawk Drive
Todd Helwig – 441 Howard Street
Carter Brandon – 22 Cherlyn Drive
Tom Reardon – 7 Sunset Drive
Stephanie Youssef – 5 Johnson Ave

Following further discussion amongst Board members, SB Chair Cohen noted that the White Cliffs Committee charge was to deliver a proposal for the consideration of the Select Board. In essence, its job has been completed and the White Cliffs Committee should be considered disbanded. If the proposal does not move forward, one option would be to establish a new committee to figure

out how to best move forward using the expert information that has been gathered to date. The use of ARPA funds may be considered to stabilize the building for the time being.

In response to concerns expressed by the abutting neighborhood, Planning Director Laurie Connors clarified that the White Cliffs Committee did not intentionally exclude anyone from providing public input during the RFP Process. She added that the Committee had to consider the concern expressed by the consultants with the difficulty in finding interested parties due to the state of the building and the limited interest in hospitality and event space.

SB Chair Cohen noted the Board's appreciation of all public input received on this proposal, including communication through public input opportunities and emails. He added that he is very appreciative of the years of hard work and effort put forth by the White Cliffs Committee to research the condition and history of the building and for the entire RFP process. He is impressed with MWCD's mission and experience, but acknowledged that the vast majority of public input leading up to this evening were not in favor of this proposal. Following a quick summary of the Board's discussions since the proposal was first brought before the Board on March 13, 2023, he admitted that tonight's decision on the project will be a difficult one. If the Select Board votes not in favor of the project, it will be important that the Select Board quickly determines a path forward.

SB Member Hirsh moved the Board vote to authorize the Interim Town Administrator to begin negotiations, on behalf of the Board, with Metro West Collaborative Development relative to the terms of an agreement for an option to purchase the White Cliffs property, with any agreement being subject to approval of the Select Board; and that the Interim Town Administrator report on the status of the negotiations at the Board's next regular meeting for the purpose of the Board making a determination on formal selection of Metro West Collaborative Development as the redeveloper for the White Cliffs property; SB Member Wixted seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Ziton	"no"	Hirsh	"no"
Wixted	"no"	Cohen	"no"

Following the vote and the conclusion of any further discussion, SB Member Lisa Maselli rejoined the meeting.

DISCUSSION REGARDING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL SELECT BOARD MEMBERS

Mr. Reed noted that it would be helpful and productive for the Board to enlist a facilitator to provide Board Training. This is a common practice and with the newness of the Board may be very constructive. He added that a good facilitator can assist the Board with its roles and relationships with each other, other communities, town departments and personnel, as well as functioning within a community's specific Charter.

Mr. Reed added that the use of ARPA funds to conduct Board training, as well as a comprehensive staffing study for all departments would be money well spent. SB Chair Cohen agreed. The Board discussed the benefits of scheduling the Board training as a posted special in-person meeting that would allow for public comment at the end of the training. SB Chair Cohen added that the Town is moving towards a hybrid setup at Town Hall that would offer a combination of in-person and remote participation during posted meetings.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR SCREENING COMMITTEE UPDATE

SB Chair Cohen reported that 27 responses were received in response to the advertisement for the new Town Administrator. The Town Administrator Screening Committee recommended a set of three questions to ask the candidates that pertain specifically to Northborough. Based on the essay answers, the candidates will then be narrowed down to six or so to be interviewed by the Screening Committee towards the end of June, with the goal of presenting three final candidates to be interviewed by the Select Board by the middle of July.

REPORTS**Julianne Hirsh**

- Announced that the Cultural Council will be sponsoring its annual Culture Fest on Saturday, June 10th on the Town Common.
- Noted that the Garden Club is holding their annual Plant Sale on Saturday, June 3rd at Ellsworth McAfee Park.
- Thanked everyone who participated in the 2nd Community Meeting for the downtown revitalization project that was held at the Library.
- Requested an update on the assessment of municipal buildings project. Requested that a discussion regarding the use of ARPA funds for this project be scheduled for the next Select Board meeting.

Kristen Wixted

- Congratulated and welcomed Select Board Members Laura Ziton and Lisa Maselli.
- Requested an update on when the Board will hear the recommendation from the Temporary Traffic Safety Committee as to whether or not a Permanent Committee is warranted.

Lisa Maselli

- Thanked everyone who came out to vote on May 9th for their support and participation.
- Attended the 2nd Community Meeting for the downtown revitalization project and thanked everyone who attended.
- Requested an update on the Complete Streets Program at the next Select Board meeting.

Laura Ziton

- Thanked everyone who came out to vote on May 9th and is looking forward to serving on the Select Board.
- Thanked everyone who is preparing for the Memorial Day Parade. The parade will start at Noon at the Civil War Monument on Monday, May 29th.
- Noted that the American Legion will be hosting a Pig Roast following the conclusion of the parade.
- Noted that the Friends of the Northborough Senior Center will be hosting an event at The Cellar Restaurant on June 21st where they will receive a percentage of the proceeds.

Mitch Cohen

- Attended the Fire Department's Retirement Party for Firefighter Michael Gaudette and Fire Captain Fred Hurst.
- Thanked Town Clerk Andy Dowd and his staff for their efforts in coordinating the recent Town Election.

- Attended ribbon cutting ceremonies for Avidia Bank as they reopened following a significant renovation and the Grand Opening of Gather Provisions.
- Noted that he will be working on the Board Liaison appointments and asked that Board members email him with any preferences for Boards, Commission or Committees in advance of the next Board meeting.

INTERVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPOINTMENT

A copy of the Select Board Interview Subcommittee meeting minutes that summarizes the interviews conducted on May 16, 2023 for the following can be found in tonight's meeting packet.

SB Member Hirsh moved the Board vote to recommend Paul Cacciatore for appointment to the Parks & Recreation Commission for a two-year term to expire on April 30, 2025 as recommended by the Select Board Interview Subcommittee; SB Member Wixted seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	"aye"	Maselli	"aye"
Wixted	"aye"	Cohen	"aye"
Ziton	"aye"		

SB Member Hirsh moved the Board vote to recommend Jennifer Tolman for appointment to the Cultural Council for a three-year term to expire on May 31, 2026 as recommended by the Select Board Interview Subcommittee; SB Member Wixted seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	"aye"	Maselli	"aye"
Wixted	"aye"	Cohen	"aye"
Ziton	"aye"		

SB Member Hirsh moved the Board vote to recommend Hannah Chen for appointment to the Cultural Council for a three-year term to expire on May 31, 2026 as recommended by the Select Board Interview Subcommittee; SB Member 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

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


ADJOURNMENT

SB Member Hirsh moved the Board vote to adjourn; SB Member 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 9:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Diane M. Wackell
Executive Assistant to the
Board of Selectmen

Documents used during meeting:

1. May 22, 2023 Meeting Agenda
2. May 8, 2023 Meeting Minutes
3. Information packet – Helen’s Variety Package Store Transfer
4. Information packet – Wegmans Special One-Day Liquor License
5. Information packet – Bond Anticipation Notes and Advances in Lieu of Borrowing
6. Information packet – Metro West Collaborative Development
7. Information packet – Retiree Pension Benefits
8. Draft Interview Subcommittee Meeting Minutes