

## SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES – November 6, 2023

### 7:03 p.m. – Chair’s Introduction to Remote Meeting

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

#### Select Board (SB)

Mitch Cohen, Chair  
Laura Zitton, Clerk  
Julianne Hirsh  
Lisa Maselli

#### Others

Michael Gallagher, Interim Town Administrator  
Diane Wackell, Interim Assistant Town Administrator  
Fire Station Building Committee, architects and  
project managers

Absent: Kristen Wixted, Vice Chair

### PUBLIC COMMENT

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

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES – OCTOBER 11, 2023

SB Member Maselli moved the Board vote to approve the October 11, 2023, meeting minutes as presented; SB Member Hirsch seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Maselli	“aye”	Hirsh	“aye”
Zitton	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES – OCTOBER 23, 2023

SB Member Hirsch moved the Board vote to approve the October 23, 2023, meeting minutes as presented; SB Member Zitton seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Hirsh	“aye”	Zitton	“aye”
Maselli	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”

### FIRE STATION BUILDING COMMITTEE – PROGRESS UPDATE

Fire Chief David Parenti provided a history of the process to date and made a presentation listing the critical reasons why the Town needs a new Fire Station.

Amy Dunlap from HKT Architects made a presentation on the work completed to date and the next steps to be taken. She presented a draft building plan.

SB Chair Cohen indicated that there would be a special town meeting early Fall of 2024 regarding the conclusion of the design process and the seeking of town funding. There will be a Debt Exclusion Special Election ballot question in November of 2024 which will be added to the Federal Election Ballot. The question of total cost is still unknown. Ms. Dunlap indicated that the first cost estimate would be done when the schematic designs are complete.

Following the presentation, several questions were asked by members of the Board, including concerns about traffic. Also discussed was the tprint and floor plan of the proposed building.

Kelly Guennett of 69 Northgate Road asked about the location of the building on 61-65 West Main Street. Ms. Dunlap indicated that the exact location of the building on the lot is still unknown at this time but that the bays for the fire trucks will be facing Route 20. There was discussion concerning the shape of the lot. She agreed that the traffic pattern testing should be for 7 days.

Judy and Tony Armata of 6 Sawmill Drive gave their support for the new fire station and told about her need for the ambulance and the CPR machine vest.

Aaron Hutchins of 91 Brigham Street commented about the traffic issues that might be created at Dunkin' Donuts and the difficulties that the fire trucks might have. SB Chair Cohen had a question about the traffic lights. Chief Parente explained how the lights worked in an emergency situation.

Fran Bakstran of 76 Cedar Hill Road gave her support for the new fire station, indicating that a modern fire station is necessary.

SB Chair Cohen indicated that public input is very important for this project and the Board hopes to market the next public meeting better to get more participation from the community. There will be a number of opportunities for public comment as the project also has to go before the Design Review Committee and the Site Plan Review Committee.

Discussion ensued regarding the Community Meeting Room in the fire station. Chief Parente indicated that while you can't control the volume of the alarm, you incorporate the ability to turn speakers down when the building is designed. Mr. Cohen stated that Community Rooms are necessary to accommodate meetings in the town.

There was discussion concerning the current and future capacity of fire fighters in the building.

### **DISCUSSION AND VOTE TO ACCEPT BID ON TOWN OWNED PROPERTY AT 13 CHURCH STREET**

Mr. Gallagher gave an update regarding the sale of 13 Church Street. A single bid of \$1.00 was received by the Town. Mr. Gallagher indicated that the town should accept this bid and allow someone to re-develop the property. Mr. Charpentier came into the meeting to explain some of the contamination in the building. Ms. Maselli had questions about items that were stored in the building. Mr. Gallagher stated that all items in the building will remain there. Mr. Charpentier stated that there are two generators in the building, but the garage doors cannot be safely opened. It is a requirement of the RFP that the building be demolished, due to its condition. All permitting and disposal of hazardous materials will be the responsibility of the new owner.

Aaron Hutchins asked what the anticipated costs of demolishing and remediating the building would be. The Town solicited a quote earlier this year and the cost was \$67,000.00, excluding remediation. Discussion was had regarding the determination of the sale price of the building.

Mr. Charpentier indicated that the uses for the building and lot are significantly limited due to its proximity to Cold Harbor Brook and that it was only valuable to abutters. Millie Milton is purchasing the property which abuts other properties she owns. Discussion was had among the SB Members regarding the amount of time to negotiate the Purchase and Sale Agreement and sell the property. Mr. Cohen asked that Mr. Gallagher keep the Board apprised of the status of the Purchase and Sale Agreement.

SB Member Maselli moved the Board vote to award the purchase of 13 Church Street to Millie Milton for her price proposal of \$1.00 and to authorize the Interim Town Administrator to negotiate the terms and conditions of the Purchase and Sales Agreement. SB Member Ziton seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

### **DISCUSSION OF RELOCATION OF POLLING PLACES FOR FUTURE ELECTIONS**

SB Chair Cohen indicated that for the last 4 – 5 years the voting polling location has been at Melican Middle School. It is disruptive to the school when elections are held while school is in session. Mr. Gallagher indicated that Mr. Andrew Dowd’s concern about changing the location is the coming election in 2024. The problem is to find a space large enough for all precincts. Mr. Dowd gave us a brief history of the voting locations in Northborough. Discussion was had about finding a way to have the elections with the least amount of disruption to Northborough and Southborough. Time will be spent in 2024 searching for other avenues for voting in 2025.

Kelly Guenette, Chair of the Elementary School Committee, felt that voting at Melican Middle School was very impactful for Northborough, Southborough and the high school and the school children. She indicated that the faculty is still in attendance during the professional development days and problems with a shortage of parking spots in the lot still exist.

SB Member Ziton indicated that the voting at Melican Middle School makes it very difficult for school pickup, the voters, and drop off for school sports. SB Chair Cohen agreed.

There was discussion concerning a study regarding the feasibility of new Town Offices. Aaron Hutchins proposed a study be created to incorporate voting within the proposed new Town Hall.

The Board and Mr. Dowd discussed utilizing the Senior Center as a voting site versus Melican Middle School. The availability of parking spaces at the school versus the Senior Center was discussed. Mr. Dowd indicated that, in his opinion, the Senior Center building could accommodate centralized voting, however the parking lot and driveway posed challenges. SB Member Hirsh indicated that she would like to see the problems at Melican Middle School settled before the 2024 election. She asked how the Town was moving forward. SB Chair Cohen discussed the procedure the Town should take. Mr. Dowd noted the Board’s concerns.

**VOTE TO APPOINT MARY THOMPSON, INTERIM FINANCE DIRECTOR, AS THE INTERIM TOWN ACCOUNTANT**

SB Chair Cohen explained that Jason Little, the previous Finance Director/Town Accountant, had moved to the Town of Westborough. According to the Town Charter, the Town Accountant is appointed by the Select Board and the Finance Director is appointed by the Town Administrator. Mary Thompson has already been appointed as the Interim Financial Director and this Board needs to appoint her as the Interim Town Accountant. The Board entered into discussion about the payment to Ms. Thompson and that she is working on a part-time basis.

SB Member Zitton moved the Board vote to appoint Mary Thompson to serve as Interim Finance Director; SB Member Hirsh seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Zitton	“aye”	Hirsh	“aye”
Maselli	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”

**VOTE TO ADOPT THE AMENDMENTS TO THE CHARTER AS PROPOSED BY SENATE COUNSEL TO AUTHORIZE THE SELECT BOARD, TO AMEND THE TOWN’S ZONING BYLAWS AND REPLACE ALL REFERENCES TO “BOARD OF SELECTMEN” OR “SELECTMEN” WITH “SELECT BOARD” OR “SELECT BOARD MEMBER.”**

At the last town meeting the Town approved language to ask the Legislature to change the Town’s charter. SB Chair Cohen described this change to the charter.

SB Member Zitton moved the Board vote to adopt the amendments to the Charter as proposed by Senate Counsel to amend the Home Rule petition to authorize the Board of Selectmen, by majority vote, to amend the Town’s General Bylaws and Zoning Bylaws to replace all references to “Board of Selectmen” or “Selectmen” with “Select Board” or “Select Board Member”, respectively; SB Member Hirsh seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

Zitton	“aye”	Hirsh	“aye”
Maselli	“aye”	Cohen	“aye”

The Senate will need a certified copy of this vote. Mr. Gallagher will find out what the Senate needs to confirm this vote.

**INTERVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS TO APPOINT ARTHUR GIACOMARRA TO THE CULTURAL COUNSEL.**

SB Member Hirsh recommended that Mr. Giacomarra be appointed to this position. He is ready to become a voting member. He is interested in administrative and financial duties.

SB Member Hirsh move the Board vote to appoint Arthur Giacomarra to the Cultural Council for a three-year term as recommended by the Interview Subcommittee; SB Member Ziton seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

### **TOWN ADMINISTRATOR SEARCH UPDATE**

SB Chair Cohen indicated the Town Administrator Screening Committee has met with the consultants at MRI. Several quality applicants will be interviewed. At the conclusion of these interviews, three (3) people will be recommended to the Select Board. The Select Board will meet on November 15<sup>th</sup> and November 16<sup>th</sup> to interview the finalists and a Town Administrator selected.

### **REPORTS**

#### **Lisa Maselli**

- A reminder that volunteers are needed for the Town Boards.
- attended the Housing Authority meeting. They reviewed the budget, and they asked that the Town property at 63 Main Street be used to house some of the seniors in town.
- Attended the Dull Men’s Club at the Senior Center. They had many questions and quite a few suggestions. They had questions regarding the building at 13 Church Street, electronic voting, the Police Chief being appointed, 4 West Main Street and White Cliffs.
- Would like electronic voting to be placed on the November 20<sup>th</sup> Select Board meeting and to utilize ARPA money to purchase or rent the apparatus.
- Also spoke about the Police Chief succession plan in place. She would like to have this completed by the Board’s meeting on November 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Attended Jason Little’s going away celebration.
- Attended the CPC meeting. There was discussion regarding the use of CPA funds.

#### **Laura Ziton**

- Spoke with Allie Lane, the Director of Recreation, who indicated that the registration for the summer program will be on Saturday, February 3, 2024, so working parents will be able to register their children and there will be 50 more spaces opened this year.
- There is still time to register for the Turkey Trot.
- Attended the CPC meeting as well. There will be future meetings regarding CPC funding.
- Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts will be gathering food for the food pantry on November 11, 2023.
- Sunday November 12, 2023 is the Hometown Heroes Rolling Rally.

#### **Julianne Hirsh**

- Also attended the Dull Men’s Club Meeting. The members were very supportive of Town-wide electronic voting. She would like to invite the Town Clerk to discuss this at a future Select Board meeting.
- Received a very informative and comprehensive proposal from Sustainable Northborough. She would like to have the Select Board invite them to a future meeting.

#### **Mitch Cohen**

- Reported that the party for Jason Little was fun. One of the best things was that it allowed time for the Board and staff to intermingle.

- Attended the Assabet Valley 50th Anniversary party. He received a tour of the building and was impressed with their program. He also thanked Virginia Sims George, the Northborough representative to the school committee for her excellent talk.
- Thanked the library for a great Haunted House Halloween event. Hopefully, this will become an annual event.

## **TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORTS**

Mr. Gallagher sent an email to counsel to begin drafting the Purchase and Sale Agreement for 13 Church Street. The Board's meeting on November 20, 2023, will also be the tax classification hearing. This will be an extensive meeting and the Board will be hearing from the assessors as well as members of the community. He requested this be kept in mind when planning the agenda for that evening.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

SB Chair Cohen invited comments from the public.

Scott Rogers of 26 Tomahawk Drive had a question about whether the tax rate will be discussed at the November 20<sup>th</sup> meeting. He also wondered whether any other budget milestones will be discussed. Mr. Gallagher replied that he didn't know yet. SB Chair Cohen indicated that certified free cash is up approximately \$1,000,000.00 from the prior year. Mr. Rogers asked about the total for certified free cash. SB Chair Cohen responded that the actual number was \$3,572,920.00 of general fund free cash .

## **ADJOURNMENT**

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

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:27 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda DiCelie  
Board Secretary

