

HAMILTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

MINUTES OF MEETING

Town Hall Memorial Room, 577 Bay Road

November 18, 2019

Selectmen Present: Chair Jeff Hubbard, Rosemary Kennedy, Shawn Farrell, William Olson, and Darcy Dale

Selectmen Absent: None

Town Manager: Joe Domelowicz

Jeff Hubbard called the Board of Selectmen (BOS) meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & BOARD OPENINGS

- The Council on Aging, Recreation Committee, Hamilton Historic District Commission (HHDC), and Hamilton-Wenham Regional School Committee each have one opening. The HHDC position is for an alternate.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Richard Boroff, Open Space Committee chair, said the Committee needs two or three more at-large members due to some members being out for health reasons.

Larry Sargent, 16 Ricker Circle, said it's been three months since the cell tower lawsuit was dismissed. He had attended the meeting when Everest [Infrastructure Partners] came in to talk with the HHDC. He doesn't understand the delay in construction and wants the Town, as the cell service customer, to push harder. He didn't think the landscaping/screening issues should hold up the construction. Town Manager Joe Domelowicz said Everest is waiting for final signoff from the Mass Historical Commission and the goal was to begin construction in the first quarter of 2020.

Selectmen/Town Manager Reports

William Olson, Rosemary Kennedy, Shawn Farrell, and Darcy Dale passed on giving reports.

Mr. Hubbard noted that on Veteran's Day the American Legion recognized veterans as well as men and women of the Hamilton Fire Dept. who made a recent "historic save." He listed their names. He said the Town Hall Building Committee met and received a report from the architects. Everything the HHDC requested has been included in the design work. There were no additional costs, and some costs were saved. The next meetings for those committees will be Dec. 10.

Mr. Domelowicz passed on delivering his Town Manager's report; it will be posted online.

Consent Agenda

- Approve Minutes—Oct. 7 BOS meeting.

Decision:

Ms. Dale made a motion to approve the minutes/Consent Agenda. Ms. Kennedy seconded the motion. The BOS voted unanimously (5-0) to accept the motion.

AGENDA

Presentation of Citation to Sgt. Karen Wallace

Police Chief Russell Stevens presented a citation to Sgt. Wallace who had responded to an urgent call in August, helped deliver a baby, and gave post-delivery care to the mom prior to the arrival of paramedics. The mom, baby, husband and big brother were present.

Review Trash Collection Program—Discussion and Vote

Mr. Domelowicz recapped that the BOS had been asked to vote to change the trash pickup back to every other week by the Waste Reduction Committee, and that, as charged, he had appointed a Task Force to review the issue. A forum was held Sept. 26 and the upshot was that most people accepted that the current trash program wasn't sustainable and they needed to find ways to get the weight out of the trash by encouraging more recycling and composting. The proposal was to return to an every-other-week pickup, but in the interim week, residents can purchase blue bags and put them out in their barrels. It was noted that the Town's trash program costs more than \$750K—more than it spends on things like planning, finance, Council on Aging, Parks and Recreation and the Department of Public Works. The only two departments that spend as much are Police and Fire. Mr. Domelowicz said the plan didn't come out of thin air; it had been studied for three or four months.

The Finance and Advisory Committee (FinCom) had previously voted in support of the move to every-other-week trash pickup. FinCom Chair David Wanger said both sides were represented at their meeting with trends in waste and costs being put forth. He cited some of these: One is that the tipping fee will likely increase by 18% with further increases each year. He noted the opposing rationale was primarily personal preference and said FinCom

felt the move to be socially responsible and fiscally prudent. He likened buying the blue bags to a usage fee that people pay for utilities.

Anne Gero, Waste Reduction Committee member, discussed the history of the compost program, which began in 2012 and went hand in hand with the change at that time to every-other-week pickup. The effect was that the trash decreased by about 30%. The every-other-week schedule went on for four years and the average amount of blue bags purchased by households was about 11 to 16 per year. She reviewed the charts on the reports in the packets, which showed trends in trash since 2006. In 2016, when the Town switched to every-week pickup, the tonnage increased. She spoke of trends across the county, including mandatory composting and pay-as-you-throw. She said composting has been proven to reduce tonnage, and Hamilton is far ahead of other towns with regard to composting. The Town no longer receives money back for recyclables and must pay for handling. The incinerators have no more capacity. About 22% of Massachusetts trash is sent out of state. The State's goal is to reduce the volume of the trash by 30% through composting. The Waste Reduction Committee thought going back to every-other-week pickup was a fair proposal and the easiest to implement.

Mr. Hubbard asked for comments, cautioning people to "be hard on the topic not on each other."

Mr. Olson said it was a tough decision that involved compromise. He was in favor of the every-other-week pickup. He called it a creative, easy way to motivate people to compost. He said there were better reasons for increasing tax dollars than trash.

Ms. Kennedy said she was sympathetic to people with busy lives and noted composting and recycling guidelines can be confusing. She said she keeps the placard that explains the guidelines posted at her house. She discussed how training and help is available for those who need it and described how neighbors can help each other and go into this with a positive attitude.

Mr. Farrell said he was the only one on the board who didn't vote for the every-week pickup back when that was approved. He said reducing the tonnage in waste will really make a difference.

Ms. Dale said she doesn't think the Town has a choice as the Town could be bumping up against Proposition 2 ½. She said she had gotten the hang of composting.

Mr. Domelowicz said Wenham was considering a pay-as-you-throw measure to save money. In Hamilton, he said, it isn't a savings measure as much as it is a cost-containment measure.

Mr. Hubbard said they weren't starting from scratch and there are certain services that residents expect from government that he thinks are important to supply. He mentioned

the Patton Homestead and Hamilton Development Corporation as places to look to cut expenses. He supported maintaining the weekly trash pickup.

Mr. Boroff said waste removal costs amount to about \$233 per household and tonnage costs were \$33.40 per household per year, which he called “peanuts.” He said he had asked the Waste Reduction Committee to stick to teaching and not force things. He asked for them to explain the “why” of what can and cannot be recycled or composted. He wanted them to conduct workshops on wigglers and organic waste, and to show people how to compost leaves. He also noted dog waste was a major problem. He applauded Mr. Hubbard for his support and said he felt treated rudely at the FinCom meeting and by others.

Peter Britton, 466 Highland St., owner and operator of Brick Ends Farm, said he wanted to make the Town an offer. He charges the town a tipping fee of \$45 a ton (which is below market-rate) and accepts brush, leaves, etc. He said if the Town embraces going back to every other week, he will reduce his fee to \$40 a ton. Mr. Farrell asked where the trucks were weighing tonnage. Mr. Britton said costs are estimated and the Town was getting a good deal. Mr. Domelowicz asked Mr. Britton if they might arrange for someone to take video and do a story about Brick Ends Farms. He welcomed the idea.

Mr. Sargent said he thought there was a lack of financial analysis with actual dollars. He said Casella [Waste Systems]’s costs were fixed for hauling. The tipping fees were the issue. He said the cost increase in the contract was \$6 per household per year. He said the numbers were “pocket change” for the Town. He said the “scary words” used about increases weren’t supported by the numbers. He and Mr. Domelowicz discussed some of the specifics. Mr. Domelowicz said while the hard dollars may not be that much, he pays attention to percentages. The Town is held to a 2.5% increase per year; this would be a 3.25% increase.

Stephen McWhirter, 18 Cunningham Drive, said he was worried about what might happen in the future and wanted to see those metrics. Mr. Britton said the amount of organics from Hamilton/Wenham is a small portion of his business and he has every intention of continuing the business. Mr. Olson asked if the demand for dirt or loam was going up. Mr. Britton said although his operation isn’t a huge industry, there is an almost unlimited demand. Mr. McWhirter asked what would happen if the whole county shifted to this model. Ms. Dale said everything was in flux and they would be looking for leadership from the State as well as Federal government.

Bob Curry, 713 Bay Road, spoke in favor of composting and noted it models for children a sense of responsibility for stewardship of the earth. He has composted 50 years and his children now do also.

Gretel Clark, Waste Reduction Committee chair, said they weren’t trying to make the argument financial; it was about getting people to compost and help the State reduce the solid waste in the waste stream by 30%. When the composting program first began, she managed a trash hotline and took many calls, but she said they stopped after about two

weeks. In-house coaching was also offered, but she said only two families took her up on the offer. She said she wanted to make it clear there should be no garbage in the trash.

Ms. Kennedy noted one payback of composting is having “black gold” for one’s garden.

Andrew Ellison, 46 Moynihan Road, said this issue has caused unhappiness in Town and it will be a significant change for his family. He thinks the decision is one-sided and wanted the matter to go to the taxpayers for a vote. Mr. Domelowicz explained that State law puts the burden for the decision on the BOS.

Michael Madden, 231 Highland St., said moving to the every-other-week pickup was the right thing to do and they should be leaders not followers. He thanked the BOS and Town for setting an excellent standard.

Decision:

Ms. Dale made a motion that the BOS vote “aye” for the trash collection program proposal as discussed [every-other-week trash pickup and blue bag option on the alternate week]. Mr. Farrell seconded the motion.

Further Discussion:

Mr. Olson suggested Jan. 15 for a start date so as not to make the change until after the holidays. He had questions regarding the blue bags. Mr. Domelowicz said the costs for the bags will be the same (\$2.50/ 33 gallon bag); he said he could ask the rep to come in to explain the rates. The Town orders the bags and pays for them and then when the stores ask for them that money comes back to the Town.

Ms. Clark said a number of people had gotten rid of their green compost bins when the Town switched to every-week pickup and now might want them back. She will find out how many bins are in storage.

Mr. Olson added that if a resident bought a blue bag every other week it would only amount to about \$60 for the year.

Decision (Continued):

The BOS voted (4-1) to accept the motion. Mr. Hubbard was opposed.

Adopt Chapter 91 Limits

Chapter 91 allows certain qualifying seniors to have an exemption from real estate taxes based on income and age. The BOS was asked to vote on whether to continue the age of 65 or change it. Ms. Dale asked for best practices. Mr. Farrell said some towns use age 70, but Hamilton had lowered the age to 65. He and Ms. Kennedy recommended keeping the age at 65.

Decision:

Mr. Farrell made a motion to maintain the current Chapter 91 limits. Ms. Dale seconded the motion. The BOS voted unanimously (5-0) to accept the motion.

Review Community Projects Manager (position)—Discussion and Vote

Mr. Domelowicz referred to the job description in the BOS packets. He said it isn't completely finalized. He said the Finance Dept. was looking for a person with economic development experience. It was decided to make the position full-time so as to gain ability to pursue grants and also help the Finance Dept. transition to a more public-friendly budget document. He said money for the position could be pulled from other places already within the budget. He said FinCom had voted (5-0) in favor of adding the staff time to make the position full-time. The expectation is to advertise the position this week and have someone onboard at the beginning of the year.

Ms. Dale had a question about the person being responsible for meeting agendas and minutes. Mr. Domelowicz said yes, the person would coordinate the activities of three boards: the HHDC, Community Preservation Committee and Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust. Former Community Projects Coordinator Dorr Fox also worked for the Hamilton Development Corporation (HDC). Mr. Domelowicz said he has been in conversation with Rick Mitchell [HDC president] about that. Some of that work is being done by another staff member and some through the Town Manager's office.

Mr. Olson asked about the Town Hall renovation project and if the person hired would have a role in that. Mr. Domelowicz said yes, there was a role, but the Town Hall Building Committee was driving that.

Mr. Farrell said he assumed Director of Planning & Inspections Patrick Reffett was consulted and asked if there'd been input from Mr. Fox. Mr. Domelowicz said yes. There was a discussion that transitioning the budget document/budget presentation to make it more public-friendly would be time-consuming at first.

Ms. Kennedy asked about the Conservation Commission agent position. Mr. Domelowicz said they are working on that. There will be a screening committee.

Decision:

Ms. Dale made a motion that the BOS vote to accept the Community Projects Manager position from part-time to full-time as written in the job description. Mr. Farrell seconded the motion. The BOS voted (4-1) to accept the motion. Ms. Kennedy was opposed.

Master Planning for Hamilton—Discussion

Mr. Domelowicz asked for feedback to determine how to best present the plan in the budget. He said it might be an investment of \$140-\$150K to do a complete master plan. Some money might be saved by pulling information from other plans.

Ms. Dale asked about grant opportunities. Mr. Domelowicz noted a few options, including adopting a plan for economic development and then funneling those monies back to pay off the loan. He said if they do get grants, they are sometimes restricted as to which consultants they can work with. He said the time-frame for the master plan would be about 15 months.

Ms. Kennedy commented that the Metropolitan Area Planning Council tends to be very development-oriented and she'd like the Town to be careful about who they decide to write the plan for them. Mr. Domelowicz agreed and said the estimate he presented provides them flexibility on that.

Mr. Farrell said the timing is right for doing the master plan. Mr. Hubbard and Mr. Domelowicz discussed that they would put it in the budget for next year.

Duke Seaver, 402 Essex St., said he'd like to see the parking they have now be a two-level parking garage due to the new development there. They discussed the current MBTA commuter lot and how some commuters park on the street.

Review of Human Resources IMA [Inter-Municipal Agreement]—Discussion and Vote

Mr. Domelowicz said he heard back from KP Law, P.C., with their comments. There was one question about the communities being able to share unemployment costs and writing that into the agreement.

Decision:

Mr. Farrell made a motion that the BOS enable the Town Manager to move ahead with further negotiations for the shared Human Resources officer in the IMA. Mr. Olson seconded the motion. The BOS voted unanimously (5-0) to accept the motion.

Mr. Farrell asked about the timeline. Mr. Domelowicz said he was going to ask the Town Administrators in Rockport and Manchester to look at the document and finalize it and then he will bring it back to the BOS for their input and signoff.

Finalize Town Manager Evaluation—Discussion and Vote

Mr. Domelowicz said he had provided a document responding to the Board's comments in his evaluation. He said he tried to offer ideas of things he could work on and asked them to set up another meeting to set goals for going forward. He said he'd like to keep the previous goals "live" because he's making progress on them.

Mr. Farrell said the BOS treats the evaluation like a management letter.

Ms. Kennedy made a comment that it helps to have the documents for meetings as soon as possible and should be a top priority. Mr. Domelowicz discussed the process of compiling the agenda and documents and keeping FinCom in the loop, as well.

_____/_____
Darcy Dale Date
Board of Selectmen Clerk