

HAMILTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

MINUTES OF MEETING

Council on Aging, 299 Bay Road

April 24, 2019

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

Town Manager: Joe Domelowicz

Shawn Farrell called the Board of Selectmen (BOS) meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Peter Britton gave comments relating to the Executive Session occurring later this evening re: 550 Highland St. He had circulated copies of the property classification sheet from the Assessors' office (in Selectmen's packets) showing how the sheet was filled out (with 0s). He referred to a Department of Local Services insert about properties being used for public purpose not being taxable. He noted that in the BOS handbook it talks about responsible leadership and how the Selectmen have the power to value property and classify it, stressing he thinks the BOS should use its power to issue an "expressed exemption" of the taxes. He said he had changed the wording of the proposed legislation to read: "shall be expressly exempt." He said in this way the BOS wouldn't leave itself open to interpretation that has been problematic.

Jack Lawrence, 105 Rock Maple, said he wanted to resolve the issues of both paid and unpaid taxes. The BOS noted both were covered by their document.

Mr. Lawrence's other comment concerned whether the amount allocated at Town Meeting for paving a stretch of Chebacco Road would be enough (because the road needs to be moved as well, plus there's ledge). He suggested the Town might purchase a good grader because the Department of Public Works (DPW) currently doesn't have one and grading of dirt roads doesn't last.

Mr. Britton went back to the Highland Street discussion, reading a letter from Jay Burnham, 21 North St., who couldn't be present at the meeting. (See attached scanned letter.) Mr. Britton said he wanted the lawsuit in Land Court (pertaining to back taxes owed by the curators) removed. Mr. Burnham's letter questioned how the Assessors could be requiring

those with only a leasehold interest in a property to pay taxes on property they do not own. The letter urged the BOS to reimburse the curators for the taxes they've paid. Mr. Britton added that Kevin Kaminsky is a contractor putting in "sweat equity" to restore the building from which he will receive no gain at the end of the lease. The BOS thanked Mr. Britton for his input.

Selectmen/Town Manager Reports

William Olson said the Planning Board was working through the Meyer Road subdivision decision and there had been some dialogue with the neighbors. The Affordable Housing Trust will meet tomorrow to talk about new opportunities, perhaps a project in partnership with Habitat for Humanity that has a relatively good price per unit.

Jeff Hubbard said the Hamilton Development Corporation (HDC) has met a couple of times. The Town Hall Building Committee met tonight and has two positions open. He urged anyone with a background in architecture or engineering to please apply.

New member Darcy Dale was welcomed. She had no report as this is her first meeting.

New member Rosemary Kennedy discussed a tree replanting project in the downtown area. She said there is almost an agreement about what kind of trees they will have and how the payment structure will be set. She met with the Ipswich River Watershed Association about how to protect the water supply. She said she spoke with Town Manager Joe Domelowicz about the trucks and debris on the other side of Patton Park and about grading the dirt road there to improve aesthetics. Mr. Farrell said he received an email from an environmental group with some grant information that he will forward to her.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & BOARD OPENINGS

- Board and Committee Openings included one for the Board of Health, two for the Town Hall Building Committee, and one for the Finance and Advisory Committee (FinCom).
- Discount Rain Barrel Program is available again through TGARB and the Town website. Deadline for orders is May 12 at midnight with pickup at the DPW Yard on May 18 from 8-12. Mr. Farrell commented on the price of the barrels, which is a significant discount.

CONSENT AGENDA

- **Approve Minutes from the BOS regular meeting on March 18.**
- **The H-W Garden Club request permission to post a banner to advertise their annual Plant Sale on Bay Road from May 10 until May 18.**
- **Hamilton Wenham Little League requests permission for their Opening Day Parade on Saturday, April 27 (route attached).**

Decisions:

Mr. Hubbard made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda excluding the March 18 minutes (because Ms. Dale and Ms. Kennedy were not yet Selectmen on that date). Mr. Olson seconded the motion. The BOS voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the Consent Agenda excluding the minutes.

The BOS voted (3-0) to approve the March 18 minutes. *Ms. Dale and Ms. Kennedy did not vote.

AGENDA

Election of BOS Officers

Decisions

Ms. Kennedy made a motion to nominate Mr. Hubbard as BOS Chair. Ms. Dale seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The BOS voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the motion.

Ms. Dale nominated Ms. Kennedy as BOS Vice-Chair. Mr. Hubbard seconded the motion.

Further Discussion:

Mr. Farrell said he was leaning toward a senior member of the board. He nominated Mr. Olson. Both Mr. Olson and Ms. Kennedy accepted their respective nominations. Mr. Olson said he was Secretary (Clerk) last year and had been vice chair of the Planning Board. He proposed he would support Ms. Kennedy for the position of Secretary (Clerk). Mr. Hubbard asked for a vote on Ms. Kennedy as vice chair.

Decisions (continued):

The BOS voted (3-2) in favor of Ms. Kennedy as vice chair.

Mr. Olson made a motion to nominate Ms. Dale as BOS Clerk. She accepted the nomination. Mr. Farrell seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The BOS voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the motion.

Discuss BOS liaison role selection process and gathering of Selectmen liaison requests

Newly elected Chair Mr. Hubbard referred to a list of the liaison roles. Mr. Farrell said he also had another list that he and former Selectman Scott Maddern had found useful for the ranking process. Mr. Hubbard asked the Selectmen to take time over the next week to review and offer their selections.

Mr. Farrell suggesting adding a new liaison role—to the Chebacco Woods Trails (advocacy group), which is separate from the Chebacco Woods Management Committee.

Debrief of Annual Town Meeting

Mr. Olson said all the issues the BOS had built consensus on went favorably and there weren't many no votes. He thought Jeff Melick did a great job in his last year as moderator. The only issue still to be worked out is that of the overflow room.

Mr. Farrell brought up the idea of having automatic counters for Town Meeting vote, as had been discussed in the past, which might help with the overflow issue and to improve the flow. He said it would privatize the voting for those hesitant about voting in front of their neighbors. Mr. Olson had been researching the counters and said he could continue.

FinCom Chair Phil Stearns suggested the Town might share the counters, perhaps with Wenham. Mr. Domelowicz said they could ask Ipswich and other towns, as well.

Mr. Farrell commended Patton Homestead Executive Director Kaleigh Pare for her work and presentation having to do with the Patton Homestead warrant article.

Ms. Dale stated she hoped going forward they can be more efficient and expeditious about getting the warrant articles finalized sooner. It hurts credibility to send out a warrant that is outdated when it's received and shouldn't happen again, she said.

Ms. Kennedy noted Ipswich does a good job with its warrant. She wanted to see more objectivity (pros and cons) in the presentation of the warrant articles.

Mr. Britton said he was impressed with the written statements from the FinCom and thought things went as smoothly as they did because of the availability of that document.

Mr. Lawrence said he thought the appendices should be included with the warrant. Without them, he thought the warrant was useless. He said Town Meeting runs the Town and needs to have all the data for making decisions. He had checked on what the postage cost would be and found it to be nominal.

Mr. Domelowicz said there's always room to improve, but he said he felt good about his first Annual Town Meeting. He liked the cooperation with FinCom and thought its document was a big help. The fact that they agreed on most every article also helped, he said. He echoed that they need more lead time, but noted that Citizen's petitions can be posted up until the date the warrant is posted as established by the Town bylaws. He said he would look into the cost for printing out and mailing the appendices.

Mr. Stearns said one option would be to print a few hundred of the appendices and leave them at the library or in other public places. Mr. Domelowicz said they had placed hard copies in the back of the Memorial Room at Town Hall for those who didn't have computers and couldn't access them on the Town website.

Mr. Stearns commented that Wenham recently voted down the OPEB part of the school budget and had some questions pertaining to the budget that Mr. Domelowicz answered.

Susan Lawrence, 105 Rock Maple, said she came to this evening's meeting because she saw the topic of the Chebacco Woods trails on the agenda for the Executive Session. As chair of the Essex County Trails Association she doesn't know what to tell people when they ask her about using the trails. Mr. Domelowicz responded that the BOS hasn't established a statement on this issue yet, but said the Board is considering the Town's options to protect the easement rights on the trails. Mr. Hubbard brought up that they had discussed having a liaison to the Chebacco Woods Trails group, who could be a contact. Mr. Farrell suggested they keep Ms. Lawrence in the loop.

Ms. Kennedy discussed communication issues within the Town and how important it is for residents to be informed. Mr. Olson asked about how the regular email blast from the Town was going. Mr. Domelowicz said about 100 people had signed up so far. There is a sign-up link on the Town website.

Ms. Kennedy said for those who preferred face-to-face contact, she would be hosting a Selectmen hour at Town Hall every Monday morning for people to meet and have coffee.

NEW BUSINESS

Consideration of Topics for Discussion at Future BOS Meetings

Topics from Mr. Olson:

- Water issues – addressing all aspects in one meeting
- Waste/recycle/compost guidelines
- Potential joint meeting with Wenham's BOS

Mr. Lawrence said the document concerning the Town's water history from DPW Director Tim Olson was excellent.

Mr. Farrell will email a list of topics to Mr. Hubbard (those the BOS hadn't gotten to yet).

Mr. Domelowicz noted the auditors were scheduled to come to the April 29 meeting and right now there would be three BOS meetings in a row. The BOS decided to keep the April 29 meeting but make it a short agenda.

Mr. Farrell suggested that after that, the BOS go back to its original cadence of meeting the first and third Mondays of the month.

Topic from Ms. Kennedy:

- Reinstating the Town's wetlands protection bylaw (with possibility of making it happen prior to Fall Town Meeting).

Topics from Ms. Dale:

- Shared services with Wenham or other towns
- Rezoning the 20 acres on Chebacco Road (the property upland) to something like light industrial or R&D to help start a commercial tax base there. Mr. Domelowicz clarified she was talking about the Town-owned property where the solar array is.
- The possibility of having an ambulance service to better serve the senior population and also enhance revenue.
- Transitioning Winthrop School for senior housing.
- Solar energy. (She would like to continue working with Energy Manager Vicki Masone on solar energy issues.)
- Cutting down on litigation and litigation costs.
- Relooking at a 2009 DLS [Division of Local Services] study about regionalizing the police department as a cost-saving measure.
- Asking State Senator Bruce Tarr and State Representative Brad Hill to come up with a mechanism that small towns can use as PILOT to get services in kind. [Many nonprofits act as profit centers, she said, diverting profits to expenses such as cars, real estate, and bonuses; she wants to take a look at that.]

The BOS took a short break at 8:03 p.m. prior to the start of their Executive Session. Town Counsel Donna Brewer arrived.

Prepared by:

Mary Alice Cookson, 5-20-19
Mary Alice Cookson Date
Minutes Secretary

Attest:

Darcy Dale, 05-20-19
Darcy Dale Date
Board of Selectmen Clerk