

HAMILTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

MINUTES OF MEETING

Teleconference

February 1, 2021

Selectmen Present:	Chair Shawn Farrell, Darcy Dale, Rosemary Kennedy, and Jamie Knudsen
Selectmen Absent:	William Olson
Town Manager:	Joe Domelowicz Jr.
Other Staff Present:	Recreation Director Sean Timmons

** This meeting was conducted via Zoom teleconference with all the above participants remaining in their homes.*

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Board of Selectmen (BOS) Chair Shawn Farrell called the Zoom meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. and took roll call. He said William Olson would not be joining the meeting. Present along with Mr. Farrell were: Darcy Dale, Rosemary Kennedy, and Jamie Knudsen. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Announcement of Board and Committee Openings

- Human Rights Commission—five openings
- Hamilton Historic District Commission—two openings
- Zoning Board of Appeals—one opening
- Community Preservation Committee (CPC)—one opening
- Conservation Commission—one opening
- Open Space Committee—one opening

Public Comment

None.

Selectmen/Town Manager (TM) Reports

Mr. Knudsen gave no report.

Ms. Kennedy said the Conservation Commission (ConCom) had an applicant with a varied background in conservation and hoped she would apply. The Town Hall Building Committee (THBC) met last week and did an analysis of how it could have done a better job informing the public about the Town Hall renovation project.

Ms. Dale reported that at a joint Capital Committee (CapCom) and Finance and Advisory Committee (FinCom) meeting last week, they were in the process of prioritizing capital projects over the next five to 15 years, including some regarding Town water issues (sources, storage, and distribution), the Public Safety Building needing major roof repairs, HVAC work at the Hamilton Wenham Library, and Emergency Center Operations repeaters, and looking at where the money will come from. The THBC held a brainstorming session and will meet again this Thursday about refining its technique and reaching out to more people about the Town Hall renovation.

Mr. Farrell said the Hamilton and Wenham BOS and FinCom chairs met this afternoon with School Committee Chair Michelle Bailey, School Superintendent Mary Beth Banios, and Vincent Leone, Assistant Superintendent to Finance & Administration. He described it as an early release on their thoughts about the school budget ask and items within it, and were brainstorming on how to reduce the rate of increase and let the community know what they are asking. Mr. Farrell said he had expressed Hamilton's concerns. [Last year an increase of about 8.5% over the previous year was requested; in other years, the proposed increase was about 5%.] Mr. Farrell said this year was tough in light of the current climate (pandemic, job losses) and said many parents of school-age children are unhappy with the school year. There was discussion about health insurance for school employees and replacing the FTEs (full-time equivalents) the Schools lost last year. If they don't replace the FTEs, the Schools may lose some programming and be knocked down in ranking. Mr. Farrell said he believes there's good parental support within the community and for this reason, students do well.

Town Manager Domelowicz Jr. said that also discussed at the joint meeting was the application through the MSBA [Massachusetts School Building Authority] for a new elementary school and there's likelihood of hearing back in April. The whole process has about a five- to seven-year timeframe. After acceptance into the MSBA program, a ballot question to the Town would be needed. Mr. Farrell said potential locations for the proposed new building included the existing Cutler School or it could be somewhere in Wenham. He said this would be addressed during Hamilton's Master Plan process. Mr. Farrell said he heard the permit for the cell tower behind Town Hall was expected to be taken out soon; Mr. Domelowicz confirmed that.

Mr. Domelowicz' Town Manager report will be posted online tomorrow. He said he was pleased to report the Town is having its first COVID vaccination clinic for the first phase under State guidelines this Saturday. There is a limited amount of vaccine so some people will need to be waitlisted. The Town also did some vaccinations of homebound seniors. He said the Town was partnering with others in the area to meet the local demand. Ms. Dale

asked the ages of the participants; Mr. Domelowicz replied 75 and older or 65 with two co-morbidities. At a certain point, he said the Town will start sharing the vaccines with teachers. Ms. Dale asked if it were true that the Town was only getting about 100 doses. He said yes, and they needed to register enough people to utilize those doses. Mr. Domelowicz added that COVID testing is continuing and will be held at the Miles River Middle School on Feb. 13. He reminded everyone the free tests are for those with symptoms or who have had close contact a person who is COVID-positive. Those who want the test for other reasons may self-pay (\$85). He reported other good news that the Town received a Winter Shared Streets and Spaces \$64,800 grant, designed to make outdoor public spaces more user-friendly and multifunctional. The grant will go toward work along Railroad Avenue and Willow Street to connect Patton Park to the downtown shopping district, create bike lanes, and add electrical outlets for providing outdoor lighting and electricity that may be used for Town festivals.

Mr. Farrell added road crews have been replacing fire hydrants and 11 were done.

CONSENT AGENDA

- Approve Minutes from the Nov. 9, Dec. 7, and Dec. 21, 2020 BOS meetings.
- Approve Community House request to use Patton Park for Bunny in the Park.

Gail Lull of The Community House was present to answer questions. Mr. Farrell asked if a Bunny in the Park event was held last year. She replied no, but said they had Santa in the Park that went well. She cited a high demand for these events.

Decision:

Ms. Dale made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from Nov. 9, Dec. 7, and Dec. 21, 2020 and request for the Bunny in the Park event. Ms. Kennedy seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken with "ayes" from Ms. Dale, Ms. Kennedy, Mr. Knudsen, and Mr. Farrell, (4-0) unanimous among those present.

DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT

Recreation Director Sean Timmons to Update the BOS

Mr. Timmons said the Recreation (Rec) Department was nearing the end of the first session of its two-session winter programming. He said the numbers were strong and program was going well. The spring program brochure is complete and will be mailed out on Friday. Spring programming starts after April vacation and runs to the start of summer. Normally the spring and summer brochure come out at the same time with registration beginning March 1; however, this year, because they aren't sure of State guidelines or how things will trend, they are delaying the summer brochure, which covers the park program and Town pool. Recruitment for summer staff has also begun.

Mr. Farrell asked if there will be a lifeguard shortage as in the past. Mr. Timmons said he didn't think so. They would not need as many because they will probably need to have a reservation-style program for the pool. Last summer, State guidelines allowed a max of 40% capacity. Lifeguard certification programs in the area were stopped, but are now running again, so he hoped to get the lifeguards they've had in the past recertified as soon as possible. Mr. Farrell inquired about basketball and about field issues. Mr. Timmons talked about how vaccination clinics happening at the schools have affected youth sports. Last year there wasn't any spring sports season so they are looking forward to it this year. He noted the Rec. Dept. is requesting a CPC grant to resurface the Patton Park tennis courts.

Mr. Timmons discussed the proposed warrant article to combine the Rec. Dept.'s revolving general fund and pool fund. He said the idea was presented at a joint FinCom meeting last week and there was agreement. He said the Rec Dept. would still be able to provide the same reports they've been providing; the merging of the two funds would just allow more flexibility. Mr. Domelowicz supplied some more reasoning. He said last year there was a shortage of about \$850 in one fund and a warrant article was needed to make the transfer from the pool fund to the general fund. If the funds are combined, that won't be necessary in the future. Also, some of the money in the general fund was from the old pool anyway. Also, he said when people pay by credit card for multiple Rec programs, they pay one total and the staff is having to separate the payments into the different funds. If they combine them, that won't be necessary.

Ms. Kennedy wanted more information on cost of the tennis court resurfacing and why it wouldn't be an appropriate expense for the Rec Dept.'s revolving fund. Mr. Timmons said cost was about \$45K. He explained the revolving fund lost \$136K in income last year (was cut in half from what it normally brings in) and while usually they would split a cost 60-40 or 70-30 with the CPC, there's a rule the Rec. Dept. can only expend the amount it brings in. Since there's no charge to the public for using the tennis courts, they don't take in any revenue that could be expended on that work. Ms. Kennedy said it seems everybody goes to the CPC for funds for everything and wondered why at least part of it wouldn't be funded by the Rec. Dept. in light of the other large-scale items currently being underwritten by the CPC. She recalled the basketball hoops were redone with CPC funds also. Mr. Timmons said they can discuss it, but the Dept. didn't have the funds to do the work. Ms. Dale asked if Wenham would pitch in; Mr. Domelowicz said the courts were a Town of Hamilton resource.

Mr. Farrell asked if Wenham has talked about repurposing its tennis courts for some other thing, such as a skate park, as was discussed 18 months to 2 years ago. Mr. Timmons replied no, and said everything will depend on future plans for the schools.

AGENDA

Approve Date for Budget and Capital Presentation to the Joint Committees

Mr. Domelowicz said some adjustments were made to the draft calendar of the events leading up to Town Meeting and some dates were pushed back by about a week. He shared

a blank February calendar onscreen to show dates. He said Saturday, Feb. 20, at 9 a.m. was proposed for a joint Zoom meeting with the FinCom regarding the budget and capital requests. FinCom had said that date would work for them. Mr. Farrell reminded everyone Feb. 10 was set for a joint meeting with Wenham and the School Committee regarding the school budget.

Decision:

Ms. Dale made a motion that the BOS convene the meeting [for the Budget and Capital Presentation] on Feb. 20 at 9 a.m. via Zoom. Mr. Knudsen seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken with “ayes” from Ms. Kennedy, Mr. Knudsen, Ms. Dale, and Mr. Farrell, (4-0) unanimous among those present.

Mr. Domelowicz said he would inform FinCom Chair who would inform the members.

Vote to Open the Warrant for the May 1, 2021 Annual Town Meeting (ATM)

Decision:

Ms. Dale made a motion to open the ATM warrant. Ms. Kennedy seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken with “ayes” from Ms. Kennedy, Mr. Knudsen, Ms. Dale, and Mr. Farrell, (4-0) unanimous among those present.

• **Discuss Possible Warrant Articles**

Mr. Domelowicz shared the 2021 Spring Annual Town Meeting Projected Warrant Articles list, which was fairly short and includes all the proposed warrant articles for consideration so far. Included were the following:

- Town Hall Building Project—Mr. Domelowicz explained that the ballot/election would need to be made by September if ATM decides to go ahead with the project; ATM has a longer timeframe between the Town Meeting and ballot than there is for STM (which is within five days).
- Merge Pool and Recreation Revolving Accounts—previously discussed.
- Increase CPC surcharge from 2% to 3% (this requires a petition campaign).
- Capital Plan—Mr. Domelowicz said they are trying to keep the capital request for FY’22 as low as possible.
- Chebacco Road Project—to seek State approval to revise the CR [conservation restriction]. The land to be moved when paving the road is conservation land so will need approval of Hamilton’s ConCom and also of Manchester’s ATM since they are the property owner. Following that, the Town Meeting article will require State approval.

Mr. Knudsen confirmed with Mr. Domelowicz there are no citizen petitions currently.

Discuss and Approve a Date for the Human Rights Commission Forum

The proposed date for the Human Rights Commission Forum is Feb. 23. A potential moderator and featured speakers have been identified and are pending. Mr. Domelowicz said if the BOS and participants agree on the date, they can schedule a planning committee meeting this week to finalize the program. A suggested time of either 6:30 or 7 p.m. was proposed for the two-hour event. Ms. Kennedy preferred 6:30, but one of the speakers is traveling that day and might prefer the later time. Ms. Kennedy and Ms. Knudsen, who both serve on the planning committee, and Mr. Domelowicz will work out the details.

Discuss and Approve a Date for an OML [Open Meeting Law]/Minutes Keeping Seminar

Town Counsel KP Law has agreed to do a seminar on OML for new board members and minutes takers. The seminar will last about an hour. Mr. Farrell suggested a Monday evening, perhaps March 8 or 22, at 6:30 p.m., and the BOS agreed to the proposed dates. Mr. Domelowicz will work out the details with KP Law.

Town Manager (TM) Evaluation and Discussion of Next Steps

Mr. Farrell said all the data from the BOS evaluations of the TM had not yet been compiled but will be completed by the next meeting. The TM contract is up soon, and Mr. Farrell suggested designating someone to meet with Mr. Domelowicz (in person or Zoom) about his contract and see what changes he proposes and bring back the info. to the BOS for discussion. Ms. Dale and Ms. Kennedy volunteered. Mr. Farrell will forward his copy of the contract to them and the other members.

Mr. Farrell said he received the employee surveys from the department heads, which he will distribute to the BOS.

Consideration of Topics for Discussion at Future BOS Meetings

None discussed.

Mr. Farrell said the DPW [Department of Public Works] just informed him the snow prediction for this evening was lowered and may amount to rain instead of snow.

Adjournment

Ms. Dale made a motion to adjourn the BOS meeting at 7:36 p.m. Ms. Kennedy seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken with "ayes" from Ms. Kennedy, Ms. Dale, Mr. Knudsen, and Mr. Farrell, (4-0) unanimous among those present.

Cemetery Deeds

#1204 was on the agenda for BOS signatures.

Prepared by:

Mary Alice Cookson, 3/1/2021
Mary Alice Cookson Date
Minutes Secretary

Attest:

Jamie Knudsen, 3/4/2021
Jamie Knudsen Date
Board of Selectmen Clerk

Documents Discussed at Meeting:

- Town Manager Report to the BOS—Mon. Feb. 1, 2021
- Minutes of BOS, Nov. 9, 2020, Dec. 7, 2020, and Dec. 21, 2020, Minutes Secretary Mary Alice Cookson
- Memo from Gail Lull, event manager of The Community House, to Pat Shannon regarding Bunny in the Park event
- February calendar—blank form to look at dates.
- 2021 Spring Annual Town Meeting Projected Warrant Articles