

HAMILTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

MINUTES OF MEETING

Teleconference

January 19, 2021

Selectmen Present:	Chair Shawn Farrell, William Olson, Darcy Dale, Rosemary Kennedy, and Jamie Knudsen
Town Manager:	Joe Domelowicz Jr.
Other Town Staff Present:	Tim Olson, Department of Public Works Director

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

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Shawn Farrell called the Board of Selectmen (BOS) teleconference to order at 6:34 p.m. and took a roll call. All BOS members were present. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Board and Committee Openings

- Council on Aging (COA)—two openings
- Human Rights Commission—five openings
- Hamilton Historic District Commission (HHDC)—two openings
- Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)—opening
- Community Preservation Committee (CPC)—opening
- Conservation Commission—opening
- Open Space Committee—opening

The closing of election applications is March 18. Mr. Domelowicz said Town Clerk Carin Kale is providing information from the State on the Town website about safe ways to obtain the necessary 50 “wet-ink” signatures during this time of COVID.

Selectmen/Town Manager (TM) Reports

William Olson reported that they are reviewing an application from a candidate who had applied to be a Planning Board associate member.

Darcy Dale said the Finance and Advisory Committee (FinCom) was reviewing the FY'22 budget in preparation for making recommendations. The Town Hall Building Committee (THBC) is reconvening on Wed. Information is getting out and people are talking about the composting program. She hoped that conversation would be ongoing up to the May roll-out.

Rosemary Kennedy discussed recent Conservation Committee (ConCom) activities. First was a site walk for the delineation of wetlands for 9 units on 0 Bridge St.; the ConCom voted they were delineated properly. The Chebacco Road paving project approved at Town Meeting last year does not have a start date yet. She said when the project was approved, there was no opposition, but on a recent Zoom call there were three residents who voiced concerns about the narrow winding road, traffic speed, and parking. The road directly abuts wetlands and not much can be done about that. The ConCom is looking at improvements to the abutments at Beck's Pond. She said another item, although not in the hands of ComCon, is the potential 60 units proposed at 133 Essex St. Regarding the Town Hall Building Committee—she said it was discussing 300 Bridget St. as a potential site for Town Hall. There are 10 acres with the property that could be helpful to the Town in terms of playing fields, but Ms. Kennedy had contacted the auctioneer about scheduling a walk-thru and because it is an auction, walk-throughs are not available. She said pledging \$1M for a nebulous site was unreasonable so they will not be bidding.

Mr. Knudsen gave no report.

Mr. Farrell met with Waste Reduction Committee members Gretel Clark (Chair) and Anne Gero. The two had spoken with a high school environmental club with 80 student members wanting to help out the Town. Ideas proposed include creating some videos with composting tips or contributing some money for bio-bags or media support. He noted high school kids often educate their parents on environmental issues like this. Mr. Farrell also said he had received many emails and is answering them concerning 133 Essex. There is no project in front of the BOS yet so they can't speak to it. On another matter, he said no building permit had been pulled yet for the cell tower behind Town Hall.

Mr. Domelowicz said he will share his Town Manager report online. He yielded his time to Police Chief Russell Stevens and Fire Chief Ray Brunet.

Public Comment

Police Chief Stevens introduced the newest sergeant for the Hamilton Police Dept., Matthew Donovan (not present online due to prior engagement) and detailed his impressive history and resume. Fire Chief Brunet introduced Andrew Ellison (who was present). Mr. Ellison was promoted to captain. Mr. Domelowicz commented that recent retirements were tough on the two departments but created opportunity for employees who deserved a chance to step up.

CONSENT AGENDA

- Approve Minutes of the Oct. 26, 2020 and Nov. 9, 2020 Meetings
- Accept donation to the Hamilton Fire Department

Ms. Kennedy asked to hold the Nov. 9, 2020 Minutes until the next meeting to have more time to review.

Decision 1:

Ms. Dale made a motion to approve the donation (\$100) to the Hamilton Fire Dept. Ms. Kennedy seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken with “ayes” from Mr. Olson, Ms. Dale, Ms. Kennedy, Mr. Knudsen, and Mr. Farrell, (5-0) unanimous.

Decision 2:

Ms. Dale made motion to approve the Oct. 26, 2020 minutes. Ms. Kennedy seconded the motion.

Further Discussion:

Ms. Kennedy made two small edits: The first was to her ConCom report, adding language: “current is 50-foot no-disturb and 75-feet no-build” and changing “State guidelines” to “State statute.” The second pertained to her language in the discussion of the Home Rule petition in which she wanted to clarify her intention in a statement and asked that “is not included” be changed to “is included.”

Decision 2 (Continued):

A roll-call vote was taken on the amended Oct. 26 minutes with “ayes” from Mr. Olson, Ms. Dale, Ms. Kennedy, Mr. Knudsen, and Mr. Farrell, (5-0) unanimous.

AGENDA

Consider Interim Appointment of Bill Bowler as Chair of the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)

Mr. Domelowicz said they had a sudden departure on the ZBA and another member is out of state attending a family matter so they reached out to former chair Bill Bowler and also asked if the person who is out of state could participate remotely. Mr. Bowler agreed to fill the one vacancy on a temporary basis until the Board was fully staffed. Permission was granted for the other member to participate while out of state. Some pending issues before the ZBA were discussed. Mr. Knudsen had a question on procedure because the openings were not advertised. Mr. Domelowicz said it is OK for Mr. Bowler to fill in as it is not a permanent replacement. Ms. Dale asked what the time interval would be and he said they could leave it open-ended.

Decision:

Ms. Dale made a motion that the BOS approve the appointment of Bill Bowler to an interim term for the ZBA through June 30. Ms. Kennedy seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken with “ayes” from Mr. Olson, Ms. Dale, Ms. Kennedy, Mr. Knudsen, and Mr. Farrell, (5-0) unanimous.

Consider Appointments to Fill Vacancies on the Hamilton COA

Both candidates to be considered were COA alternates who the COA voted to recommend.

Decision:

Ms. Dale made a motion that the BOS approve the appointments of Catherine Minnetyan and Adam Strozier to the Hamilton COA to fill the vacancies. Mr. Olson seconded the motion.

Further Discussion:

Ms. Kennedy expressed that she had thought the BOS was going to make it a point to talk with the candidates before voting. Mr. Farrell explained the invite to them had been lost in the mix of waiting on the COA recommendations.

Decision (Continued):

A roll-call vote was taken with “ayes” from Mr. Olson, Ms. Dale, Ms. Kennedy, Mr. Knudsen, and Mr. Farrell, (5-0) unanimous.

Consider Water Abatement Application—710 Bay Road

Mr. Farrell referred the BOS to the abatement application included in the BOS packet. Department of Public Works Director Tim Olson was present online for questions. There were none.

Decision:

Ms. Dale made a motion to approve the water abatement for 710 Bay Road. Mr. Olson seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken with “ayes” from Mr. Olson, Ms. Dale, Ms. Kennedy, Mr. Knudsen, and Mr. Farrell, (5-0) unanimous.

Department Head Report—Tim Olson, DPW Director

Mr. Domelowicz asked to take this agenda item out of order to accommodate Mr. [Tim] Olson. Permission was granted by BOS chair.

Mr. [Tim] Olson said his biggest time-consuming project was the new change to the Waste Reduction program and fielding calls on composting. He gave some stats--free-bin applications (80) and delivery (35); 168 more bins were ordered; 40 exemption requests. The plan is to inspect residents’ backyard composting to determine if they qualify for exemption. He should be getting the exemption stickers by month-end. He is working to finalize the contract with Brick Ends Farm for composting. He would like to publicize

where the compost goes and that residents can use that compost, which is free, but the Town does monitor it. He's working on a solid waste survey with grant money for that.

Mr. [Tim] Olson said he's been doing budget reporting on facilities, including interior work at Patton Homestead (bathrooms). There was a roof leak at the Public Safety Building. A contractor is coming in to fix. He serves on the THBC that is meeting tomorrow. The DPW is replacing 10 fire hydrants that have been inoperable for years. The Town is in the preliminary design stage for the water pretreatment system that should be finalized by the end of the month and submitted to DEP [Department of Environmental Protection]. Construction should take 8 months or so he said in reply to a question from Mr. Farrell. A fire panel needed to be replaced at the water plant, which isn't high cost and needs to be done. The School Street well building had some leaks. There was vandalism at the plateau building. After settlement in court, DPW is repairing the door. Routine maintenance and tree trimming is being conducted on roads.

Mr. [Tim] Olson said the Chebacco Road paving project he's working on involves large permitting and environmental issues. Approval was received from Mass DEP for that. He wants to hold another public presentation on it in mid-Feb. Hamilton will need a new easement from Manchester that will have to go through Manchester's Annual Town Meeting (ATM) and then Hamilton will have to petition the State regarding the conservation restriction there. Mr. Farrell said Hamilton will likely have something on its ATM warrant regarding the easement. Mr. Domelowicz noted it will be easier to get State approval if Manchester aligns with Hamilton in the project. Mr. Farrell said the gravel of the roadway is being pushed into vernal pools now and once paved, that won't happen. Also, there will be a controlled drainage system added with permitting. Ms. Kennedy asked about trees that would be cut down. She said the plan was to allow it to naturally reforest, but she asked if the Town could help with re-treeing to help that process along. He said yes there are ways to do that. He said not many trees will be taken down. While disturbing one habitat, they are creating another and making the existing habitat in the area healthier.

Ms. Kennedy inquired about sink-side compost bins for residents. Mr. [Tim] Olson said they have about 15 left over from 2012 on hand. He said many people prefer to choose their own; some use bio bags. He recommended leaving it to personal choice but said the Town is supplying the green bins. Ms. Kennedy inquired if residents could put in applications for those remaining sink-side bins. Mr. Domelowicz said perhaps they might ask people in a survey whether they would want one if offered. Then they can evaluate based on whether there is a need.

Ms. Kennedy commented Patton Park was in a messy state one day and she noticed the next day it was cleaned up. She wanted to know who to thank. Mr. [Tim] Olson replied an employee was at the park daily. She asked if there were trash cans in the park. The answer was yes. He added they were doing some drainage work at the park. Other items he discussed were that Sharon Road was officially closed and stones and deflectors had been installed. Waterline improvements were made on some streets. Paving is being done. He is working on drainage near Miles River and Bridget St. There was work done at the cemetery regarding grub treatment and hydroseed. Ms. Kennedy asked about a maintenance

program to treat for grubs. He said it would be done in April or May. He said the Town should take a look at its cemetery rates in comparison with other towns. He reported that the DPW mechanic is retiring in June after 37 years, a big loss, and he hopes to bring in the new hire a few months prior so the two can overlap for training. He said the DPW was up to date with permitting for the storm water system. Plans were approved and submitted on time. He is working on the Master Plan RFP now.

Mr. Farrell said a couple of years ago they had a ticketing system whereby if a resident saw something in Town, they could call the system and generate a work ticket. Mr. [Tim] Olson said he recently changed to a new system and they do create work orders for the crews utilizing that software. It helps with forecasting and coordinating projects also. Mr. Farrell said he remembered when a consultant came in and assessed the condition of the roads. Mr. [Tim] Olson said that was for asphalt only, but the DPW likes to pair that with water line work when they do the scheduling.

The last item discussed was whether the BOS would consider having a liaison to the DPW because Mr. [Tim] Olson always has a long list of things to report. Ms. Dale asked if that could fall on Mr. Domelowicz. Mr. [Tim] Olson said it would benefit him to have more communication with the BOS as they see things arise and for them to follow up with him. Mr. Farrell suggested the Town Manager Report include a "DPW Corner" to open up a gateway and generate more dialogue. Ms. Kennedy said she thought it would be good if Mr. Domelowicz could update them more about some of the larger DPW projects. She said she enjoys checking in with the DPW directly also. Mr. [Tim] Olson was thanked and left the meeting.

Human Rights Commission (HRC) Forum Discussion

Mr. Knudsen and Ms. Kennedy are involved in the planning of the forum. Mr. Domelowicz said the BOS had set a target date of Jan. 25. He will be in contact tomorrow with the head of the Dedham HRC, who established the commission back in the 1990s. He suggested that if the date was moved back a bit, he could have this person talk to the various members involved in the planning. Ms. Kennedy commented that she, Mr. Knudsen, and Mr. Domelowicz had had a conversation on it and she is very much in support of the Commission and excited about it. Mr. Knudsen said he thought they should push the date back so they can encourage more participation. Mr. Olson liked that Mr. Domelowicz had reached out to the other town. All agreed they should give it more time.

Mr. Farrell said they had received some applications (about 4) for HRC appointments and wanted Mr. Domelowicz to write a letter back to them to advise them of the status. He said one applicant was for the student member position. Mr. Farrell said he wanted to be cognizant of the Appointments Policy in light of this.

Mr. Farrell asked if there should be a timeline for accepting applications or if they should take a wait-and-see approach. Wait-and-see was decided. Mr. Knudsen said there were some hard timelines in the Appointments Policy they should adhere to, but the part where it says that the HRC makes a recommendation can't happen because there is no HRC yet.

Mr. Farrell said perhaps they could have a grace period to cover that. He cited from the policy that the timeline should be no less than 30 days and no longer than 60 days. Ms. Kennedy said they should make sure they have the structure in place before filling the positions. She, Mr. Knudsen and Mr. Domelowicz will meet to discuss plans tomorrow for the upcoming forum.

Master Plan Steering Committee Discussion

Mr. Domelowicz said he and Mr. [Tim] Olson were working on the Master Plan procurement. Then a Master Plan Steering Committee would be set up to elicit as much input from the community as possible. His suggested goal was to have the group (7-9 members with only 3-4 from established boards and the rest new people) to work with the consultants.

Mr. Farrell noted the Master Plan for Housing and the Master Plan for the Open Place and Recreation had already been completed. He said they wanted to see if they could get a good cross-section of opinions to determine majority opinion. Mr. Domelowicz cited some criteria that will be on the RFP to identify the right consultant for the Town. He added that he would like to have a Hamilton resident from the School Committee as a member. If they try to represent all the Town boards, they might lose the ability to get new thought from those outside of the boards. Mr. Farrell said they could use best practices from other communities to see how they've done it and encouraged the BOS to reach out to other towns.

Ms. Kennedy's comment was that the last Master Plan was done in 2005. She said she was impressed with the amount of work that went into it and hoped they would consider looking to that document for guidance as the Town thinks about its future. She said the 2016 survey backed up what was said in 2005. Mr. Olson agreed they should go back and use that document and thought it was a great idea. Mr. Domelowicz said the consultant could conduct focus groups with people outside of the committees that are represented so they hit all the areas. The purpose of a Steering Committee was not to leave anyone out but to make the process so it wasn't unwieldy.

Mr. Domelowicz said they would have RFP for the consultant advertised by the second week of February. He said that when they get to the interview stage, they might like to have the Steering Committee in place to get their suggestions for who to reach out to by March.

Tosh Blake, 217 Sagamore St., a resident who called in to the Zoom meeting, had a question regarding the hiring of the Master Plan consultant. Mr. Domelowicz detailed the process as outlined by State law starting with the procurement. Mr. Blake asked who would ultimately be choosing the consultant; Mr. Domelowicz said that would be he and those under him following the State process; the Steering Committee would be appointed by the BOS. Mr. Blake said he was concerned about a consultant having a political agenda regarding housing and wanted to see a neutral stance taken. Mr. Domelowicz said good firms don't engage their personal beliefs and don't make recommendations. He said it will be an open process and they were hoping for a lot of citizen engagement.

Regional School District & Services Discussion Consideration of Topics for Discussion at Future BOS Meetings

Mr. Farrell acknowledged there were some School Committee members present for the discussion, including School Committee Chair Michelle Bailey who was present online for questions. He said that if they agreed to open up the Hamilton Wenham Regional School Agreement, they wanted to discuss what they might be looking at. In the BOS packets were the original amendments to the 1959 and 2010 amendments. Mr. Farrell shared his screen to display the 2010 Amendment.

Ms. Dale gave suggested changes to the document. She commented she would like "Election of Members" to apportion the membership to reflect the taxpayer distribution of each Town. Where it says "the annual district election should be held on a day in May," she said that actually should state within five days of the ATM. She advocated that the School Committee nomination process be handled through the two town clerks and not by the School Administration secretary for transparency sake. She said both towns should be aware of the candidates in real time as they apply. She said the candidates' towns should be stated. (It says in the agreement document that a person's town should not be stated.) She posed an idea that each town have its own elementary school and just have a regionalized middle school and high school. The agreement says there is one elementary school in each town so that should be fixed unless one school should be located in each. Mr. Farrell said the issue with that is that some specializations are handled at just one of the schools. Ms. Dale noted that Hamilton hosts most of the schools in its town so a lot of the costs of maintenance for them falls on Hamilton taxpayers. Her point was that the School Committee representatives need to reflect the population distributions in both towns.

Mr. Olson said the agreement only mentioned one audit and they should have a yearly audit. Also it was noted that it said the cost should not exceed the sum of \$90K, which might not be realistic in today's dollars. Ms. Bailey said the document was referring to a one-time operational audit, but they do have an annual audit.

Mr. Farrell noted that when he looked through the agreement it mentions the elementary schools, but not the middle or high school when it discusses the school buildings. Ms. Bailey said that is because the middle and high schools are owned by the Regional School District but the elementary school buildings are owned by the towns. Mr. Olson wanted the requirements of having a capital plan added and wanted something added about funding O.P.E.B. (other post-employment benefits). Mr. Farrell wanted to have some type of mechanism added regarding what was allowed pertaining to increases to the school budget each year. Ms. Kennedy said that along with the operational audit, it is important to understand where the money is going. Ms. Dale and Ms. Kennedy both commented on having a tie-in between the two towns regarding employee COLAs (cost of living adjustments) and increases so they were on par with each other. The fact that Mr. Domelowicz had foregone his COLA was acknowledged.

Mr. Farrell said there is a date for working on apportionment figures for how many kids are enrolled from each town. Part of what they look at should be the real estate in both towns. Also, he recommended a lease review, especially since there's been talk of new buildings which could be problematic depending on the lease terms. Ms. Bailey said they needed to look at whether the goal was to apportion the number of students or to even out the apportionment. This discussion will be ongoing.

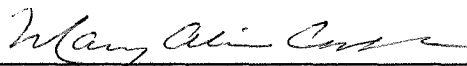
Consideration of Topics for Discussion at Future BOS Meetings

None discussed. Mr. Farrell invited the BOS to call or email him as topics arise.

Adjournment

Ms. Dale made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:04 p.m. Ms. Kennedy seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken with "ayes" from Mr. Olson, Ms. Dale, Ms. Kennedy, Mr. Knudsen, and Mr. Farrell, (5-0) unanimous.

Prepared by:

 3-15-2021
Mary Alice Cookson Date
Minutes Secretary

Attest:

 3/17/2021
Jamie Knudsen Date
Board of Selectmen Clerk

Documents Discussed at Meeting:

- Minutes of BOS, Oct. 26, 2020 and Nov. 9, 2020, Mary Alice Cookson
- Copy of donation check for \$100 to the Hamilton Fire Dept.
- Letter from Patrick Reffett to Joe Domelowicz Jr. re: appointment of Bill Bowler to ZBA
- Applications for COA appointments
- Water abatement application for 710 Bay Rd.
- Original amendments to the 1959 and 2010 amendments to the Hamilton Wenham Regional School District agreement