

HAMILTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

MINUTES OF MEETING

Memorial Room, Town Hall, 577 Bay Road

July 6, 2021

Selectmen Present at Town Hall: Chair William Olson, Jamie Knudsen,
Rosemary Kennedy, and Shawn Farrell

Selectmen Present Online: Darcy Dale

Town Manager: Joe Domelowicz Jr.

**The Board of Selectmen meeting was held at Town Hall with an online/Zoom option offered.*

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Chair William Olson called the Selectboard/Board of Selectmen (BOS) meeting to order at approximately 7 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Four of the five members were present in the Memorial Room at Town Hall; one member, Darcy Dale, participated via Zoom. **Note: The Board of Selectmen is informally known as the Selectboard.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS & BOARD OPENINGS

Board and Committee Openings

- Finance and Advisory Committee (FinCom)—one opening and two associate member openings
- Conservation Commission (ConCom)—one opening
- Hamilton Historic District Commission—one opening
- Zoning Board of Appeals—one opening
- Open Space Committee—two openings
- Planning Board—one associate member opening

Public Comment

Peter Britton, 466 Highland St, said he has been in extensive discussion for years with Kevin Kaminski, curator of the State property at 550 Highland St. The Board of Assessors had imposed a property tax about 13 years ago and by the time that situation was discovered, Mr. Kaminski and his wife, Maureen Clarke, had paid \$13,256.07 in property

taxes, which the Treasurer of the Town of Hamilton has now declared to be invalid per the Home Rule petition. Mr. Britton said Mr. Olson had written a letter to the Kaminski-Clarks saying the BOS had directed Town Counsel to reach out to them, but Mr. Britton said there had been no attempt by Counsel to communicate with them. Mr. Britton said the only option was for the BOS, which is empowered to refund taxes and reclassify property, to vote ASAP to issue the refund check. Mr. Olson said the BOS worked hard as a board to change how they were taxing the property and what he wrote in his letter was true and accurate.

Selectmen/Town Manager (TM) Reports

Mr. Farrell gave no report.

Ms. Kennedy said the first in-person meeting of the Master Plan Steering Committee was last Thursday and there will be another this week on July 8. Jack Lawrence was elected Chair and Kristina Caswell, Vice Chair. The ConCom had a meeting last week and the subject was the 133 Essex St. project and how a request for approval should be presented. The discussion is ongoing. Ms. Kennedy said there was lots of info. given by the attorney and abutters to the property. Another ConCom meeting will be held July 14 and there will be a site walk on Friday (July 9). Ms. Kennedy said she was organizing a garden party at the Patton Homestead for seniors on Aug. 14, presented by the BOS in conjunction with the COA. She said Mr. Farrell had volunteered to be a waiter and asked if anyone else wanted to volunteer.

Mr. Knudsen gave no report.

Ms. Dale said she would be helping out with the flowers for the tea/garden party mentioned by Ms. Kennedy.

Mr. Olson noted the Hamilton Wenham Regional School District Superintendent had retired and the School Committee Chair was present this evening for a discussion of the Regional School Agreement.

Town Manager Joe Domelowicz Jr. gave positive comment on the COA Board of Directors' cookout held June 30 at the Senior Center with about 50 people attending. He said the COA was doing a great job keeping the Senior Center open with drop-in hours. The Town is looking for a part-time COA outreach coordinator. Two union contracts—Department of Public Works (DPW) and Emergency Dispatchers—were settled. Rick Campana, longtime DPW mechanic, and COA Director Mary Beth Lawton have retired. Assessor John Speidel and Health Agent Leslie Whelan have left. The Hamilton Wenham Human Rights Coalition hosted a Pride picnic on June 27 at the Patton Homestead, which was well attended by about 400 people.

CONSENT AGENDA

- **Approve minutes of the June 7, 2021 BOS meeting and hearing**

- **Approve request for one-day liquor license for Patton Homestead event**
- **Approve request for one-day liquor license for Community House event**
- **Approve/Declare surplus goods at the Council On Aging**

Decision 1:

Ms. Dale made a motion that the BOS approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Farrell indicated he was not present for the June 7 meeting and for this reason, he amended Ms. Dale’s motion.

Mr. Farrell made a motion that the BOS approve the Consent Agenda items with the exception of the June 7 minutes. Ms. Kennedy seconded the motion. The BOS voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the motion.

Decision 2:

Mr. Farrell made a motion that the BOS approve the June 7, 2021 BOS minutes. Ms. Kennedy seconded the motion. The BOS voted (4-0-1) to approve the minutes. *Mr. Farrell abstained.

Regional School Agreement Update—Discussion

Mr. Olson took the agenda item out of order to accommodate School Committee Chair Dana Allara who was present in person. In addition to being on the School Committee, Ms. Allara is on the Master Plan Steering Committee. Mr. Olson introduced the discussion and said it was to be about process (how to proceed with opening the agreement) rather than specifics of the agreement. All three parties (Hamilton, Wenham, and the Schools) must agree to make it happen. The BOS previously discussed this topic last fall. Mr. Olson noted that since the topic was put on the BOS agenda, the School Superintendent had retired.

Ms. Dale said the BOS should sit down with its counterparts in Wenham and the two towns, which provide the revenue for the Schools, should get on the same page and decide what guardrails to put up to protect the towns. She said showing solidarity was critical, and that the 1959 agreement was a relic of the last century. She said they needed to take a hard look at it and it was a great opportunity to do so.

Ms. Kennedy, who is liaison to the Master Plan Steering Committee, said she thinks the regional agreement is a separate issue from the Master Plan. She suggested looking at other towns’ regional agreements. She said she was surprised in looking at the HW agreement that there are things that have not been followed through on.

Mr. Domelowicz said the current agreement established the Regional School District and it lays out how the District will operate and how the two towns are assessed for their shares of the budget. He said it does not consider changes to State law that have been made since that time. He said there should be a way to accomplish both tasks: the hiring of a new superintendent and the updating of the agreement. He said he and Ms. Allara had thought

the discussion with the three parties (Hamilton, Wenham, and the School District) should begin sometime after the next School Committee meeting, which is July 19.

Mr. Farrell suggested sending a letter to the Wenham BOS or holding a joint meeting with the Wenham BOS to agree to reopen the agreement, approaching the School Committee, and then establishing subcommittees as well as holding joint meetings with the two FinComs. He said in some ways it does affect the Master Plan because there has been talk about new school buildings. He noted Hamilton and Wenham share Town Counsel and said they should hire Town Counsel to look at the agreement and then run it by the Schools' Counsel. He suggested starting with the "easy stuff." Ms. Kennedy said she felt they should start by defining their goals rather than by updating the legalese of the document.

Mr. Olson talked about a three-prong approach: looking at goals and needs, looking at other regional agreement models within the state, and editing the current document. Ms. Kennedy volunteered to research agreements of other towns. Ms. Dale said they should be bold and everything should be on the table. Mr. Olson said they should be thoughtful and not rush into it.

Ms. Allara said she can't speak for the School Committee unless she discusses it with them, but she agreed with Ms. Dale and Ms. Kennedy about being bold and articulating what they dream to get out of the agreement. She said that opening up a process after almost 50 years is a bold step and it was OK to take their time. While the School Committee has a lot to do this year and it might be a long process, she doesn't think they need to "kick it down the road" (put it off). Mr. Farrell said he didn't think they should set a timeline because they needed to do their due diligence. Ms. Allara said all three entities are a whole and all have the same goal of success for their community.

Ms. Kennedy confirmed the agreement process was between the School Committee and the two Boards of Selectmen and said the hiring of the new superintendent should not impede the process. Mr. Knudsen said he wouldn't want to rule out the possibility that the Master Plan might have an impact on it. He said he felt that the processes would be coming to fruition over the next year or year and a half. Ms. Kennedy agreed that was a reasonable timeframe.

Mr. Farrell asked about next steps. Mr. Olson said he would reach out to the Wenham BOS, but they should vote to open up the agreement at the next meeting and then get together with Wenham. They also needed to talk to Town Counsel about looking at the agreement and researching other models. Mr. Farrell recommended having Wenham vote on it also. Ms. Kennedy added that she thinks it important for a joint conversation to revolve around needs for the School District and financial necessities. She said it was imperative to look at it realistically and not reach beyond their means.

Mr. Farrell said they need to look at the over/under as far as needs and costs. Ms. Dale said they need to agree on what a basic school day consists of and nail down functionality first and then talk about other things that might be desired. Mr. Olson asked Mr. Domelowicz to re-circulate the latest agreement for them to look at. He asked each of them to come with

ideas about goals, needs, and wants for the School District. Ms. Kennedy said she found joint meetings educational. She advocated having as much full board involvement as possible. Mr. Domelowicz noted Christina Schenk-Hargrove, FinCom chair, was in attendance. Mr. Farrell inquired about the Schools' Counsel and wondered if it would be an additional fee to review the agreement. Ms. Allara guessed yes, but said she would check. She said she would bring the information discussed this evening to the School Committee.

Reappointment of Board of Registrar Walter Leszczynski—Vote

Mr. Domelowicz referred to the letter in the packets from Carin Kale recommending the reappointment of Mr. Leszczynski as registrar. There is a Republican, Democrat, and Independent on the Board; Mr. Leszczynski is the Republican whose term had expired.

Decision:

Ms. Dale made a motion that the BOS reappoint Walter Leszczynski to the Board of Registrars. Mr. Farrell seconded the motion. The BOS voted unanimously (5-0) for the reappointment.

Proposal for new Cemetery Fees—Discussion and Vote

Mr. Domelowicz said he had been asked to discuss the matter with the FinCom and said the FinCom and new Finance Director Alex Magee had recommended approval of the new fee schedule as presented by Department of Public Works (DPW) Director Tim Olson. Ms. Schenk-Hargrove noted that the Fin Com had suggested the fees be reviewed every two years. Ms. Dale said the BOS had discussed reviewing them every three to five years; she was in favor of every three. Mr. [William] Olson noted that would mean once every term. Ms. Kennedy liked the three-year time frame.

Decision:

Mr. Olson entertained a motion that the BOS accept the new cemetery fees with a cadence of reviewing the fees every three years.

Mr. Farrell made the motion presented. Mr. Knudsen seconded the motion.

Further Discussion:

There was a discussion regarding the price of the four-grave lot, which did not give any discount over the single-grave price multiplied by four. Some felt there should be a discount for a family plot. Ms. Schenk-Hargrove said while the FinCom had not discussed it, she wondered why there would be a discount for multiple plots because it isn't like there is less work involved for having more. Ms. Kennedy said she thinks it is a courtesy to not charge full price because often people purchase the additional lots ahead of time and there are gravesites purchased that are then not used for whatever reason. She said she would like the BOS to be understanding since the increase could be "sticker shock." Mr. Olson said when you are buying a multiple plot, you are planning for the future but paying for it now. Mr. Domelowicz said one thing he has heard is that there is limited space and giving the discount would incentivize people to buy now, which means they would be able to

accommodate less people in the future when they run out of room. Ms. Kennedy asked when the new rates would go into effect and the answer was as soon as it is voted. Ms. Dale advocated offering a discount but not making it too steep.

Decision (Continued):

Ms. Kennedy amended the motion made by Mr. Farrell and seconded by Mr. Knudsen to vote to approve the new fee structure with the price of \$700 for an individual lot and a plot of four for \$2,400 with all other costs as proposed. The new rates would be effective immediately. The BOS voted unanimously (5-0) in favor of the amended motion.

Historic Preservation Restriction for First Congregational Church—Vote

Mr. Farrell, who is the BOS liaison to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC), said when the church came to the CPC for the grant, they had previously restored the clock, which had a Historical Preservation Restriction on it that had run out. The CPC wanted to reinvigorate the restriction for the new steeple work and make sure the work adhered to the State and National historic guidelines. The restriction currently before the BOS was drawn up by Town Counsel and the church had agreed to it. All Selectboard members had read the document and felt comfortable voting.

Decision:

Mr. Knudsen made a motion that the BOS approve the Historic Preservation Restriction related to the First Congregational Church of Hamilton. Mr. Farrell seconded the motion.

Further Discussion:

Mr. Knudsen inquired about accountability for the restriction. Mr. Farrell said according to the CPC, accountability and enforcement lies with the Hamilton Historic District Commission (HHDC). The document will be left in the Town Clerk's office for the BOS to sign.

Decision (Continued):

The BOS voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the Historic Preservation Restriction.

Update on anti-bias/sensitivity training—Discussion and Vote

Ms. Dale was tasked with coming up with a plan for the training. She had sent information to the BOS today after meeting for about 40 minutes with Regional Human Resources Director Michellelee Carroll and principals of Diversity at Workplace. She said the group was professional and she felt the BOS would benefit from working with them. They had suggested the BOS start with the unconscious bias training, which is \$4,400 per 90-minute session with up to 35 attendees. The BOS would need to decide who should attend, such as perhaps department heads, assistant department heads, etc. The meeting would be a virtual meeting on Zoom.

It had been discussed at a previous BOS meeting that the training should be kept small for the first session. Mr. Domelowicz said in addition to the BOS, they might want to focus on

supervisors and those who interact with the public. Mr. Olson asked about timing; Ms. Dale said the group had mentioned August. It was decided Ms. Dale would contact the group for dates and times and bring that information back to the Selectboard. Mr. Olson said if it were a Zoom meeting, someone on vacation would still be able to take part.

Decision:

Mr. Farrell made a motion that the BOS authorize Ms. Dale to engage with Diversity at Workplace and Mr. Domelowicz to find a date to move forward with holding a 90-minute training session for up to 35 attendees in August. Ms. Dale seconded the motion.

Further Discussion:

Mr. Knudsen thought the proposal looked good, but noted they had discussed having the first session be just for the BOS and to be in-person. He asked Ms. Dale if she had discussed that option with Diversity at Workplace. She said she would. Mr. Olson suggested the BOS meet at the Patton Homestead and have the Zoom call together and then afterward, hold a team-building strategy session. All agreed they would prefer an in-person event. Mr. Olson suggested a 4 p.m. (late-afternoon) start with dinner afterward. Mr. Domelowicz said it was OK budget-wise.

Decision (Continued):

The BOS voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the motion (above).

New Business/Topics for Future Meetings

- Support for a downtown block party or other event.
- A look at pros and cons of the existing regionalization that has been done and what regionalization to look at in the future. Ms. Kennedy suggested discussing the COA.
- Opening the Special Town Meeting warrant. Mr. Domelowicz said the Oct. 23 date was confirmed with the high school and he had sent in the paperwork.
- Ms. Kennedy said she would like to see the Town institute a modest tree replanting program to replace trees that have come down due to age or disease. She noted the environmental benefits and said significant replanting had been done on Rantoul and Dodge streets in Beverly. She said that with the gift from Institution for Savings last year, two trees are still promised for Linden Street, which has been repaved. Mr. Farrell asked if trees were included in the next cycle for the MVP grant. Mr. Domelowicz said he would check. Mr. Domelowicz noted some recent improvements that were completed, such as curbs downtown, and said signage was purchased for the bike lane and bike racks would be installed.
- Student liaisons to boards and committees.
- Indigenous Land Acknowledgement discussion.
- Policy on third-party flag raising
- ADA-compliance issue at Town Hall

Mr. Knudsen will be the next Selectboard member to assist Mr. Olson and Mr. Domelowicz with agenda setting for the next meeting.

Adjournment

Ms. Dale made a motion to adjourn the meeting for the evening at 8:27 p.m. Ms. Kennedy seconded the motion. The BOS voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn.

Prepared by:

Mary Alice Cookson, 8-2-2021
Mary Alice Cookson Date
Minutes Secretary

Attest:

Darcy Dale, 08-04-2021
Darcy Dale Date
Board of Selectmen Clerk

Documents Discussed at Meeting:

- Minutes from BOS meeting/public hearing on Cable License Renewal of June 7.
- Recommendation letter from Town Clerk Carin Kale regarding Board of Registrars reappointment.
- Historic Preservation Restriction Agreement for the First Congregational Church
- Photos of surplus goods
- 2020-3-10_Cemetery Rate Spreadsheet