

Hopedale Select Board
Meeting Minutes
October 23, 2023
Draper Room 6:30pm

In attendance: Chair Hazard, Mr. Stock, Mr. Savage, Town Administrator Ruscitti
Call to order: 6:33 p.m.

A. Consent Items

1. Review/Approve meeting minutes of March 24, 2022 and November 21, 2022: Motion made by Mr. Stock to approve the meeting minutes of March 24, 2022 and November 21, 2022, seconded by Mr. Savage.

Stock- Aye Savage- Aye Hazard- Aye

B. Appointments & Resignations

1. Appoint Lisa Donovan as Full-Time Public Safety Dispatcher effective October 23, 2023: Motion made by Mr. Stock to appoint Lisa Donovan as Full-Time Public Safety Dispatcher effective October 23, 2023, seconded by Mr. Savage.

Stock- Aye Savage- Aye Hazard- Aye

2. Promote Robert Minichiello to Call Firefighter effective October 23, 2023

Motion made by Mr. Stock to promote Robert Minichiello to Call Firefighter effective October 23, 2023, seconded by Mr. Savage.

Stock- Aye Savage- Aye Hazard- Aye

C. New Business

1. Quarterly report from Marcum LLP (Town Accountants), Tanya Campbell, Partner and Rich Howorth, Manager attending via zoom. They are nearly complete with closing out FY 23. As compared to last fiscal year, local receipts came in \$600K higher and building permit fees came in \$400K higher. The Free Cash calculation will be submitted this week for certification by DOR.

2. Free Cash discussion: The accountants anticipate Free Cash will be a little less than last year - around \$1.1Mil. TA Ruscitti met with the Finance Committee last week and discussed opportunities to pay off some of the Town's debt.

D. Old Business

1. Continued review of November 7, 2023 Special Town Meeting warrant: 12 articles are on the warrant, including several "housekeeping" articles. The town meeting warrant is available in the meeting packet on the town website. Discussion and explanation of articles is available to view on the meeting video.

2. Consider and Vote on Proposed Order of Taking for Land at 364 West Street Pursuant to Article 1 of the July 11, 2022 Special Town Meeting.

Motion made by Mr. Stock to sign the Order of Taking for Land at 364 West Street Pursuant to Article 1 of the July 11, 2022 Special Town Meeting, seconded by Mr. Savage.

Stock- Aye Savage- Aye Hazard- Aye

E. Administrator Updates:

- Interviews were conducted today for a new Highway Department employee, and an offer was made to Jared Parmensi. He currently works for MassDOT, is a plowing contractor for the town and has obtained all licenses.
- The Blackstone Valley Vocational Technical School Summit is shaping up to be a very well-attended event. It will be recorded by Hopedale Cable Access. The preliminary agenda has been distributed to prospective attendees. Mr. Savage intends to speak at the event and would like the Board to take a position. Chair Hazard stated that it was her hope that attendees briefly discuss their community's financial position and budget process. Mr. Stock feels that having a budget cap makes sense and that there should be a better way for all the towns to communicate before budget talks begin. TA and staff will work on putting together a position statement for the Board's consideration.

F. Public and Board Member Comments (votes will not be taken)

Chair Hazard: GURR Update, several areas are still under litigation. For full update, please view the meeting video.

Mr. Stock: Congratulated the Police Chief regarding the grant the department was awarded. Reminder that it is time to display the Scarecrows and thank you to Tracy Phillips who organizes these wonderful town events.

Mr. Savage: He feels that the town can and should do a better job informing the citizens about the ongoing litigation with GURR and where the town stands now.

Resident Len Guertin asked which attorneys provided the litigation update and Chair Hazard told him it was special counsel from Anderson Krieger. Mr. Guertin then presented the board with a FOIA request asking for a copy of the agreement that was signed on 3/13/2023 with Anderson Krieger and release of executive session minutes.

Resident Lou Costanza wanted it noted that there are many senior citizens who would like to be involved in meetings, but some boards are only meeting virtually. This is a big disadvantage. TA Ruscitti stated that this has been a big complaint from others as well. Unfortunately, it is not the Select Board's purview to tell other boards how to conduct their meetings as virtual meetings are permitted under the state's guidelines.

G. Requests for Future Agenda Items: TA Ruscitti will have some items to present that the staff is working on.

H. Correspondence and Select Board Informational Items (votes will not be taken): none

I. Executive Session: none

Motion made by Mr. Savage to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Stock.

Stock- Aye Savage- Aye Hazard- Aye

Meeting adjourned by Chair Hazard at 8:03pm

Respectfully submitted: Kelly Grant

Date approved: _____