

**Select Board
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 13, 2023, 6:30p.m.**

Present: Chair Hazard, Selectman Stock, Selectman Keyes, Interim Town Administrator Nutting

Chair Hazard called the meeting to order at 6:30p.m.

Consent Items

Accept \$38,500 donation from The Hopedale Foundation for Rustic Bridge assessment and engineering services.

Chair Hazard stated that this item will be put on a future meeting to accept.

Accept \$1,600 donation from anonymous donor to fund legal fees associated with West Street litigation.

Chair Hazard stated that this item will be put on a future meeting to accept.

Review/Approve Select Board Meeting Minutes – 9/21/2022, 10/11/2022, and 1/21/2021.

Chair Hazard stated that Selectman Stock will not be able to vote on the 2021 meeting minutes because he was not present for them.

Selectman Stock motioned to approve the minutes of September 21, 2022, and October 11, 2022.

Selectman Keyes seconded the motion.

Stock – Aye, Keyes – Aye, Hazard – Aye

Selectman Keyes motion to approve the January 21, 2021, meeting minutes. Chair Hazard seconded the motion.

Keyes – Aye, Hazard – Aye

Appointments & Resignations

Promotion of Call Firefighter Candidate Alec Kaminski-Miller to Call Firefighter

Chair Hazard read the letter provided by Fire Chief Daige. The letter clarifies that March 14, 2023, would be the promotion date.

Selectman Stock motioned to accept the promotion of Call Firefighter Candidate Alec Kaminski-Miller to Call Firefighter. Selectman Keyes seconded the motion.

Stock – Aye, Keyes – Aye, Hazard – Aye

Promotion of Call Firefighter Candidate Andre Aureliano to Call Firefighter **

Chair Hazard read the letter provided by Fire Chief Daige. The letter clarifies that March 14, 2023, would be the promotion date.

Selectman Stock motioned to accept the promotion of Call Firefighter Candidate Andre Aureliano to Call Firefighter.

Stock – Aye, Keyes – Aye, Hazard – Aye

Resignation of Call Firefighter Candidate Tiana Lasorsa

Chair Hazard clarified that this resignation would be effective immediately.

Selectman Stock motioned to accept the resignation of Call Firefighter Candidate Tiana Lasorsa, effective immediately. Selectman Keyes seconded the motion.

Stok – Aye, Keyes – Aye, Hazard – Aye

New Business

Endorsement of Hopedale Booster Club 5K Run/Walk, May 20, 2023

Chair Hazard read the letter submitted by the Hopedale Booster Club. Selectman Keyes thanked the Hopedale Booster Club for their hard work.

Selectman Stock motioned to approve the endorsement of the Hopedale Booster Club 5K run/walk on May 20, 2023. Selectman Keyes seconded the motion.

Stock – Aye, Keyes – Aye, Hazard – Aye

Announce Annual Town Meeting May 16, 2023, Open the Warrant, and Announce Warrant Closing Date of April 20, 2023

Town Administrator Nutting informed the Select Board that they are able to open the warrant at 10:00a.m. on March 14, 2023, and close the warrant on 3:00p.m. on April 20, 2023. Nutting continued that the Select Board reserves the right to reopen the warrant and close if another item comes to light.

Selectman Stock motioned to open the Town Meeting warrant on March 14, 2023, at 10:00a.m. and close the warrant on April 20, 2023, at 3:00p.m. Selectman Keyes seconded the motion.

Stock – Aye, Keyes – Aye, Hazard – Aye

Meeting with the Park Commission Regarding Town Park Renovation Project

Park Commission Chair, Mike Reynolds, provided a presentation regarding the Hopedale Town Park revitalization to the Select Board and meeting participants. Reynolds stated that the Park Commission has not made any capital improvements to the parks. They have been maintaining the parks to the best of their ability. Reynolds stated that the Park Commission worked with Tighe and Bond to obtain a proposal for possible updates to the Town Park. Reynolds touched on certain problem areas of the Town Park and the “band aid” corrections the Park Commission has made i.e., the tennis courts, the retaining wall, the drainage and electrical, field and band stand. Reynolds continued that Tight and Bond had created a proposal of plans and scope of work that will modernize the Town Park. Reynolds continue that the proposals describe putting fields that are safe and updating unsafe areas of the park, and correcting the drainage issues that are causing the unsafe conditions. Reynolds stated that items that are out of scope are the playground, the band stand will not be torn down, but improvements will be made. Reynolds shared an image of what the updated Town Park will look like. Reynolds stated that the project cost is projected to cost 3.8 million, 30% is contingent which totals \$866,993. The contingency is based off unexpected findings. Regarding financing this project, the Park Commission is looking into Town bond, CPA funds, potential grants, and donations/matching gifts. Mike Leduc, Park Commission Member, stated that this

plan would help all the sports teams that use the fields. Reynolds stated that if the Town was to start this project on April 1, 2023, the expected end date would be August 2023. Unfortunately, the Park Commission was advised not to do this project in phases by Tight and Bond because costs could change. Reynolds stated that the Park Commission is aware of the costs of this project during the current state of the Town budget, however, these updates need to be made. Reynolds stated that the tennis courts are unusable, the tennis team plays their matches in Worcester because of the state of them. The Park Commission would like this item to be put at the Town Meeting and see what the residents vote. Chair Hazard agreed that these updates are necessary for the Town Park, however, the funding source is questionable with the current state of the Town budget. Town Administrator Nutting discussed the financing of this project, stating that the Community Preservation Committee has begun their work and it would be beneficial for the Park Commission to collaborate funding sources with them. Nutting continued that grant funding will not be possible if the Town votes at a Town Meeting for this project because the Town will have voted to approve and pay for this. Nutting encouraged the Park Commission to continue to look for funding sources and suggested that possibly in a few years the Town will be able to assist with funding.

Review/Approve Memorandums of Agreement with (1) Clerical Personnel and (2) Highway, Water & Sewer Personnel

Selectman Stock motioned to approve the memorandum of agreement with the Town of Hopedale and the Clerical Personnel on behalf of staff public employees local 272. Selectman Keyes seconded the motion.

Stock – Aye, Keyes – Aye, Hazard – Aye

Selectman Stock motioned to approve the memorandum of agreement with the Town of Hopedale and the Hopedale Highway, Water and Sewer and Clerical staff on behalf of public employees Local 272. Selectman Keyes seconded the motion.

Stock – Aye, Keyes – Aye, Hazard – Aye

Review/Approve Contract with Tighe & Bond for Phase I Safety Inspection and Emergency Action Plan for Spindleville Pond Dam; Vote to fund contract from ARPA funds (\$12,500)

Selectman Stock motioned to approve the contract with Tighe & Bond for phase I safety inspection and emergency action plan for Spindleville Pond Dam and vote to fund the contract from ARPA for \$12,500. Selectman Keyes seconded the motion.

Stock – Aye, Keyes – Aye, Hazard – Aye

Old Business

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

Selectman Stock motioned to vote on the proposed order of the taking for land at 364 West Street pursuant to Article 1 of the July 11, 2022 Special Town Meeting. Selectman Keyes seconded the motion.

Stock – Aye, Keyes – Nay, Hazard – Aye

Passed 2:1

FY 2024 Budget Discussion and possible vote on Proposition 2 ½ Override and allocation of budget reductions for General Government and School Department

Town Administrator Nutting informed the Select Board that the Finance Committee is reviewing all Department budgets and will be completed on March 20, 2023. This is the first round of budgets, once the finance committee has completed reviewing, they will brainstorm how to make ends meet. Administrator Nutting suggested doing a two-thirds/one-third budget, and to spread budget cuts equally to create a balanced budget. Nutting continued that the Finance Committee will have something to present to the Select Board in the future. Nutting also suggested that the Select Board meet with the Finance Committee and the School because it is the Select Boards responsibility to determine the amount of override the Town will be asking for. Nutting asked the Select Board to set an override number tonight so himself and the Finance Committee can work to create a balanced budget. Also, the Schools will need this information to work off to show the residents what their budget will look like once they have a target number. Selectman Keyes stated he is not agreeable to cutting the Schools, Police or Fire budgets unless the Department Head gives him approval. Selectman Keyes stated he is also reluctant to close the Bancroft Memorial Library, stating it is an embarrassment to the Town. Administrator Nutting responded that the Town owes it to the citizens what the budget and repercussions will look like with and without an override. Nutting stated the Select Board needs to provide a starting point tonight. Chair Hazard expressed her that while it is not ideal to cut the budgets of the School, Police and Fire, the Town is one community sharing one problem. She stated that she will likely support an override, however, the Select Board needs to see what all the options are, especially if the override does not pass. Selectman Stock stated he is open to following the Town Administrators suggestion of a two-thirds/one-third budget. Superintendent of Schools, Karen Crebase stated that the Schools budget is 14 million, however, 7 million comes from the State. Crebase stated that a two-thirds/one-third is a large amount. Meeting participants agreed with Crebase's statement. Town Administrator Nutting state that the two-thirds/one-third recommendation was created by taking the overall budget, minus the bills that everyone must pay i.e., BBT, interest that is an invoice, pension, health insurance. From there he reviewed the budget and saw that the budget for the Town is 6.5 million and the School is 14 million, viewing this in a mathematical way, the two-thirds/one-third budget cut makes the most logistical sense. Nutting did say that this is the very beginning of the budget process and is open to other ideas. Nutting continued that tonight's meeting is to give the Administrator and the Finance Committee a direction, this is not a final decision, this is to open discussion.

Selectman Stock motioned to do a 60% School/40% General Government budget reduction. Chair Hazard seconded the motion.

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

Selectman Stock informed the Select Board and meeting participants that there is a retaining wall on Dutcher Street that is on the verge of falling. He expressed concern that this wall will fall on a resident. Stock stated that the wall is not Town owned so the Owner needs to be notified that it must be corrected. Tim Watson informed the Select Board that the Highway Department discussed this at their last meeting and are notifying the Owner that the wall needs to be corrected. If the Owner does not correct the wall, then the Highway Department will correct it and send the Owner an invoice.

Correspondence and Select Board Informational Items (votes will not be taken)

a. Letter from DEP re: new water tank

b. Attorney General Decisions regarding November 22, 2022, Special Town Meeting

c. Central MA Regional Planning Commission Traffic Count Program

d. Letter to Green River Cannabis Company authorizing Virtual Web-Based Community Meeting (and associated MGL requiring such authorization)

Chair Hazard read the correspondence items stated that the correspondence items are provided in the meeting packet.

Executive Session(s):

- a. Move that the Board vote to enter Executive Session, pursuant to Purpose 7, to act under the authority of a general or special law, specifically the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c.30A, Section 22(g), to review and approve executive session minutes of February 16, 2023
- b. Move that the Board vote to enter into Executive Session pursuant to Purpose 3, G.L. c. 30A, §21(a)(3) to discuss litigation strategy in that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body, and the Chair so declares (Berger v. Town of Hopedale)
- c. Move that the Board vote to enter into Executive Session pursuant to M.G.L. c.30A, § 21(a)(3), to discuss strategy with respect to litigation because an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigation position of the Town, and the Chair so declares, in matters captioned Town of Hopedale v. Jon Delli Priscoli, Reilly v. Town of Hopedale, and Grafton & Upton Railroad v. Town of Hopedale. Attorney David Mackey from Anderson Kreiger LLP will be present.

Chair Hazard read the executive session purposes above, stating that the Select Board will not reconvene to open session.

Selectman Stock motioned to enter executive session per the purposes read by Chair Hazard, not to reconvene in open session. Selectman Keyes seconded the motion.

Stock – Aye, Keyes – Aye, Hazard – Aye

The Select Board entered executive session at 9:18p.m.

Chair Hazard dissolved the regular meeting at 9:18p.m.

Submitted by:
Lindsay Peterman

Board Approved: May 22, 2023