

Select Board  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
January 9, 2023, 6:30PM

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

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

**Consent Items**

Acknowledge \$200 donation to Bancroft Memorial Library from Frederick G. Oldfield III

Chair Hazard read the letter provided in the packet regarding the donation to the Bancroft Memorial Library. The donation is being made in honor of Marjorie Hattersley. Selectman Stock stated that Fred Oldfield is someone that makes a Town a community and is glad he is a part of Hopedale.

Selectman Keyes motioned to approve the \$200 donation to Bancroft Memorial Library from Frederick G. Oldfield III. Selectman Stock seconded the motion.

Selectman Stock – Aye, Selectman Keyes – Aye, Chair Hazard – Aye

Acknowledge \$10,000 grant award to Bancroft Memorial Library

Chair Hazard stated that the grant award letter and grant documents are provided in tonight's meeting packet. She read a portion of the grant letter, noting that the Association of Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL) grant selected the Bancroft Memorial Library grant application for full funding in the amount of \$10,000, which funds will be used to develop programs focused on young English-language learners and seniors living with memory loss.

Selectman Keyes motioned to accept the \$10,000 grant award to the Bancroft Memorial Library. Selectman Stock seconded the motion.

Selectman Keyes – Aye, Selectman Stock – Aye, Chair Hazard – Aye

Accept donation to Council on Aging from the Hopedale Friends of Elders, Inc.

Carole Mullen, Director of the Council on Aging, thanked the Hopedale Friends of Elders for their years of support. Mullen stated that this donation will be applied to fund program instructors.

Selectman Stock motioned to accept the \$2,000 donation to the Council on Aging from the Hopedale Friends of Elders, Inc. Selectman Keyes seconded the motion.

Selectman Stock – Aye, Selectman Keyes – Aye, Chair Hazard – Aye

**Appointments & Resignations**

Revise effective date of appointment of Career Firefighter/EMT Alex Cappella from 9/12/2022 (as voted on December 27, 2022) to 12/27/2022

Town Administrator Nutting stated that he did reach out to the Town's Labor Attorney. The Attorney concurred that the date should be December 27, 2022. Nutting stated that the Fire Chief agreed as well.

Selectman Stock moved to revise the effective date of appointment of Career Firefighter/EMT Alex Cappella from 9/12/2022 (as voted on December 27, 2022) to 12/27/2022. Selectman Keyes seconded the motion. Selectman Stock – Aye, Selectman Keyes – Aye, Chair Hazard – Aye

### **New Business**

#### **Discuss formation of Town Administrator Search Committee, including but not limited to number of members and composition**

Chair Hazard stated the previous search committee consisted of 10 members, which she felt was too many members. Selectman Keyes suggested starting with an odd number of members, around 5-7 members. The Select Board agreed on 7 members, consisting of the Town Clerk, the School Superintendent, a member of the Personnel Committee, a member of the Finance Committee, a public safety employee and two residents. Chair Hazard stated residents interested in serving on this committee must fill out a talent bank form and turn it into the Town Administrator's office. The deadline to turn in the talent bank form is January 18, 2023.

Selectman Stock motioned to have the Town Administrator Search Committee consist of 7 members, consisting of the Town Clerk, the School Superintendent, a member of the Personnel Committee, a member of the Finance Committee, a public safety employee and two residents. Selectman Keyes seconded the motion.

Selectman Stock – Aye, Selectman – Aye, Chair Hazard – Aye

#### **Discuss proposed Community Preservation Act By-Law for presentation to Annual Town Meeting**

Chair Hazard stated that the Town is looking for members for the Community Preservation Committee. This committee would create a plan for distribution of community preservation funds. The Select Board has already voted that the Town of Hopedale is a Community Preservation community. Town Administrator Nutting stated that this committee will consist of nine members, one member from the Open Space and Recreation Committee, one member from the Conservation Commission, one member from the Planning Board, one member from the Parks Commission, one member from the Housing Authority, and four residents that are appointed by the Select Board. Nutting stated that regarding the resident terms, two would be appointed for one year, and the other two would be appointed for three year terms. This would be on a rotation. Nutting stated that as of December 31, 2022 there was \$180,000 to be spent on items such as open space, housing and historical preservation. By the end of the fiscal year there should be an additional \$40,000-\$50,000. Nutting stated that currently the State matches 10-15%. Chair Hazard advised residents that are interested to complete a talent bank form and turn it in to the Town Administrator's Office.

#### **Interim Town Administrator proposal for Financial Summit meeting of elected and appointed officials**

Town Administrator Nutting asked the Select Board to hold a financial summit with the Finance Committee, the School Committee, all Department heads, all Boards and Committees and citizens. A date does not need to be determined at tonight's meeting. Administrator Nutting suggested sometime in February 2023. The goal of this meeting is to let Town employees and the public know the financial position of the Town, especially prior to the Town Meeting. Nutting stated that this would be beneficial to the Select Board to have a discussion that sheds light on the Town's financial constraints and opportunities. Selectman Keyes stated that the Town has faced substantial gaps with the budget over the years. Administrator Nutting stated that he is meeting with the Town Accountant and the Treasurer next week to look at estimated revenues. Selectman Keyes asked Town Administrator Nutting how he will present the draft budgets. In recent years, it has been complicated and the previous Town Administrator would be making live revisions to an excel document as the Select Board discussed the budget. Town Administrator Nutting stated that his vision is to review the proposed budgets of

departments, Boards and Committees, meet with each to develop “status quo” budgets and to gain better insight into operational needs and challenges. Requests for additional funds for new programs, additional staff, etc. will be listed in a separate column. He will make recommendations and work with the Finance Committee to review all budget requests. Nutting stated that his goal of holding the financial summit is to get all Boards, Departments and Committees on the same page as to projected FY24 revenues and how that compares to projected expenses. Administrator Nutting stated he will work on proposed dates and locate a space large enough to hold this summit. Resident Len Guertin thanked Town Administrator Nutting for being so proactive with this budget cycle.

### **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**

Chair Hazard noted that this is a recurring vote until the Town hears from the Judge in this matter.

Administrator Nutting noted that, because this has to be re-voted every 30 days or less, the vote is scheduled for the Select Board agendas of January 23, 2023, February 13, 2023, March 13, 2023, and April 10, 2023 unless the judge’s decision occurs earlier.

Selectman Stock motioned that, in accordance with the vote of the Special Town Meeting, that the Town vote favorably on the Order of Taking to continue the procedure that is currently before the Court. Selectman Keyes seconded the motion.

Selectman Stock – Aye, Selectman Keyes – Nay, Chair Hazard – Aye

Passed: 2-1

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

Resident Tara Taglianetti-Chambers stated that the Hopedale Community House will be 100 years old in 2023. The Community House is planning a celebration, the tentative date is June 24, 2023.

Selectman Keyes stated that today, January 9, 2023, is national law enforcement day. Selectman Keyes thanks and appreciates law enforcement across the Country and especially those in the Town of Hopedale. Selectman Stock shared Selectman Keyes sentiments.

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

#### **Requests for Future Agenda Items**

Selectman Keyes requested to have one department a quarter on a Select Board meeting to provide an update to Town residents.

### **Administrator Updates (In Packet)**

#### **Update regarding 364 West Street finances**

Town Administrator Nutting wanted to address questions he has received regarding the Railroad, the lawsuit and the expenditure of funds. Town Administrator Nutting stated that there has not been a decision regarding this litigation and he has not yet received an answer from Kopelman and Paige Law regarding their legal fees to date associated with this issue. Nutting stated that the law firm of Anderson Kreiger has been paid \$234,000 to date, but not with Town funds. A private party donated \$38,300 towards the Anderson Kreiger fees. Nutting suggested that any future donations toward these legal fees should be presented to and accepted by the Select Board, then deposited in a Town account from which the legal fees would be paid. This is a far better

municipal accounting procedure. Selectman Keyes stated that the Select Board had voted to utilize this process – that the donations would go into an account fund set up by the Town Treasurer and legal expenses would be paid from this account. Selectman Keyes asked Administrator Nutting to get the invoices sent to the Town instead of another party. Nutting stated that currently, the invoices are confidential because of the nature of them, once the item is settled then they will become public record. Selectman Keyes shared his concerns that the Select Board does not know what the invoices state and whomever is paying them could have ulterior motives and that could become an ethics problem. Keyes also stated that the other half of the problem is that the money is not going to the account that the Select Board voted to set up and the Town is not directly paying the invoices. Chair Hazard stated that Town Counsel has said that there is no issue with the anonymous donors directly paying them. Selectman Keyes stated that he is incredibly appreciative of the anonymous donors, he feels that the Town needs to follow the procedure that the Select Board voted on. Resident, Liz Reilly stated that the donor is not getting direct billed by Anderson Kreiger, the Town is receiving the invoices. Reilly stated that the donor is paying the invoices within two days. However, the donor is willing to pay the invoices per the procedure the Select Board put into place. Administrator Nutting suggested that it is important that donations such as this be deposited to a donation account, otherwise at the close of a fiscal year the funds will fall to free cash. Administrator Nutting moved on to discuss the appraisal, stating the appraised value was \$4.4 million and the Town voted a borrowing authorization of \$3.9 million. In addition, the Town has received a donation of \$76,000 toward the purchase of the land, there is a written commitment for \$450,000, and the Hopedale Foundation has expressed an interest in providing funds but is waiting to see what the outcome of the decision is prior to making a commitment. Nutting stated that if the Town does prevail in the suit, then the Town needs to exercise the eminent domain option quickly. Nutting stated that if the donations fall through then the Town will need to hold a Special Town Meeting and ask for additional funds to cover the balance, this can be done within fifteen days. Nutting stated that if the Town did borrow the \$3.9 million and the rest backed by donors, the Town would have 20-year bond payments of approximately \$300,000/year depending on interest rates and whether the bond was for level payments or declining interest. Selectman Stock thanked the Hopedale Foundation for their continued support of the Town of Hopedale. Selectman Stock feels that the donation from the Hopedale Foundation can be clarified shortly. Chair Hazard thanked the Hopedale Foundation for their commitment to the Town.

**Executive Session(s): Anticipated 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 from September 26, 2022.**

Chair Hazard read the executive session purpose above.

Selectman Keyes motioned to enter into executive session per the purposes read by Chair Hazard, not to return to regular session. Selectman Stock seconded the motion.

Selectman Stock – Aye, Selectman Keyes – Aye, Chair Hazard – Aye

Chair Hazard dissolved the meeting at 8:08pm.

Respectfully submitted: Lindsay Peterman

Adopted by Select Board: 2/16/2023