

Board of Selectmen
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 8, 2021 7:00 PM

Present, Chair Keyes, Selectman Louis J. Arcudi, III, Town Administrator Diana Schindler
Chair Keyes convened the meeting at 7:00PM, all present recited the pledge of allegiance.

Consent Items

Approval of January 21, 2021 Regular Minutes

Selectman Arcudi made a motion to approve the January 21, 2021 Regular Minutes. Chair Keyes seconded the motion.

Arcudi – Aye, Keyes – Aye

Accepting the \$10 Donation from Beth Fox and her daughter, Brittany to the Bancroft Memorial Library (Letter Attached)

Chair Keyes read the letter from the Director Robyn York regarding the donation from Beth Fox and her Daughter, Brittany. Selectman Arcudi and Chair Keyes thanked Beth and Brittany Fox and Robyn York. Selectman Arcudi made a motion to accept the \$10 donation from Beth Fox and her Daughter, Brittany for purchasing supplies. Chair Keyes seconded the motion. Arcudi – Aye, Keyes – Aye

Rent Abatement request for Beyond Full for February 2021 (Letter Attached)

Chair Keyes read the letter sent in by Richard Yancey regarding the rent abatement for the month of February 2021. Selectman Arcudi stated that the Town placed no restriction on them for the month of February and that they were informed to abide by the state guidelines/restrictions. Selectman Arcudi stated that he does not agree with giving a rent abatement for February due to these conditions.

Town Administrator Schindler stated that Beyond Full has been paying 25% (\$750) of their rent for the months of October, November, December. The month of January 2021, rent was completely forgiven. By mid-January Beyond Full was allowed to open back up for morning hours, regular and weekend hours, the Town did not place restrictions on them. They were to follow the state guidelines for 40% occupancy. Selectman Arcudi stated that is not inclined to forgive the rent for the month of February if there are no restrictions from the Town of Hopedale, only the state.

Chair Keyes and Selectmen Arcudi agreed that their needs to be a conversation between Richard Yancey and the Town Administrator to create a plan to get back to full rent.

No vote was taken.

Appointments and Resignations

Chief Daige spoke to the promotions of the Justin Carnaroli, Kristin Krauss, Adam Kaminski-Miller and Brandon Deluca to Call Firefighter. Chief Daige stated that the effective date is March 1, 2021. He stated that they are excellent employees, graduated academy and are ready for the call firefighter position. Chair Keyes thanked them.

Promotion of Call Firefighter Candidate Justin Carnaroli to Call Firefighter, effective February 23, 2021 (Letter Attached)

Selectman Arcudi made a motion to promote call firefighter candidate Justin Carnaroli to call firefighter effective March 1, 2021. Chair Keyes seconded the motion. Arcudi – Aye, Keyes – Aye

Promotion of Call Firefighter Candidate Kristin Krauss to Call Firefighter, effective February 23, 2021 (Letter Attached)

Selectman Arcudi made a motion to promote call firefighter candidate Kristen Krauss to call firefighter effective March 1, 2021. Chair Keyes seconded the motion. Arcudi – Aye, Keyes – Aye

Promotion of Call Firefighter Candidate Adam Kaminski-Miller to Call Firefighter, effective February 23, 2021 (Letter Attached)

Selectman Arcudi made a motion to promote call firefighter candidate Adam Kaminski-Miller to call firefighter, effective March 1, 2021. Chair Keyes seconded the motion. Arcudi – Aye, Keyes – Aye

Appointment of Brandon Deluca as a Call Firefighter, effective March 1, 2021

Chief Daige stated that Brandon Deluca has ample experience with Fire Departments. He is very happy to have Brandon join the Fire Department. Chair Keyes thanked Brandon for protecting and serving the Town of Hopedale. Selectman Arcudi echoed their sentiments.

Selectman Arcudi made a motion to appoint Brandon Deluca as a call firefighter effective March 1, 2021. Chair Keyes seconded the motion. Arcudi – Aye, Keyes – Aye

Appointment of Ken Wilson to the Finance Committee, effective March 8, 2021

Chair Keyes thanked Ken for volunteering with the Town of Hopedale and serving the Town. Ken Wilson spoke to his experience and looks forward to contributing to the finance committee.

Selectman Arcudi made a motion to appoint Ken Wilson to the Finance Committee, effect March 9, 2021. Chair Keyes seconded the motion. Arcudi – Aye, Keyes – Aye

New Business*

[Expression of Interest for One Stop for Growth Grant Program](#); Voted by Planning Board 3/3/2021; Review Commitment Letter from Board of Selectmen Chair

Town Administrator Schindler informed the Board of Selectmen that a Commitment Letter was sent in by the Town Administrator instead of the Board of Selectmen. Town Administrator Schindler explained the dynamics of the grant. Some examples of projects that this grant could be applied to is Complete Streets, the Draper Mill Project, Downtown Redevelopment and so on. Town Administrator Schindler is hoping to have an update regarding the expression of interest by weeks end.

Update regarding Town Counsel Appearance in Worcester Superior Court re: Elizabeth Reilly, et.al. vs. Town of Hopedale & GURR

Town Administrator shared a few updates regarding this topic. The Town has received the preliminary motion and it has been filed in Worcester Court. The appearance has been postponed until Wednesday. Town Counsel will be at the appearance on the Town's behalf. The Hopedale Foundation was referenced in the motion, regarding rescinding their support/payments in a letter. Town Administrator confirmed that the Town received the letter on February 24, 2021. The letter does not state that they have officially rescinded the vote as of yet. Town Administrator Schindler stated that she will contact and communicate with the Hopedale Foundation. Selectman Arcudi stated that the Hopedale Foundation's donation was not specified that it had conditions (I.E., gift must be applied to purchase of entirety of the land at 364 West St.) and if these conditions were known from the beginning, Selectman Arcudi would not have accepted the gift originally. Town Administrator stated that the Town currently has a deficit of \$15,800 in the legal account.

Fire/EMS Proposals to be Addressed (Fire Chief present): Ambulance Billing Rates, Inter-facility Ambulance Transfers; Application for SAFER grant (vote)

Present, Chair Keyes, Selectman Arcudi, Town Administrator Diana Schindler, Fire Chief Daige, EMS & SAFE Coordinator Brian Kelly, Jen Vander Baan from Coast Medical Billing and Donna Auger EMS liaison from Milford Regional Medical Center

Chief Daige stated that the Fire Department did a survey throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in a prior year to explore if the Hopedale Fire Department is bringing in enough funds/billing for the ambulance services/emergency services. Chief Daige shared the average rates across Massachusetts, the Town of Hopedale is roughly 32% below average compared to other Towns in Massachusetts. Chief Daige shared the projected rates that they would like to update in Hopedale. The 660 Transport is derived from Coastal Medical; it is typically an average in what the Hopedale Fire Department works in calls per year. Chief Daige stated that this number is trending upward over the past years, even during the COVID pandemic. Chief Daige stated that if the Board of Selectmen votes to change the rates, the new rate would become effective April 1, 2021.

Selectman Arcudi made a motion to accept the 2021 Ambulance Fee Schedule. Chair Keyes seconded the motion. Arcudi – Aye, Keyes – Aye

Chief Daige discussed the understaffing in the Hopedale Fire Department. He stated that the calls coming into the Fire Department are more than the staffing allows. Chief Daige's suggestion is to increase revenue in the ambulance account and staff the Fire Department with 2 additional firefighters per shift. If this recommendation is approved by the Board of Selectmen, this will allow the Fire Department to transport patients from the hospital to nursing homes, rehab facilities or psychiatric facilities or their homes, etc. Currently, Milford Regional Medical Center is averaging 12 patient transports per day. The average wait time is 3 hours for an ambulance to transport the patient to the facility, which is causing crowding in the emergency room. Chief Daige feels that if this recommendation gets approved it would benefit the community, this would also be a zero cost to the taxpayer. The SAFE grant is through Homeland Security, which pays for the salaries and benefits for the firefighters that are hired for 3 years. The Town will pay for the equipment for these new hires, which is a one-time cost and any overtime (training that is required, callbacks, vacations, sick, etc.) Chief Daige proposed to hire 8 firefighters. The estimated generated revenue is \$1.1 million, with a \$700,000 net revenue in profit. Selectman Arcudi expressed concern regarding the taxpayers after year 3 and on, he asked how there will be a guarantee that this will not affect the taxpayers. Donna Auger stated that the volume has increased, there is a shortage of EMT's and ambulances available. Typically, patients will wait an hour or more. The numbers have steadily gone up, even with slow days. Selectman Arcudi stated that he supports this if it brings in revenue to the Town or whether it is cash neutral, he expressed concern that after the three years is there a possibility of having to let the new firefighters go. Chief Daige stated that yes, this is a possibility, however, there is a large need for additional staff. Chair Keyes and Selectman Arcudi stated that after the Fire Department applies for the SAFE Grant on Friday, and if the Fire Department is awarded the SAFE Grant, they need to discuss with the Finance Committee prior to accepting the SAFE Grant. Chief Daige stated he also recommends bringing on 4 new staff members if Hopedale does not get the SAFE Grant, with the same stipulations. Selectman Arcudi and Chair Keyes stated if the SAFE Grant is not awarded, to bring on 4 new members, the Fire Department would still need to bring it to the Finance Committee.

Selectman Arcudi made a motion to approve the application of the SAFE grant for 8 firefighters, with a favorable recommendation from the Finance Committee. Chair Keyes seconded the motion. Arcudi – Aye, Keyes – Aye

Old Business
COVID Updates

Town Administrator Diana Schindler stated that the Schools are maintaining a COVID dashboard on their webpage. The School Commissioner stated that all student K-6 will return to in person learning by April 2021 while maintaining remote classes.

Annual Town Meeting 2021 Warrant Schedule (vote)

Town Administrator Schindler suggested holding Town Meeting on May 18, 2021 starting at 5:30PM. Chair Keyes asked Schindler to add a rain date.

Selectman Arcudi made a motion to accept the Annual Town Meeting 2021 Warrant Schedule as presented by the Town Administrator. Chair Keyes seconded the motion. Arcudi – Aye, Keyes – Aye

Revisit formation of Open Space & Recreation Planning (OSRP) Committee per recommendation of CMRPC; To reform Open Space and Recreation Planning (OSRP) Committee, to be made up of seven (7) members; two (2) members from the Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC), one (1) member from the Parks Commission, one (1) member from the Conservation Commission, and three (3) qualified members from the public. Terms are for duration of planning project.

Selectman Arcudi made a motion to accept the formation of Open Space & Recreation Planning Committee. Chair Keyes seconded the motion. Arcudi – Aye, Keyes – Aye

Administrator Updates (In Packet)

MVP Workshops Scheduled

Freedom Street Dam Update on Road Commissioner Meeting on 3/10

Finance Committee Meeting re FY22 Budget; Board of Health, Parks Commission on 3/10

Public Safety on 3/17

Selectman Arcudi made a motion to move to executive session. Chair Keyes seconded the motion. Arcudi – Aye, Keyes – Aye

Chair Keyes dissolved the meeting at 8:48pm

Executive Session:

Motion: To move into Executive Session, pursuant to M.G.L. c.30A, § 21(a) for item # (3): To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigation position of the public body and the chair so declares. Roll Call Vote

Purpose: Collective Bargaining; All units. Fire Chief present.

Submitted by:

Lindsay Mercier
Lindsay Mercier, Executive Assistant

Adopted: _____