

Hopedale Select Board  
Multi-Community Summit re: Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical School  
October 26, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.  
Hopedale Community House, 43 Hope Street, Hopedale, MA

In Attendance: Hopedale Select Board Chair Hazard, and members Mr. Stock, Mr. Savage  
Hopedale Town Administrator M. Ruscitti and Executive Assistant K. Grant

Also in attendance were elected and appointed officials from the 13 Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical School (BVT) member communities (Bellingham, Blackstone, Douglas, Grafton, Hopedale, Mendon, Milford, Millbury, Millville, Northbridge, Sutton, Upton, and Uxbridge) as well as Dr. Michael Fitzpatrick, BVT Superintendent-Director and members of the general public.

Quorum present and called to order at 7:00 p.m.

A. Multi-community summit regarding BVT spending, budgeting, and financial management:

Hopedale Select Board Chair Hazard began the summit by welcoming all those communities who were present and thanking them for their attendance. Chair Hazard went on to explain the purpose of the Summit and spoke about Hopedale's concerns and vision moving forward.

"As we are all BVT stakeholder communities, it is important and imperative for all of us to have a voice and to feel that our voices are being heard. The Hopedale Select Board has long felt that there has been a lack of democratic process for towns having input into the BVT budget. As some of you may be aware, Hopedale is in a challenging financial situation, and I am sure we are not alone in this. We are in a position where we need to make hard choices about every dollar we spend. I'm here tonight, and action needs to be taken. There is no question that BVT is an amazing technical school. But is it coming at the expense of many Hopedale students who remain at Hopedale High? When the budget is presented to us, we are told that the budget already has enough approvals and therefore what we say does not matter. It is unfair for the students who remain in Hopedale to receive less financial support than their peers who attend BVT.

We, as a town, should be able to determine what costs we can absorb and afford to send to BVT so that all students who reside in Hopedale are equitably supported. We feel that each town should have the ability to do the same. The BVT communities might even consider determining a cap for each community's expending. BVT should have to work under the same financial constraints that each municipal budget is held. We need a better way to communicate with each other so that we are all in unison on a BVT budget before town budget processes begin. Communities should not have to shoulder the burden of providing certain benefits, upgrades, and students services at BVT if we cannot provide the same to our students who choose to stay at their local schools. The goal should

provide a great education for all students. Capital projects should be vetted in the same manner that any town would be required to do and should be presented to towns well before budget discussions begin.

In conclusion for this evening, it is our great hope that tonight can be the beginning of important conversations, and for those conversations to continue in the coming weeks and months.”

- B. Town Administrator Remarks: Hopedale Town Administrator Mitch Ruscitti suggested that those who wish to speak should focus on what the individual towns feel are their struggles and goals and avoid criticisms of individuals.
- C. Town Official Public Comment: At this time, any town who wished to address the attendees was invited to do so. Representatives from Bellingham, Millbury, Douglas, Milford, Hopedale, and Millville all addressed the crowd. The common theme among them being their feeling of not having a voice in the BVT budget process and BVT continuing act as though they have an “open checkbook” and are not held to the same constraints as the towns are.
- D. Remarks from Dr. Fitzpatrick BVT Superintendent: Dr. Fitzpatrick began by giving a brief overview of BVT’s financials and the school’s program offerings. He addressed some of the concerns expressed by member communities.
- E. Community Public Comments: Citizens were given the opportunity to offer comments and concerns as parents, taxpayers, and teachers in the feeder communities.  
(To view the entire summit, including all comment sections, the video is located here: [https://townhallstreams.com/stream.php?location\\_id=56&id=55893](https://townhallstreams.com/stream.php?location_id=56&id=55893) )
- F. The meeting concluded at 8:45 p.m.
- G. Chair Hazard adjourned the Hopedale Select Board meeting at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:  
Kelly Grant, Executive Assistant

Select Board approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Hopedale Select Board  
April 10, 2023  
Meeting Minutes

In Attendance: Chair Hazard, Selectman Stock, Selectman Keyes, Interim Town Administrator Jeffrey Nutting

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

A. Executive Session

The Chair read the notice for Executive Session: 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 the matter captioned Grafton & Upton Railroad v. Town of Hopedale, U.S. District of Massachusetts, Case No. 4:22-cv-40080. Attorneys David Mackey, Sean Grammel and Mina Markarios from Anderson Kreiger, LLP will be present. The Board will return to open session.

Mr. Stock moved that the Board go into Executive Session per the notice read by the Chair, to return to open session. Seconded by Mr. Keyes.

Stock Aye, Keyes Aye, Hazard Aye

The Board resumed the open session at 7:32pm

Mr. Keyes requested a moment of silence for Hopedale bus driver Mike Mullaney.

B. New Business

**a. Update from Attorney David Mackey of Anderson Kreiger** re: Grafton & Upton Railroad v. Town of Hopedale litigation: Atty Mackey, via Zoom, shared a couple of developments. The federal lawsuit (1<sup>st</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals) that was brought by GURR against the town was heard by a federal judge who dismissed 4 out of the 5 claims. The 5<sup>th</sup> claim was allowed, granting the railroad's request for a preliminary injunction to block the Town's eminent domain of the so-called "forest land". She required the railroad to file a petition with the Surface Transportation Board. The Select Board has the right to appeal this decision. Regarding the state appeals court litigation, the court reversed a finding by the land court, thus now allowing a group of citizens to intervene on the Town's behalf and support the Town's effort under Chapter 61 (exercising its right of first refusal).

C. Consent Items

**a. Review/Approve Select Board Meeting Minutes – 3/20/2023 and 7/6/2022.**

Motion made by Mr. Stock to approve meeting minutes of 3/20/2023 and 7/6/2022; seconded by Mr. Keyes

Hazard-Aye Stock-Aye Keyes-Aye

**b. Approve Hopedale Youth Baseball Annual Parade Saturday April 15<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m.**

Motion made by Mr. Keyes to approve this event, seconded by Mr. Stock.

Hazard-Aye Stock-Aye Keyes-Aye

D. Appointments & Resignations

**a. Appointment of Roberta Lamothe as Part-Time Dispatcher, effective April 17, 2023**

Information is available in the packet on the town website. Chief is in favor. Mr. Stock made a motion to appoint Roberta Lamothe as Part-Time Dispatcher effective April 17, 2023; seconded by Mr. Keyes.

Hazard-Aye Stock-Aye Keyes-Aye

**b. Interview/possible appointment of Finance Committee applicant David Arthur:** Talent bank form is available on town website in the packet. Mr. Arthur was in attendance and shared why he would like to be considered for this position.

Motion made by Mr. Stock to appoint David Arthur to the Finance Committee. Seconded by Mr. Keyes

Hazard-Aye Stock-Aye Keyes-Aye

**c. Interview/possible appointment of Community Preservation Committee applicant Tara Taglianetti-Chambers:** Talent bank form is available on town website in information packet. Tara is active in the community and is known to Board members, who had no questions. Mr. Stock made a motion to appoint Tara Taglianetti-Chambers to the Community Preservation Committee; seconded by Mr. Keyes.

Hazard-Aye Stock-Aye Keyes-Aye

E. New Business, Continued

**a. One-day Liquor License: Rushford & Sons Brewhouse** Rushford & Sons is scheduled to participate in the Hopedale Community House 100-Year Celebration on June 24, 2023. Motion made by Mr. Stock to approve the one-day liquor license for Rushford & Sons for June 24, 2023; seconded by Mr. Keyes

Hazard-Aye Stock-Aye Keyes-Aye

**b. Request from Master Plan Steering Committee** to (1) dissolve the Committee and (2) establish a Master Plan Implementation Committee: Information regarding this is in the meeting packet on the website. Mr. Abruzzese was in attendance noting that the committee accomplished its goal and therefore can be dissolved. He is also asking for a Master Plan Implementation Committee to be created to oversee and advocate for implementation of recommendations in the master plan and see that the goals are met.

Motion made by Mr. Stock to dissolve the Master Plan Committee, seconded by Mr. Keyes

Hazard-Aye Stock-Aye Keyes-Aye

Motion made by Mr. Stock and seconded by Mr. Keyes to establish a Master Plan Implementation Committee with a makeup of 5 members.

Hazard-Aye Stock-Aye Keyes-Aye

**c. Water Department – Proposed Designer Selection Procedures**

David Butler, Water Department Operations Supervisor, explained that, If adopted by the Board, this

Designer Selection Procedure would apply to all municipal departments (except School Department). (The proposed Designer Selection Procedure is in the packet on the town website). David recommends the Board adopt both the state procurement policies and the federal procurement policies. A procurement officer must be appointed. And typically a committee is formed to review proposals.

Motion made by Mr. Stock to adopt the state policy and appoint the Town Administrator as the procurement officer. Second by Mr. Keyes.

Hazard-Aye Stock-Aye Keyes-Aye

Motion made by Mr. Stock to adopt the federal policy. Second by Mr. Keyes.

Hazard-Aye Stock-Aye Keyes-Aye

**d. Announce Revised Annual Town Meeting Warrant Closing Date of April 26, 2023:** Revised date of warrant closing is to allow the Select Board time to review the warrant at their April 24 meeting. Mr. Stock made a motion to amend the closing date from April 20 to April 26. Seconded by Mr. Keyes.

Hazard-Aye Stock-Aye Keyes-Aye

**e. Announce Special Town Meeting May 16, 2023, Open the Warrant, and Announce Warrant Closing Date of April 26, 2023:**

Mr. Stock made a motion to open the Special Town Meeting warrant on April 11, with a warrant closing date of April 26. Seconded by Mr. Keyes.

Hazard-Aye Stock-Aye Keyes-Aye

**f. Review DRAFT Special Town Meeting warrant: draft presented to Board for review.**

Nutting distributed a draft of the warrant for future discussion.

**g. Request(s) for use of ARPA funds:** Mr. Nutting presented the board with the various ARPA requests. The complete list and recommendations are in the meeting packet on the town website. Mr. Nutting is still evaluating the capital requests and the availability of free cash to fund them. Mr. Keyes said he would like to follow Mr. Nutting's suggestion of taking each expenditure individually.

Tax Title - \$25,000 Motion by Stock, second by Keyes.

Keyes-Aye Stock-Aye Hazard-Aye

Trees - \$25,000 Motion made by Mr. Stock and seconded by Mr. Keyes to defer the recommendation of funding tree removal until after the Town Meetings.

Keyes-Aye Stock-Aye Hazard-Aye

Fire hose- \$56,000 Motion by Keyes, second by Hazard

Keyes-Aye Stock-Nay Hazard-Aye (motion passed 2-1)

Police Motorcycle- \$26,000 Motion made by Keyes, second by Hazard

Keyes-Aye Stock-Nay Hazard-Aye (motion passed 2-1)

IT Hardware & Software- \$29,000 Motion made by Keyes, second by Stock; approved 3/0

**h. Discussion regarding upcoming meeting schedule:** The Board will keep their next meeting as 4/24

**i. FY 2024 Budget Discussion/Vote:** Mr. Nutting noted that he sent a draft budget out to the members. Mr. Nutting has negotiated to a new electric rate, although it did increase. Overall impact across the budget is \$20,000; the only option to fund this unanticipated additional cost was to utilize \$20,000 in Free Cash. He requested that the Board endorse the budget. Mr. Stock would prefer it if FinCom made their recommendation prior to the Select Board. The Board will wait until their next meeting to address this.

**j. Vote to sign Local Election Warrant:** Motion made by Mr. Stock, seconded by Mr. Keyes to sign the election warrant.

Hazard- Aye Stock- Aye Keyes- Aye

F. Old Business

**a. 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:** Mr. Stock made a motion to sign the Order of Taking as was directed by the voters at Town Meeting. Seconded by Mr. Keyes.

Hazard- Aye Stock- Aye Keyes- Nay

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

Mr. Guertin asked for clarification regarding Atty Mackey's comments. Chair Hazard clarified that the Board voted to appeal.

Ed Burke asked if ARPA funds could be used for solar. Mr. Nutting said they would have to investigate it, but he would argue against using ARPA funds for a department that utilizes enterprise fund accounting. (Mr. Burke was asking in his capacity as a member of the Water & Sewer Commission).

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

**a. Memo from KP Law regarding Pandemic-Related Updates** (included in packet available on Town website)

I. Requests for Future Agenda Items: none

J. Administrator Updates: none

Meeting dissolved by Chair Hazard at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Kelly Grant

Board Approved \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Chief Daige

I am writing to formally resign from my position as a call firefighter at Hopedale Fire Department, effective December 21st, 2023.

I appreciate the opportunities and experiences I have gained during my time here. I have learned a great deal and am grateful for the support from you, the deputy, call members, and full-time members. I truly appreciate the trust you put in me when you promoted me to Acting Lieutenant. It was a big step for me and built my confidence as a leader on the department and as a firefighter.

I will continue my schedule of being on call for group 2 until my last day. Again, thank you for what you taught me and for giving me the opportunity to serve the town and residents of Hopedale.

Sincerely,

Pat Rahill

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pat Rahill". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.



## TOWN OF HOPEDALE

78 Hopedale Street - P.O. Box 7  
Hopedale, Massachusetts 01747

Tel: 508-634-2203 Fax: 508-634-2200  
[www.hopedale-ma.gov](http://www.hopedale-ma.gov)

**Select Board**  
Glenda A. Hazard, Chair  
Bernard J. Stock  
Scott M. Savage

**Town Administrator**  
Mitchell Ruscitti

December 7, 2023

TO: Select Board  
FROM: Martha White, Executive Assistant  
Kelly Grant, Executive Assistant  
REGARDING: Annual licenses scheduled for approval 12/11/23  
COPY TO: Mitch Ruscitti, Town Administrator

For Board members' information, while the licensing requirements vary somewhat depending on the license type, generally the following (and often additional) information is required:

- Evidence of compliance with the MA Department of Unemployment Assistance
- Evidence of compliance with the MA Department of Revenue
- Evidence of Worker's Compensation Insurance
- 24-Hour Emergency contact information
- Confirmation that no taxes or other fees are owed to the Town

Complete applications have been submitted and all other requirements fulfilled for the following applicants; accordingly, it is recommended that the Select Board approve these licenses for 2024:

### **CLASS II (USED CAR SALES) LICENSE**

- Milford Auto Sales
- A&S Detailing & Auto Sales
- Duest Motors
- Off-Lease Auto Sales

(Note that Patriots Custom Auto, Inc. has advised this office that they will not be renewing their Class II license).

### **COMMON VICTUALLER**

- Hopedale Country Club
- Dunkin'
- Hopedale Pizza Market Bar & Grill
- Hong Kong House



- Maria's Pizza

**SALE OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES (ON-PREMISES)**

- Hopedale Country Club
- Hopedale Pizza Market Bar & Grill

**SALE OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES (OFF-PREMISES)**

- Hopedale Package Store
- Brothers' Liquor (note that, as of this date, we do not have their Certificate of Compliance from DOR, but we expect to receive it tomorrow)

**ENTERTAINMENT**

- Hopedale Country Club



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**Select Board**  
Glenda A. Hazard, Chair  
Bernard J. Stock  
Scott M. Savage

**Town Administrator**  
Mitchell Ruscitti

December 7, 2023

TO: Select Board  
FROM: Martha White, Executive Assistant  
REGARDING: Draft Personnel Policy  
COPY TO: Mitch Ruscitti, Town Administrator

At the May 16, 2023 Annual Town Meeting, under Article 28, the Town voted to repeal and replace Town By-Law Chapter 137 (the Personnel By-Law); the new Personnel By-Law becomes effective January 1, 2024. Article 28 provided that the Select Board must adopt a Personnel Policy by January 1, 2024.

The proposed Policy mirrors the terms of the "old" Personnel By-Law. Many provisions have been clarified, but the Policy does not provide any benefits that did not previously exist.

Your favorable consideration is appreciated.

# Town of Hopedale Personnel Policy **DRAFT**

Adopted by the Hopedale Select Board \_\_\_\_\_

Effective January 1, 2024

## INTRODUCTION:

This Personnel Policy is adopted pursuant to, and as a supplement to, the Town of Hopedale By-Law Chapter 137. For a full understanding of the Town's personnel system, By-Law Chapter 137 should also be reviewed. The Classification and Compensation Plan, adopted under Article 27 of the May 16, 2023 Annual Town Meeting, as may subsequently be amended, is deemed an addendum to this policy.

The Town of Hopedale is an equal opportunity employer and shall not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability or sexual preference. It is the goal of the Town of Hopedale to provide a respectful and supportive work environment for its employees. The Town expects the same of its employees in their interactions with fellow Town employees, the public, and others with whom they interact.

## 1. APPLICABILITY

- A. This Policy shall not apply to positions under the jurisdiction of the School Committee, elected officials or employees working under a valid employment contract.
- B. Subject to the terms of By-Law § 137-2, the benefits and other provisions of this Policy shall apply to:
  - Regular employees who are non-salaried and are customarily scheduled to work 37.5 hours or more per week.
  - Salaried employees who are scheduled to work 37.5 or more hours per week on a regular basis.
- C. Regular part-time employees who are non-salaried and scheduled to work 20 hours or more per week; the benefits stated hereunder for said employees shall be applied on a pro-rata basis based on the number of hours worked each week.
  - Monthly accrual of leave shall be determined by dividing the employee's typical hours worked per week by 37.5. For example, an employee who typically works 20 hours per week would be paid 5.33 hours for each day of leave ( $20/37.5 = 5.33$ ).
  - Maximum accrual of leave, where applicable, shall be determined by dividing the employee's typical hours worked per week by 37.5, then multiplying by 120.
- D. Temporary employees who are non-salaried and hired to work for a specified term of less than one year are not eligible for benefits.
- E. Paid leave, as described in sections 2 through 6 below, is applicable only when the employee is normally scheduled to work on the day(s) of said leave.

## 2. VACATION LEAVE

- A. Each employee shall be credited with vacation leave with regular pay as follows:
- After the initial 6 months of service, 5 days will be credited, an additional 5 days will be credited after the second six months of service
  - For 2 through 4 years of service, 10 vacation days will be credited
  - For 5 years of service, 15 vacation days will be credited
  - For years 6 through 10, one additional vacation day will be credited each year such that as of year 10, 20 vacation days will be credited
  - For 20 years and more of service, 25 vacation days will be credited
  - Vacation days shall be credited as of the anniversary date of the employee's date of hire
- B. Employees are eligible to use their vacation time once it is credited
- C. Vacation days must be taken within 12 months of being credited. Unused vacation days will not be carried forward beyond said 12-month period except in the case of emergency as determined by the employee's department manager, and with the approval of the Town Administrator, up to one week may be carried forward.
- D. Requests for vacation leave must be submitted to the employee's department manager for approval at least one week prior to the intended leave.
- E. There shall be no payment or other consideration made to an employee for unused vacation leave except that employees who leave the employment of the Town in good standing shall be compensated for remaining accrued vacation time either by:
- using and being compensated for said vacation days by leaving their position in advance of their last day of employment, or
  - working until their last day of employment and being compensated for said remaining vacation time.

## 3. BEREAVEMENT LEAVE

- A. In the event of the death of the father mother, spouse, sibling, child, step-child, grandchild, mother- or father-in-law, of an employee, said employee will be granted 3 days leave with pay for bereavement and/or to attend funeral or related services.
- B. In the event of the death of any other member of an employee's immediate family, said employee will be granted one day leave with pay for attendance at funeral or related services.
- C. Compensation for bereavement leave shall be based on the hours normally worked by the employee.

## 4. SICK LEAVE

- A. For employees who are scheduled to work 37.5 hours per week or more, sick leave shall accrue at the rate of one day for every month of employment, up to a maximum of 120 days.

- B. For employees who are scheduled to work less than 37.5 hours per week, accrual shall be in accordance with paragraph 1.C., above.
- C. In no event shall an employee be entitled to receive payment or other consideration for unused sick leave.
- D. Sick leave shall be used only for illness or injury, except that up to 5 days of sick leave per year may be used for medical appointments or to care for an immediate family member who is ill.

5. PERSONAL LEAVE

- A. Each employee who has completed six months of continuous service shall be credited three days of personal leave.
- B. Except in the case of emergency, requests for personal leave must be submitted to the employee's department manager for approval at least 48 hours prior to the intended leave.
- C. Personal leave may be taken in 4-hour increments with the department manager's approval.
- D. In no event shall an employee be entitled to receive payment or other consideration for unused personal leave.
- E. Personal leave must be taken within 12 months of being credited. Unused personal leave will not be carried forward beyond said 12-month period.

6. HOLIDAY LEAVE

- A. Employees shall be granted leave with pay for the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- Presidents' Day
- GOOD FRIDAY (Friday before Easter)*
- Patriot's Day
- Memorial Day
- JUNTEENTH (June 19<sup>th</sup>)*
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Veterans' Day
- ½ DAY BEFORE THANKSGIVING*
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day after Thanksgiving
- ½ day on the last working day before Christmas*
- Christmas Day

Compensation for the above holidays shall be based on the hours normally worked by each employee.

#### 7. COMPENSATORY TIME

- A. There shall be a flexible system of compensatory time available for each employee: salaried exempt, salaried non-exempt, and hourly non-exempt.
- B. Compensatory time allows employees to work additional, unpaid, hours beyond their normal work schedule – hours that may later be taken as time off by the employee, subject to the following provisions.
  - 1. Working compensatory time is only allowed if the department manager has determined that there is a benefit to the department and/or the Town and if the employee agrees to work said additional hours.
  - 2. It is the responsibility of the department manager to properly track employees' compensatory time accumulated and used.
  - 3. Compensatory time may only be used as time-off and shall not be paid time.
  - 4. Employees may accrue a maximum of 24 hours of compensatory time.
  - 5. The accumulation and use of compensatory time must be approved in advance by the department manager and must be used within 30 days of the close of the fiscal year in which said time accrues.
  - 6. Requests to use compensatory time must be submitted to the employee's department manager or immediate supervisor for approval at least 48 hours in advance.

#### 8. Administration of Personnel System

The Town's personnel system shall be administered by the Town Administrator, which system shall include but not limited to:

- Maintenance of personnel records
- Maintenance and/or development of appropriate job descriptions for positions covered by this policy
- Implementation of effective recruitment and selection processes
- Administration of the Classification and Compensation plans
- Annual review of the Classification and Compensation plan and presentation to the town of any amendments deemed necessary to maintain fair and equitable wage and salary rates.
- Oversight of the administration of the Personnel Policy, periodic review and evaluation of the Policy, and presentation to the select board of any recommended amendments to this Policy
- Periodic evaluation of employee performance

9. The Town Administrator, with the approval of the Select Board, may establish new positions, or new classes of positions and compensation therefore, subject to subsequent ratification by Town Meeting.
10. Department heads, boards or committees having Town employees not otherwise exempted from this Policy under its/their jurisdiction shall be responsible for ensuring that wages, salaries, and benefits for said employees are in accordance with this Policy and the Classification and Compensation Plan.