

Select Board

January 3, 2022

Present:

- Select Board: Ms. Liz Klein (Acting Chair) and Mr. Joe Fisher
- Mr. Tom Mayo, Town Administrator
- Ms. Michelle Monsegur, Assistant Town Administrator for Finance
- Mr. Art Robert, Assistant Town Administrator for Operations

7:00 PM: Call to order

Ms. Klein called the meeting to order and read the following statement:

“This meeting is being held remotely as an alternate means of public access pursuant to an Order issued by the Governor of Massachusetts dated March 12, 2020 Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law. You are hereby advised that this meeting and all communications during this meeting may be recorded by the Town of Hingham in accordance with the Open Meeting Law. If any participant wishes to record this meeting, please notify the chair at the start of the meeting in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, § 20(f) so that the chair may inform all other participants of said recording. “

She announced that Select Board members participating in the meeting were herself, Ms. Liz Klein, and Mr. Joe Fisher. Chair Bill Ramsey was unable to attend. The meeting was conducted both in person and remotely via Zoom.

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of Minutes

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to approve the minutes dated December 13, 2022. Ms. Klein seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Ms. Klein: yes

Discussion regarding acceleration of Community Preservation project debt payments (Julie Strehle, Lori Magner)

Ms. Julie Strehle, 231 Leavitt Street, Chair of the Community Preservation Committee, presented. Town Accountant, Lori Magner, was also present. Ms. Strehle explained that, each year, the CPC recommends projects and grant amounts to Town Meeting for approval. The funding source for these projects comes from a 1.2% surcharge on residential and commercial tax bills plus a distribution from the Commonwealth's Community Preservation Trust Fund. The Community Preservation Act requires that the Town set aside 10% of the annual revenue for three main purposes: 10% to historic preservation, 10% to open space/recreation, and 10% to community housing. From time to time there have been projects that have been over budget but too time-sensitive to pass up, so the Town has funded them through the issuance of general obligation bonds. Future CPC revenue would be used to pay for these bonds. Currently, there are two projects for which the CPC is still paying for debt service for each year: the Lehner property (2016) and the Benjamin Lincoln House (2020). Ms. Strehle reported that, in 2022, the CPC decided to pay accelerated debt payments for these properties. She explained that she has

come before the Select Board to verify that these payments would be made this year. The CPC plans to vote on Wednesday, January 11 on their final recommendations of projects and dollar amounts to present to the annual 2023 Town Meeting. She provided the Select Board with debt payment schedules for both projects. Ms. Strehle asked the Board for approval to pay off the full amount on the Lehner land (\$70,000) or to allocate a larger than typical payment, if the funds are available and the CPC votes to do so. Discussion ensued, with a focus on interest rates and potential costs to the Town. The Board decided to revisit this agenda item at their meeting on January 10, 2023.

Agreement with Liberty Chevrolet, Inc.

Fire Chief Steve Murphy explained that the Fire Department would like to purchase a Chevrolet Silverado pick-up truck to replace their Shift Commander vehicle. They plan to use FY23 Capital funds for the project. Their current vehicle is a Chevy Tahoe. Chief Murphy said that, because of the nature and amount of equipment they are required to transport on calls, he felt that it would be safer for the staff if they could carry it in the back of a pick-up truck as opposed to inside the vehicle.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to authorize the Town Administrator to sign the Agreement with Liberty Chevrolet, Inc. for a new 2023 Chevrolet Full Size 4WD K1500 Silverado Pickup Truck for the Fire Department in an amount not to exceed \$55,767.00. Ms. Klein seconded.

FY24 Department Budget Requests

Bare Cove Park

Ms. Claudia Eaton, 19 Ocean View Drive, Chair of the Bare Cove Park Committee, presented. Bare Cove Park is a 484-acre wildlife sanctuary and public recreation area along the banks of the Weymouth Back River. Hingham received the land from the federal government in 1971. It served as a Navy ammunition depot for WWI, WWII and the Korean War. There are two historic buildings within the park: the Dock House Museum and Building 151, a burial vault. One part-time ranger keeps the park clean, mows the fields and plows the paved road surfaces in the winter. A goal going forward is to create a historic and recreational focal point within the park. They would also like to get power and water to the dock house. Ms. Eaton requested \$24,757 for the salary for one part-time park ranger and \$9,390 for expenses. Major expenses in FY24 will be \$2,995 for equipment repair and maintenance and \$2,000 for dog park licenses and associated items. Members of the Select Board reviewed and discussed the Bare Cove Park FY24 budget with Ms. Eaton.

Fire

Chief Murphy and Deputy Chief Lachance presented the Fire Department's FY24 budget. The mission of the Fire Department is:

- Save lives, protect property, and support our community
- Provide the best possible customer service through professionalism and pride
- Promote fire prevention, public education, and risk reduction
- Provide pre-hospital care/transportation and fire control
- Show fiscal responsibility and strategic planning for Hingham's future needs

Deputy Chief Lachance noted that the Fire Department's total call volume, EMS calls, and number of ambulance transports all continue to go up each year, with the exception of 2020 due to the pandemic.

Key initiatives of the Fire Department are:

- Filled all vacant positions (some employees haven't started yet but have accepted a position)
- Sent five members to fire academy recruit training
- Public Safety Building Project
- Firefighter development/training
- Review and learn from major incidents in Town
- Create Pre-Fire Inspection Program
- Continue working to secure FEMA reimbursement and other grant opportunities

Chief Murphy requested \$7,053,376 for 57 full-time personnel and \$677,228 for expenses. Major expense items include vehicle fuel (\$83,170), repair & maintenance of buildings (\$75,000) and vehicles (\$125,000). He also presented an addition budget request of \$392,280 to hire 4 new firefighters, which will allow the department to increase their maximum staffing levels and decrease overtime wages.

Members of the Select Board reviewed and discussed the Fire Department budget. Additional discussion revolved around the morale of the department and the issue of overtime. Chief Murphy said that morale has been a challenge in the past year due to the fact that personnel are being forced to work overtime out of necessity. He explained that one of the reasons for the additional request is so that they can limit the number of holdovers by increasing staffing. Regarding mental health, he reported that the Town has been very helpful, but they have also been utilizing different services through Plymouth County, the Fire Service or other means in order to make sure their employees get what they need. Chief Murphy also noted that the department has been exploring the use of electric or hybrid vehicles. While they have requested a hybrid vehicle for one of the Admin vehicles, he explained the challenges with an all-electric vehicle. The current technology is not yet able to support all of the equipment, lights, radios and sirens necessary on a fire department vehicle. The electric fire engines that are currently on the market are very cost-prohibitive as well.

Public Safety Utilities

Chief Murphy reported that The FY24 Emergency Water Service budget is a flat fee charged by the Weir River Water System to maintain water in the 900+ fire hydrants in town. They have also budgeted \$10,000 for emergency repair of hydrants. The Public Safety Utilities budget funds 2,300+ streetlights in town through the Hingham Municipal Light Plant.

Animal Control

Officer Leslie Badger presented the Animal Control Budget. The Animal Control Officer is responsible for all injured, sick, and deceased animals on Hingham Town Property and enforcing all animal-related State and Town laws. Typical duties of the Animal Control Officer are:

- Find and reunite loose/missing pets with their owners.

- Capture/handle livestock, wildlife, and marine mammals, and get them medical care or humanly put them down.
- Capture sick and injured wildlife by hand or use of trap; transport them to the New England Wildlife Center or humanely put them down if necessary.
- Monitor coyote, fox, and fisher cat activity.
- Patrol Bare Cove Park and monitor the off-leash program
- Handle animal law enforcement cases (hoarding, abuse/neglect, animals left in cars)
- Also provide coverage for Cohasset, Norwell, Hull, Rockland, Abington, Hanover, and Pembroke.
- Work with multiple Hingham Town departments (BOH, Veterans, and Elder services)

Key initiatives of the department are:

- Continue to promote the dog licensing program; residents have adopted many new dogs and puppies
- Continue to monitor the Bare Cove off-leash program and Coyote Program
- Work on updating the Animal Control truck and equipment
- Continue working on a volunteer training program for HPD and HFD, with one of our local big barns and kennels and hold the trainings
- More community outreach programs for children, adults, elders and veterans
- Work on an Animal Control social media page presence
- Continue offering educational meetings with help from NEWC, EPOS, local veterinarians and fellow ACOS, to help address or educate our community regarding animal or pet concerns

Ms. Badger requested \$81,858 for one full-time Animal Control Officer and for one unfilled part-time position. She also requested \$6,200 for departmental expenses.

Harbormaster

Harbormaster Ken Corson provided an overview of the Hingham waterways and gave the following departmental benchmarks. In the past year, the Harbormaster's Office has monitored the following:

- 1500+ log entries
- 566 calls for service
- 1,693 mooring/slip locations
- 1,850+ vessels in 2022
- 178 Transient Customers (many multi-day)
- 202 HRS of pump out service during the 2022 Season
- Approximately 6,100 gallons of waste removed from ≈ 270 boats

Key initiatives of the department are:

- Town Wharf Improvement
- MBTA Computer Dock/HM Jet Docks
- Port Security Grant Refurbish Marine I
- Camera System Buildout and Server R.

- Secure the Cities Program - Partner with BPD in DHS program to reduce the risk of radiological or nuclear weapons against metropolitan areas.

Mr. Corson requested \$249,997 for FY24 salaries for 2 full-time personnel and 15 part-time personnel. He also requested \$85,343 for expenses, including fuel, repair and maintenance of vehicles and grounds, the mooring management system, use and occupancy HOC, and boat slip fees.

Mr. Corson also requested an additional \$63,100 for an additional Assistant Harbormaster. He explained that Police reform and the evolving law enforcement profession transformed the operations of the Harbormaster Division from how it was envisioned it some 20 years ago. Required police education and training rendered that system impossible. Mr. Corson said that the Hingham community has progressed to the point of requiring another full-time person to meet the community's expectations, maintain training, fill shifts, and plan for the future. Additionally, Mr. Corson explained the correlation between lack of staff and reduced departmental revenues. He noted that they need more staff to enforce ticketing and to follow up with the collection of fees. The Select Board reviewed and discussed the Harbormaster's budget and had some additional conversation and questions regarding Mr. Corson's additional request for an additional Assistant Harbormaster.

Police

Police Chief Dave Jones presented. He began by announcing the core values of the Police Department as "Integrity," "Service," "Excellence," and "Leadership." Chief Jones reported the following metrics from FY22:

CY22 Hingham Court Statistics

- 108 Arrests
- 144 Complaint Applications
- 1,402 Incident Reports

CY22 Hingham Traffic Statistics

- 3,670 Citations
- 399 Motor Vehicle Crashes
- 226 Parking Tickets

Key initiatives of the Police Department include:

- Community Engagement
 - Citizen's Police Academies – Linden Ponds / HPD
 - National Night Out / Family Fun Day
 - Community Meetings – Boy/Girl Scouts, K-9 Demos, etc.
 - Coffee w/a Cop – Senior Center and public locations
 - Hingham Police Association – Senior Dinner (2022 first in 2 years)
- Training
 - Comply with new training mandates due to police reform

- Offer innovative new training opportunities for employees
- Focus on regional training opportunities
- Outreach
 - Plymouth Country Outreach – Drug Dependency / Overdose
 - Domestic Violence Advocate
 - Mental Health Clinician
 - Civil Rights Officer – Lt. John Marquardt

Chief Jones requested FY24 salaries of \$6,887,921, which included:

- Wages Full-Time - \$4,732,628
- Clerical Full-Time - \$258,118
- Crossing Guards - \$107,572
- Overtime - \$521,329
- Contractual Benefits - \$1,268,274

Chief Jones also requested FY24 expenses of \$495,750, which included:

- Officer Equipment - \$110,000
- Fuel - \$97,650
- Vehicle Repair - \$45,000
- Continuing Education - \$35,000

The Chief had an additional request for four full-time Police Officers at a cost of \$335,724. The addition of these officer would add one officer to each shift. It would reduce overtime expenditures and would also reduce the number of times that officers are being forced into serving double shifts. Calls for service continue to increase each year and the number of Police Officers on staff has decreased significantly since 1980. The Select Board members reviewed and discussed the Police FY24 budget with Chief Jones. There was additional discussion regarding:

- overtime hours, including statistics for patrol overtime and forced overtime and the impact on the department's morale
- crossing guard salaries
- body cameras
- the recently hired Mental Health Clinician and the tremendous resource she has been to the department

Select Board sponsored Warrant Articles for 2023 Annual Town Meeting (Tom, Michelle)

Reports of Various Town Committees

Mr. Mayo explained that this is a perennial article that gives a report from Town Meeting-formed committees. Statutorily, the Town is required to provide a report this annually.

Salaries of Town Officers

This article sets the salaries of various Town board and committee members, including the Select Board members.

Budgets

Mr. Mayo reported that the budget will be reviewed and analyzed by Town Administration and the Select Board, and other Town Committees, over the course of the next two months.

Transfer from the Stabilization Fund

This is an annual article that utilizes bond premiums from previous sales in order to offset the tax rate.

Disbursement of Electric Light Department Receipts

Mr. Mayo explained that this article outlines a Pilot (payment in lieu of taxes) that the Town receives annually from the Hingham Municipal Light Plant. Each year the Town holds back \$450,000 or, based on a formula, something greater than that from HMLP receipts.

Building Department Revolving Fund

Receipts from the electrical, plumbing, and gas permitting receipts are added to the Building Department Revolving Fund and are used to pay inspectors.

Transfer of Funds to the Reserve Fund

Mr. Mayo explained that his article is included in the Warrant each year in the event that the existing Reserve Fund is not adequate to cover unbudgeted and unanticipated expenses for the balance of the current Fiscal Year. The specific amount will be reported at Town Meeting.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to propose the articles as presented for inclusion in the 2023 Warrant for Hingham Annual Town Meeting. Ms. Klein seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Ms. Klein: yes

Appointments (for a list of Talent Bank Applicants, please visit [Hingham-ma.gov/SB](https://www.hingham-ma.gov/SB))

There were no appointments.

Public Comment

“The Hingham Select Board encourages community engagement and welcomes questions and comments as agenda items are discussed at the meeting. In addition, we have set aside up to fifteen minutes for public comment for items that fall under the purview of the Select Board and are not already on tonight’s agenda. If any guests wish to speak, please seek to be recognized. Once recognized, state your name and address and address your comments to the Chair. Comments will be limited to three minutes per speaker and must relate to topics within the scope of the responsibilities of the Select Board. Speakers are encouraged to present their remarks in a respectful manner and not to indulge in personalities. The Public Comment period is not a time for debate by members of the Select Board. The Select Board is not adopting or endorsing any of the comments made during the Public Comment period.”

There were no comments from the public.

Town Administrator and Select Board Reports

Mr. Mayo reported that he has, as he does annually, put together a year in review summary of important accomplishments of Town staff and volunteers. Ms. Klein was excited for the public to get to see the list.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Klein seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Ms. Klein: yes

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 PM.

Documents: A complete meeting packet of supporting documentation is on file and available for public review in the Select Board office