

# Select Board

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January 18, 2022

Present:

- Select Board: Mr. Bill Ramsey, Chair, Ms. Liz Klein 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

## **6:00 PM: Call to order**

Mr. Ramsey 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. “

He announced that Select Board members participating in the meeting were himself, Bill Ramsey, Ms. Liz Klein, and Mr. Joe Fisher. 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 January 10, 2023. Ms. Klein seconded.**

## **Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Fisher: yes**

**Ms. Klein: yes**

**Mr. Ramsey: yes**

## **Permanent Full-time Police Officer Appointments**

Police Chief Jones and Deputy Chief O’Shea gave some background on the approval process for the candidates as well as the department’s recommendation for appointments. Chief Jones said that he felt very fortunate to have such capable candidates. He explained that the selection process began in early November when they received the candidates from the Civil Service eligibility list. After that, each of the candidates were assigned a background detective who screened them with an extensive background investigation that lasted several weeks. Following that, the candidates participated in interviews with the Select Board and the Police Interview panel. During this process all the candidates displayed a high level of maturity and professionalism. They all showed a genuine desire to serve the Hingham community and to have the opportunity to give back and help others. Chief Jones said that, “most importantly, they all exemplified our department’s core values of integrity, service, excellence, and leadership.” Three of the candidates that they plan to offer conditional employment offers to will plan to attend the Police Academy, beginning on February 21, 2023. One of the candidates is already a certified officer, and therefore would not be required to attend the academy. The Police Academy training will last six months, followed by three months of training in the field. Chief Jones has submitted

a letter to the Select Board which contained his recommendations for appointments. He asked that the Select Board consider offering conditional employment offers to Jacob Foss, Jacob Crenier, Justin Worth and Gina McCarthy. Neither Chief Jones nor Deputy Chief O'Shea had any reservations about the candidates. The members of the Select Board said that they were very impressed with all of the candidates. Chief Jones added that all four of the positions are contained within the department's budget and are open due to retirements and transfers. Town Administrator Mayo was comfortable with Chief Jones' recommendations. Mr. Ramsey made some remarks about his personal experience as a sibling of a Hingham Police Officer and shared some kind words with the candidates.

**Vote: Ms. Klein made a motion to extend a conditional offer of employment to Mr. Jacob Foss as a permanent police officer for the Town of Hingham. This offer is contingent upon the successful passing of all required medical and psychological screening examinations and all other requirements related to, but not necessarily limited to the following:**

- A. Successful passing of the required medical examination;
- B. Successful passing of the required psychological screening process;
- C. Subject to an available appropriation and any and all other requirements as mandated by-law or regulation.

Mr. Fisher seconded

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

**Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to extend a conditional offer of employment to Mr. John Crenier, Mr. Justin Worth, and Ms. Gina McCarthy as permanent police officer(s) for the Town of Hingham. This offer is contingent upon the successful passing of all required medical and psychological screening examinations and all other requirements related to, but not necessarily limited to the following:**

- A. Successful passing of the required medical examination;
- B. Successful passing of the required physical abilities test (PAT);
- C. Successful passing of the required psychological screening process;
- D. Successful passing of all other requirements for entrance into the police academy;
- E. Entering into a satisfactory agreement with the Town of Hingham relative to repayment of the \$4,650 recruit training fee and cost of any initially issued police equipment, if the appointed officer ceases employment with the Town of Hingham Police Department within the first five years;
- F. Successful completion of the police academy as determined by the Police Chief;
- G. Subject to an available appropriation and any and all other requirements as mandated by-law or regulation.

Ms. Klein seconded.

**Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Fisher: yes**

**Ms. Klein: yes**

**Mr. Ramsey: yes**

**Two Special (One Day) Wine and Malt Beverages licenses to Friends of Hingham Cemetery, Inc.**

This agenda item was deferred until the next meeting of the Select Board.

**Select Board sponsored Warrant Articles for 2023 Annual Town Meeting**

**Article D: Personnel Board Report**

Town Administrator Mayo explained that Article D is an annual article that will include the salary increases, fringe benefit changes, job classifications and any amendments to the Personnel By-law. A report from the Personnel Board should be available in early February, at which time it will be brought back to the Select Board for a vote of favorable action. Mr. Mayo clarified that this article applies only to non-school employees. No major changes to the by-law were anticipated this year.

**Article O: Acceptance of M.G.L. c. 59, § 5N**

Assistant Town Administrator, Ms. Michelle Monsegur explained that Article O and Article W were both brought to the attention of the Select Board by Director of Veterans' Services, Mr. Keith Jermyn, and both offer additional tax assistance to a certain group of residents. Article O would confirm acceptance of provisions to allow certain residents \$1,875 in tax exemptions for the property tax work-off program. She added that, the Town felt that it would be worth bringing these two articles to the attention of the Board this year, especially since the Town is planning for a tax override. Mr. Jermyn added that veterans have been made aware of this benefit through the Town's website and through a flyer that was sent to all the addresses that pay property tax.

**Article W: Acceptance of M.G.L. c. 59, § 5C½**

Ms. Monsegur reported that Article W is another tax exemption that was brought to the Board's attention by Mr. Jermyn. The article would allow the Town to increase by 100% all of the other exemptions that are currently offered by the Town, with the exception of the Senior Means Tested exemption. The Veterans Office is currently looking into the different exemptions available to qualified residents. Additional exemptions, if approved by the Town, would begin in FY24. Currently there are about 124 people who participate in these exemptions for a total exemption of \$75,000. If approved these exemptions would increase to a financial impact of \$150,000, which could be covered by the Town's overlay budget. Mr. Jermyn also explained how residents could qualify for these exemptions and there was some additional discussion regarding tax exemptions for Gold Star families and widows of Veterans. Ms. Monsegur is still reviewing the State guidance to make sure that they are including all available tax exemptions.

**Article R (and Z): Building Department Fees**

Assistant Town Administrator, Mr. Art Robert explained that Article R contains updates to the Town's plumbing and gas permitting fees. The purpose of the article is to update the fees as well as to provide the Select Board with the authority to adjust those fees from time to time rather than leaving the

decision to a vote by Town Meeting. Article Z refers to the updating of electrical permitting fees. Building Commissioner, Mr. Mike Clancy, added that these proposed articles would bring Hingham in line with comparable communities with regard to Building Department fees and would allow the Town to cover the cost of inspections. He also noted that, when the current permitting fees were adopted in 2009, the average home in Hingham has 11 inspections. Currently, an average home has 22 inspections between plumbing, gas, building, HVAC and electrical inspections. Mr. Fisher asked Mr. Clancy if he has any discretion to alter the fees in the case of a hardship claim. Mr. Clancy felt that the approval of hardship claims would be under the purview of the Select Board.

**Article X: Senior Center Feasibility Study**

Mr. Mayo explained that this article would amend an article that was passed in 2020, which appropriated \$525,000 for design and permitting fees for a new Senior Center at Town Hall. Article X would free up use of that money to identify any other appropriate sites that may be identified through an analysis. Mr. Mayo noted that there seems to be some interest amongst the senior population to make sure that the location is appropriate before we get to the next stage of the project, which would include construction documents. Ms. Klein added that she has heard from seniors in Town that they would be interested in looking at additional sites for a new Senior Center. Once a site is chosen, an additional Town Meeting vote would be necessary for permitting and construction documents costs. While this would slow the process, Mr. Mayo felt that it would enable the Town to secure a location that the senior population would be happy with. The Board was in agreement that it could be appropriate to call a Special Town Meeting to secure additional funding, if necessary, once a location is chosen.

**Article Y: Municipal Capital Needs**

Article Y would fund needed projects that Capital Outlay and CPC are not able to. Mr. Mayo felt that this article could be a potential solution to some ongoing needs for important capital projects. Some ideas for projects could be the GAR Hall windows project, DPW vehicles that have been deferred for a number of years, and the green dock house building at Bare Cove Park, which could be a “home base” or “safety zone” for the Hingham High School rowing team while they are practicing in the park. Specific projects and dollar amounts would be included in the final version of the article once the results of the Community Preservation Committee and the Capital Outlay Committee finalize their projects. At that time, the Select Board would weigh in on projects remaining on the “critical” list. There was some additional discussion regarding whether “preventative maintenance” projects should be included in this list.

**Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to propose Articles D, O, R, X, Y, and Z 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**

**Mr. Ramsey: yes**

**Naming By-law Committee Update**

Chair Phil Edmundson presented. He reported that the Committee has been working with Attorney John Coughlin on the wording of their potential Town Meeting Article. The committee plans to vote on the article's language at their upcoming meeting. He sought the advice of the Select Board members regarding increasing the naming threshold to 25%, while there may be some interest in bringing that threshold up even higher, to 50%. Ms. Klein felt that a threshold of 50% may be a way to streamline the process and make it easier for the Town to make decisions. Mr. Fisher felt that the lower threshold of 25% doesn't go far enough. Mr. Edmundson explained that the committee used the 25% threshold as a way of streamlining the process and eliminating the need to get Town Meeting approval so frequently, while also encouraging private funding. Mr. Mayo added that Real Estate Attorney, Susan Murphy, and Senior Planner, Ms. Emily Wentworth, have reviewed the proposed article and have worked closely with Attorney Coughlin and are in agreement with the wording of the article as presented.

### **Foster Elementary School Project Update**

Mr. Ray Estes, 92 Forth Hill Street, Vice-Chair of the School Building Committee, presented. Also present were Mr. Chris Carroll, Owner's Project Manager, and Ms. Linda Hill, Chair of the School Building Committee. Mr. Estes provided the Select Board members with an update on the new Foster Elementary School project. Site work started soon after Town Meeting when they were able to award the bid. He hopes that construction will start in the spring. Work completed to date includes:

- A new access roads for construction vehicles
- Approval of a storm water protection plan by the Conservation Commission as required.
- The paving of temporary parking at the site.
- Preparation of site work with heavy earth moving equipment.
- Installation of observation wells in the hill to monitor water levels
- Tree removal and loam removal
- Installation of utility hookups for site trailers and construction vehicles
- The building of a temporary outdoor playground has begun.

Mr. Fisher asked if Mr. Estes anticipated any disruptions to the anticipated schedule. Mr. Estes reported that the principal of Foster has told him that the teachers are not seeing much disruption at all so far. Mr. Estes and Ms. Hill have not received any complaints from abutters regarding the construction to date. They noted that they have socialized the plans very well with parents and abutters so that everyone affected knows what to expect during the construction. They have set up an email address for people to contact regarding questions and they have not yet received any emails. Ms. Klein commented that she was thrilled that the schedule is currently on time and under budget, as reported by Ms. Estes. Mr. Ramsey was happy with the progress so far and offered the support of the Select Board if needed during the building project.

### **FY22 Fund Balance Memo Presentation (Michelle, Sue Nickerson)**

Ms. Nickerson, Town Accountant, presented the FY22 Fund Balance memo. Total General Fund Balance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022 (FY2022) is \$48,532,091 as compared to the Fund Balance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021 (FY2021) of \$47,796,707, which represents an increase of \$735,384. Total Annual Expenditures per the Town's Financial Policy for FY22 is \$111,897,794. The percent of Unassigned Fund Balance to Total Annual Expenditures is 31.71 %. The amount of excess Unassigned

Fund Balance (over 20% of TAE) would be \$13,098,088. The change in Fund Balance of \$735,384 is mostly attributed to three categories: surplus of revenue of approximately \$3.63 million; a budget surplus (turn backs) of approximately \$4.45 million (which includes \$2.1 million in receivables from Federal COVID related reimbursements); minus the use of Fund Balance of approx. \$7.35 million. Ms. Klein and Ms. Nickerson clarified that the \$13,098,088 of Unassigned Fund Balance does not include the \$7 million that had already been earmarked and voted upon by Town Meeting. Mr. Fisher asked if the Excess Fund Balance could be anticipated annually as a type of recurring revenue. Ms. Nickerson said that it would be difficult to forecast. With the end of the Federal money from Covid and other reasons, she did not anticipate turn backs of this size in the future. The members of the Select Board discussed the Fund Balance memo with Ms. Nickerson.

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

**Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to appoint Judd Caplain to the Audit Committee to fill an unexpired term ending June 30, 2024. Mr. Fisher seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Fisher: yes**

**Ms. Klein: yes**

**Mr. Ramsey: yes**

**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. Robert reported that a blood drive is scheduled for Tuesday, January 24. Those interested in participating can sign up at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).

Mr. Mayo announced that he, Mr. Robert, Ms. Monsegur, members of the Select Board, and other staff plan to attend the Massachusetts Municipal Association’s annual conference on Friday, January 20. He said that the conference is a great place to exchange ideas with other municipalities.

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

**Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Fisher: yes**

**Ms. Klein: yes**

**Mr. Ramsey: yes**

**The meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.**

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