

Board of Selectmen

January 26, 2021

Remote meeting via telephone conference call

Present:

- Board of Selectmen: Ms. Mary Power (Chair), Mr. Joseph Fisher and Mr. Bill Ramsey
- Mr. Tom Mayo, Town Administrator
- Ms. Michelle Monsegur, Assistant Town Administrator

7:00 PM: Call to order

Ms. Power 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.”

Ms. Power asked if anyone was recording the meeting. Mr. Rowe of WATD News indicated that he was recording the meeting.

Audit Committee presentation of Fiscal 2020 Financial Statements

Ms. Power recognized the members of the Audit Committee, including Rob Shickel, Joshua Marine, Doug Farrington, Leonetta Scappini and John Deeley. She also recognized the efforts of Town Accountant, Sue Nickerson, for her significant contributions to ensuring the integrity of the Town’s financial statements. Ms. Nickerson introduced Rob Shickel, Chair of the Audit Committee. Mr. Shickel explained that the Audit Committee had unanimously accepted the following reports that had been prepared by Clifton Larsen Allen:

1. Town of Hingham Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR)
2. Town of Hingham GAO and uniform Guidance Reports year Ended June 30, 2020
3. Town of Hingham Contributory Retirement System Pension Plan Schedules for the Year Ending December 31, 2019
4. Management Letter discussing internal controls, ongoing status of previously reported items and review of upcoming regulatory changes

There was some additional discussion of key findings of the auditors. Jim Piotrowski and Chris Rogers of CLA made some comments. Ms. Sue Nickerson, Town Accountant, clarified that the Town’s retirement system runs on a calendar year and the CAFR runs on a fiscal year. Ms. Power likened the CAFR to a corporation’s annual report and pointed out that, in addition to financial information, it contains statistical and demographic information for the Town of Hingham. She pointed out that, because the CAFR shows a 10-year view, it is useful in identifying budget trends. The CAFR will be available for review at www.hingham-ma.gov.

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to accept the Fiscal 2020 financial statements and Management letter as submitted. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

FY21 Community Preservation Committee Grant Agreements

Ms. Power reported that the Board would take a procedural vote to allow the Board to sign grant agreements for CPC projects that were approved by last year's Town Meeting. Mr. Larry Lindner, 22 Water Street, Chair of the Community Preservation Committee explained that the Board is being asked to sign the following grant agreements:

- \$500,000 for design and construction documents up to for a pool at the South Shore Country Club
- \$75,000 for the repair of tennis courts at Plymouth River School

Mr. Mayo stated that Town Counsel has reviewed the grant agreements and found everything to be in order. Mr. Mark Thorell, Director of the Recreation Department was excited to get started on the repairs to the courts. Mr. Kevin Whelan, Director of the South Shore Country Club, was also eager to get started on their work. He reported that they have already hired a designer and a project manager. Mr. Fisher pointed out the following special conditions in the South Shore Country Club's grant agreement:

1. The project cannot commence without the consultation of an engineer
2. The project should require an engineer's approval of the new site for the pool
3. The recipient must notify abutters and have a meeting to address any concerns prior to the start of the project.

South Shore Country Club:

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to enter into a Grant Agreement by and among the Board, the Community Preservation Committee, and the South Shore Country Club for the grant of \$500,000 in Community Preservation Act funds approved under Article 19 by the 2020 Annual Town Meeting in accordance with the conditions of said Article 19 and to authorize the Town Administrator to sign said Agreement. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Hingham Recreation Department:

Vote: Ms. Power made a motion to enter into a Grant Agreement by and among the Board, the Community Preservation Committee, and the Hingham Recreation Department for the grant of \$75,000 in Community Preservation Act funds approved under Article 19 by the 2020 Annual Town

Meeting in accordance with the conditions of said Article 19 and to authorize the Town Administrator to sign said Agreement. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: abstain

Ms. Power: yes

Mr. Ramsey said that he would abstain from voting because his spouse is on the Recreation Commission.

Police Chief Candidate Interview: David P. Jones

Mr. Mayo began by giving a summary of the hiring process for a new Police Chief. He explained that, to date, the Town has done the following:

- Issued a job posting
- Compiled applications
- Distributed the information to the Board members, including the resume of the only candidate, interim Chief David Jones, correspondence received from the public regarding this hire, and the Police job description
- Coordinated an interview of the candidate by a panel of three qualified and respected Police Chiefs from the Towns of Marshfield, Canton and Dedham.

Ms. Power added that the Town invited residents to submit questions for consideration for this evening's interview. She also announced that there would not be an opportunity for public questions or comments during the interview. Ms. Power introduced Interim Chief David Jones and asked him to make some comments regarding his background and experience. Interim Chief Jones stated that he was raised in Hingham, went to Hingham Public Schools and participated in the Boy Scouts, serving as an Assistant Scoutmaster and an Eagle Scout. He received a Bachelor's degree from Curry College and a Master's Degree from Roger Williams University. Interim Chief Jones has been with the Police Department for over 20 years and has held many positions including Patrolman, Sergeant, Lieutenant, Deputy Chief, and currently Interim Chief. He has served as an incident Response Team Coordinator on the Metropolitan Law Enforcement Council. He is an instructor and trainer with the Police Department, member of the Honor Guard, a Field Training Officer, and Director of the Citizens Police Academy. Interim Chief Jones is also an elected member of the Retirement Board, a member of the Traffic Committee, and a member of the Town's Covid Response Team. He stated that leading the Hingham Police Department has been a goal of his since he joined the department. A goal of his is to better the department and to improve their level of service and commitment to the community. He also thanked the Board for the opportunity to interview for the position of Police Chief. Members of the Board followed by taking turns asking the candidate a number of questions related to the following categories:

- Leadership and vision for the department
- Administration and day to day activities
- Policing and community relations
- Miscellaneous (School Resource Officers, communication, diversity and inclusivity in Hingham, changes he hopes to implement, etc.)

Ms. Power noted that questions provided by residents and Board members were not shared with the candidate prior to the interview.

Mr. Mayo explained that the next step in the hiring process would be for the Selectmen to include an agenda item at a subsequent meeting to consider a potential appointment to the position of Police Chief, if the Board feels it has a qualified candidate. Ms. Power thanked Interim Chief Jones for stepping into the role of Chief and holding it for the last several months, and also for his efforts in leading the department during the Town's COVID-19 response.

Letter of support for Hingham Municipal Light Plant to pursue a grant opportunity for electric vehicle charging stations on Town property

Ms. Michelle Monsegur, Assistant Town Administrator, announced that Mr. Tom Morahan from HMLP has asked to partner with the Board of Selectmen's Office to install several electric vehicle charging stations at a few municipally-owned properties around Hingham. Station Street and Town Hall parking lots have been identified as possible locations, although parking is already tight at Town Hall. Ms. Monsegur reported that HMLP is pursuing grant opportunities that would allow HMLP to install charging stations at no cost. These stations would be open to the public. At this time, HMLP is asking for support from the Board of Selectmen for the grant application and for the Board to give preliminary permission to move forward with installing electric charging stations in two locations. The final installation of these stations would be subject to any necessary Town permits and a license agreement with the Board of Selectmen. Ms. Monsegur expressed support for more energy efficient and environmentally friendly modes of transportation in Hingham.

Mr. Morahan added that the grant agreement specifies that the Town could receive up to \$50,000 towards the installation of these charging stations, as long as they are situated on public land and accessible to the public. Mr. Fisher asked if there were plans for any charging stations to be installed on private property in Town. Mr. Morahan said that some locations on Route 3A near the Shipyard have been considered. He added there are currently some charging stations at Linden Ponds, the new apartments on Beal Street and at the headquarters of Russell Electric. The Board expressed support for pursuing the grant funding.

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to approve the a letter of support for Hingham Municipal Light Plant to apply for the MassEVIP Public Access Charging Program Grant to install electric vehicle charging stations on Town property. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Inside Town Finances: Volume 3

Ms. Power presented the third in a series of presentations on Town Finances, Excluded Debt. The entire presentation can be found online at www.hingham-ma.gov. Ms. Power concluded by saying that she hopes the series will help inform residents in municipal finances as Town Meeting approaches.

Dr. Dorothy Galo, 1 Volunteer Road, expressed her support for the series of financial presentations and felt it could be a great tool to inform residents. She asked how many votes would be required if the Town chooses to exclude debt, specifically as such debt applies to school building projects. Ms. Power explained that a debt exclusion would require a 2/3 vote at Town Meeting and a majority vote at the ballot box. She added that, under the MSBA program, the amount the Town Meeting approves is the total cost of the project. It was noted that, with MSBA projects, the Town receives reimbursements periodically as the project progresses rather than just when the project is complete.

The Board had some additional discussion regarding the purchase of the Weir River Water System. Ms. Power clarified that excluded debt was not used to purchase the water system because it is an Enterprise Fund. She added that, anytime the Town borrows money, a 2/3 vote is required.

COVID-19 Update

Mr. Mayo gave the following update on the COVID-19 crisis:

COVID-19 Data

According to [public health data](#) from the MA Department of Public Health (DPH) released last week, the Town's designation is "yellow" indicating a "medium risk" of spread in the community. The average daily incidence rate for the Town of Hingham is 64.0 per 100,000 residents, slightly down from 70.8 the prior week. According to DPH, there have been 215 new cases of COVID-19 in the community over the past 14 days. There have been a total of 1,242 cases in Hingham since the start of the pandemic. As of today, confirmed COVID-19 cases in Massachusetts had climbed to 481,617. Please continue to avoid high risk activities, especially indoor social gatherings. In addition, all Massachusetts residents remain under orders from the Governor to wear masks at all times while in public.

Vaccine Rollout

This week, the Town is continuing to hold vaccination clinics for home health care workers and non-COVID-facing health care workers as part of Phase 1 of the state's vaccine rollout plan. The Town is also ready to begin holding vaccination clinics for Phase 2 individuals as soon as we receive sufficient vaccine supplies from the state. Earlier this week, the Baker-Polito Administration announced updates to plans for Phase Two, which will begin on Monday, February 1st. Individuals 75 years or older will now be the first priority group in Phase 2; individuals 65 years and older and individuals with two comorbidities are now the second priority group in Phase 2. We understand and recognize that these vaccines are important to so many of our residents, and we will continue to keep the community updated on the progress of vaccine distribution as part of Phases 2 and 3. As we receive additional vaccine supplies from the state, we will communicate via our official website, social media channels, the local press, email blasts and more to schedule people for appointments. Additionally, the Town's Elder Services Department will be conducting outreach to our senior population to ensure they are made aware of clinics and to provide assistance with registration if needed. Much of the guidelines and vaccine distribution capabilities are controlled by the state DPH, and we encourage all residents to continue to follow the state's official COVID-19 website for the most up-to-date information. This page can be found by visiting [mass.gov](#) and clicking on the COVID-19 link. Many questions can be answered on this page. Anyone with questions about how to get a vaccine should visit [mass.gov/COVIDvaccine](#) to find their phase and priority group.

Those with questions about the vaccine may also contact the state by emailing COVID-19-Vaccine-Plan-MA@mass.gov. We appreciate the public's patience during this very difficult and busy time for us all.

As always, residents are encouraged to visit the Hingham Town website for information on current data and resources. That site is hingham-ma.gov/COVID19. Lastly, anyone with questions about the vaccine who was unable to find the information they needed online can email the Hingham Health Department at CovidQuestions@hingham-ma.gov.

Mr. Fisher asked how seniors who do not have access to internet should navigate the vaccine process. Mr. Mayo advised that the Senior Center staff would be reaching out directly to residents and offering help registering for the vaccine. Mr. Ramsey thanked Mr. Mayo and Town Administration for pushing to obtain access to the vaccine. Ms. Power advised the public that the COVID-19 testing site on Cushing Street is still open daily. Mr. Mayo thanked Fire Chief Murphy and his team for volunteering to serve as vaccinators.

Public Comment

There were no comments from the public.

Appointments

Weir River Water System Citizens Advisory Board

Mr. Mayo explained that, as part of the acquisition of the water company, Hingham agreed to create a Citizens Advisory Board comprised of citizens from Hingham, Hull and Cohasset, who would serve as liaisons between the residents and the Board of Water Commissioners. The Town of Hingham has 6 seats on this Advisory Board. Cohasset has one seat and Hull has two seats. The number of seats is roughly related to the populations of all three communities. The appointees have been recommended by the Board of Selectmen of each town. John Struzziery is a long-time Hull resident and an engineer who works in the Hull Sewer Department. Mr. Mayo added that he was instrumental in the selection of our Water System Operator and is a very knowledgeable person. Donna Purcell is a Select Board member in Hull and is highly recommended by the Hull Town Administrator.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to appoint Donna Purcell as the Town of Hull's representatives to the Weir River Water System Citizens Advisory Board for a term ending June 30, 2023. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to appoint John Struzziery as the Town of Hull's representatives to the Weir River Water System Citizens Advisory Board for a term ending June 30, 2024. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Selectmen/Town Administrator Reports

Ms. Monsegur: Nothing to report

Mr. Mayo: Nothing to report

Mr. Fisher: Nothing to report

Mr. Ramsey: Nothing to report

Ms. Power announced that the newly created Commission on Disabilities, Chaired by Diane DiNapoli, has been actively working on a number of front. They are organizing themselves, creating bylaws, holding meetings and bringing in State representatives to help shape their work. She reported that she speaks on a monthly basis with Ms. DiNapoli to discuss priorities. One current priority for the commission is to make Town Meeting more accessible, including large print Warrants and logistics for the meeting. She was hopeful that their work would be very helpful.

9:18 pm: The Chair stated that the Board will now enter into Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to litigation in the Plymouth County Superior Court case of Matthew Hersey v. Town of Hingham (Docket # 1883CV00583) under the provisions of M.G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(3) because an open discussion may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the public body and that the board will not reconvene in open session.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

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