

Board of Selectmen

February 9, 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
- Town of Hingham Advisory Committee
- Town of Hingham School Committee

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. There were no responses.

7:02 PM: Bob Curley, Chair of the Advisory Committee, called their meeting to order.

7:02 PM: Kerry Ni, Chair of the School Committee, called their meeting to order.

Joint Session with School Committee and Advisory Committee

FY21 Financial Management Plan: Quarter 2 Financial Review

Mr. Mayo reminded the public that the Board of Selectmen, the Advisory Committee, and the School Committee jointly adopted a financial management plan in June 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He said that part of the plan was to provide quarterly reports to the School Department and the Advisory Committee. Mr. Mayo proceeded to give a summary of Town finances as of Q2. He reported a surplus of \$1.2 million, meaning that the Town has not used \$1.2 million of the \$3.3 million Fund Balance that Town Meeting had appropriated to balance the budget. He also reported that the Town hopes to receive between \$800,000-\$900,000 in reimbursements from FEMA for additional COVID-19 expenses, which would increase the surplus to a little over \$2 million. He attributed this news to good financial management. He highlighted some important points including:

- Property tax collection rates are on target.
- There has been no decrease in State funding, as was feared during the pandemic.
- He anticipated shortfalls in the following areas:
 - motor vehicle excise tax
 - meals tax collection
 - ambulance fees (approximately \$100,000)
- Investment income is down from normal projections due to lower interest rates.
- He did not feel the need to enter into Tier 2 of the Financial Management Plan.

- He reported that Capital Outlay is on target.
- School and municipal expenditures are on target.
- Hingham was allotted \$3.6 million in CARES Act funding, of which \$2.2 million in reimbursements has been submitted to Plymouth County to date. Hingham has received \$736,000 in reimbursements as of now.

Mr. Mayo felt that the Town was in a good position. Mr. Ramsey asked about possible new stimulus money from the Federal Government. Mr. Mayo responded that he would work with Senator Pat O'Connor and State Representative Jean Meschino to obtain information.

Mr. Victor Balterra, member of the Advisory Committee, asked for the status of any items that had been deferred during Q1. Mr. Mayo reported that the Town has recently made some hires that had been deferred during Q1 and purchased some essential winter supplies for the DPW. Going forward, he envisioned allowing for some additional expenditures that had previously been deferred.

Ms. Power advised the public that the Q2 Financial Review would be made available at www.hingham-ma.gov.

Preliminary FY22 Financial Forecast

Mr. Mayo reviewed for the Board the Preliminary FY22 Financial Forecast. Some highlights included:

- Mr. Mayo reported a total Tax Levy of \$92.2 million, which he anticipated a full collection by the Town.
- \$500,000, residing in the Overlay Account, would be used for a means tested senior abatement program intended to reduce taxes for needy seniors.
- State aid is being fully funded.
- Local receipts are anticipated to go down, as outlined in the Q2 Financial Review.
- Total revenue sources are anticipated to be \$129.8 million
- Uses for this revenue include immediate needs of the Town and requests by the schools.
- He anticipated that all uses of this revenue would lead to a \$7 million deficit.

Mr. Mayo continued with a review of the structure Town Budget (general government, Police Fire, Public Works, Human Services, and Recreation) totaling about \$30 million. He highlighted an anticipated increase in health insurance costs, not to exceed 10%.

Ms. Power reminded the public that the forecast is subject to change. She said that the Town is reviewing its process of moving forward in a way that balances a desire for services and appropriate stewardship. She added that the Board is exploring ways of using fund balance to offset a potential \$7 million deficit including revenue opportunities, expense control, and a possible override.

Mr. Fisher began a conversation regarding the drop in new growth. Mr. Mayo said that while there has been an increase in revenue from residential home improvements, there has been a significant decrease in commercial activity. There was some additional discussion regarding State Aid, which Mr. Mayo reported, would continue to be fully funded throughout 2021 and 2022. Mr. Fisher also asked if the Town should consider changes in its investment strategy due to decreased interest rates. Mr. Mayo said that the Town is required to invest public funds in some specific ways and very conservatively. Town Accountant, Ms. Sue Nickerson agreed and added that the Town is required to follow MA State laws

regarding investments. There was some additional conversation about health insurance and retirement funds.

Mr. Ramsey encouraged the Board to take a close look at opportunities for using Fund Balance and an override.

Mr. Bob Curley, Chair of the Advisory Committee, noted that the Advisory Committee tries to closely follow the Town's Financial Policy.

There were additional questions from several School Committee members regarding potential positions at the high school not included in the budget projection, accessibility of the financial model proposed by John Asher, Fund Balance, and the Overlay Account.

Mr. Joshua Ross, 125 Wompatuck Road, asked a question regarding the unused Levy and asked if it could dispersed in any other ways. Ms. Power answered that, for the past several years, the Board has been trying to identify meaningful tax relief for Hingham's most vulnerable citizens. She reported that the senior means tested tax relief option was made available to the Town about 2 years ago, pending authorization by Town Meeting and approval by MA Legislature. She further explained that the Town held onto any unused Levy Capacity during those years because it would be needed to fund the tax relief program, once approved. The Board of Selectmen are now recommending that \$500,000, the full cost of the program, be funded for FY22. If the Town asks the public to raise taxes, Ms. Power felt that this tax relief would serve as a safety net to help our most vulnerable citizens. She added that discussions continue to be ongoing. Mr. Ross also asked for clarification on Excluded debit. Ms. Power explained that FY21 is the last year the Town would receive \$1.6 million in State Aid for the renovations that happened 20 years ago at South School and the High School. FY21 would also be the same year that the annual \$1.6 million debt is retired.

Mr. Carlos DaSilva, School Committee member, asked if the Town has a full-time Grant Writer. Ms. Power answered that this year's budget does not include a request for a Grant Writer, however the Town generated nearly \$3 million in grants this year.

Ms. Pryia Howell, 26 Del Prete Drive, asked about important upcoming dates with regard to Town Meeting votes and for clarification regarding residential commercial tax rates. Ms. Power outlined the annual Tax Classification hearing and the recommendation of the Assessor to keep one tax rate in Hingham. She felt that a residential tax rate would be helpful in encouraging new commercial growth in South Hingham. Ms. Power advised that dates for Town Meeting would be announced in a public setting in the upcoming weeks.

Sue Garland asked if there was a possibility of making an exception to the Financial Policy with regard to what Excess Fund Balance be used for so that it could be used for recurring expenses. Ms. Power felt that there could be an opportunity to consider the suggestion. There was additional discussion of Fund Balance, as a result of a questions from Greg Corbett, 70 Winter Street.

Ms. Power announced that there would be a more detailed discussion regarding the school budget during the next few weeks and that the forecast documents would be available online at www.hingham-ma.gov.

Authorize the Chair of the Board of Selectmen to sign the Massachusetts School Building Authority Feasibility Study Agreement for Foster Elementary School

Mr. John Ferris, Business Manager of the School Department, explained that this is a contract between Hingham and the MSBA for a feasibility study on Foster School. It states that Hingham will abide by the MSBA process and regulations and will go through all steps as proposed. He also said that they hope to open bidding for an Owners Project Manager (OPM) on March 3 with bids to be received by March 17. He explained that the OPM would help select with the designer selection. They would then select a designer in accordance with the MSBA procedures. He anticipated that a designer would be selected by late June.

Vote Mr. Ramsey made a motion to authorize the Chair of the Board of Selectmen to execute the Massachusetts School Building Authority Feasibility Study Agreement for the William L. Foster Elementary School. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Ms. Kerry Ni adjourned the meeting of the School Department at 8:28 pm.

2021 Annual Town Meeting Warrant Article Discussion

Article S: Proposed Changes to Article 14 of the General By-laws: Advisory Committee By-law

Mr. Bob Curley explained that it was brought to the Committee's attention last year that this Article did not conform to the Committee's current practice. He explained three changes to the bylaw including dates of Committee members' terms, the posting of the Town Meeting Warrant in specific places, and changing pronouns to gender neutral terms. He said that Town Counsel has reviewed and approved the changes.

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to recommend favorable action of Article S. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Mr. Curley recessed the meeting of the Advisory Committee and announced they would rejoin the Advisory Committee meeting as posted on their agenda.

Article I: Building Department Revolving Fund

Building Commissioner, Mr. Mike Clancy, explained that that all revenues from plumbing, gas and electric go towards the Revolving Fund. He said that this Article outlines that the Building Department is allowed to spend up to \$350,000 per year out of the fund, as approved by Town Meeting, for the following items:

- 50% of the Building Commissioner's salary

- 50% of the salaries of 2 Administrative Assistants
- Plumbing, Gas, and Electrical Inspectors
- Part-time Inspectors
- Miscellaneous expenses (trucks for Inspectors, etc., fuel costs, office supplies, etc.)

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to recommend favorable action of Article I. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Article J: Department of Elder Services Revolving Fund

Ms. Jennifer Young, Director of Elder Services, explained that all revenue collected from programs, fitness classes, special events, entertainment, etc. and added to the Revolving Fund. They also pay for all costs associated with running classes and services, such as instructors, special presenters, day trip costs, etc. from the Revolving Fund. Shee said that this Article is requesting use of an amount not to exceed \$80,000 by Elder Services.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to recommend favorable action of Article J. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Mr. Mayo thanked Ms. Young and her team for their help with the vaccine rollout. He reported that they made thousands of phone calls to members of the senior community to help them understand and to sign up for the vaccine.

Inside Town Finances: Volume 5

Ms. Power presented the fifth in a series of presentations on Town Finances, "Proposition 2½ and the Impact of Voter-Authorized Tax increases." The entire presentation can be found online at www.hingham-ma.gov.

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 remains "yellow," indicating a "medium risk" of spread in the community. The average daily incidence rate for the Town of Hingham is 54.8 per 100,000 residents, slightly down from the prior week. According to DPH, there have been 184 new cases of COVID-19 in the community over the past 14 days. There have been a total of 1,419 cases in Hingham since the start of the pandemic. As of today, confirmed COVID-19 cases in Massachusetts have risen to 517,806. 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

I wanted to share with you the latest news regarding COVID-19 vaccine distribution in the Town of Hingham. At this time, all Phase 1 priority groups as well as individuals age 75 and older are eligible to receive the vaccine in Massachusetts. The Town has taken several steps in recent weeks to prepare for vaccination clinics for residents as part of Phase 2 of the state's distribution plan. Last Thursday, Feb. 4th, the Town vaccinated 160 people during a clinic held at the South Shore Baptist Church for residents 75 years old and older and eligible Phase 1 individuals. Members of the Hingham Fire Department administered the vaccine doses. We have been preparing for additional clinics for this portion of the population. However, local vaccine distribution is dependent on receiving doses from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Unfortunately, our most recent request for vaccine doses was not fulfilled, and we will need to wait until we are provided with more doses before we can schedule additional clinics in Hingham. We are doing everything in our power to acquire additional doses, and will continue to request the vaccine so we can resume our vaccination clinics for all eligible residents. We will release details on future vaccination clinics as additional doses are received. In the meantime, if you can access a COVID-19 vaccine through other means, you should do so. We encourage eligible residents to make an appointment at one of the vaccination sites around the region. Information on available clinics and eligibility requirements can be found at [mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov) by clicking the COVID link. If you end up receiving the vaccine through another organization and no longer need to be on the Town of Hingham list, please let us know as soon as possible by emailing CovidQuestions@hingham-ma.gov.

Mr. Fisher asked if there was anything the Town could do to get additional doses of the vaccine. Mr. Mayo reported that additional doses have been directed toward the mass vaccination sites and pharmacies. He said that they have made it known to the State that Hingham is ready to distribute a high capacity of vaccines.

To proclaim Saturday, February 13, 2021 as Lincoln Day in the Town of Hingham

Ms. Power issued the following proclamation:

"WHEREAS, The Town of Hingham was settled in 1635 by a small band of puritan pilgrims many of whom came from Hingham, England and environs; and,

WHEREAS, Among the descendants of those original settlers, were two famous American public figures who shared the common family name "Lincoln" as well as a common heritage; and,

WHEREAS, It is a long-standing Hingham tradition to honor and celebrate their birthdays: General Benjamin Lincoln, a life-long Hingham citizen and a hero of the American Revolution; and, Abraham Lincoln, our 16th President and the towering figure of the Civil War; and,

WHEREAS, We honor and celebrate the lives and deeds of the two Lincolns because of the indelible legacy of community-building and preservation they have left for us; and,

WHEREAS, In this year, Two Thousand and Nineteen, we pay special honor to four centuries of our citizens--those famous like Benjamin Lincoln, and Abraham Lincoln-- and those unknown to history, who worked in myriad ways to build and sustain this wonderful community Hingham and the broader communities of state and nation; and,

WHEREAS, The preservation of community is a perpetual task in which each generation must fully participate.

Now, Therefore: We, the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Hingham, do Hereby Officially Proclaim: Saturday, February 15, 2020 Lincoln Day. We urge also that as many citizens as possible join us at Old Ship Meeting House on Saturday, February 15, 2020, at 11:00 a.m. for a patriotic ceremony of celebration.

Finally, we urge each citizen to take to heart the examples of the two Lincolns and those of four centuries of Hingham citizens, and we urge each citizen to participate in some concrete way in the strengthening and preservation of this community of Hingham and the broader communities of state and nation for the generations which will succeed us.

Given under our hands and seal of Hingham, this eleventh day of February 13, 2020"

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to proclaim Saturday, February 13, 2021 as Lincoln Day in the Town of Hingham. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Public Comment

Ms. Power stated, "The Board of Selectmen set aside up to 15 minutes for public comment for items not on the Board's agenda, but within the purview of the Board of Selectmen, during which time we typically follow the guidelines of open meeting. We encourage speakers to present remarks in a respectful manner and not to indulge in personalities. The Public Comment time is not a period of debate for the Board of Selectmen and the Board is neither adopting nor endorsing any of the comments made during the Public Comment period."

There were no comments from the public

Selectmen/Town Administrator Reports

Ms. Monsegur: Nothing to report

Mr. Mayo: Mr. Mayo thanked the DPW for their dedication and their help with the winter storms.

Mr. Fisher commented that he was looking forward to celebrating next year's Lincoln Day celebration in public.

Mr. Ramsey: Nothing to report

Ms. Power expressed her appreciation to all the staff members and citizen volunteers who helped with the newly created vaccination clinic at the South Shore Baptist Church. She reported that she has received letters, phone calls and emails from residents thanking the Town for providing this service in a

comfortable and familiar setting. She said that the Town of Hingham is ready and able to continue with the clinic.

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

The meeting adjourned at 9:07 PM.

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