

Select Board

March 20, 2022

Present:

- Select Board: Mr. Bill Ramsey, Chair, Ms. Liz Klein, and Mr. Joseph Fisher
- Ms. Michelle Monsegur, Assistant Town Administrator for Finance
- Mr. Art Robert, Assistant Town Administrator for Operations
- Ms. Susan Murphy, Special Real Estate Counsel

9:00 AM: 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. “
No one indicated that they were recording.

He announced that Select Board members participating in the meeting were himself, Bill Ramsey, Ms. Liz Klein, and Mr. Joseph Fisher. The meeting was held remotely via Zoom.

To open the 2023 Annual Town Meeting Warrant for submission of a Warrant Article FF regarding the purchase of 30 Summer Street, Hingham, MA

Ms. Susan Murphy said that 30 Summer Street is located on the harbor in between 26 Summer Street and the rotary, next to Barnes Wharf. The owner of the property approached the Town to see if there was any interest in purchasing it. The Town Administrator is now asking the Select Board if they would be interested in exploring the possibility of purchasing the property, pending the determination of an acceptable purchase price and time for due diligence. Mr. Fisher said that the purchase is a unique opportunity for the Town, but felt it would be important to negotiate a fair price. In addition, he felt it would be necessary to be able to do due diligence prior to Town Meeting. Assuming that those conditions are met, Mr. Fisher was willing to move forward. Mr. Ramsey agreed and asked Ms. Murphy for her opinion on the next steps in the process. She suggested that the Town should look into the title status of the property, permitted uses, an environmental report, a survey, and potential future uses in addition to an inspection of the current building. Mr. Ramsey clarified that a vote by the Select Board today would not commit the Town to move forward with the purchase. If there was information gathered during the due diligence process that changed the minds of the Select Board members, they could chose not to pursue the purchase.

Ms. Monsegur explained how the purchase of this property would affect taxpayers. She said that the purchase would be within the levy, meaning that the tax levy would not increase as a result of the borrowing for this purchase. This is also known as non-excluded debt. If the Town decides to purchase this property, the deficit would widen by \$50,000-\$80,000 each year, which would affect the Tax Mitigation Stabilization Fund or Unassigned Fund Balance during the payment years. There would be no tax increase for property owners.

Ms. Klein said that the purchase of this property could be a great opportunity for the Town in terms of preserving the harbor and access to public resources. It could also be a possibly revenue opportunity for the Town and could help with Hingham's climate resiliency goals. Ms. Klein's biggest concerns were to negotiate a fair price and any financial impact to residents, especially during an override year. She also felt that it was appropriate to move forward.

Finally, Mr. Ramsey said that their decision is time-sensitive because the Town Meeting warrant has to be sent to the printers in the next few days and the Advisory Committee is required to take a vote tomorrow night.

Ms. Carol Meyer, Hingham Anchor, asked for a price on the property. Mr. Fisher said that the Board is in negotiations so they would not be able to comment at this time. She also asked if the environmental study would be advised because the property used to be a gas station. Ms. Murphy said that it is standard practice for the Town to do an environmental report on the purchase of any commercial property.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to open the 2023 Annual Town Meeting Warrant, insert Article FF, and close the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. Ms. Klein seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

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

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

The meeting adjourned at 9:14 AM

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