

Board of Selectmen

March 23, 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 announced that the meeting was being broadcast live by Harbor Media and asked if anyone else was recording or taking photographs. There were no responses.

Ms. Power also said that the Board of Selectmen members who were participating remotely were herself, Mary Power, Chair, Joe Fisher, and Bill Ramsey.”

Approval of minutes

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to approve the minutes dated February 23, 2021. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to approve the minutes dated February 25, 2021. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to approve the minutes dated February 26, 2021. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

7:05 PM Public hearing on the request of National Grid to install and maintain approximately 1,250 feet of 4-inch gas main in Pleasant Street and 200 feet of 2-inch gas main in Downing Street.

Town Engineer J.R. Frey explained that National Grid is proposing to relay approximately 1,250 feet of 4-inch gas main in Pleasant Street and 200 feet of 2-inch gas main in Downing Street. These mains would replace aged mains that are between 49-67 years old. He said that National Grid is taking care of all abutter notices and has already been in touch with some residents who have had questions. He said that National Grid is planning to begin this work directly after the work finishes on Stoddard Road. He anticipated the work would be complete in 3-4 weeks.

Mr. Ramsey felt the work was necessary due to the age of the mains. He was happy that National Grid was notifying the neighbors. Mr. Fisher asked what time of day the work would be conducted. Mr. Frey said that National Grid plans to work between 7am-6pm, for 8-hour days. He said that National Grid would coordinate with himself and the Transportation Department of the high school because some of the work will take place directly across from the school. Mr. Frey anticipated nominal construction noise from the project and did not expect it to disrupt the school. He also said that National Grid is required to coordinate Police details for the project.

Ms. Beth Rockoff, 36 Pleasant Street, asked why Pleasant Street was not going to get a new water line during the construction similar to the surrounding streets. Ms. Power suggested that it would be best for Ms. Rockoff to address her question to Water Superintendent Russell Tierney and said she would be happy to have him call her. Ms. Rockoff also asked a question about a pipe in front of her neighbor's house. Mr. Frey agreed to look into the matter and report back to the Board or to the Town Administrator.

Ms. Insa Elliott, 11 Pleasant Street, asked if the entire street would be affected and asked if there would be access to Pleasant Street at Pond and Main Streets. Mr. Frey noted that the entire street, up to Union Street, would be affected. He said that there would be approximately two detail officers directing traffic and said that National Grid would work with residents to make sure there is as little inconvenience as possible.

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to approve the request of National Grid to install and maintain approximately 1,250 feet of 4-inch gas main in Pleasant Street and 200 feet of 2-inch gas main in Downing Street. The gas main in Pleasant St. will originate at the intersection of Pleasant St. and Main St., connecting into the existing 2-inch gas main and continuing easterly in Pleasant St., to its connection approximately 40 feet west of the intersection with Union St. The gas main in Downing St. will originate at the intersection with Pleasant St. and continue in Downing St. to completion at approximately #7 Downing St. These gas mains will replace existing 2-inch coated steel (1954 and 1972, respectively). The age of the abandoned main is between 49 and 67 years old. This approval is subject to the stipulations of the Department of Public Works as outlined in the letter dated March 11, 2021. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

7:19 pm: Ms. Power welcomed the Chair of the School Department, Ms. Kerry Ni, who called their meeting to order.

Discussion and Vote regarding appointment of two Police Lieutenant positions (Candidates being considered are: Steven Dearth, John Marquardt, and Nicholas Smith)

Ms. Power reported that last week, the Board of Selectmen conducted interviews with three Sergeants from the Hingham Police Department for two open Lieutenant positions. She said that the Board was very impressed with the caliber of all three candidates. She welcomed Chief Jones who presented his recommendation to the Board. Chief Jones read the following statement to the Board:

“The Hingham Police Department held chiefs panel interviews with the candidates for Permanent Police Lieutenant on March 24, 2021. The panel consisted of Chief Edward Lee (Norwell PD), Chief Phil Tavares (Marshfield PD), and Chief Mark Thompson (Scituate PD). Deputy Chief Ryan O’Shea and I were also present, but did not participate in the interview or scoring process. The panel reported that Sergeant Steven Dearth was an enthusiastic and experienced supervisor who was able to draw from his varying roles as a Field Training Officer, Court Prosecutor, and the Department’s Public

Information/Social Media Officer. They found that Sergeant John Marquardt demonstrated a commanding understanding of law enforcement principles and showed progressive professional development throughout his career. They stated that Sergeant Nicholas Smith held impressive qualities, especially in his ability to develop individual connections within the community and his aptitude for technology and managing departmental initiatives. The panel noted that the candidates performed very well, and that all of them would be able to assume the challenging role of a police lieutenant.

After watching these three candidates interview with this panel, I was both impressed with their responses and proud of their representation of the Department. I was equally impressed with their performance last Tuesday evening at their interviews before your board. I am honored to be able to be able to present these three candidates to you for your consideration for promotion to Lieutenant. Though I wish we had three lieutenant vacancies, there are currently only two. While this is an extremely difficult decision with three highly qualified candidates, I recommend the top two scoring candidates from the civil service list, Sergeant Steven Dearth and Sergeant John Marquardt, be promoted to the rank of Lieutenant. Sergeant Smith is an extremely competitive candidate with a bright future and I am confident that he will come before this board again. Thank you for your dedication to this process and for your support of the department.”

Mr. Fisher asked Chief Jones to explain the ranking system. Chief Jones explained that officers interviewing for Lieutenant positions take a test administered by an outside assessment center who ranks the candidates based on their Civil Service exam, their performance during realistic scenarios, education and background. Civil Service then creates a list of available candidates, which the Police Department then requests. After this, the candidates are then interviewed by an panel of Chiefs from nearby towns who rank their answers. Chief Jones further explained that, if the Board did not want to hire according to the Civil Service ranking, the Board would need a reason for bypass, which did not exist

in this case. Mr. Fisher felt that all three candidates performed remarkably, demonstrated a sensitivity to issues and dedication to the Town.

Mr. Ramsey concurred with the Chief's recommendation. He noted that he has worked with Sgt. Dearth while on the Traffic Committee and has been impressed by his dedication. He also noted that Sgt. Marquardt was a recipient of the Purple Heart during his service to our country and felt he was very strong candidate for Lieutenant. Ms. Power said that this has been a very vigorous process and noted that all three candidates are capable of serving as Lieutenant, are excellent officers and are respected by their fellow officers. Mr. Fisher said that he looks forward to Sgt. Smith's continued involvement and growth in the Police Department.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to appoint Sgt. Steven Dearth and Sgt. John Marquardt as Permanent Full-Time Police Lieutenants for the Town of Hingham. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Chief Jones said that he was very proud of how the three Sergeants represented themselves and the Hingham Police Department during the interview process.

To nominate Leslie Badger as the Inspector of Animals for the Town of Hingham

Mr. Mayo announced that this is an annual nomination for Officer Badger and he enthusiastically endorsed her nomination. The Board concurred. Officer Badger thanked the Board for the opportunity and appreciated their kind words.

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to nominate Leslie Badger as the Inspector of Animals for the Town of Hingham. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

FY22 Budget Discussion and Vote

Ms. Power said that the Board plans to discuss the budget and vote. Ms. Power reported that they had received several questions from the Advisory Committee with respect to the Municipal Budgets and said that Town Administration has prepared some additional information for the Board's consideration. Mr. Mayo noted that the questions from the Advisory Committee focused on three elements of the budget:

- The Assistant Town Administrator for Finance - Mr. Mayo explained that the size and complexity of the Town and operations continue to grow resulting in increased responsibility under the TA Special Act. This addition of a second Assistant Town Administrator would result in one ATA for Finance and one ATA for Operations. The creation of this position would solve three main issues:
 - Provide capacity for big picture financial planning and analysis.

- Improve the capacity, oversight, communications, and responsiveness of the TA Office
- Remove bottleneck and provide more guidance/direction to departments, board and committees

Mr. Mayo gave a brief overview of the history of Town Administration, noting that a second Assistant Town Administrator positions was discussed as far back as 2009-2010. He explained that Town revenues have nearly doubled in the past 15 years and the number of Selectmen's meetings have more than doubled in the past 15 years. He stressed that the pace and complexity of Town issues continue to grow. To highlight the increasing complexity of operations, Mr. Mayo cited the following issues that the town Administrator's Office is working on now and will be working on in the near future, as follows:

- Multiple large capital project (Foster School, Public Safety Facility, Senior Center, Harbor Wharves, and more)
- Implementation of the Master Plan
- South Hingham development
- Revitalization of downtown Hingham
- Climate change preparedness and resiliency
- Water System acquisition and transition

Mr. Mayo listed the responsibilities that would fall under the position of the Assistant Town Administrator for Finance:

Big-picture, longer term financial analysis

- Deeper engagement with budget process year round
- Investigate new sources of revenue, coordinate grants
- Track Federal funding and pandemic financial impact
- Greater financial coordination with boards and committees
- Explore paperless options for more processes; implement formal, electronic procurement system
- Direct oversight of 8 departments

A Transfer Station Heavy Equipment Operator – Ms. Monsegur reported that the Advisory Committee had some questions about the recommendation of an additional Heavy Equipment Operator at the Transfer Station. To answer their questions, Ms. Monsegur explained that the growth of operations at the Transfer Station have outpaced the team they have in place now. She noted that, before the pandemic, vehicle trips to the Transfer Station had grown from 7,000 vehicle trips per week to an average of 9,000 per week. That number has remained steady throughout the pandemic, with a peak of 11,500 vehicle trips per week. Ms. Monsegur estimated that hiring this position could save the Town approximately \$10,000 in overtime fees.

- The Recreation Field Maintenance Program – Ms. Monsegur clarified that this is presented as an ongoing expense, as recommended by the Field and Outdoor Courts Study conducted by Weston and Sampson. She noted that the FY22 request of \$241,180 would include the following:
 - \$70,000 for 4 Recreation seasonal employees to perform infield grooming
 - \$128,000 for field expenses (utilities, infield openings, irrigation & materials)
 - \$182,780 for field applications (fertilizing, liming, aerating, over-seeding and top dressing)

Mr. Fisher asked which ATA would be most closely working with Police, Fire & DPW. Mr. Mayo said that there would be much crossover work and the ATA's would serve as point of contact while Mr. Mayo is unavailable due to meetings or vacation days. Ms. Monsegur noted that the Town Andover, MA, which recently implemented a similar structure, reported improved capacity across the organization and a better chain of command and communication. Mr. Fisher felt that this arrangement made sense and felt that it would enhance coordination.

Mr. Ramsey also supported the proposal of an additional ATA. He said that he liked that there is a reporting structure that will allow the Town Administrator to focus on some of the bigger issues, some of which come up unexpectedly.

Mr. Ramsey asked if the request for \$241,180 for the Field Maintenance Program would be an additional request or if some of it would be pulled from various existing budgets. Ms. Monsegur explained that the request of \$241,180 is an additional request, but the total cost of the Field Maintenance Program is over \$300,000 and the additional amount would come from existing budgets.

Ms. Power agreed that a town the size of Hingham additional professional management expertise.

Ms. Power thanked Dr. Austin and Ms. Kerry Ni, Chair of the School Committee, for submitting a copy of a letter that Dr. Austin prepared for the Advisory Committee. She felt it was very thorough and that it expressed things in ways that they had not heard before. She felt it was helpful in filling in some information gaps.

Ms. Power announced that, yesterday afternoon, the Advisory Sub-committee recommended the full, proposed Education Budget request of \$61.8 million, which is a gross amount before deducting the anticipated Federal money coming in (ESSR II & ESSR III). The Advisory Committee Education Subcommittee felt that "the educational and social-emotional impact on students from Covid is indisputable and the need to address it is urgent. While the number of proposed FTEs may appear high, when looked in context, it is the ACES recommendation that it is essential. ACES believes that rushing an operational override for this year without the necessary planning could be detrimental to Hingham." They also felt that it was "important to address the immediate learning loss quickly." ACES also acknowledged that, looking ahead, "Hingham will have a problem to solve, which is how do we support the entire Town budget in FY23 and beyond." They reference the future growth rate of some expenses that must be reduced but also expressed confidence that Town employees and Town leaders will come together and work on that. She noted that the School Committee has also voted affirmatively on the Education Budget as presented.

Mr. Ramsey thanked Dr. Austin, Jamie LaBillois, and the School Department for their hard during this difficult school year. He also thanked the parents for the tremendous engagement they displayed this year. He added his support for the budget.

Mr. Fisher noted that, in Dr. Austin's financial report, there is a chart that shows how money is allocated to various School departments. He pointed out that there is 20% more money allocated to Special Education than to both the Middle and High Schools combined. Dr. Austin explained that this shows their commitment to the Schools' most vulnerable population, which is elementary students and special needs students. Mr. Fisher also reported that he has received a strong commitment from Dr. Austin

that the students will be attending school in-person in the fall, as long as the government allows for it. He also said that he was glad to hear that the School Department is committed to providing summer services to students in need of them. Dr. Austin added that, while summer programs are not in their budget, they have some alternative funding methods that they plan to bring to the School Committee in April.

Ms. Power made some additional comments about the consequences of the trajectory of the School Department's annual budget increases. She was concerned that, if the budget continues to increase at its current rate, that it would impede the implementation of new or mandated educational programs and large capital projects. She emphasized the shared commitment between the Board of Selectmen, the Advisory Committee and the School Department to address the issue as part of the proposed Education Strategic Plan. She cited this commitment as a main reason she is supporting the budget as presented.

Ms. Priya Howell, 26 Del Prete, thanked the Board for their support of the School Budget and was in favor of the addition of a second Assistant Town Administrator position.

Ms. Libby Lewiecki, 370 Gardner Street, also thanked the Board for their support of the School Budget and their consideration of a tax override. Ms. Power noted that, while there is a lot of work ahead, she appreciated the level of citizen engagement on these matters.

Ms. Power reported a gross Education Budget of \$61,792,079 with Federal offsets of \$1,376,192. The taxpayer-funded portion of the budget would be \$60,415,887. She also noted that the budget also includes \$2,493,580 for Capital Outlay (Municipal and Education)

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to recommend a FY 2022 Recreation Budget of \$349,276. Ms. Power seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: abstain

Ms. Power: yes

Vote: Ms. Power made a motion to recommend a FY 2022 Police Budget of \$6,324,798. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: abstain

Ms. Power: yes

Mr. Ramsey said that his spouse is a Recreation Commissioner and his brother is a Police Officer and Town Counsel has advised him that it would be inappropriate to participate in these votes.

Vote: Ms. Ramsey made a motion to recommend a FY 2022 Budget as presented in the Town Administrator Budget Recommendations Spreadsheet dated March 23, 2021 for a total Article 6 appropriation of \$131,976,035. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Ms. Power noted that the education budget vote taken by the Board is consistent with the recommendation of the ACES Sub-committee and consistent with the vote taken by the School Committee. She reported that the Advisory Committee plans to take their votes on the budget on Thursday, March 25, 2021. She said that it is the votes of the Advisory Committee that will go into the Warrant for Town Meeting.

8:37 pm: The meeting of the School Committee adjourned.

COVID-19 Update

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

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. There have been 81 new cases of COVID-19 in Hingham over the past 14 days, and a total of 1,699 cases in Hingham since the start of the pandemic. The average daily incidence rate for the Town of Hingham was 24.1 per 100,000 residents, and our percent positivity rate was 2.67% for the previous 14 days. As of today, confirmed COVID-19 cases in Massachusetts totaled 582,159. Public health metrics have been trending in a positive direction statewide, including drops in average daily COVID-19 cases and hospitalization rates. However, those rates remain higher than they were before the surge hit in fall 2020.

Vaccine Rollout & Reopening Plans

According to DPH's [daily COVID-19 vaccine report](#), over 1,110,000 people in Massachusetts have been fully vaccinated as of today. As we mentioned last week, DPH has started to report vaccination rates by community on a weekly basis. As of March 18, approximately 16.8% of Hingham residents have been fully vaccinated. Last week, DPH announced the schedule for vaccine eligibility for all remaining groups in Massachusetts as follows:

- o Yesterday, March 22nd: Residents 60+ and [certain workers](#), including public works, public health, water, and utility workers, became eligible for the vaccine.
- o April 5th: Residents 55+ and residents with one certain medical condition become eligible.
- o April 19th: General public ages 16+ become eligible.

Public Comment

The Board of Selectmen has 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 and Town Administrator Reports

Mr. Mayo congratulated the new Police Lieutenants on their appointments tonight.

Mr. Fisher gave the following announcement:

"Tomorrow, March 24, 2021 will be marked as "Education & Sharing Day, USA" by the United States Congress and the President. This has been a national event since 1978 when it was started during the presidency of Jimmy Carter.

It is celebrated every year on the birthday of Rabbi Menachem Schneerson in recognition of his achievements for the betterment of education for all Americans, as a day to raise awareness and strengthen the education of our children.

President Joe Biden just signed this year's Declaration for Education & Sharing Day, USA, which reads, in part as follows:

"If the isolation and loss of the last year has taught us anything, it is just how much we need each other, how intertwined our lives are, and how deeply we crave conversation, connection, and community. We are at our best when we work together and help our neighbors, whether down the road or around the world.

This lesson is at the heart of Education and Sharing Day, U.S.A., when we celebrate the role models, mentors, and leaders who devote themselves to the progress and success of each new generation, to reinforcing our common bonds, and to lifting up our highest ideals. Today, we mark the legacy of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, a guiding light of the international Chabad-Lubavitch movement and a testament to the power and resilience of the human spirit. A witness to some of the 20th century's darkest events and greatest tragedies, he devoted his life to bringing healing by advancing justice, compassion, inclusivity, and fellowship worldwide. A tireless advocate for students of all ages, he sought to foster exchange, understanding, and unity among all people."

Also this week, we will be celebrating the holiday of Passover, which is the Jewish festival of freedom, beginning this Saturday evening, March 27."

Mr. Ramsey reported that Keith Jermyn, Veterans Services Officer, is working on a virtual reenactment of the Battle of Grape Island. As the Board of Selectmen's liaison to Veterans Affairs, he said he was looking forward to participating.

Ms. Power reported that, last Wednesday, she attended the Library Board of Trustees meeting. She said that the Library is working very closely with the Town Administrator, the Board of Health and the Reopening Group on how to safely open up the Library.

Ms. Power also announced that, due to the nice weather, the patio at the South Shore Country Club's Greenside Grill has reopened for lunch and dinner. She said that all of the Town's restaurants are relying on the support of the community to maintain their viability as the pandemic winds down.

She also announced that the Board of Selectmen plan to attend the meeting of the Advisory Committee on March 25 and plan to have their next meeting on Tuesday, March 30, 2021

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

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

The meeting adjourned at 8:48 PM.

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