

# Select Board

August 1, 2023

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Present:

- Select Board: Ms. Liz Klein, Chair, and Joseph Fisher
- Tom Mayo, Town Administrator
- Michelle Monsegur, Assistant Town Administrator for Finance
- Art Robert, Assistant Town Administrator for Operations

## **Call to order: 6:01 PM**

Chair Klein called the meeting to order and read the following statement:

“This meeting is being held in person and/or remotely as an alternate means of public access pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 and all other applicable laws temporarily amending 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.”

Kevin Hertell was recording the meeting.

Select Board members participating in the meeting were Ms. Liz Klein, Chair, and Mr. Joseph Fisher. Mr. Bill Ramsey was not present.

## **Pledge of Allegiance**

## **Approval of Minutes**

**Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to approve the minutes dated July 25, 2023. Ms. Klein seconded.**

## **Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Fisher: yes**

**Ms. Klein: yes**

## **Bear Update from Hingham’s Animal Control Officer**

ACO Leslie Badger gave an update on the current bear sightings in Hingham. She reported that they would be taking a different approach to reporting on the bear’s whereabouts. At the request of the MA Department of Fish and Game and the Environmental Police, Hingham will not be posting on social media the exact location of the latest sightings, but they will post the general area. ACO Badger will be tracking the bear and will personally alert residents, schools, places of worship and businesses that are in the vicinity of the bear. During the bear’s last trip through Town and in other towns, there were instances where police cruisers were followed by people trying to get a glimpse of the bear. People were also spotted looking for the bear in backyards, which is a serious safety concern for both humans and the bear. The Environmental Police and the MA Department of Fish and Game both feel that the bear should be able to co-exist with humans and have no plans to trap and relocate the bear unless it poses a very serious threat to humans.. Officer Badger explained that black bears are most attracted to fruit trees, compost piles, bird feeders, chicken or animal fed, gardens and not very likely to bother

humans. Officer Badger reported that she and the Department of Fish and Game do not consider the bear a threat to residents at this time.

Officer Badger suspects that the bear is a male between the ages of 1 to 3 years old. Mr. Fisher asked if there was any guidance for residents with pets. ACO Badger reported that the bear seems not to be interested in the pets that it has encountered thus far, but expected that it could if it felt threatened. Residents were encouraged to keep their pets within sight and not leave them outside unattended. ACO Badger plans get in touch with the Recreation Department so that youth sports using the fields can be alerted. The bear has been in Hingham for approximately 24 hours at this point and will likely move on soon. If residents would like to report a non-emergency bear sighting, they can call the HPD non-emergency line at 781-749-1212 ext. 0. If someone is in an emergency situation with the bear, they should call 911.

#### **Request of Bertucci's Restaurants LLC, 90 Derby Street, for a Change of Manager**

The applicant was not present so this agenda item would be taken up at the next meeting of the Select Board.

#### **Proclamation for Veterans Suicide Awareness and Remembrance Day**

Veterans' Services Officer (VSO), Keith Jermyn, presented as Hingham's VSO and as the Suicide Awareness and Remembrance (SAR) Officer. Mr. Kevin Hartell, President of the SAR Flag Family, was present was also present. "SAR" stands for Suicide Awareness and Remembrance. VSO Jermyn thanked the Select Board members and the current Hingham Administration for taking the step to facilitate a proclamation for National Suicide Awareness and Remembrance Day, which is currently targeted for September 20. The goal is to make this a national day of recognition. VSO Jermyn hopes that Hingham's endorsement of this day would send a message to the MA State Representatives and Governor Healy and would position Hingham as a leader in Veterans issues. VSO Jermyn noted that suicide is an epidemic amongst those who have served or are currently serving in the military.

Kevin Hartell, Founder and President of the SAR Flag Corporation and Air Force Veteran, spoke to the Select Board in support of the proposed proclamation for the annual observance of Veteran Suicide Awareness and Remembrance Day. He is also the creator of the SAR flag and originator of the observance named Veteran Suicide Awareness and Remembrance Day. Mr. Hartell's cousin, also a Veteran, died from suicide in 2016. That tragedy inspired him to find out why there are approximately 22 Veteran suicides a day. His years of research showed that there are organizations and methods available to Veterans where they can find help for mental health challenges, yet he believes that there is a stigma associated with getting help for such issues within the military. His mission is to break down that stigma, change people's perception and to respect, honor, and unite the families of victims of military suicide. Mr. Hartell reported that, in one year, the United States loses more military and Veterans to suicide than all of the casualties from Iraq and Afghanistan combined. Outreach efforts for the SAR Day include flag raisings and presenting SAR flags to victims' families and by conducting remembrance ceremonies. More information about the SAR Flag Corporation is available at <https://sarflag.org/>. This Sunday, August 6, there will be a remembrance ceremony at the Bandstand at

Hingham Harbor in honor of Hingham resident and USMC Veteran, Sgt. Matthew Partyka at 11:00am. All are invited to attend.

Ms. Klein thanked Mr. Hartell for speaking and she said that the Select Board is committed to breaking down the stigma of mental health and was happy that Hingham is acting as a leader in this effort.

The Select Board members read a proclamation in honor of Suicide Awareness and Remembrance Day.

**Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to proclaim Friday, September 22, 2023 as Veterans Suicide Awareness & Remembrance Day in the Town of Hingham. Ms. Klein seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Fisher: yes**

**Ms. Klein: yes**

**To proclaim August 12, 2023 as Farmers Market Day in the Town of Hingham**

Mark Cullings, 44 Spring Street, explained that next week is National Farmers' Market Week and requested that Hingham proclaim Saturday, August 12 as Farmers' Market Day in Hingham. The Farmers' Market has been in existence since 1977 and currently has never been better or more popular. Mark Cullings thanked Police Chief Jones and the other officers who help them with the market. The market is open until the last Saturday before Thanksgiving. Following that, they will take a month off and will once again set up a winter market at the Wompatuck State Park Visitors' Center. The market accepts SNAP benefits. Ms. Klein and Mr. Fisher both commented that the Farmers' Market is a very positive contributor to the community.

The Select Board proclaimed August 12, 2023 as Framers' Market Day in Hingham, Massachusetts.

**Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to proclaim Saturday, August 12, 2023 as Farmers Market Day in the Town of Hingham. Ms. Klein seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Fisher: yes**

**Ms. Klein: yes**

**Public Safety Facility Project Update**

The following were present: Matthew Hennessy & Paul Kalous from Hill International, Bob Garrity and Donna Smallwood of the Public Safety Building Committee, JR Frey, Town Engineer, Fire Chief Murphy and Police Chief Jones. Bob Garrity gave an overview of the Public Safety Facility Committee's recent activities.

KBA is the architectural firm, with Sean Schmeigle as the lead architect. The construction contract has been awarded to Colantonio, with a contract amount of \$39,483.840. The contract timeline is May 15, 2023 through March 26, 2025. Work completed to date includes:

- Installation of fencing, work trailers and temporary utilities
- Demolition of the wood building on the site
- Demolition of the concrete slab and foundation walls is underway
- Installation of utilities is underway
- The contractor and subcontractors have been submitting shop drawings of their installation plans.
- A payment plan has been established.
- Fixtures, Furniture and Equipment (FFE) are being procured.

Paul Kalous and Matthew Hennessey presented a construction update to the Select Board which included a more detailed breakdown of what is being done on-site. Matthew Hennessey is the Project Manager and is on-site daily. Next steps were discussed, including:

- Continued demolition of the slab
- Continued crushing of concrete debris for rebar separation
- Excavation at North side to access former steam lines
- Hand digging around former water, sewage and steam lines for careful removal of piping.
- Backfill former piping removal trenches

Project updates for the Select Board will be provided quarterly or as needed going forward.

Mr. Mayo reminded the public that, when the Town purchased the site a number of years ago, they knew that they would be able to use the building “as is” while they were waiting for construction to start. Some of the interim uses for the building have been:

- Training exercises for the Police Department
- A Covid testing clinic
- Fire Department training

Bob Garrity reported that the construction is currently on schedule. No concerns from abutters have been reported thus far. Mr. Fisher thanked them for their ongoing oversight on the project and said he looks forward to future updates.

**FY24 Senior Means-Tested Property Tax Exemption Update and Outreach** (Michelle Monsegur, Joshua Ross, Erin Walsh) Ms. Monsegur updated the Select Board on the status on the Senior Means Tested Property Tax Exemption, which was created by Annual Town Meeting in 2019 and made permanent by Annual Town Meeting in 2023. Assessor Erin Walsh explained the eligibility requirements, which are as follows:

- Age: Must be 65 or older (co-owner must be 60 or older) by December 31, 2022
- Residency: must have owned and occupied a residence in Hingham for at least 10 consecutive years, though it does not have to be same residence
- Income: Annual income for CY2022 cannot exceed \$64,000 for single individuals. \$80,000 for head of household or \$96,000 for married couples filing a joint return.
- Assessed value: Homeowners principal residence may not exceed \$912,000.
- Assets: Applicants must not have excessive assets as determined by the Board of Assessors.

- State Tax Return: Must have claimed the State Circuit Breaker Tax Credit on income tax return for CY2022.

Joshua Ross of the Board of Assessors explained some past and current participation numbers. FY23 saw a 26% increase in applications. To date there are 40 applications received in 2024. The public was encouraged to feel confident in turning over their person information to the Assessor's Office as they exercising extreme caution to protect this information. Joshua Ross explained the outreach efforts that they have done to date. Assessor Walsh explained the other tax exemptions that residents may be eligible for. At the last Town Meeting, an article was voted on where many of these exemption amounts have been doubled since the previous year. Residents with questions should contact the Assessor's Office at 781-741-1455 or via email at [assessors@hingham-ma.gov](mailto:assessors@hingham-ma.gov). Applications are due in the Assessor's Office by September 1, 2023. Mr. Fisher commended the Assessor's Office for their outreach efforts.

### **Appointments**

There were no appointments. Ms. Klein noted that they are still accepting Talent Bank applications for a number of Town Boards and Committees.

### **Public Comment**

There were no comments from the public.

### **Town Administrator/Select Board Reports**

Ms. Monsecur congratulated Town Accountant Sue Nickerson and her team for receiving the Government Finance Officers achievement of excellence in financial reporting award for the FY22 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report. This is the 27<sup>th</sup> year in a row that her team has earned this distinction for the Town.

Mr. Mayo reported that he has approved the following Special One-Day Liquor Licenses since the previous Select Board meeting:

- Barrel House Z for a sunset picnic at Weir River Farm on August 10 from 7-9pm
- Hingham Maritime Center for a family event on August 2 from 6-9pm
- Break Rock Brewing for a sunset picnic at Weir River Farm on August 17 from 5-9pm

The Hingham Summerfest event that was previously approved by the Select Board has been rescheduled to August 19 due to an inclement weather forecast.

Mr. Fisher reminded the public that July 31 marked the three-year anniversary of the Town's acquisition of the water company. He noted that one of the Town's goals for the acquisition was to better deal with unaccounted for water. Mr. Fisher said that, in 2019, unaccounted water was at 25% and in 2022 it was at 18%, which is a successful reduction. He gave an update of achievements of the Weir River Water System (WRWS) since the acquisition, which included the following:

- Rates were stabilized, with no increase in 2022 or 2023.
- PFAS levels are well below the State requirements.

- The water company has been within budget all three years.
- The Citizens Advisory Board has been active and is comprised of residents from all three towns.
- Improved communications between the water company and the Town of Hingham.
- Received drinking water awards from MA DEP in 2020 and 2022.
- Darren Dearth of the Weir River Water System, received an award for Operator Excellence in 2022.
- Over 17,000 feet of main main/pipe has been added or upgraded.
- 36 fire hydrants have been added to the system.
- 89 inoperable fire hydrants have been replaced.
- A new storage tank has been designed for Strawberry Hill in Hull.
- A 10-year capital plan has been created and implemented.
- New filter systems and media have been installed.
- One of the centrifuges has been replaced with a high-efficiency model.
- A second centrifuge has been ordered and is expected to be delivered in late 2024.
- Contracts have been signed to replace the underdrain system.
- New energy-efficient boilers have been installed.
- Customer service has been excellent, according to comments received by Mr. Fisher and Mr. Tierney.

Mr. Fisher congratulated the Weir River Water System team for all their efforts under the leadership of Russell Tierney. Ms. Klein echoed his comments.

Ms. Klein reported that tonight is “National Night Out” sponsored by the Hingham Police Department. The event will take place on the field behind Town Hall. There will be an outdoor movie and other family-friendly activities.

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

**Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Fisher: yes**

**Ms. Klein: yes**

**The meeting adjourned at 7:36 PM.**

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