

Select Board

August 3, 2021

Remote meeting via telephone conference call

Present:

- Select Board: Mr. Joseph Fisher (Chair), Mr. Bill Ramsey, and Ms. Liz Klein
- Mr. Tom Mayo, Town Administrator
- Ms. Michelle Monsegur, Assistant Town Administrator

6:30 PM: Call to order

Mr. Fisher 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. “

Mr. Fisher asked if any participants were recording the meeting. There were no responses.

Mr. Fisher also noted that the Select Board members who were participating remotely were Bill Ramsey, Liz Klein, and himself.

Approval of minutes

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to approve the minutes dated July 27, 2021. Ms. Klein seconded

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

To authorize the Chair to sign a lease agreement with Santander Bank, N.A. for the lease of twenty-one (21) 2022 IC CE 77 Passenger School Buses and one (1) 2022 IC CE 77 Passenger School Bus with Wheel Chair Accessibility

Mr. John Ferris, Hingham School Department Business Manager, explained that this is a lease agreement with Santander on behalf of Datco. Mr. Ferris planned to purchase the buses through the Source Well Cooperative bidding contract, which is an authorized agency that is acceptable for the State of Massachusetts procurement laws. Mr. Ferris reminded the public that the Town Meeting in May took a vote to allow the School Department to enter into a five-year lease. Typically, they enter into a three-year lease. He also noted that the agreement in place since 2016 has expired on July 31. Since then they have been in procurement talks with Datco to replace the 21 buses. The School Committee took a vote in early March to authorize the purchase of the 21 buses to replace the existing fleet. Mr. Ferris said that they have already issued one payment from the FY22 budget to Datco, in the amount of \$255,600. For future payments, the School Department plans to enter into a finance agreement with

Santander whereby they plan to make an additional four payments over the next four years. The School Department would also have the opportunity to purchase the buses at some point, based on their residual value. Mr. Ferris advised that he has brought the lease agreement to the attention of the Select Board because it is essentially a finance agreement and the School Department is not allowed to enter into debt contracts.

Mr. Fisher added that it was Article 24 at the Annual Town Meeting, which authorized the School Department to enter into this lease. He also clarified that the reason the School Department is not purchasing the buses outright with financing is that there is a residual value associated with the school buses. Leasing the buses as proposed would result in payments that are actually less than they would have been if the buses were purchased outright. Mr. Ferris agreed. He added that, when the Hingham Public Schools first entered into this type of lease, it saved them approximately \$1 million over five years. It turned out to be a very prudent decision and allowed the schools more flexibility with their transportation.

Mr. Fisher noted that the Town is moving towards consideration of the impact on the environment of all of our purchases including school buses. Mr. Ferris agreed that they are on the path to factoring in energy efficiency issues and environmental issues when selecting purchases in the future. Mr. Ferris said that, prior to Covid, they had been looking into obtaining a grant to purchase an electric school bus. He noted that they are continuing to investigate energy efficient options. He added that getting a grant would be very important, as the electric buses are considerably more expensive than the traditional options. Ms. Klein asked if they had encountered any unforeseen fees associated with the contract. Mr. Ferris said that there were no additional fees. Mr. Ramsey said that he was very glad that the school are exploring the idea of electric buses. There was some additional discussion about older buses that were released at the beginning of the year.

Vote: Ms. Klein made a motion to authorize the Chair to sign a five-year Municipal Lease-Purchase Agreement with Santander Bank, N.A. in the form attached hereto for the lease of school buses as authorized by 2021 Annual Town Meeting Warrant Article 24. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

COVID-19 Update

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

“Data

As of today, 27 new COVID-19 cases were reported in Hingham during the month of July. That is compared to 5 cases reported in June. So far, 1 new COVID-19 case in Hingham has been confirmed in August. We are keeping an eye on the troubling uptick in cases reported at the state and national levels. As of last week, 69% of Hingham residents are fully vaccinated (compared to approximately 64% statewide). If you look at only vaccine-eligible individuals in town (people age 12+), the percent of fully vaccinated eligible residents rises to 82%.

Mask Guidance

Last week, the MA Department of Public Health (DPH) issued a [new mask advisory](#) in light of the CDC's updated guidance.

- Fully vaccinated individuals are advised to wear a mask or face covering when indoors (and not in your own home):
 - a. if you have a weakened immune system,
 - b. if you are at increased risk for severe disease because of your age or an underlying medical condition, or
 - c. if someone in your household has a weakened immune system, is at increased risk for severe disease, or is an unvaccinated adult.
- All unvaccinated residents are advised to continue to wear masks in indoor settings and when they can't socially distance.
- Masks are still mandatory for all individuals on public and private transportation systems, in healthcare facilities, and in other settings hosting vulnerable populations, such as congregate care settings.
- The Hingham Health Department remains in constant contact with DPH and continues to closely monitor COVID-19 trends and guidance."

Mr. Fisher asked what the current mask policy is for Town Hall. Mr. Mayo advised that people who have not been fully vaccinated are being asked to wear a mask while inside Town Hall. Those who are fully vaccinated are welcome to wear a mask, but it is not required at this time. Mr. Mayo said that they will continue to reassess the mask policy if guidance changes in the future.

Mr. Ramsey asked if there is any data on whether the new cases were vaccinated or not. Ms. Monsegur did not have that data but was happy to check with the Health Department. He asked Ms. Monsegur to gather that information for next week's meeting to inform the public. In addition, he was happy to hear about Hingham's high vaccination rate.

Public Comment

"The Hingham Select Board encourages community engagement and welcomes questions and comments as agenda items are discussed at the meeting. In addition, we have set aside up to fifteen minutes for public comment for items that fall under the purview of the Select Board and are not already on tonight's agenda. If any guests wish to speak, please seek to be recognized. Once recognized, state your name and address and address your comments to the Chair. Comments will be limited to three minutes per speaker and must relate to topics within the scope of the responsibilities of the Select Board. Speakers are encouraged to present their remarks in a respectful manner and not to indulge in personalities. The Public Comment period is not a time for debate by members of the Select Board. The Select Board is not adopting or endorsing any of the comments made during the Public Comment period."

There were no comments from the public.

Town Administrator/Select Board Reports

Ms. Klein acknowledged the one-year anniversary of Hingham owning the water company on August 1. She congratulated everyone who worked hard to get that done.

Ms. Klein also reported that the Hingham Downtown Association Sidewalk Sales took place this past weekend and were a huge success. She said that it was a beautiful weekend with many people out on the water. She thanked the Police and the Harbormaster for keeping everyone safe out on the water.

Ms. Klein announced that this coming Saturday, August 7 is Hingham Farmer's Market Day. Mr. Fisher encouraged people to support the Farmer's Market and announced that a proclamation would be read at the opening of the market. He also said that the Farmer's Market folks really appreciate the support of our residents.

6:56 PM: Mr. Fisher announced that the Board would recess and reconvene at 7:00 PM to join the School Committee's meeting.

7:00 PM Joint session with the School Committee and Advisory Committee regarding discussion and vote for an appropriation for the Plymouth River School Window Replacement Project (Remote meeting via Zoom: Dial-in number: 929-205-6099, Meeting ID: 871 2218 4306, [Website: https://zoom.us/join](https://zoom.us/join))

7:00 PM: Ms. Kerry Ni, Chair of the School Committee, reconvened in open session and adopted 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. Ni asked if any participants were recording the meeting. A representative from the Hingham Journal announced that they were recording the meeting.

7:00 PM: Mr. Joe Fisher, Chair of the Select Board called the Board out of recess and noted this is a continuation of their meeting that began at 6:30 PM. He also adopted the same statement regarding the Open Meeting Law that was read by Chair Ni.

7:00 PM: Ms. Julie Strehle, Chair of the Advisory Committee, called their meeting to order and adopted the same statement regarding the Open Meeting law provisions.

Interim Principal at East Elementary School

Ms. Liza O'Reilly announced that they have a new interim Principal, Amanda Donovan, starting at East School.

Vote: Ms. O'Reilly made a motion to approve the agreement from August 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022 at \$139,000 annual salary pro-rated for the 11-month period that she is working and an additional \$1,000 paid for attainment of a doctorate degree, and an additional stipend of \$2,200 for supervision of the Integrated Preschool and Intensive Kindergarten programs housed at East School.

Ms. Nes Correnti seconded. The vote was unanimous by the members of the School Committee.

Plymouth River Windows Project

Ms. Ni announced that, last May, Town Meeting unanimously passed Article 23, which appropriated funds for the Plymouth River School windows project through the MSBA's accelerated repair program. As part of the MSBA's process, they require that the Town guarantees funding for the project. One method of doing that is through a Town Meeting vote, but it can also be done by the vote of an authorized board, such as the School Committee. She went on to say that the language of Article 23 requires the money to be appropriated through debt exclusion, however Hingham does not usually use debt exclusion for such a relatively low amount of appropriation and would rather use a different funding source. Ms. Ni said that the School Committee is being asked to guarantee that the funds will be available through their budget, which they have the authority to allocate. They then would submit an article to the May Town Meeting that will give more flexibility to the funding source of the project. She announced that this should have no impact on the School Committee's budget. She added that the Town has already allocated \$1 million for this project, which she felt would be more than enough to cover any expenses between now and April. This vote will help keep the project on track and would give the MSBA the guarantee that they require.

Mr. Fisher noted that the members of the Select Board are familiar with the project and that he fully supported the comments made by Chair Ni. He also said that the Select Board would follow through with appropriate action as needed for the upcoming Town Meeting. He thanked the School Committee members for their support.

Ms. Julie Strehle, Chair of the Advisory Committee, noted that the Advisory Committee had joined the meeting tonight for information purposes and so they could be up to date on the Town budget. She thanked the School Committee and their administrative teams for helping to facilitate a creative solution for the MSBA.

Vote: Ms. Liza O'Reilly made a motion that whereas, the Town of Hingham 2021 Annual Town Meeting approved a total appropriation of \$62,810,611.00 for the Town of Hingham Public School Department for Fiscal Year 2022; and

Whereas, the Town of Hingham School Committee has the authority under M.G.L. c. 71, § 34 to determine its expenditures within said total appropriation; and

Whereas, the Massachusetts School Building Authority ("MSBA") requires confirmation of an available appropriation to cover the costs of the Plymouth River Elementary School Windows Project in order to approve said project for eligible reimbursement under the MSBA's Accelerated Repair Program; and

Whereas, the Town of Hingham School Committee wishes to confirm the appropriation and availability of sufficient funds to cover the costs for the Plymouth River Elementary School Windows Project;

Now, therefore, the Town of Hingham School Committee hereby adopts the following vote:

That the Town of Hingham School Committee hereby appropriates an amount not to exceed \$3,993,600.00 from its total Fiscal Year 2022 School Department Budget for the purpose of paying the costs of a windows replacement project at the Plymouth River Elementary School located at 200 High Street, Hingham, MA 02043. The project would replace necessary doors and windows and make other repairs or replacements as necessary to meet the Massachusetts School Building Authority (“MSBA”) requirements, including the payment of all costs incidental or related thereto. This proposed repair project would materially extend the useful life of the school and preserve an asset that otherwise is capable of supporting the required educational programs, and for which the Town has applied for a grant from the MSBA, said amount to be expended under the direction of the Town of Hingham School Committee in consultation with the 2017 School Building Committee. The Town of Hingham School Committee acknowledges that the MSBA’s grant program is a non-entitlement, discretionary program based on need, as determined by the MSBA, and if the MSBA’s Board of Directors votes to invite the Town of Hingham to collaborate with the MSBA on this proposed repair project, any project costs the Town of Hingham incurs in excess of any grant that may be approved by and received from the MSBA shall be the sole responsibility of the Town of Hingham.

Ms. Nes Correnti seconded.

Mr. Ray Estes, member of the School Building Committee, noted that the proposed vote language says that the expenditure was to be overseen by the School Committee in consultation with the School Building Committee. He said that that wording seemed to be the reverse of what was intended. Mr. Ferris agreed with Mr. Estes. Chair Ni Agreed as well.

Vote: Ms. Liza O’Reilly proposed an amendment to the motion that the amount not to exceed \$3,993,600 would be extended under the direction of the 2017 School Building Committee in consultation with the Town of Hingham School Committee. Ms. New Correnti seconded. The motion as amended passed unanimously.

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

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

The meeting adjourned at 7:16 PM.

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