

**Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
September 14, 2021**

Remote Meeting via Zoom

In Attendance

Committee Members: Dave Anderson, Brenda Black, Davalene Cooper, Bob Curley, Vice Chair George Danis, Kristin Dziergowski, Matt Goulet, Caitlyn Kirk, Alan MacDonald, Nancy MacDonald, Andy McElaney, Sarah Melia, Evan Sheehan, Tina Sherwood, Chair Julie Strehle. Town Accountant, Sue Nickerson.

Absent: None.

1. Call Meeting to Order

At 7:00 pm, Chair, Julie Strehle, 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 Chairman 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.”

Chair Strehle asked if any participants were recording the meeting. There were no responses.

2. Comments from the Public Regarding Items Not on the Agenda. There were no responses.

3. Welcome New Members

Chair Strehle welcomed new members: Matt Goulet, Caitlyn Kirk, and Sarah Melia.

4. Approval of Minutes of Meeting June 29, 2021

Vote: Mr. Curley made a motion to approve the June 29, 2021 minutes with revisions. Mr. Sheehan seconded.

Roll Call Vote: 9-0-5.

Approval of Minutes of Meeting August 3, 2021

Vote: Mr. Curley motioned to approve the minutes of 8-3-21. Ms. Cooper seconded.

Roll Call Vote: 10-0-4 (Ms. Black was absent, Ms. MacDonald was absent, Mr. McElaney was absent, Ms. Kirk was absent)

5. At 7:23 pm, Chair Strehle motioned to put the meeting into recess.

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Vote: Mr. Anderson motioned for AdCom to recess. Mr. Curley seconded.

Roll Call Vote: 14-0-0

6. 7:30 pm: Joint Session with the Select Board and School Committee for Preliminary FY21 Financial Review and Sustainable Budget Planning

At 7:36 p.m., Chair Strehle announced the Joint Session has ended and the Advisory Committee will come to order.

7:36 p.m. Call to Order

Chair Strehle called the meeting to order.

Town Administrator Mayo and Assistant Town Administrator Monsignor provided a financial overview of the previous year.

8:11 p.m. Recess

Chair Strehle called the meeting to recess.

Roll Call Vote: 14-0-0

8:15 p.m. Call to Order

Chair Strehle called the meeting to order.

7. Reserve Fund Transfer Request

Linda Harper, Library Director, requested a reserve fund transfer of \$59,250 to replace the 20-year-old floor tiles at the Hingham Public Library which present a safety hazard. The Library had \$184,000 total to complete this project. Kathy Reilly, Procurement Officer, recently put the project out to bid. The lowest bid was priced at \$202,708 including a base bid of \$188,952 with an additional \$13,756 for the anti-fracture membrane which J.R. Frey, Town Engineer recommends. The \$59,250 covers the shortfall plus 20% contingency.

Ms. Harper noted the Select Board unanimously voted to approve the transfer and the contract.

Conversation ensued regarding the size of the request which is large for a typical fund transfer. Vice Chair Danis asked if this should be handled through Capital Outlay. Town Accountant Sue Nickerson said that would not be until FY23. Ms. Harper said the Select Board posed a similar question to Michelle Monsegur who said \$59,250 is a small request compared to the amount available in the fund.

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Vote: Mr. Sheehan motioned to recommend a transfer from the Reserve Fund to the Library Lobby & Stair Floor Tile account in the amount of \$59,250. Mr. Curley seconded.

Roll Call Vote: 14-0-0

8. Liaison Reports

A. Sustainable Budget Task Force

Vice Chair Danis, Mr. Curley, and Ms. Dziergowski are the Liaisons to the Task Force; there is a second tier of citizens including former AdCom Chairs who have agreed to support the Task Force efforts to prepare reports and do analysis.

Mr. McElaney is concerned the Task Force does not include an AdCom member. Chair Strehle said the Task Force is charged with determining what kind of Town we want to be and what services to offer which is ultimately for the Select Board and the School Committee to decide. The Task Force is committed to getting input from AdCom Liaisons throughout their process. Vice Chair Danis said the Task Force is charged with making recommendations for actions. Our main input is going to come after the recommendations.

Ms. Cooper recalled when AdCom discussed this recommendation last spring, it was agreed that AdCom would not be represented on the Task Force because we deal with current and next year's budget. The Task Force needed to be a group that could look over a longer timeframe. Mr. Sheehan said there needs to be more regular communication than a monthly readout to the Select Board.

Mr. Curley discussed a possible Operational Override and that people want to be able to substantiate the need and consequences of that ask of the Town. The Task Force is being asked to accelerate a lot of things so they can make a recommendation prior to Town Meeting.

Mr. Anderson said he thinks the suggested role of Liaison might be an observer role. Chair Strehle agreed that this is a good role for AdCom and will discuss with the Town Administrator at their next meeting.

B. ACES/Education

Mr. Anderson reported Dr. Austin has resigned. His departure was within the warranty window of the Search Committee thus the Town will not have to pay for a second search.

Mr. Anderson said that all new FTEs that were approved in the budget have been hired with one exception which is not a student facing position.

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The Strategic Plan is going to continue this year. The School Committee does not want to delay it waiting for a new Superintendent. Chair Strehle noted a facilitator will be hired to assist with Strategic Planning. The Plan should be completed by July 1, 2022 so it is concurrent with the AdCom budget planning process. Their goal is to find what is best for the Town as a whole.

Mr. Anderson said there are three elementary Interim Principals at PRS, Foster, and East. The School Committee is working toward getting permanent positions.

Mr. Anderson recommended new AdCom members attend the annual Joint Select Board / Advisory Committee / School Committee Meeting with AdCom Education Subcommittee (ACES) members on Saturday, October 2, from 8:00-11:00.

There was conversation around the budget regarding the growth of expenses versus the growth of revenues. AdCom members last year made the point to the School Committee that they need to get to a sustainable plan.

C. Harbor Development Report

Chair Strehle said there is no report at this time.

D. CPC

Ms. MacDonald said approximately 20 preliminary applications arrived this week. They have two to three weeks to determine whether applications meet CPC eligibility requirements. Then they will start the actual presentation process.

E. Public Safety Facility

Ms. MacDonald said the Public Safety facility is getting close to having a final interior design. They met on September 2, 2021 with Kaestle Boos Architects (KBA) who gave a presentation about Net Zero and LEED certification attributes of the project. Cleaner Greener Hingham as well as Hingham Power and Light are active in the process.

F. Net Zero Study Committee is now the Climate Action Planning Committee

Ms. Black said the Warrant Article requesting the formation of the Committee with the name, **Climate Action Planning Committee** rather than **Net Zero Study Committee**. The first meeting is scheduled for the week of September 21.

Chair Brian Moyer has written up a proposed charter that the Committee will vote on once they meet. The Committee will spend this coming year until the fall of 2022 to develop a proposed Climate Action Plan for the Town which would then lead to a public process preparing for

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Articles for the 2023 Warrant to address things that need to be done through Town Meeting to enact the plan.

G. Planning Board

Mr. McElaney reported the Planning Board approved the Master Plan with minor technical changes. The approved plan will be available in mid-October.

The Chair of the Master Plan Committee also serves on the Planning Board. Gordon Carr is planning a subcommittee of the Master Plan Committee to develop an approach and perhaps a Warrant Article to establish a formal Master Plan Implementation Committee.

H. Tree Preservation Study

Mr. McElaney said the Tree Preservation Study Committee will submit a proposed Warrant Article that would amend the Zoning by-law to include a tree preservation portion that will look a lot like what Wellesley has implemented.

Items not on the agenda

Light Board

Chair Strehle asked Ms. Black if she had a point of information to share about the substation. We cannot discuss and ask questions, but feel free to share.

Ms. Black stated that the piece of land within the Transfer Station property was identified as a potential place for the third substation to be located. The Light Plant is talking to Weymouth about routes that the line would use to come into Hingham. Their plan is to start public meetings in October.

9. Discussion of Housekeeping Items

A. Conflict of Interest Signature and Ethics Training

Ms. MacDonald asked AdCom members to return the Conflict of Interest form. Every Town employee needs to complete Ethics training every two years.

B. Open Meeting Law Training

The Town is providing optional training is available on-line either September 23, 2021, at 3:00 p.m., or September 29, 2021, at 7:00 p.m.

C. Calendar 2021 – 2022

Chair Strehle sent a future calendar to AdCom members.

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The Annual Policies & Procedures needs to be updated. These were reviewed it the Spring 2021. Both Ms. Sherwood and Ms. Black will review the document.

The Financial Policy also needs to be updated, which AdCom must do once every 3 years.

D. Review of Policies & Procedures and Financial Policy Update

Mr. Curley, Vice Chair Danis, and Ms. Kirk individually reviewed the Financial Policy, then met together which resulted in revisions that were circulated to members on September 14. They hope to have the final ready for approval by late October or early November.

Suggested changes included:

- Adding language to provide guidance during pandemics or climate disasters.
- Changing Total Annual Expenditures (TAE) to not include Enterprise Funds (Sewer, South Shore Country Club budget, or Weir River Water System) as it significantly skews what is added to Fund Balance.
- Adding a paragraph regarding an Override.
- Increasing the definition of a Capital Asset from \$10,000 to \$15,000.
- Adding a paragraph to reflect the Town's commitment to Net Zero Carbon Emissions.

Mr. Goulet suggested revisiting the Town's AAA bond rating versus taking on debt given the low interest rates and low levels of debt service currently.

Mr. Curley discussed the value of the AAA bond rating to the Town. Last year the Town borrowed money on bond anticipation notes at a rate of .75%.

Mr. Goulet explained the difference between a AAA rated bond rating and a AA rated bond rating is .15%. The debt service is only a \$15,000 differential every year for every \$10M of bonds we would be issuing. Mr. Goulet suggested it could be argued the AAA rating is a point of pride for the Town, but it does not make financial sense.

Ms. Nickerson noted that the Town has a debt capacity we will never reach. We can borrow money and not lose our AAA rating.

Mr. Anderson suggested we ask our Capital Market Advisors to provide more information so we all have a better understanding of the bond ratings and their impact on the Town.

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All AdCom members agreed to send Mr. Curley, Vice Chair Danis, and Ms. Kirk suggested changes to the Financial Policy Update document within one week. Mr. Goulet will prepare information for members to expand the discussion around the AAA bond rating. Chair Strehle would like to send this information to the Select Board to solicit their input.

10. Matters not anticipated within 48 hours of meeting

Ms. Cooper said the Affordable Housing Trust will make their annual presentation at our next AdCom meeting, October 12, 2021.

11. Motion to Adjourn at 9:49 p.m.

Vote: Mr. Curley motioned to adjourn. Mr. Sheehan seconded.

Roll Call Vote

All in favor

14-0-0

Documents Distributed for this Meeting

Agenda

June 29, 2021 Meeting Minutes

August 3, 2021 Meeting Minutes

2021 - 2022 AdCom Meeting Calendar

Financial Policy Update

*Respectfully submitted by
Nancy MacDonald
Advisory Committee Secretary*