

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
MARCH 21, 2023**

In attendance were Chairman Randolph G. LaMattina; Vice Chairman Daniel L. Salvucci; Clerk Justin R. Evans; Members Shawn M. Kain and Dr. Carl F. Kowalski; and Town Administrator Mary Beth Carter.

Chairman LaMattina opened the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and followed by a moment of silence.

Chairman LaMattina announced that the meeting is being recorded and televised by WHCA.

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to approve bill and payroll warrants. **Second** Dr. Kowalski, **so voted 5-0.**

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to accept correspondence in the Read File. **Second** Dr. Kowalski, **so voted 5-0.**

**PUBLIC FORUM**

Mr. Salvucci made an announcement that on Saturday April 1, 2023, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. there will be an open house at the DPW for those who would like to view the premises which was built in the early 1900s.

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to approve the Open Session minutes of the meeting held on March 7, 2023. **Second** Dr. Kowalski, **so voted 5-0.**

**SCHEDULED EVENTS:**

**Joint Meeting With the Finance Committee re FY24 Budget**

Members of the Finance Committee in attendance were Chairman Richard Anderson, Vice Chairperson Kathleen Ottina, and members Al Cafferty, Charles Colby, Rosemary Connolly, Ralph Mitchell, Lukas Moscoso and John Noone.

Chairman LaMattina reminded all in attendance that they can speak upon their turn and that presentations will be shown by some department heads. Finance Committee Chairman Anderson recognized the budget subcommittee for their work on the budget worksheet which is currently being reviewed. Chairman LaMattina agreed that due diligence has been done. Town Administrator Mary Beth Carter stated that in using a 5 percent assessment for the schools, she did not come close to a balanced budget. She proceeded to decrease each line in the budget with the exception of salaries that are contracted. Free cash was used toward some articles, leaving a balance of \$316.00. She also used ARPA funds for some capital items. If the requested 8.35 percent from the school district does not change, the Town will be faced with lay-offs. Chairman LaMattina stated that there are no fictitious numbers and that tough decisions were made. He went on to say the school needs things but so does the Town. Mr. Salvucci stated that a few years ago the Town had to cut its budget drastically and he will never support a budget that includes layoffs in order to support one major budget. He further stated that tax payers need Town

support, safety support and educational support and that he will not support a budget that jeopardizes that. Mr. Kain clarified that the working group has no decision-making authority; and that they ran scenarios in order to make intelligent decisions easier for the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee. He went on to say the most recent School Committee meeting was difficult for him as he feels decisions are being made by advocating for the students, yet decisions should be made by advocating for all departments. Kathleen Ottina stated there were town departments that proposed higher increases; and the school district came in with high requests as well. She feels there is plenty of time to come up with a balanced budget. Chairman LaMattina disagreed with Ms. Ottina's comments regarding the requests made by some town departments. He then addressed his concerns with comments made by Ms. Ottina at recent meetings of the School Committee, where she stated the town was providing fictitious numbers and the school district should include all of its needs in the budget. Chairman LaMattina stated that the School Committee is not taking into consideration the actual revenue numbers. Chairman Anderson reminded the Board of Selectmen that Ms. Ottina is the liaison between the Finance Committee and the School Committee. Ms. Ottina apologized for using the word fictitious; and advised Chairman LaMattina that she meant to use the word preliminary and realized her mistake as soon as she said it. Chairman Anderson stated that open houses are a good idea for consideration of upcoming projects. Chairman LaMattina stated that the budget cycle is getting lost. The School Committee budget has large increases that are not going toward the students and he suggested that maybe this year is not the year to ask for additional services. Time is of the essence and there are only two meetings before the warrant date. He suggested the Finance Committee review the school budget carefully as not all increases are things for the students. Ms. Rosemary Connolly inquired if there is a plan to move forward to provide services. Mr. Kain replied that there are a number of factors, such as when school enrollment is decreasing, aid decreases creating a budget gap. He suggested that staying at a 5% increase is stable.

Police Chief Hanlon presented a budget for the department. He stated that the department was not posted in the Madden Report and that there is a deficit. There are many shifts that are not being filled because of said budget deficit. The Police Department is asking to be funded properly and Chief Hanlon provided a spreadsheet presenting that the Police Department percentages have been considerably less than the Fire Department and School Department. He stated that he will make the budget provided to his department work. Chief Hanlon also addressed comments made at a recent Finance Committee meeting in connection with he and Chief Clancy being in attendance when the IT Director presented his budget to the committee. It was suggested that if the two chiefs found it necessary to be in attendance, maybe they would want to give up part of their budgets to help out the IT Director. Chief Hanlon made it clear that he and Chief Clancy were in attendance in support of the IT Director because that's what Town departments do – they support each other – and the comments made by Finance Committee members were uncalled for.

Fire Chief Clancy stated that a lot has changed since the 2019 Madden Report. He further stated that department heads are working together for the best outcome for the Town.

Fred Small, School Committee member, spoke on the Hold Harmless status. He confirmed that enrollment is up at this time; there is no prediction for next year.

John Galvin requested clarification on the deficit. Town Administrator Mary Beth Carter stated that free cash will be used to close the budget if the School Committee does not change the increase in the school budget. Chairman LaMattina suggested that a submittal will be made and a secondary budget will be provided to the School Committee.

Mr. Kain suggested that the School Committee should request an override. Mr. Galvin reminded the Board of Selectmen that the override has to be carefully worded. Mr. Small further clarified that the budget was split on the warrant a few years ago and that is how it was accomplished. Chairman LaMattina stated that the budget provided shares the equity among departments. Chairman Anderson reiterated that the Finance Committee is committed to all Town departments.

### **COVID-19 UPDATE**

Chief Clancy provided a Covid-19 update. There were 227 tests performed resulting in 11 positive cases. This is a positivity rate of 4.8%. The Town has been approved for the wastewater testing machine. The wastewater report also showed a decrease.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

#### **WMS Building Project: Town Clerk to Discuss Election and Ballot Vote for the Project**

Mr. Evans inquired about a special Town election for the project. Town Clerk Dawn Varley suggested that holding two Town elections on the same date would not be the best option, but it is possible. Town Administrator Mary Beth Carter asked for clarification on reimbursement costs which was provided. A thirty five-day notice must be provided to post the election date. Mr. Salvucci asked for the simplest manner to hold a special election to which he was told to hold only one special election not in conjunction with a separate election.

John Galvin stated that the last week of September would be ideal for a Special Town Meeting followed by a Special Election two weeks later.

Chairman LaMattina and Mr. Salvucci agree that holding a special election in conjunction with a presidential primary election would have a high percentage of voters in attendance, despite risking confusion as expressed by Town Clerk Varley.

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Mr. Kain presented potential debt ratios. The standard for municipalities is 12% debt ratio. The Town is currently at 3% which is considerably lower than the debt capacity. Mr. Salvucci inquired as to whether it was possible to downsize the proposed school building being projected. Mr. Small does not know if this is an option at this point.

Mr. Salvucci inquired about a budget line item for revenue for the marijuana shop to which Town Administrator Mary Beth Carter stated there is an estimate of \$100,000 budgeted as revenue.

### **OLD BUSINESS (cont'd)**

#### **Whitman-Hanson Regional Agreement Committee Consensus Proposals**

Mr. Evans outlined the proposals one-by-one, with the Board voting as follows:

Mr. LaMattina **MOVED** to agree to a 2/3 vote for all School Committee Votes. **Second Dr. Kowalski, so voted 2-3 (motion failed).**

Dr. Kowalski **MOVED** to include language within the Whitman-Hanson Regional Agreement that requires the Agreement to be reviewed every three (3) years. **Second Mr. Evans, so voted 5-0.**

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to approve the amendment to “Section III – Location of the Regional District Schools, (B) Lease of the Elementary and Middle Schools.” **Second Dr. Kowalski, so voted 5-0.**

Dr. Kowalski **MOVED** to approve the proposed new language for “Section V – Apportionment and Payment Costs incurred by The District, (5) Emergency Repairs”; and to include in said proposed language notification to the Facilities Director and Town Administrator in the event of an emergency repair. **Second Mr. Salvucci, so voted 5-0.**

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to approve the amendment to “Section V – Apportionment and Payment of Costs Incurred by The District, (3)” by removing the language. **Second Dr. Kowalski, so voted 5-0.**

Dr. Kowalski **MOVED** to approve the proposed new language to “6. Transportation” in the Whitman-Hanson Regional Agreement. **Second Mr. Evans, so voted 5-0.**

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

##### **Rescind Appointment: Fred Gilmetti**

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to rescind the appointment of Fred Gilmetti from the position of Delegate, Old Colony Planning Council. **Second Dr. Kowalski, so voted 5-0.**

##### **Appointment to OCPC: Noreen O’Toole**

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to appoint Noreen O’Toole to the position of Delegate, Old Colony Planning Council for the remainder of a one-year term, through June 30, 2023, in order to fill an existing vacancy. **Second Dr. Kowalski, so voted 5-0.**

##### **Resignation: John Galvin**

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to accept with regret the resignation of John Galvin from the position of Member, DPW Building Committee, effective March 9, 2023. **Second Dr. Kowalski, so voted 5-0.**

##### **Dollars for Scholars Month**

Dr. Kowalski **MOVED** to approve the request of Michael Ganshirt on behalf of Whitman & Hanson Dollars for Scholars to declare April as “Dollars for Scholars Month”. **Second Mr. Salvucci, so voted 5-0.**

##### **Dollars for Scholars Fundraiser**

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to approve the request of Michael Ganshirt on behalf of Whitman & Hanson Dollars for Scholars to erect a fundraising thermometer on the Town Hall lawn from April through the end of May. **Second Dr. Kowalski, so voted 5-0.**

### **Historical Society**

Dr. Kowalski **MOVED** to allow John Campbell to store a collection of items belonging to the Historical Society at the Armory building. **Second Mr. Salvucci, so voted 5-0.**

### **Recorded Meetings/Public Meeting Decorum.**

Chairman LaMattina suggested tabling discussion on this issue until the next meeting in order to allow for Mr. Lynam to be present. Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to table discussion on recorded meetings/public meeting decorum until the next meeting of the Board. **Second Dr. Kowalski, so voted 5-0.**

### **April Meeting Schedule**

The Board set their April meeting schedule for Tuesday, April 11, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. and Tuesday, April 18, 2023, at 7:00 p.m.

### **TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

#### **Boston 25 Zip Trip**

Town Administrator Mary Beth Carter advised the Board of the request of Boston 25 to hold a Zip Trip in the Town Park on Friday, August 11, 2023. There were no objections from the Board.

At 9:13 p.m. Dr. Kowalski **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting. **Second Mr. Salvucci, so voted 5-0.**

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Justin R. Evans, Clerk