

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

February 13, 2023

6:00 p.m.

Meeting held at Town Hall, 139 Main Street, Rowley, MA

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Robert Snow; Vice Chairman Joseph Perry; Cliff Pierce (Town Administrator Deborah Eagan, Assistant Town Administrator Natalie Lovett) Clerk Deana Ziev -ABSENT; Christine Kneeland - ABSENT

PUBLIC ATTENDEES: Treasurer/Collector Karen Summit

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chairman Snow called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. He said the meeting is being audio and video recorded by Rowley Community Media.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Police Chief Scott Dumas led the Pledge of Allegiance.

6:00 p.m. TO 6:05 p.m. PUBLIC COMMENT*

There were no public comments.

6:05 p.m. APPOINTMENT – Police Chief Scott Dumas to present Christopher Ottani for appointment to the position of Police Sergeant

Chairman Snow read the letter from Chief Dumas.

Chief Dumas presented the candidate to the Board. He said that the Patrol Sergeant is an important position and there were several internal candidates that applied for the position. The candidates were reviewed through a series of tests and Officer Ottani rose to the top.

Officer Ottani told the Board that this has been a goal of his since he began working for the Town of Rowley. He said he is thankful for the opportunity and excited to start work.

Joe Perry made a motion to appoint Christopher Ottani to the position of Patrol Sergeant, Cliff Pierce second, all in favor – aye (3-0).

6:30 p.m. APPOINTMENT – Open Space Committee Chair Alyssa King and Conservation Agent Brent Baeslack to discuss Bradstreet active recreation parcel Lot C for proposed educational nature trail

Chairman Snow said that this appointment has been rescheduled to a later date.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Request from Fire Chief Mark Emery to appoint Justin Haley to the position of Call Firefighter

Chairman Snow read the following:

The Board needs to vote to appoint Justin Haley to the position of Call Firefighter. Justin recently resigned as a full time Firefighter, but would like to stay on as a Call Firefighter.

Cliff Pierce made a motion to appoint Justin Haley to the position of Call Firefighter, Joe Perry second, all in favor – aye (3-0).

NEW BUSINESS

1. Update on February 9, 2023 Triton District Communication Committee Meeting

Vice Chairman Perry updated the Board on discussions that took place at the last Triton District Community Committee meeting. Perry said that Triton Regional School District (TRSD) is resubmitting to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) for funding of the high school and middle school renovation project. He said they have \$1,500 set aside to handle the 1st round of preliminary investigations into the school problems. They are going ahead with that and they expect to hear in late May whether the application will be progressing to the first grant round.

Perry said that they also received information on the FY24 TRSD school budget. He said that enrollment for Newbury is down approximately 10 students, Salisbury is down approximately 20 students, and Rowley's enrollment is going up over 30 students. He said the preliminary FY24 budget shows an increase of \$2.5 million over last year's Triton budget. He said the breakdown by Town would be: \$500,000 increase for Newbury, \$1,000,000 increase for Salisbury, and \$1,000,000 increase for Rowley. Perry said the final budget will be voted on by the School Committee in March. He said the budget process is complicated by the fact that the new governor has additional time to develop the State budget, so there is a delay for the schools in finding out their aid amounts.

Snow said this is the highest assessment we've ever had. He said the schools generally cost the Town approximately \$20,000 per student.

Perry added that Pine Grove School also wants to add a classroom by dividing existing space. He said he spoke to Brad Dore, from Dore and Whittier, who estimated the cost to be approximately \$5,000,000. Snow said that he is speechless. He said the Board needs to get clarification on the cost to create an additional classroom.

Eagan said the clarification should come from the school. She said the \$5,000,000 cost would need an override. She said an \$1,000,000 assessment increase would use all of Rowley's levy and new tax growth, and the Town budget would still be short. She said there is nothing left for the Town operations; the Town would need to cut its operating budget.

Bernie Cullen, 283 Wethersfield Street, said that he was at the DCC meeting and can confirm the figures Perry presented. He said that, from what he can tell, the bulk of the increase (approximately \$1.7 million) comes from steps and COLA increase for employees, then there is a large increase in costs associated with retirees (over \$500,000). He said that it seems as though the school took out everything from the budget requests that were discretionary. Cullen said the level services approach to budgeting, when the drivers of the budget are going to break the budget, is not going to cut it. He said staffing and class sizes need to be looked at.

Snow asked Cullen if he heard any pushback from the other Towns at the DCC meeting. Cullen said no, just shock. Perry said that a lot of the budget is fixed items, like medical insurance costs. Pierce said it seems the majority of the items are fixed costs. Cullen said the last time this happened, TRSD was able to dramatically reduce the number of classroom aids in order to bring down the budget. He said the school should do their due diligence to see if level services is appropriate given the amount of the budget increase.

Snow said that 60% of the Town's budget goes to the schools, the remaining 40% is used to run the Town operations. He said to think about cutting Town services is unthinkable. He said the Board needs to talk with the School Superintendent. Snow said there are essential services that the Town needs to provide, as well.

Treasurer Karen Summit said that the Town used to receive a level-funded budget in addition to a level-services budget, but hasn't in several years. She said that the real budget probably falls somewhere in between those two numbers.

Snow said he thinks the Board should send a letter to the Superintendent and ask him to come to the February 27th meeting. Pierce said the estimate for next year is significantly higher than previous years, and there needs to be an explanation for the increase. Perry said that during COVID, the increase was lower due to the COVID funding the schools received.

Pierce said it is a good idea to invite the Superintendent to the next meeting. Snow added that the School Committee representatives from Rowley should also be invited.

Cliff Pierce made a motion to invite the Superintendent Brian Forget and the Rowley School Committee representatives to the next Board of Selectmen's meeting, Joe Perry second, all in favor – aye (3-0)

2. Review Board of Selectmen Meeting Schedule

Chairman Snow read the following:

The Board needs to set the meeting schedule for the upcoming months of April, May, and June. Below is a proposed schedule with meeting start times of 6:00 p.m.

Proposed Meeting Schedule April 2023 – June 2023

April 3 – Warrant articles finalized BOS votes to sign warrant with articles as presented and pending Finance Committee recommendations to be made on April 4, 2023

April 5 – Tentative meeting date if special meeting needed for changes to warrant

April 10

April 17 – NO MEETING PATRIOT'S DAY

April 24

May 1 – Annual Town Meeting

May 8

May 15 – NO MEETING

May 22

May 29 – NO MEETING – MEMORIAL DAY

June 5

June 12

June 19 – NO MEETING – JUNETEENTH INDEPENDENCE DAY

June 26

Cliff Pierce made a motion to approve the meeting schedule as presented, Joe Perry second, all in favor – aye (3-0)

3. Discuss Town Hall stone foundation walls

Chairman Snow read the following:

Please see attached memo concerning the Town Hall foundation walls.

We need direction from the Board on how to proceed.

Eagan asked the Board if they had any questions regarding the options. Snow asked if the mortar and stone foundation is deteriorating due to water. Eagan responded that

they think so, but they would like to hire a structural engineer to assess the foundation. She said they had a mason look at the wall and he thought the issues are due to water getting in from outside. She said he proposed to repair the mortar and cracks and then apply a waterproof barrier on the inside of the walls. Eagan said the staff's recommendation is to hire a structural engineer first to assess the condition of the foundation before proceeding with any repair work. Snow asked what the cost is of the assessment. Eagan responded \$1,825. Pierce said that Town Hall is an important building for they Town. He said the cost of the assessment is relatively little money and the structural engineer may be able to tell them whether the mason's proposal would be an option for the repair. Snow asked how long the assessment will take. Eagan responded that they are not sure, but they are hoping to get an estimate for the foundation repair in advance of Town Meeting.

Joe Perry made a motion to hire a structural engineer to conduct an assessment of the Town Hall foundation, Cliff Pierce second, all in favor – aye (3-0).

OLD BUSINESS

1. Vote to authorize the filing for State Economic Bill Earmark Grant for Kid's Kingdom Playground Project

Chairman Snow read the following:

Debbie is working on getting the funds from the State Earmark Grant. She is asking the Board to vote to authorize Chairman Snow to sign the Chapter 268 of the Acts of 2022 Economic Development Bill Earmark Contact Collection Form on behalf of the Board. She needs to get this form filed so that she can set up the grant account with the State.

Cliff Pierce made a motion to authorize the filing for the State Economic Bill Earmark Grant for Kid's Kingdom Playground project, Joe Perry second, all in favor – aye (3-0).

MINUTES

- February 6, 2023

Joe Perry made a motion to approve the February 6, 2023 minutes, Cliff Pierce second, all in favor – aye (3-0).

- February 6, 2023 – Executive Session

Joe Perry made a motion to approve the February 6, 2023 Executive Session minutes, Cliff Pierce second, all in favor – aye (3-0).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. The Town continues to be in a drought status. Please check the Town's website for the latest information or call the Rowley Water Department at 978-948-2640 for more information.
2. The Board of Selectmen announces that a textile recycling bin has been placed in the rear parking lot of the Town Hall Annex at 39 Central Street. Residents can drop off clothing, shoes, linens, sheets, pillows, blankets, hats, duffle bags, belts, gloves, towels, draperies, handbags, tablecloths, bathrobes, and stuffed animals. All items must be dry, bagged, and placed into the bin. Please do not leave items on the ground.
3. The Town has the following board vacancies:
 - **Council on Aging**
 - **Conservation Commission**
 - **Open Space Committee**
 - **Rowley Cultural Council**
 - **Zoning Board of Appeals – Alternate member**Interested residents should send a letter of interest to the Board of Selectmen. Positions are open until filled.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining concerning American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees Local 2905 pursuant to State Open Meeting Law, G.L. c.30A section 21(a) (3) as having the discussion in open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Town

Chairman Snow called for a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining concerning American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees Local 2905 pursuant to State Open Meeting Law, G.L. c.30A section 21(a) (3) as having the discussion in Open Meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Town and to not return to open session. Joe Perry so moved, Cliff Pierce second, all in favor – roll call vote: Cliff Pierce – aye; Joe Perry – aye; Bob Snow – aye.

Open session adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Natalie Lovett
Assistant Town Administrator

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Meeting memo regarding 6:05 p.m. Appointment – Police Chief Scott Dumas to present Christopher Ottani for appointment to the position of Police Sergeant
2. Letter from Police Chief to Board of Selectmen dated February 7, 2023
3. Meeting memo regarding 6:30 p.m. Appointment – Open Space Committee Chair Alyssa King and Conservation Agent Brent Baeslack to discuss Bradstreet active recreation parcel Lot C for proposed educational nature trail
4. Memo from Open Space Committee Chair Alyssa King and Conservation Agent Brent Baeslack
5. Plans showing Lot C, active recreation parcel
6. Quitclaim Deed for Lot C, active recreation parcel
7. Meeting memo regarding New Business #1 – Update on February 9, 2023 Triton District Communication Committee Meeting
8. Triton District Communications Committee meeting agenda – February 9, 2023
9. Triton Preliminary Budget handouts from February 9, 2023 meeting
10. Meeting memo regarding General Business #1 – Request from Fire Chief Mark Emery to appoint Justin Haley to the position of Call Firefighter
11. Letter from Fire Chief Emery to the Board of Selectmen dated February 7, 2023
12. Meeting memo regarding New Business #2 – Set Board of Selectmen meeting schedule for April, May, and June
13. Meeting memo regarding New Business #3 – Discuss Town Hall stone foundation walls
14. Email from Amy Lydon to Board of Selectmen re: Memo – Town Hall Foundation Walls w/ attachments
15. Meeting memo regarding Old Business #1 – Vote to authorize the filing for State Economic Bill Earmark Grant for Kid's Kingdom Playground Project
16. Earmark Contact Collection Form
17. Draft minutes of the February 6, 2023 meeting
18. Written Executive Session Motion