

HAMILTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

MINUTES OF MEETING

Teleconference

June 17, 2020

Selectmen Present: Chair Jeffrey Hubbard, Shawn Farrell,
William Olson, Darcy Dale, and Rosemary
Kennedy

Town Manager: Joe Domelowicz

** This meeting was conducted via Zoom teleconference with all the above participants remaining in their homes.*

Chair Jeff Hubbard called the Board of Selectmen (BOS) teleconference to order shortly after 6 p.m. This meeting was held on Wednesday evening prior to the BOS's participation in Wenham's Budget Forum. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Board and Committee Openings

The Council on Aging, Community Preservation Committee, Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust, and Hamilton Board of Appeals each have one opening. The Hamilton Historic District Commission has two openings.

Public Comment

None.

A roll call of the BOS was taken. The full board was present.

Selectmen/Town Manager Reports

Shawn Farrell, William Olson, and Darcy Dale gave no report.

Rosemary Kennedy said she was happy to see people out and about again and was pleased the Town has had a low range of [COVID-19] infections due to people following the guidelines.

Town Manager Joe Domelowicz reported Town Meeting is this Saturday at 9 a.m. on the football field. There will be a walk-through on Friday at 1 p.m. He reported the Town was pursuing an MVP [Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness] grant to assist with finding another water source, with efforts guided by Anne Gero, 180 Asbury St., the Planning Dept., and Dewberry engineering consultants.

CONSENT AGENDA

- Approve minutes of May 11 and June 8, 2020

Decision:

Ms. Dale made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Farrell seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken with “ayes” from Mr. Farrell, Mr. Olson, Ms. Dale, Ms. Kennedy, and Mr. Hubbard, (5-0) unanimous.

AGENDA

EMERGENCY VOTE – Enhanced Water Ban

Mr. Domelowicz read the information sent to the BOS by Department of Public Works (DPW) Director Tim Olson beginning with: *“As of June 8, 2020, the discharge flow rate of the Ipswich River near the Willowdale Dam has dropped below the flow rates deemed necessary by MassDEP to sustain a healthy watershed...”* Due to the shortage, the BOS is voting on declaring a state of water conservation and imposing a stricter water ban. He read the measures and fines to be imposed for violations.

Decision:

Ms. Dale made a motion to accept the water conservation restriction as written by DPW Director Tim Olson. Mr. Olson seconded the motion.

Further Discussion:

Ms. Dale asked how this would affect the Town as it goes forward looking for a new water source. Mr. Domelowicz said finding water elsewhere and figuring out how to tie it into the existing system would be part of the study (MVP grant). Ideally it will be outside off the Ipswich River. They aren’t usually allowed to mix water sources, so the transition will need to be worked out.

Decision (Continued):

Ms. Dale amended her motion to include both the water ban and approving the language for the notice of the water ban as written by the DPW director. Mr. Farrell seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken with “ayes” from Mr. Farrell, Mr. Olson, Ms. Kennedy, Ms. Dale, and Mr. Hubbard, (5-0) unanimous.

Mr. Farrell inquired about signage regarding the water ban that is put up at the tennis courts. He was told there is a sign there now and it is new as of last year.

Update from Chairman/Discuss Joint Meeting with HWRSC [Hamilton Wenham Regional School Committee]

Mr. Domelowicz noted BOS concerns regarding the current School Dept. budget request and how it hadn't had an impact on Town assessments. He said he recently learned the State legislature is planning to fund Chapter 70 at level funding to FY'20. He reached out to the School Committee to start a conversation around that.

Ms. Dale proposed the idea that since the Schools had already committed to a budget that is \$1.2M less, perhaps the BOS might support Article 2-2, allowing a budget up to a 5% increase, but then let the State supplement the balance instead of passing Article 2-3. [The second article takes the Schools' budget increase up to 8%.] Mr. Olson asked the question that if both articles were to pass and then the Schools receive the Chapter 70 funds, how much money would go back to the Town. Mr. Domelowicz said about \$600K. Since the original budget in February, he said the Town had already reduced its budget by several hundred thousand dollars to reduce the impact on residents. Whatever the School saves this year will be there for the Schools to use in FY'22. Ms. Dale suggested again, why not support Article 2-2 and allow the State to pick up the balance. Mr. Domelowicz said both articles were already on the ballot and Town Meeting can vote for them both if it chooses. Mr. Olson proposed that the BOS support the two articles provided any State money that comes in will go back to the Town. Ms. Kennedy said it is presumed the average tax bill will increase by about \$800. She said it was a vicious blow to citizens dealing with the pandemic and tough financial times to allow school departments to not decrease their budgets. Ms. Dale said they have a fiduciary responsibility to all the townspeople, not just those with kids in the school system.

Mr. Olson said there are only two things to decide tonight: whether to vote favorably or unfavorably on Articles 2-2 and Articles 2-3 and whether to create a mechanism to ensure where the money will go if there's an influx of additional capital from the State. Mr. Domelowicz said the budget that's adopted should be the budget (without consideration of potential additional funds).

Decision:

Mr. Olson made a motion that the BOS vote favorably on Warrant Article 2-2, which is that the Town and School budget combined has a less than 3% increase. Mr. Farrell seconded the motion.

Ms. Kennedy said she had seen data that other excellent school systems voted level funding or reduced their asks by half. Mr. Farrell said 4.6% of the HWRSD budget is just in contracts (teacher pay, etc.). Almost 5% plus their deficit is what the Schools are obligated to pay in COLAs [cost-of-living adjustments]. Mr. Olson said much of the budget is due to out-of-district placement costs over which the Schools have no control. What gets cut, he said, are services for the kids since the contracts and out-of-district expenses are set and don't get cut.

There was a discussion that the Schools have already cut their spend by \$1.2M due to an expectation of a decrease in State aid by 20%. If they don't let the School Committee change its budget once they get more State aid, it will have a positive impact on the Town's assessment. The Schools have said they're willing to have the conversation. Mr. Hubbard said his concern was that any budget they approve has teachers getting a pay increase and he has a hard time with that since people in the private sector are lucky now just to keep their jobs and not have their salaries cut.

Decision (Amended):

Mr. Olson tabled his motion until the next meeting. Ms. Dale seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken with "ayes" from Mr. Olson, Ms. Dale, Mr. Farrell, Ms. Kennedy, and Mr. Hubbard, (5-0) unanimous.

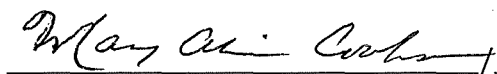
Set Meeting Date for After Town Election:

Mr. Domelowicz said he is leaving Town on June 28 for a family vacation. The next BOS meeting date will be determined.

Adjournment—Vote to Enter Joint Meeting with School Committee

Ms. Dale made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:51 p.m. Ms. Kennedy seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken with "ayes" from Ms. Dale, Ms. Kennedy, Mr. Farrell, Mr. Olson, and Mr. Hubbard, (5-0) unanimous.

Prepared by:

 7-29-2020

Mary Alice Cookson
Minutes Secretary

Date

Attest:

Darcy Dale, *07-29-2020*
Darcy Dale Date
Board of Selectmen Clerk