

HAMILTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

MINUTES OF MEETING

Teleconference

January 4, 2021

Selectmen Present: Chair Shawn Farrell, William Olson, Darcy Dale, Rosemary Kennedy, and Jamie Knudsen

Town Manager: Joe Domelowicz Jr.

Other Staff Present: Michellelee Carroll, Human Resources Director

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

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Shawn Farrell called the Board of Selectmen (BOS) Zoom meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. and took a roll call. Present with Mr. Farrell were: Darcy Dale, Rosemary Kennedy, and William Olson. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Jamie Knudsen joined the meeting, so the full board was present.

Announcement of Board and Committee Openings

- Council on Aging—two openings
- Human Rights Commission—five openings
- Hamilton Historic District Commission—two openings
- Zoning Board of Appeals—one opening
- Community Preservation Committee—one opening
- Conservation Commission—one opening
- Open Space Committee—one opening

Selectmen/Town Manager (TM) Reports

Ms. Dale, Ms. Kennedy, Mr. Knudsen, and Mr. Farrell gave no report.

Mr. Olson said the Hamilton Wenham Regional School District Committee will meet on Wednesday when the yearly calendar starts and discuss the budget.

Town Manager Joe Domelowicz Jr. reported the 2021 Town Street List/Census forms were mailed out in early December, and Town Clerk Carin Kale asks that they be returned as soon as possible. The data is used for grant applications, programming, state aid, and to determine residency and benefits. Cares Act funding was extended by a year to Dec. 31, 2021. There had been concern it would sunset, but it did not. The funding is being used for additional public health nurses to conduct contact tracing and for COVID testing. Two more testing dates (Jan. 6 and 9) at Miles River Middle School were set; info. is available on the Town website. Residents will also find information there for the new Compost Program. Budget season has begun. The Town prepared a Shared Winter Streets and Spaces grant application to provide residents with opportunities for outdoor recreation, targeting winter uses for Patton Park and connecting the park to the downtown shopping area.

Public Comment

None.

CONSENT AGENDA

- Approve Minutes of the Nov. 23, 2020 BOS Meeting
- Accept Donations to the Hamilton Fire Department

Decision:

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

Mr. Farrell asked for more information about the donations. Two letters were included in the packet. Mr. Domelowicz noted one was from Willowdale [the Willowdale Professional Complex and Willowdale Condominium Association]. The donations were for addressing unmet needs of the Fire Dept.

AGENDA

Consider Appointments to Fill Vacancies on the Hamilton COA—NO VOTE

Decision:

Ms. Dale made a motion to table this agenda item. Ms. Kennedy seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken with “ayes” from Ms. Kennedy, Ms. Dale, Mr. Olson, Mr. Knudsen, and Mr. Farrell, (5-0) unanimous.

Consider Water Abatement Application—275 Asbury St.

Decision:

Mr. Olson made a motion to approve the abatement for 275 Asbury St. Condo Association. Ms. Dale seconded the motion.

Further Discussion:

Mr. Olson noted the Condo Association was seeking an abatement for two bills. He was OK with approving one, but wanted the BOS to explore what was done the last time an abatement spanned two bills. Ms. Kennedy agreed they should look into it. However, the Selectmen decided to vote on the abatement before them.

Decision (Continued):

A roll call vote on the abatement was taken with “ayes” from Ms. Kennedy, Ms. Dale, Mr. Olson, Mr. Knudsen, and Mr. Farrell, (5-0) unanimous.

Announce Town Election 2021 Openings

Mr. Domelowicz said the list of openings for Town positions was posted on the Town website. It was also included in the packet. Mr. Farrell read the list and outlined requirements and deadlines for the application process. He said 40 certified signatures are required, so applicants should get more than 40 in case some are not accepted. Mr. Olson suggested they explore ways for people to obtain signatures rather than having to go door-to-door (in light of the pandemic). Ms. Dale suggested people could email in their signatures. Mr. Domelowicz said he would consult with Town Counsel about potential alternatives and get back to them.

Town Hall Building Committee (THBC) Re-Charge Discussion

Mr. Farrell said he spoke with the THBC and other entities involved with the Town Hall renovation. The conclusion reached was that there was a need for better public outreach. He detailed the work of the THBC to date, which had completed its charge of getting the bid documents ready for Special Town Meeting (STM) vote. He said there had been talk of trying to get the School Committee in the Town’s corner, as some parents had incorrectly assumed the Town Hall renovation funding was in competition with funding for school projects.

Mr. Olson said the THBC had done a good job with the construction and design details of the project, but needed to build a public communications campaign, which required a different skillset. Mr. Farrell reiterated what he said at a previous meeting, which is that perhaps the School Committee could make a statement that the timing on School capital needs is not overlapping with or in conflict with the decision on the Town Hall project.

THBC Chair Mike Twomey, who was present online, said the THBC was looking for directive from the BOS. He said there were resources within the THBC for publicizing the project and detailed what had been completed regarding the THBC charge.

Ms. Kennedy, a member of the THBC, commented she felt there needed to be broader communication and said a rudimentary plan for that was being developed. She noted the THBC are experts on the project and the entire process, especially Mr. Twomey who has worked diligently for the past 2 ½ years. She advocated re-charging the THBC, saying it was in the best interest of the project. She added she felt there may also be room to cut expenses a bit more. Ms. Dale agreed. Mr. Farrell said he agreed also and that they could use some nicely-done graphics to show the building's needs along with price breakdowns. He said the building was not a luxury for the Town, it was a need.

Decision:

Ms. Kennedy made a motion that the BOS re-charge the Town Hall Building Committee to continue its work to move the project toward Annual Town Meeting (ATM) in May to the best of its ability, understanding they can alter the date if necessary.

Mr. Farrell modified the motion to include language that the BOS "continue the THBC with the charge to help explain the project and its needs to the Town for further consideration." Ms. Kennedy added: "and perhaps to cut the expenses a bit more," adding the THBC members are ready, willing, and able to continue.

Further Discussion:

Mr. Olson asked if the THBC needed more specific direction or if the motion was sufficient. Mr. Twomey said the THBC also needed a deadline because if it were going to be May 1 (date of ATM), the THBC could hold the bid numbers they presently had; if they aim for STM in the fall, the project will need to be re-bid.

Mr. Olson outlined three parts of the recharge: the construction aspect, which includes listing deficiencies of the building and various options as well as alternatives to the entire project itself; public relations campaign/outreach; and getting School Committee support so people would not perceive School projects and the Town Hall project as being in competition.

Ms. Dale said she predicts there will be an economic "boomlet" in the fall as pent-up demand will be supplied. She said it would be in the Town's best interest to aim for May ATM because if they wait, prices will start to rise as workers become employed.

Mr. Knudsen said if the Town can answer everyone's questions and show there aren't other options and they can communicate that well, as much as he has some hesitation about trying to bring this forward at ATM, it seems to make sense to do that and not wait. He brought up some questions he has heard, such as why a Town Hall was needed and said not everybody is committed to keeping the historic building. He said he didn't think people would appreciate Ms. Dale's economic boom message although he understood she was talking about costs.

Ms. Kennedy reminded everyone that the bids secured by the THBC came in at \$800K under budget.

Mr. Farrell reiterated what had been said about bringing the project back to ATM as opposed to waiting until STM, citing that the conditions of the Town Hall building are subpar. He noted the building is lacking in ADA (Americans with Disability Act) compliance and fire safety measures (sprinkler system). Ms. Dale discussed both issues. She said people with disabilities using wheelchairs and scooters, as well as people with babies in strollers, should be able to access the second floor of Town Hall and have full access to their government. She cited a *Boston Globe* article about the 30th anniversary of the ADA, saying people with disabilities are a social construct. She said it was critical the building's access situation be remedied.

Mr. Farrell explained that if more than a certain percentage of the building's value is spent on renovation, the Town needs to bring the building to code and would have to renovate the whole building anyway. He said if they built a town hall in another location, they would be facing land acquisition costs and would lose all the money already invested in the project. Mr. Twomey added that if the Town decided to go with a new building instead of renovating the existing building, the Town would not have access to the CPA (Community Preservation Act) funds that it currently has. Mr. Farrell said he wanted to make sure the BOS does its due diligence to share the facts about the renovation with the public and answer any questions.

Mr. Domelowicz suggested that if the BOS amends the motion, it make the date flexible so if for some reason the date is missed, they would not have to bring it back for another vote on the THBC recharge.

Decision (Continued):

Ms. Kennedy amended her motion (see "Decision" above) to add: The THBC and any people who also become involved will make best efforts to bring it to the May 1 Town Meeting with the understanding it may need to go longer than that. Ms. Dale seconded the motion.

Further Discussion:

Mr. Olson said if anyone watching had any suggestions or comments, the BOS welcomed hearing from them. Ms. Kennedy suggested some Zoom forums on the subject.

Decision (Continued):

A roll-call vote [on recharging the THBC with the language as detailed above] was taken with "ayes" from Ms. Kennedy, Ms. Dale, Mr. Olson, Mr. Knudsen, and Mr. Farrell, (5-0) unanimous.

Mr. Farrell said he and Ms. Kennedy planned to meet this week and he would follow up with Mr. Twomey afterward. Mr. Twomey said the THBC was prepared to bring in people outside of the group who had expertise in social media. He said the THBC didn't know right up to the bidding if they would come in at \$1M over or under budget, and that the THBC had to condense all the data in just a short period of time prior to Town Meeting. He said the THBC was prepared to move forward and welcomed BOS input.

Organics Ban Policy Rollout Discussion

Mr. Farrell said an announcement went out prematurely and some citizens were upset about the rollout. The new suggested rollout date is May 1, which will provide time to get information out and time for residents who no longer have compost bins to get them. He commented that the program would make people's trash lighter. He said they would just be adding another barrel to put out on trash day. Ms. Kennedy noted the green compost bins were on wheels. [The plan is that unless a resident puts out a green composting bin alongside their trash bin or has an exemption sticker on their trash bin, which indicates they are a backyard composter, the trash hauler will not collect the resident's trash.]

Ms. Kennedy asked if there were room for negotiation between Feb. 1 and May 1 as the suggested rollout deadline. Mr. Domelowicz said it would take six to eight weeks for the composting barrels' [green bins] order. He also wanted to give people time to understand the program and stressed the goal wasn't to make anyone's life more difficult, but to keep the weight of the trash down as that part of the trash stream was the most expensive. He said diverting food waste over to composting means a more cost-efficient method of disposal. [The Brick Ends price is about \$40 per ton compared to the trash cost of about \$90 per ton.] Ms. Kennedy said she hadn't realized it would take so long on the ordering and thought the May 1 date was reasonable. Ms. Dale asked if there might be grant money to cover the cost of the barrels (\$30.10). Mr. Domelowicz said the Town would utilize the money it had, which was about \$8K. Ms. Dale asked if the countertop collector came inside the green barrel or if it was a separate item. Mr. Farrell said the two are separate. If someone wants a countertop collector, they need to pay for it. There would also be a cost if someone wanted a second green bin.

Mr. Domelowicz said Composting Program forms are on the Town website—for ordering a green bin and for requesting an exemption sticker if a resident is a backyard composter. An email address was created for the program and four members of Town staff were charged with answering questions. He said the BOS did not need to vote on the May 1 rollout. The Selectmen expressed they were comfortable with the May 1 date.

Waste Reduction Committee Chair Gretel Clark said she wanted to put her vote in for the Town acquiring a supply of countertop collectors, to make it simple for newcomers to compost. She said it would amount to only a \$3+ change. Mr. Farrell asked Mr. Domelowicz to look into the cost. Bins had already been supplied to residents, but those new to Town would not have received one.

Ms. Clark said *BioCycle*, a national publication, had asked for information on Hamilton's program. Also, it was noted a Rhode Island group was having a Zoom conference and had asked for someone from Hamilton to speak. Ms. Kennedy suggested Ms. Clark. Mr. Farrell said he would forward Ms. Clark the email to see if she were interested. He commented that other communities were going to be interested in following Hamilton's lead.

COVID Testing Rollout Discussion

Mr. Domelowicz said he wanted to make people aware that the Town would be continuing COVID testing using Cares Act funds and provide additional resources to the Health Dept. Tests are being conducted on Wednesdays and Saturdays at the schools and would run at least through Feb. Tests are for people who are symptomatic or who have come in contact with someone who has tested positive. Mr. Domelowicz talked about the fairness of offering the tests for those who actually need them rather than those who just wanted them. Ms. Kennedy asked if someone had tested positive and wanted to be tested again, if the Town would pick up the cost. Mr. Domelowicz said the contact tracers would advise those resident testing positive about what they should do.

Town Manager Evaluation Discussion

Human Resources Director Michellelee Carroll was present online. Mr. Farrell said there had been a request for a more widespread evaluation of the Town Manager (TM). A document had been circulated, but was not in the packet, about sending the TM evaluation form to supervisors and managers who were not department heads (in addition to sending them to department heads). Ms. Carroll had drafted an evaluation form that had been forwarded to the BOS just prior to the meeting. Ms. Carroll said the TM assessment should cover just a certain period of time; the BOS decided on the beginning of Fiscal Year 2020 through the present.

Mr. Olson commented he felt it more important to elicit comments on the form rather than numbers. The form Ms. Carroll had drafted used a 1 through 5 scale. Mr. Farrell suggested a compromise of having the 1 through 5 scale plus space for adding comments. Ms. Carroll suggested utilizing the scanner on the first floor of Town Hall for maintaining confidentiality when sending in the evaluation form and suggested the managers be given a two-week deadline for completing it.

Mr. Knudsen said he had a question for future years. While he thought the new evaluation tool was good, he said the topics were not as intertwined with those covered by the BOS evaluation of the TM and thought they might want to examine that in the future.

Ms. Carroll discussed another evaluation form—an employee engagement survey—she had devised. She had shared a preliminary rough draft with Mr. Farrell, who said he would forward it to the BOS. Ms. Carroll said her thought was to ask all Town employees what they could do for the Town to make things better rather than just commenting about their jobs or on what the Town could do for them. Mr. Farrell liked the idea and thought it would promote a sense of community among the staff. Ms. Dale said it would give employees ownership in the process and help them feel they were being heard, and would give them incentive to do some thinking on the subject. Ms. Carroll said the employee engagement process would be an open dialogue and not anonymous.

Mr. Knudsen asked who would see the survey and how it would be used. Ms. Carroll said it could be shared across the board in a presentation. She said that within the survey, employees could give ideas that would then be responded to. She said summertime

employees could also be invited to fill one out and share their ideas. Ms. Dale asked if the engagement survey would be mandatory. Ms. Carroll said it would be strongly encouraged.

Mr. Farrell recapped that the BOS had agreed to the Town Manager evaluation form it was already working on and now needed a vote on giving the separate evaluation form not only to department heads, but also to supervisors and managers with Michellelee Carroll facilitating the process.

Decision 1:

Mr. Olson made the motion (regarding underlined above). Ms. Dale seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken with “ayes” from Ms. Kennedy, Ms. Dale, Mr. Olson, Mr. Knudsen, and Mr. Farrell, (5-0) unanimous.

Decision 2:

Ms. Dale made a motion to have Ms. Carroll continue her work [on the employee engagement survey] document. Ms. Kennedy seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken with “ayes” from Ms. Kennedy, Ms. Dale, Mr. Olson, Mr. Knudsen, and Mr. Farrell, (5-0) unanimous.

Winter Shared Streets Grants Discussion

Mr. Domelowicz displayed the document onscreen. Mr. Farrell asked if it was the updated version from this afternoon. Mr. Domelowicz said he did not think so. He said the only thing that had changed from the memo prepared by Assistant to the Town Manager/CPC Coordinator Pat Shannon was the project cost, which is now just a little under \$100K for the grant. The purpose of the grant program, available through MassDot, was to tie the downtown area to Patton Park and propose built-in fire pits in the Park (promoting outdoor recreation in the wintertime in a safe manner). Mr. Domelowicz said they were also proposing to add a walking/pedestrian lane down Willow Street and to install some electricity outlets to allow for lighting during downtown festivals and such. He shared some of the images from Brian Stein, Hamilton Development Corporation and Planning Board member.

Ms. Dale asked for more details on the fire pits. Mr. Domelowicz said they were thinking about having two of them that were of a large size to accommodate one or two families and perhaps charging a small user fee. Ms. Kennedy said she appreciated the grant would take care of the infrastructure, but asked about the cost, such as cleanup, porta toilets, etc. It was noted the park restrooms aren't typically open in the winter. Mr. Domelowicz said he didn't anticipate any added burden being placed on taxpayers. He said they needed to ensure the fire pits were of good quality so would hold up over the years. He said in the case of a festival, the fire pits might be used in a different way, such as having them be sponsored for public enjoyment. Ms. Dale asked about extending the fire pits for the summer season also. Mr. Domelowicz said if the Fire Dept. said that was OK, then yes.

Ms. Kennedy asked if they were talking about permanently lighting up the downtown or just for festivals. Mr. Domelowicz and Mr. Farrell said it would only be for special events or perhaps seasonal, such as during holidays.

Ms. Knudsen asked if there had been any consideration of a dog park in Town. Mr. Farrell and Ms. Kennedy commented that some Wenham residents had brought up the idea, but it didn't gain traction. A discussion followed regarding area dog parks and the need for dog owners to keep dogs on leash at Schooling Field for safety reasons due to horses there.

Consideration of Topics for Discussion at Future BOS Meetings

- Ms. Carroll's engagement survey, further draft.
- Town Manager evaluation.
- Town Manager contract renewal.
- Joint meeting with Wenham BOS, which is tomorrow evening at 7 p.m.
- Mr. Farrell suggested a social media blast with a pie chart to show how tax dollars are being spent. Ms. Kennedy said she received an email response from Finance Director Marisa Batista that said the majority of the tax increase was for the school budget increase. Ms. Dale noted it was 8.4%. She said the Town budget was a reflection of its values.

Mr. Knudsen noted he had not received an invitation to the joint Zoom meeting with Wenham being held tomorrow. Others had also not received it, but an agenda is posted on the website.

Adjournment

Ms. Dale made a motion to adjourn the BOS meeting at approximately 8:30 p.m. Ms. Kennedy seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken with "ayes" from Ms. Kennedy, Mr. Olson, Ms. Dale, Mr. Knudsen, and Mr. Farrell, (5-0) unanimous.

Cemetery Deeds

#1155 and #1159 were on the agenda for BOS signatures.

Prepared by:

Mary Alice Cookson 2/19/2021

Mary Alice Cookson
Minutes Secretary

Date

Attest:

John E. Knudsen 2/20/2021

Jamie Knudsen
Board of Selectmen Clerk

Date

Documents Discussed at Meeting:

- Minutes of BOS, Nov. 23, 2020, Minutes Secretary Mary Alice Cookson
- Copies of letters and checks to the Fire Dept. in the amounts of \$250 and \$50
- Two applications for appointments to the COA
- Water abatement application for 275 Asbury St.
- 2021 Election Open Positions and 2021 Election Dates, Town Clerk Carin Kale
- Overview for the MassDOT Winter Shared Streets Grant
- Images from Brian Stein regarding Winter Shared Streets grant proposal
- Memo regarding Hamilton Historic District Commission vacancies with criteria for members
- Town Manager evaluation form for Department Heads, Managers and Supervisors, HR Director Michellelee Carroll