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Town Clerk-Dighton, MA
OCT 23 2023

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By: Ro

The following Meeting was video and audio recorded for Airing on Channel 9

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Goals Meeting
Friday, August 25, 2023 10:00 a.m.
Hybrid Meeting
Old Town Hall, 1111 Somerset Avenue, Dighton, MA

Meeting was called to order at 10:00 am by Chairman Caron.

Roll call:

- Chairman Caron, present.
- Selectman Mello, present.
- Selectman Hull, present.

Selectman Hull stated that the meeting was a hybrid meeting and was being recorded.

Present: Chairman Caron, Selectman Hull, Selectman Mello, Town Administrator Michael Mullen, Executive Assistant Karin Brady, Town Accountant Sirena Amaral, Highway Superintendent Tom Ferry, Fire Chief Chirstopher Maguy, Acting Police Chief George Nichols and Detective Ryan Richards.

Michael Mullen went over the events of the past year and mentioned that the permit processes will continue to be streamlined with the addition of peer review engineers. He said this is an opportunity for everyone here to outline some of the goals that you see for the town going forward and discuss how we can get there.

Peter Caron said the Board of Health has made great strides in the past year. He said they have also indicated that they will go back to having monthly meetings.

Chairman Caron spoke about the permitting process and Permit Link. He said the Town Treasurer Paul Reynolds is on board with this as well. Chairman Caron said this will allow everyone to easily see what the permit process status is for each permit.

Chairman Caron also spoke about the new engineer for peer review that was brought on board. He also stated that he would like to see other things, with regard to purchasing, streamlined as well. He mentioned the planned signage on the Town Hall campus and he mentioned the breakroom and small office at Town Hall.

Town Administrator Michael Mullen said plans were being finalized with Paul Pacheco for the Town Hall campus signage. He said that because of the energy costs at the end of last year, we had to re-prioritized the signage and the completion of the breakroom to this year.

Chairman Caron we are spending a lot of money on water at town hall. He would like to see Town Hall switch to the same water system as Old Town Hall.

Chairman Caron asked about the lockdown at Whitney Academy that occurred last week. The Police Chief outlined the events that transpired that evening and all of the moving parts that were involved in resolving the incident.

Selectman Hull added that there is protocol that should be followed in group homes. He said the home should be held accountable and this was not something that should be taken lightly.

There was discussion on how to improve the processes between the police department and the group homes in town.

Selectman Hull asked if someone could reach out the state and let them know of our concerns.

Chairman Caron asked if the selectmen could have a page in the Strawberry Vine newsletter put out by the Council on Aging. He said he thought it would be a good idea to have some input from all departments.

Selectman Hull said that there have been a couple of bad accidents on Elm Street and he was wondering if improvement of signage could be considered.

Highway Superintendent Tom Ferry said that we do have local control. He suggested inexpensive fixes for warning of the intersection and he thought that low-cost improvements may be the best option. Mr. Ferry also mentioned the downside to a 4 way stop sign and flashing signage.

Selectman Hull mentioned that a resident has placed some boulders in front of their house at the corner of Main and Elm Street. He wondered what the liability is for the town with regard to that.

Mr. Ferry said there is a lot of boulders that have been placed on properties around town. He asked Mr. Mullen to check with town counsel regarding the liability for the town.

There was discussion about various intersections, speed issues and overgrown trees.

Selectman Hull asked about installing a third stop sign at Regional Road near the high school.

Selectman Hull mentioned the corner of Hart and Pleasant and asked if the owner was responsible for the trees.

Mr. Ferry said the home owner removed the biggest offender last year.

Selectman Hull mentioned the corner of Chace Avenue and the collecting of water.

Mr. Ferry said he would take a look at that.

There was discussion of ongoing construction operations.

Police Chief Nichols mentioned Main Street and the procedure for police details and opening of the road for roadwork.

Selectman Mello said Mr. Robert Woods mentioned a newsletter for the Board of Selectmen as well as improving the onboarding process for boards and committee members.

Selectman Mello felt that a message should have been posted to the public, regarding the broken trash bags recently.

Selectman Mello said she would like to see better communication with the individuals associated with running the James Briggs Garden.

Selectman Mello also mentioned heating and air and if someone is monitoring it daily.

There was discussion about the garden and how to handle the condition of it. Selectman Mello said she would handle it with the volunteer in charge.

Financial

Mr. Mullen said we have been focusing on FY25 recently. He said we are in a good place with regard to financial forecasting.

Mr. Mullen and Sirena Amaral made a presentation regarding the financial forecasting spreadsheet.

Selectman Hull mentioned the possibility of an impact bylaw. Mr. Mullen said if we have an impact bylaw, it would have to pass muster of the Attorney General's office. He argued that what we are doing with our peer review process, would give us the ability to quantify the impacts and put these costs back on the developer.

There was discussion of rates and sharing information that would allow the Sewer enterprise to make informed decisions.

Selectman Hull asked how much input the Board of Selectmen has in the process of determining rates. He asked if the town will put themselves in the same situation as with the Water Department.

Mr. Mullen said we have to get in front of this now. He said we don't have the volume of users and therefore there is no room to proportionately spread it out.

Special Town Meeting

Mr. Mullen said there is a proposed article on the Special Town Meeting for a cruiser.

Mr. Mullen said that the warrant will be light. He said we may have the need for unpaid bills. Mr. Mullen said we have an obligation to find OPEB and we typically fund \$35,000.00 in the operating budget and \$90,000.00 through free cash. He said funding of the fire truck and street sweeper has historically been funded at the Annual Town Meeting but is dangerously close to the due date. We are proposing to fund them at the Special Town Meeting to give us some room for comfort in that area. Mr. Mullen said we have developed a priority to fund the Snow and Ice deficits from free cash rather than the levy. He said last year it was \$226,000.00 and this year it was only \$45,000.00. Mr. Mullen said based on the total cost of the Main Street roadway project, if we are not putting money away for that, it has the potential to become an issue.

Mr. Mullen said there is a draft for a budget bylaw for cannabis host community funds, opioid settlement funds, and a 2/3 bylaw.

Chairman Caron asked about the 2/3 bylaw and if it should be considered.

Mr. Mullen said our general operating bylaws are weak. He thought there needed to be a lot of work done to review and update bylaws and bring them into 2023. He thought the 2/3 vote would make this more challenging, but that is a policy decision for the board.

Chairman Caron thought it should be changed.

Selectman Hull thought it should be changed as well.

Highway Superintendent Ferry asked about the bylaw revisions. Mr. Mullen said we will try to attack them one by one.

Police Cruisers

Acting Police Chief George Nichols asked to meet with Mike Mullen and Town Accountant Sirena Amaral regarding cruisers and a warrant article. He said maintaining the fleet is more important than falling behind and he thought that one car per year was the best scenario.

Detective Ryan Richards said the police cruisers do not have every-day drivers. He said we have different people driving them every day. Detective Richards said they travel at high rates of speed and come to complete stops and then idle. He said this is wear and tear on the mileage, motors, suspension, etc.

Detective Ryan Richards said now that we have a detail account, after so many years that account will supplement the effort to replace cars. He went over the spreadsheet detailing the fleet of police vehicles and condition of each. He said that the police department would be looking for \$75,000.00 to fund a new cruiser.

There was discussion about details and condition of cruisers.

Selectman Hull said he needed a better short-term picture of finances before he could support a police cruiser.

Mr. Mullen gave a brief overview of free cash and capital expenses. He said last year we had a hold-back of \$450,000.00. He said this year we have about the same amount. He said we are only trying to fund things that we have a dire obligation to fund.

FY25 Budget Planning

Mr. Mullen gave an overview of the FY25 budget planning process, how the budget is made up and what cuts would be necessary.

Selectman Hull said that the town has some control over the K-8 budget and he thought it may be possible to exert some authority over that. He said we need to take a look at needs and wants.

Chairman Caron thought there may be some excess that we could look at with the school officials, as well as the parents.

Mr. Mullen said he thought it would be helpful to reach out to Bill Runey early in the process and let everyone know what we are up against. He thought there was an obligation to show this to everyone.

Financial Management Review

Mr. Mullen said this was one of the things that they pointed out was an undefined budget process.

Mr. Mullen said Abigail Eckerson, worked with Sirena Amaral and I to draft an initial draft budget bylaw.

There was discussion of the transfer station and how to defray costs. Tom Ferry said education is a big part of it and if the public is educated, there is no need for the transfer station.

There was discussion about the book and textiles recycling and how that was going.

Also, they discussed providing the board with monthly year-to-date spending trends

Personnel Policy Update

Executive Assistant Karin Brady gave an update on the Personnel Policy Manual that was currently being written.

ARPA Update

Mr. Mullen gave an update on the ongoing ARPA application. He said we have a need to update all of the SCBA equipment in the Fire Department. Mr. Mullen said we have applied for a grant and the remaining \$300,000.00 of ARPA he would like to hold back on that, in case we need it for the Fire Department apparatus.

There was discussion.

Town Solar Initiative

Mr. Mullen said this is extremely relevant and he thought we had an opportunity to begin with an installation at the landfill on Tremont Street. He said the Board of Health would be a very important part of this initiative. Mr. Mullen said there is a collaborative group for the purchasing and cuts out the procurement part of it, which is very important. He also said we will have to make sure that the area has the ability to accept this sort of installation.

Tom Ferry suggested involving the Land Use Committee.

Review of Ongoing Projects

Library Building Project

Mr. Mullen said there was a bid opening yesterday to select an architect and project manager for the Library Building Project. He said we also have plans for the ramp that students from Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical High School would be able to get involved in. He said we have engaged PRS Electric to do some lighting and Building Commissioner Aguiar is working with Pat Gales regarding the columns out front.

Main Street

Mr. Mullen said we have project a cost of between 2.1 and 2.5 million for that project. He said he was working on an ARPA application for this and there was some Chapter 90 money set aside for it as well.

Mr. Mullen said he did not want to not be funding the project as we go. He said if we contribute to the cost as we go, we can phase the project in without breaking the bank.

Fire Station Feasibility Study

Fire Chief Magy said there was a walk-through yesterday and seven bidders attended.

Chairman Caron said at the next selectmen’s meeting, the board would be interviewing two new members for the Fire Station Feasibility Study Committee.

Mr. Mullen said there is always an opportunity to hire an OPM (Owner’s Project Manager) to guide the town through this type of study. He said Building Commissioner Aguiar is willing to serve as the OPM, and he is a member of the committee as well.

Selectman Hull said he saw the value of Mr. Aguiar’s services, but thought that the study committee should be given the opportunity to weigh in, out of respect.

Mr. Mullen said he thought that that was always the understanding, but that could be verified.

Tom Ferry

Road safety/Signage

There was discussion of road opening permits and process for road opening approvals.

Adjournment

Selectman Hull motioned, Selectman Mello seconded and it was VOTE to adjourn the meeting at 12:56 p.m.

Roll Call Vote:

Chairman Caron, aye.

Selectman Mello, aye.

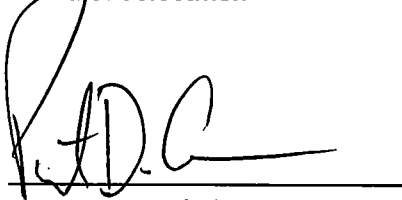
Selectman Hull, aye.

Respectfully submitted,

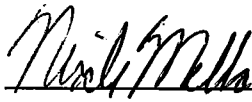
Karin L. Brady

Executive Assistant

Board of Selectmen



Peter Caron, Chairman



Nicole Mello, Clerk



Leonard Hull, Member

Documents Reviewed

Financial Dashboard PDF

List of Proposed Special Town Meeting Articles and Funding Source

Police Department Cruisers and Condition Spreadsheet

Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Planning Memorandum

Bristol-Plymouth Debt Service Breakdown by Year

Draft Budget Bylaw

Financial Management Review Document

Month to Date Expenditure Reports

Library Building Project Budget

June 2023 Annual Town Meeting-Article 20

Main Street Roadway Improvement Budget Breakdown

Debt Service Breakdown