

TOWN OF IPSWICH | MASSACHUSETTS
SELECT BOARD MEETING
SELECT BOARD as Water and Sewer Commissioners and Electric Light Commissioners
Monday, February 6, 2023 6:30 PM
Meeting Room A – Town Hall, 25 Green Street

Pursuant to Open Meeting Law M.G.L. Chapter 30A, §§ 18-25, written notice posted by the Town Clerk and delivered to all Board members, a meeting of the Select Board was held on Monday, February 6, 2023, at 6:30 PM in Meeting Room A.

Board Members present: William Whitmore, Chair; Sarah Player, Vice Chair; Linda Alexson; Kerry Mackin

Also present: Stephen Crane, Town Manager; Mary Gallivan, Assistant Town Manager/HR Director; Sarah Johnson, part-time Finance Director

Motion for Executive Session (M.G.L. c. 30A, sec. 21(a))

Kerry Mackin moved to convene in executive session pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws chapter 30A section 21(a) for the following purposes:

To consider the purchase, exchange, taking, lease, or value of real property if such discussion may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the governmental body relating to battery citing.

Linda Alexson seconded. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote. The Board will return to Open Session at 7:00 PM.

The Board returned to Open Session and Mr. Whitmore called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

Welcome and Announcements

Ms. Alexson announced the Shellfish Subcommittee will be meeting tomorrow night Tuesday, the 7th at 7:00 PM in the Town Resource room downstairs, and the Veterans District Board of Directors will be meeting on February 15th in the Veterans office.

Ms. Player announced that the Electric Light Subcommittee will be meeting on Wednesday 8th in the Utilities Conference room and Affordable Housing Trust and Ipswich Housing Partnership will be meeting on Thursday the 9th at 7:00 AM.

Mr. Whitmore asked if bills were mailed out by the Town, Ms. Alexson stated that excise tax bills were mailed out. Mr. Whitmore reminded citizens to check their mail for excise notices.

Citizen Queries

None.

Boards and Committees

Mr. Whitmore called forward Ms. Erica Duda, 240 High Street, a new appointment for Zoning Board of Appeals. Ms. Duda spoke to her recent abutter encounter and her interest in contributing to the town after seeing the vacancy online. No questions.

Mr. Whitmore asks for a motion to appoint Ms. Duda.

Vote: Ms. Alexson moved to appoint Ms. Duda as an associate member to the Zoning Board of Appeals, one-year term, seconded by Ms. Player. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Safety Building Committee Update

Mr. Whitmore called forward Robert Weatherall, Chair of the Public Safety Facility Committee, and Tammy Jones, Select Board representative to the Public Safety Facility Committee, who presented an update on the progress of the Public Safety Facility Committee, aka the Public Safety Building Committee. Chief Nikas was also in attendance.

Mr. Weatherall spoke to the challenges regarding the cost and size of the building and plans due to inflation considerations. The committee has had to make difficult cuts that affect how the public safety personnel will carry out their jobs. Mr. Weatherall feels town committees such as Select Board and Finance should be aware of the decisions, the cuts that have been made, and the plans. Mr. Weatherall believes that the old/current Fire Station on Central Street may need to be retained by the town for additional public safety offices, due to the cuts in the new building. Ms. Jones reiterated the building needs to reflect the town expectations of the building and is seeking the guidance of the Select Board as representatives of the town. Ms. Jones spoke to the cost and layout of the proposed dispatch center. The dispatch center is \$1 million cost in the new building, and reminded the board of the option to use regional resources in other communities or join another regional dispatch in order to save money. Ms. Jones mentioned both Hamilton and Rowley were built as regional systems which we could join. Chief Nikas spoke to the dispatch room and said eliminating it would be pennies on the dollar and the town could offer regional resources to other communities. Mr. Whitmore asks the Chief if he has reached out to other communities about joining us, the Chief says he has and someone is interested in joining, however nothing is formal. Mr. Whitmore asks if shared dispatch has to be in one location, Chief Nikas says it does.

Mr. Crane highlights that the most recent plans/designs from the architect are in the meeting packet. The full committee did endorse the plans in order to move the building into the next planning phases of where IT and other internal structures would be placed. Mr. Crane says it is an efficient and well thought out layout. Ms. Alexson asks if there are public restrooms, Ms. Jones states there are and it's important to remember this is a public and accessible building with

welcoming public access. Ms. Jones invites the public to the next meeting Monday night at 7:00 PM in Room A to see the plans and give community feedback.

PUBLIC HEARING: Water and Wastewater Rates (1 of 2)

Mr. Whitmore read the legal notice.

Vote: Ms. Alexson moved to open the public hearing, Ms. Player seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Vicki Halmen, Director of Water and Wastewater, presents the rates for Water and Wastewater. Vicki starts with the Water Department, reports the town pumped the lowest in 33 years with the lowest residential consumption ever, also the lowest number of water main breaks in the past 10 years. Budget increases due to contractual increases, OPEB, and materials/equipment. Water Capital Asset Replacement Plan includes Dow Dam discharge inlet; water treatment plant replacement, groundwater well replacement, new well construction and water main replacements. Ms. Alexson asks about funding sources and any grants, Vicki states any available funding they do apply for and anticipate applying for some grant funding. Consistent rate increases are projected to fund necessary capital improvements plans. Surplus balance allows for long term project planning and funding. Rates are tied to revenue, if people stop watering, rates can increase to meet necessary revenue projections, reduction in customer water use increased cost per unit of water. Vicki projects an 8% increase effective 5/1/23 from \$13.67 to \$14.71. Ms. Alexson asks what the most expensive unit cost will be down the road, Vicki projects by FY33 the town would be at \$25 per unit. Vicki shows Ipswich in comparison to surrounding communities water rate comparison, Ms. Alexson asks if those communities all have municipal water, Vicki is uncertain that they all do.

Vicki presents the Wastewater budget summary. Overall a 2.9% increase, with increases to salaries & expenses. Ms. Alexson speaks to grant funding received and whether it reduces this budget. Vicki states some grant funding was received; however, it will not offset this budget year but perhaps will adjust next year's budget. Continual infrastructure improvements are needed: for FY24-FY28\ \$12.2 million Capital asset replacements planned – Town Wharf pump station move and replacement; wastewater treatment plant updates; and collection system rehabilitation. All available grants have been applied for. As with water, rate increases projected to fund capital improvements. Similar to water, as usage decreases rates increase, sewer is based on the water usage. Vicki proposes an 8% current rate of \$11.96 increasing to \$12.92.

Mr. Whitmore states further rate discussion will be continued at the next rate hearing.

FY24 Budget Review Water & Wastewater

Vicki presents the Water and Wastewater budgets. Water department is an enterprise fund, fully funded by rate payers. Increases are due to contractual increases, OPEB, and materials, equipment, chemical and service costs.

Wastewater also likewise enterprise fund, fully funded by rate payers. Heavily regulated by EPA/DEP. Increases due to new short-term debt service and capital projects (wharf pump station, collection system, aeration projects). Ms. Alexson questions why septic users aren't experiencing a rate increase as sewer customer. Vicki states it's a delicate balance and we could lose projected revenue if we charge too much to septic users, they will go someplace else. Mr. Whitmore agrees and states those on septic pay for their refuse to be hauled away, sewer customers pay for sewer.

Amended Capital Plan Presentation

Mr. Blake, superintendent, and Mr. Rais, Facilities Director, presented the school portion of the Capital Plan. Mr. Crane introduced the Capital Plan, states it was mostly complete a couple weeks ago, however the school added some large-scale items late, in particular the school roofing projects. Mr. Crane states Capital is largely funded with free cash, typically expended amounts are \$1.5 - \$2 million. Mr. Crane suggested bundling the school roofing request as a debt exclusion vote outside of Capital. Mr. Crane speaks to Town needs on the Capital plan, including Assessing software, chiller replacement, window replacements, most of which come out of the Facilities assessment conducted in 2015, and engineering/roadway projects.

Mr. Blake clarifies on the proposed high school roofing projects there are two options shown in the Capital plan, either asphalt roof at a cost of \$420,000 or metal roof at a cost of \$1.89 million. Mr. Rais suggest installing a metal roof due to the longer lasting material and the option to add solar. Ms. Alexson clarifies that the school is therefore not asking for both, Mr. Blake confirms they're not, it's either or. Mr. Blake states they believe they could do solar on either of the roofing options, asphalt or metal, Mr. Rais confirms.

Ms. Alexson questions the Doyon and Winthrop school roofing costs and timing if we are replacing the schools. Mr. Blake states they are roof overlays, not a replacement, that will last 5-7 years, states they are submitting the SOI's for the new school but it'd be 5-6 years until the new school would be built, it's not money wasted. Ms. Alexson furthers if the SOI is submitted soon, in a years' time we should know if its approved, and asks if these roofs can be delayed a year. Mr. Rais states the roofs will not be insured by MIIA, we would only receive actual cash value of the roofs. Ms. Player asks for clarification on the roofing columns listed for Doyon, as there are several, Mr. Rais states they are place holders from the previous Capital plan. If this project was completed in this upcoming fiscal year, those columns would be removed. Mr. Whitmore asks why Winthrop is half the cost of Doyon, Mr. Blake states because of the footprint

of the building and size. Board speaks to leaks in the building, confirmed by Mr. Rais. Mr. Whitmore requests more information on the solar considering the \$1.89 million-dollar cost, and the benefits/offset of solar on that cost, and any cost recovery, the insurance implications, and the short-term warranty of the overlays. Ms. Alexson and Ms. Player question future roofing costs show in the capital plan. Mr. Rais states some of those expenses could be removed with the replacements this coming fiscal year.

Mr. Crane speaks to the paving at the high school and the police cruiser increase. DPW is looking into paving costs and bids and the cruiser increase is due to demand and inflation. Ms. Alexson asks about the Building department vehicle request. Mr. Crane and Mr. Rais state it needs to be hybrid or electric due to green communities.

Citizen inquiry: Carl Nylan, 34 Brownville Ave., asks about the school projects and asks if the solar companies could include the costs of a roof replacement project in the solar bid rather than spending that money first. Also, are any of the school projects MSBA accelerated repair funds? Mr. Rais says he has looked into the option of having a solar company pay for the roofing, however, we'd have to use their propriety equipment and would lose control. Mr. Rais says MSBA is shut down for 2023 and the high school is not eligible because it's not old enough. Carl further questions the MSBA program and believes the program is based on the building condition and wonders if this would this disqualify the district if they get marginally better? Mr. Blake doesn't think it will penalize the district, Mr. Crane says we would get point reductions if we didn't maintain the building.

Citizen inquiry: Maria Wilkens 315 Linebrook Road, asks about municipal government 0 carbon plan and resolutions and whether the proposed capital plans have been evaluated in light of this plan?

Citizen Inquiry: Carolyn Britt, 1 Shagbark Woods, further questions the fossil fuel powered equipment on the capital plan and what has been evaluated according to the resolution? There are numerous electric options available and have all been evaluated. Mr. Crane states not these particular ones. He has Googled it many times. They are not commercially available or within the price point the Town is looking to spend. He believes in the future they may be an option; however, they'd require further fleet expansion to account for ones that would be charging. Carolyn questions the chiller and fuels storage tank replacements, and asks for an actual analysis to be done, not just saying it isn't possible but an actual cost analysis of the available options.

Ms. Alexson questions the TIP project on Central Street, wants it clarified that the project hasn't been approved and the Town hasn't decided if they want to move forward with the redesign. Mr. Crane states the town needs to get on the TIP for funding.

Mr. Whitmore looking for a vote to approve the Capital Plan, clarifies that the Capital for the schools will be in a separate article, Mr. Crane concurs, only general fund being approved. Mr. Rais clarified that the green communities needs to be included in the Capital cost as it hasn't been applied for yet. Mr. Crane says the debt exclusion roofing projects would be a warrant article at Town Meeting.

Vote: Ms. Player makes a motion to support the general funding of the Capital Plan of \$1.78 million dollars funded by free cash. Ms. Alexson clarifies it is not all funded by free cash. Ms. Player amends her motion to endorse the Capital Plan of \$1.78 million dollars. Ms. Mackin seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

Change of Officers/Directors Applications

Mr. Whitmore asks if anyone is present from the Trustees, Ms. Player notes the packet says no one will be present. Mr. Whitmore reads the change of officer/director's announcements for the Trustees, there was a change in officer/directors so this is to update. Asks for a motion to approve the changes.

Vote: Ms. Alexson moves to approve, Ms. Mackin seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

Select Board and Town manager Goal Setting Planning

Mr. Crane speaks to the goal setting and asks when the last one was. Mr. Whitmore states it was when the previous town manger first started and it was a basic chart of goals. Mr. Crane states goal setting is important and beneficial especially during transition, as the acting in Wayland it was very effective and he's happy to help facilitate. He suggests doing it in a different room, still a public meeting, but a different space/time can be helpful. Ms. Player asks timing, Mr. Whitmore says not in February. Mr. Crane suggests after Town Meeting/election in May, Mr. Whitmore doesn't want to wait that long and suggests starting in March.

Consent Agenda

Mr. Whitmore reads the following consent agenda liquor license applications:

- a. One Day All Alcohol Liquor License Application(s) – i. Eleanor Harbeck for Appleton Farms for Celebrating Maple Tapping Season on February 18, 19, 25, 26 and March 4, 5, 11, 12, 18, 19, 25, 26, 2023.
- b. One Day Wine and Malt Liquor License Applications(s) – i. Nicholas Caso for Notch Brewing for Appleton Farms Biergarten, 129 Country Street on June 17 & 18, July 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, August 6, 8, 13, 20, 27, September 16, 17, and October 14, 15, 2023. c. 2023 Renewal License Application(s) –
 - i. Common Victualler from Sandpiper Bakery, 29 A North Main St.
 - ii. Common Victualler, Weekday Entertainment, Sunday Entertainment from New England Country Club Management for Ipswich Country Club at 148 Country Club Way and Ipswich Country Club Swim & Tennis at 67 Edge St.

Vote: Ms. Alexson moves to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Ms. Player. Motion passes unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Whitmore asks for motion to approve the January 17th bi-board minutes.

Vote: Ms. Alexson so moves to approve, seconded by Ms. Player. Motion passes unanimously.

Town Manager Report

Mr. Crane gave an update on a variety of topics including: donated office supplies from EBSCO given to the town; update on the interview process for a new Director of Planning and Development; resignation of the Climate Resilience Manager Mary DeLai; plans and discussion surrounding a new regional animal control with surrounding communities; upcoming Recreation events; BRIC Water department funding received; and the various boards, committees, and events he has attended.

Select Board Sub Committee Update

Ms. Player announced the Section 3A Task Force is meeting Monday night at 5:00 PM, Assistant Planner Andrea Bates has created a webpage and timeline available to the public as a form of update. They are also creating a listening component and public meeting in March to inform the public. Mr. Crane states it's important to note this is just getting started and information available has been and will continue to be provided. Ms. Player states they re working to put the information received into accessible and understandable format for public consumption.

Ms. Alexson stated the Property Reuse Working Group met January 31st and is finalizing details on using a section of Bialek for public gardens. The group will meet again in February and then will probably be on hold until the public safety building use is resolved.

New Business

NONE

Old Business

NONE

Miscellaneous and Correspondence

Ms. Alexson speaks to an email the Board received from Neil Shea regarding the Ipswich Dam update. She seeks to stress that this should be a Town Meeting decision and would like a warrant article to be considered. Mr. Crane states the Board can decide as it is Town owned. Mr. Crane believes that Town Meeting endorsing the Board's previous vote to move forward

with the permitting process could be impactful. Ms. Alexson clarified that the Board didn't vote to remove the dam, that is a public misconception, they approved the process to get more information and enter the permitting process. Mr. Crane believes it would be helpful to have Town support. Mr. Whitmore suggested follow up with Neil and continue the discussion at Town Meeting, asks for it to be scheduled or a March Select Board meeting to discuss the warrant language. Mr. Crane says it is set up as a citizen petition but the Board can craft it. Board agrees its helpful to have Town feedback at the beginning of the process.

Adjourn

Ms. Alexson makes a motion to adjourn, Ms. Mackin seconds. Motion passes unanimously.