

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING  
MINUTES SEPTEMBER 26, 2016  
APPROVED**

**BOS Members Present:** John G. Petropoulos, Chair; Joshua A. Degen, Vice Chair; Barry Pease, Clerk; Anna Eliot, Member

**Absent:** Peter S. Cunningham

**Also Present:** Mark W. Haddad, Town Manager; Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant

Mr. Petropoulos called the meeting to order at 7:00pm and reviewed the agenda.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Ms. Eliot said that Groton Community Dinner would be held on Friday night at First Parish Church.

Ms. Eliot said that there would be a forum on ballot question #2 on Wednesday, October 5<sup>th</sup> at the Senior Center.

Mr. Pease said that Gibbet Hill Grill had been approved to expand by 40 more seats.

Mr. Pease said that Indian Hill Music would be giving a presentation on Thursday at Groton Country Club.

**TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

1. Mr. Haddad said that the final draft of 2016 Fall Town Meeting Warrant was going to the printer the next morning. Mr. Mihran Keoseian thanked the Board for allowing the Committee to meet last week adding he thought it was a thoughtful and productive meeting. He said that the Committee voted to pull the \$300K article as written. He said that they took the advisement of a lot of people and as a result of the Prescott School discussion, they submitted a modified motion to ask the Board to allocate a sum of money (cost unknown) to have Prescott looked at as it related to a senior center. He said that they were looking to obtain hard data on road access, costs to renovate the school, explore the viability of an emergency center at Prescott, and ADA adaptability. He said that the Committee also discussed asking the Board to consider holding a special town meeting in January to consider their findings and design costs. Mr. Haddad said that the current article, the way it was written, did not allow the Board to do what the Committee was requesting. Mr. Haddad suggested the Board pull the article as written and do a line item transfer under article 2 for money needed to further investigate Prescott School as suggested. Mr. Haddad said that he also had placed a call into the architect to see what the cost would be to look at Prescott School further. Mr. Pease asked if this would require another RFP. Mr. Haddad said that they would just amend the current contract. Mr. Keoseian said that they would also like to make a presentation at Town Meeting and that they had also formed a subcommittee to hold informational meetings.

Mr. Degen said that he applauded the Committee for doing its due diligence. He asked if evaluating the 3 sites was in their initial scope and if so why more money was needed. Mr. Keoseian said that he didn't think this would have come up if the argument wasn't made by the Friends of Prescott at the last meeting. He said that there seemed to be a push by others when the Committee decided not to pursue the Prescott as the location for the Senior Center. He said that people wanted to see more data on Prescott which was beyond the scope of the original RFP. Mr. Degen said that the former Prescott Committee received money to look at the building and he wanted to make sure there was no redundancy.

*Mr. Degen moved to open the public hearing for the adoption of the layout of Crystal Spring Lane as a town way. Mr. Pease seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

*Mr. Degen moved to continue the public hearing to the end of this discussion. Mr. Pease seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Ms. Eliot said that the Bargmann report had some of the information they required. She said that a lot of information was compiled adding that exploration of a second access was not something that had been done. She said she was not sure she wanted to spend money knowing it was going to cost a lot of money to do it. She said that she took away from the discussions that people had not digested what the report said

adding that she would like to get that out there and get the discussions going. She said that she was open to moving this along further. Mr. Degen said he agreed that the report should be completed and put out there. He said that he needed to see what the costs were and if the reports done achieved what they were looking for. He asked what the cost was to hold a Special Town Meeting. Mr. Haddad said that it would cost about \$5K. Mr. Degen asked what the rationale was for a special town meeting. Mr. Keoseian said that it promoted eligibility adding they would like to be in front of the spring town meeting. He said that some donors had also expressed interest but needed concrete information. Mr. Haddad said that it would also keep you them track with having bids in hand at the Spring Town meeting.

Mr. Keoseian said that an opinion on wetlands was given last week for Prescott which was another reason the current site was chosen. He said the Committee didn't feel there was a need to pursue Prescott after it was determined that a wetlands crossing cost was going to be substantial. Mr. Haddad said that he wanted to change my recommendation to leave article 6 and amend the original appropriation from the 2016 Spring Town Meeting. Mr. Petropoulos said that he valued the input from Friends and asked if a topographical study was part of original scope. Mr. Keoseian said that it was not but added they had a little extra money and used it for that. Mr. Petropoulos commented on how money was spent to look at the topo of the current site by group when a milestone decision had not been determined yet adding he was disappointed in that. He thought it was worth going back to Bargmann and their architect to use like for like. He did agree that a report to town meeting should go forward. He asked about the donor interest. Mr. Keoseian said that when they visited Milford, MA they were impressed by the fact that every room was sponsored by someone and learned that they put out an invitation to donors to sponsor a room. Mr. Petropoulos said that he didn't like that they scramble at the very end and was not in favor of changing this eight hours before they go to print. He said he was quite supportive of the initiative but not supportive of a last minute cost.

Mr. Degen asked how much was left over from the Fire Station project. Mr. Haddad said \$82K. Mr. Degen asked if it could be repurposed. Mr. Haddad said that he was holding onto it because there was no warranty because there was no GC. Mr. Degen said that he would like to see article 6 go away and have a line item transfer instead. Mr. Haddad said that he would like to see this stand alone. He said that he also understand the Chairs concerns but did not think this was a last minute item at all. He said that it was originally brought forward on August 23rd. He said that the Committee was trying to address concerns recently brought forward. He said that they picked the current site as was their job to recommend a site. He said that they spent money on topo and wetland delineation to be able to provide as much information as possible to Town Meeting and didn't think any money was misspent. Mr. Haddad said that it wouldn't be a lot to change the wording. Mr. Degen said he could support that. Ms. Eliot said that she could support that also.

*Mr. Degen moved to strike wording for article 6 and change to wording as proposed by the Town Manager. Mr. Pease seconded the motion. The motion carried 3-1 with Mr. Petropoulos voting against it.*

#### **PUBLIC HEARING – CRYSTAL SPRING LANE**

*Mr. Degen moved to reopen the public hearing for adopting the layout of Crystal Spring Lane as a town way. Mr. Pease seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Mr. Collins said that the road had been completed to the satisfaction of the Planning Board and Highway Surveyor. He said that he was requesting that the Board lay it out and bring it forward for acceptance. Mr. Haddad read a letter from the Planning Board. Mr. Collins said in response to the letter that the stone dust path had been completed, and the street trees were sufficient as per a letter from tree warden. Mr. Collins said that he alerted Ms. Bonavita that work had been done. Mr. Collins added that he wouldn't request that the bond be released until this was signed off on. Mr. Degen said that he would have liked to have driven adding it was his fault he hadn't. He asked if this would be deferred. Mr. Haddad said that they could continue this adding they needed to accept the layout before Town Meeting. Mr. Collins said he thought that was fine. Ms. Eliot said that the Planning Board held the bond until work was done. Mr. Pease said he didn't want to lay out the road until all items had been completed adding what they had before them was a conditional Planning Board recommendation. Ms. Eliot said that the Board approved the layout but that the bond and recommendations here were separate issues that the Planning Board had jurisdiction over. She

said she felt comfortable with the layout and approving that portion of it and thought they were mixing apples and oranges. Mr. Petropoulos asked if they could make their approval conditional on these things. Mr. Degen said that the Board could not make layouts conditional. Mr. Degen suggested continuing this to 6pm on the night of Town Meeting.

A resident asked about the punch list mentioned. Mr. Collins said it included the stone dust path and that it be weeded and that the tree warden indicates that the trees were fine.

*Mr. Petropoulos entertain a motion to continue public hearing to 6:15pm on Monday 10/17 in the Middle School cafeteria. Mr. Degen made the motion. Mr. Pease seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

### **TOWN CLERK PRESENTATION**

Mr. Mike Bouchard explained that there was an election coming up on November 8th. He said that the polls would be open from 7am-8pm. He said he anticipated a pretty busy day adding they had received a lot of interest in early voting and absentee ballots. He said that he was expecting 80% turnout and that the registration deadline was Oct 19th. Mr. Bouchard said that there were three different ways to register to vote and that early voting was new to Mass. He said that early voting would occur biannually in even numbered years. He said that the Law stated that the Town would conduct early voting during normal business hours in a designated area. He said that they were going to open on Thursday nights for a 2 week period and Saturday from 9-1. He said that the 2 weeks for early voting would be from Oct 24<sup>th</sup> - Nov 4<sup>th</sup>. He said that he believed Town Hall was a suitable place for early voting as it was accessible and convenient to the Town Clerk's office for their records. He said that he would like to use the first floor meeting room for the next 2 weeks as the volume would overwhelm their office and asked the Board for their permission to take over the room for the next 2 weeks. Mr. Haddad said that he was going to recommend that the Board meet upstairs during those 2 weeks. Mr. Pease asked where this was a state mandate if they were going to be compensated for the increase in hours. Mr. Bouchard said that it was an unfunded mandate adding they were only required to offer early voting during normal business hours. He said that they could apply for a state grant for \$500. Ms. Eliot asked if votes would be tallied on Election Day. Mr. Bouchard said that was correct adding it was just like absentee ballots. The Board granted permission to him to use the room.

Mr. Bouchard said that Mr. Petropoulos thought it would be helpful to hear about elections security. Mr. Bouchard said that the topic was broader than just a machine. He said that they needed to worry about voter databases, ballots themselves, tabulating machines and early / absentee ballots. He said that the voter database was a separate database run by the state. He said that the office staff had password protected logins. He said that the ballots were printed by a vendor and were specific to their machines. He said that the machines were tested before every election. He said that ballots were kept and hand counted to the machine if necessary. All machines had special security key and password and were certified by the state. He said he asked the vendor to comment on their security for programming to which they said they have an ex-military/police person program them adding they felt secure. He said that ballots were kept under lock and key during election with the key being held by a police officer. The Board thanked him for his time.

### **SARGISSON BEACH REPORT**

Mr. Haddad said that the lifeguards were asked to put together a daily tabulation of use adding that John Giger and Andrew Davis were there to discuss the report. Mr. Giger said that the lifeguards were asked to count the number of heads on the beach during specific times of day. He said he thought they had a good summer with not much inclement weather. He said they had no incidents of having to close the beach for E.coli and thought they had good utilization on the 4th of July and Labor Day. Ms. Eliot asked if more people would be able to use the beach if more parking was available. Mr. Davis said that people were not sure where to park because there was no designated parking spots. Mr. Haddad said that this was also a good opportunity to thank the donors who had contributed toward keeping the lifeguards there this summer. Mr. Degen said they were very lucky to have people in their community willing to make these kind of donations.

## **TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

2. Mr. Haddad said that he provided the Board with a spreadsheet to show where funding was coming from. He said at the end of the day, they would be left with \$674,459 in free cash after a certified balance of \$1.2M.

Mr. Haddad said that he was leery about taking too much of what was left in free cash to offset the tax rate. He said the Board might want to consider \$100-200K as they had done in previous years. He said that this would also give them the ability to fund other things that may come up, like funding the design engineering for the COA should a Special Town Meeting approve, without affecting the tax rate. Mr. Petropoulos said that he wanted to return a lot more to the taxpayers. He thought that withholding \$300K for an article to fund design costs seemed like they were holding onto taxpayer dollars which concerned him. Mr. Haddad said that he agreed but was concerned that if they lowered their free cash balance too much and free cash wasn't there in subsequent years, the taxpayers would get hit with a big increase. Mr. Haddad said that budgets were getting tighter and shrinking year over year so it may not be something that's there in the future. Mr. Pease said that he thought unexpended money not spent from department budgets should be given back to the taxpayers as a matter of policy. Mr. Haddad said that it would be a good policy to look at. Mr. Petropoulos said that the same could be said for unexpended revenue. Mr. Pease argued that that was different adding they were conservative in their revenue forecasts. He said that unspent department budgets could always be assured to go back to the tax payers. Mr. Robertson said that he didn't think they should give any money back this year. He thought that having cash was good and especially during a period of unsustainability he didn't think they should be giving back cash when they didn't know what this next year was going to bring. He said he understood it was taxpayer money but thought they should wait. Mr. Robertson said that there was a lot they didn't know right now. He said that they knew wages were an issue but thought free cash could be one way of dealing with that. Mr. Pease said that they were only allowed that money because people said it was okay. He didn't feel right keeping the money because they didn't spend it. Mr. Petropoulos said that free cash not affecting the tax rate was not something he agreed with. Mr. Degen said that he agreed with everything said. He agreed with Mr. Haddad wanting to keep a certain balance, and Mr. Robertson for wanting to hold onto it. He said that the tax payer was the most important thing at the end of the day. He said he liked Mr. Pease's idea and at a minimum that money should be returned.

*Mr. Degen move to return \$500K to the tax payers. Mr. Petropoulos seconded the motion.*

Mr. Haddad urged the Board not to take \$500K out of free cash. He said that would artificially increase the tax rate which was not fair to the tax payers. He said that free cash came from revenues not just budget returns and thought \$500K was a very big mistake. Ms. Eliot said that he agreed with everything that had been said. She said it had always been her understanding that no matter what planning had been done, there always needed to be a buffer for unexpected situations. She said that when it came to prudent financial planning, she tended to air on side of caution.

*Mr. Degen moved to amend his motion to offset the tax rate by \$400K. Mr. Petropoulos seconded the motion.*

Mr. Haddad said he thought that was still too much. Ms. Eliot suggested they lower it to \$300K.

*Ms. Eliot move to modify the amount to \$300K. There was no second.*

Mr. Pease said he thought the \$400K was a steep number. Ms. Eliot asked what it meant to the average tax bill. Mr. Petropoulos said he didn't like to see this put into dollars adding it was disreceptful to look at it that way. He said it would certainly go down with this.

*The motion made by Mr. Degen and seconded by Mr. Petropoulos carried 3-1 with Ms. Eliot opposed.*

Article 5 - Mr. Haddad said that the Water Commissioners fully supported this. The Board was unanimous in its support.

Article 12 – Mr. Haddad said that he, Mr. Delaney and Mr. Degen met with Steve Byrnes last week to discuss repairing the boiler. He said that he cost to repair it was \$6,200/month or \$75K per year to put in and maintain a temp boiler. A new one cost \$80K. He said that he personally thought they should go forward with a new boiler. Mr. Degen said that efficiency was so low already, fixing it could mean problems in the dead of the winter. He said that heat for their children was important and they had no choice but to support a new \$80K boiler. The Board was unanimous in its support.

3. *Ms. Eliot moved to ratify the Town Manager’s appointments of Griffin Modzelewski and Cody Trudel as Pro Shop Staff. Mr. Pease seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*

Mr. Haddad said that the Cable Committee wanted to promote Ashley Doucette to Brenden Crewe’s vacant position and asked the Board to ratify this.

*Mr. Degen made the motion. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion.*

Mr. Petropoulos asked if there was any need to post this. Mr. Haddad said that it was posted internally in an effort to save some costs and because the Committee recommended she be promoted. Mr. Petropoulos said they should post it externally in the future.

*The motion carried unanimously.*

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Pease said that the State Auditor was coming to the PAC on Oct 12th.

Mr. Degen said he had an offline meeting with a member of School Committee during which they talked about a lot of things. He said that in an effort to work collaboratively they talked about having a quarterly meeting in joint session to talk about challenges, changes, etc. Ms. Eliot said it sounded like a great idea, something she had been asking for for a while now and fully supported it. Mr. Pease asked if quarterly was too few. Mr. Degen said it would be a great start. Mr. Petropoulos said he was not certain what they would get out of it but could try it.

**LIAISON REPORT**

Ms. Eliot said that the Planning Board and Economic Development Committee met jointly last week to discuss discontinuing the concept plan requirement.

**MINUTES**

*Ms. Eliot moved to approve the Regular Session meeting minutes of September 12, 2016. Mr. Degen asked if they could be deferred.*

Mr. Petropoulos adjourned the meeting at 9:10pm.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Barry Pease, Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_ respectfully submitted,  
Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant

Date Approved: 10/24/16