

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
VIRTUAL MEETING
MONDAY, AUGUST 30, 2021
APPROVED**

SB Members Present: Rebecca H. Pine, Chair; Alison S. Manugian, Vice Chair; Peter S. Cunningham, Clerk; Joshua A. Degen, Member; John F. Reilly, Member

Also Present: Mark W. Haddad, Town Manager; Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant; Melisa Doig, HR Director; Patricia Dufresne, Town Accountant

Ms. Pine called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

6:30PM –REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION DISCUSSION - JOINT MEETING WITH PEPPERELL SELECT BOARD AND SENATOR EDWARD KENNEDY

Senator Edward Kennedy and Ms. Patricia Kirwin-Keilty, Chief of Staff were present along with Mr. David Bradley, Director of LRTA, Mr. Andrew MacLean, Pepperell Town Administrator and Pepperell Select Board Chairperson, Margaret Scarsdale.

Mr. Bradley introduced himself as the Director of the LRTA. He said that he and the Senator had talked about ways in which they could provide public transportation to residents from Groton and Pepperell to the commuter rail in Ayer. Mr. Bradley started by saying that Groton did not expend its full LRTA budget like Pepperell had. He said that Groton was about \$30K under budget right now. Mr. Haddad asked if Groton would use its vans or have LRTA run buses. Mr. Bradley said that he wouldn't envision their buses running through the Towns but more so a transit service. Senator Kennedy asked how many riders Pepperell and Groton anticipated. Mr. Haddad said that was hard to answer adding they hadn't done any research on this. Mr. Cunningham said that their vans had not provided trips to the commuter rail to his knowledge. Mr. Cunningham asked about the roadrunner that used to run throughout Town. Mr. Bradley said that the roadrunner would have been dispatched through the city of Lowell and would have been used more for ADA customers. Mr. Bradley asked if these rides would be during peak travel hours. Mr. Haddad explained the Towns goal of increasing transportation but were beginning the discussion. Ms. Pine explained what the intent of increasing transportation for Groton residents was.

Mr. Degen said he thought the only way to gauge usage would be to run 2 trips from Pepperell and Groton in both the morning and evening. He said that with Indian Hill coming online next year, transportation might be important for concerts also. Senator Kennedy said he thought it would be hard to estimate what ridership would be but thought they could run a pilot program for 6 months and reassess. He asked if this would be possible. Mr. Bradley said that because the funding for Groton was there, the Town should run it through the COA for now. Mr. Haddad asked if they had the drivers available now to do that. Mr. Cunningham said they would have to check with the COA Director. Ms. Pine said she thought the label of it being a COA van would be difficult to get people to see it as anything different.

Mr. MacLean said he thought a pilot plan was a good idea and said that from his experience in Maynard, a program like Cross Town Connect might work best for them. He said that they researched and studied just this same thing in Maynard for 3 years before finalizing the Cross Town Connect program adding he thought they needed to do some research first before piloting a program. He said that Pepperell needed transportation to medical appointments but did not have a demand for commuter transportation. Mr. Bradley said that he thought Mr. MacLean's suggestion was a good one.

Senator Kennedy said that it sounded like they needed to continue these conversations, explore funding and research program such as Cross Town Connect. Senator Kennedy asked if it made sense to meet again in 3 weeks after doing some research. There was a brief discussion about outreach and about the path moving forward.

Mr. Haddad said that before the start of the meeting, it was pointed out that Groton did not have a rep to the LRTA and asked the Board to appoint Ashley Shaheen as the rep to the LRTA.

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to appoint Ashley Shaheen as the Rep to the LRTA. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Manugian-aye; Degen-aye; Reilly-aye; Cunningham-aye

Ms. Pine read through the agenda items for the remainder of the meeting beginning at 7:20pm.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Haddad said that the Board was not meeting next week and asked the Board to consider allowing the Town Manager and one member to sign warrants for the next 2 weeks. Mr. Haddad said he would also be giving an update on the vaccination status of employees.

Mr. Cunningham asked the public to get in touch with the Town Manager's office if interested in commuter rail transportation. Ms. Pine added also seeking comments on an increase in public transportation also.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Mr. Haddad said that he had received a memorandum from the Historical Commission requesting that Joshua Vollmar be appointed to the Historical Commission. Mr. Haddad said he was nominating Mr. Vollmar for appointment and respectfully requested that the Select Board accept this nomination and appoint Mr. Vollmar to the Commission. Ms. Pine said she thought this was an excellent appointment to make and was happy to see he was nominated. Mr. Cunningham agreed.

Mr. Cunningham moved to accept the Town Manager's nomination of Joshua Vollmar and that they appoint him to the Historical Commission. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. Mr. Haddad said that the appointment was going to be through June 30, 2024. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Manugian-aye; Degen-aye; Reilly-aye; Cunningham-aye

2. Mr. Haddad said he had appointed Elizabeth Harris as a Lifeguard at the Groton Country Club through Labor Day and respectfully requested that the Select Board consider ratifying this appointment.

Ms. Manugian moved to affirm the Town Manager's appointment of Elizabeth Harris as a Lifeguard at the Country Club. Mr. Degen seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Manugian-aye; Degen-aye; Reilly-aye; Cunningham-aye

3. Mr. Haddad said that the Public Hearing on the Warrant was scheduled for Monday, September 13, 2021. He said he had still not received the Articles from the Planning Board, but expected them within the next week.

Mr. Haddad said that the Board needed to make a final determination on whether or not to go forward with the Article proposed by the Diversity Task Force to amend the Town Seal by removing the words "Holy Bible" from the Book on the Seal. Mr. Haddad said it was currently on the warrant as a placeholder. Ms. Pine said she spoke with the Chair of the Diversity Task Force and debated bringing this forward or waiting but decided it was best to bring it forward to the Fall Town Meeting. Mr. Cunningham said he wasn't keen on bringing this forward at this time adding because he thought it would be somewhat divisive, they should wait until the spring. Ms. Manugian said she favored putting this on the Fall Town Meeting warrant and thought the timing was right. Mr. Degen said he was in favor of the concept of the Town debating this but thought public outreach and education needed to be done first. He said that they needed to have that and should therefore defer until the spring. Ms. Pine said that it was unclear how, who, when that should happen and asked if the Diversity Task Force should do that. Mr. Degen said that if they brought it back to the Task Force for their discussion on how best this be done was the right thing to do. Ms. Pine said if they were postponing this because it was controversial, she didn't think that was the best way to go. Ms. Pine said she had heard people say that they should keep bringing this up until it was passed adding she wasn't sure people would change their minds between now and the spring. Mr. Cunningham said he wasn't sure how far they were going to go to sanitize history and didn't relate this to examples Ms. Pine provided such as some statutes that had been looked at and ultimately taken down across the country. He said that the Bible was not a bad book adding it talked about other religions within it. Mr. Degen said that Mr. Cunningham's statement about the Bible talking about diversity and other religions had changed his mind adding there was also a lot of negative in the Bible. He said he wanted to see this brought forward in the fall. Mr. Reilly said he didn't want to see this brought to Town Meeting at all.

Ms. Manugian moved to bring forward the article removing the words Holy Bible from the Town Seal to the Fall Town Meeting. Mr. Degen seconded the motion.

Mr. Degen cited Mr. Green's intent of the Town Seal when he originally developed it. Mr. Reilly said he thought they should remove the plow from the seal and should also bring that forward to the Town Meeting adding he was not a farmer which the plow historically had represented. He said he thought they were throwing away a lot of history by bringing this change forward.

Roll Call: Pine-aye; Manugian-aye; Degen-aye; Reilly-nay; Cunningham-nay. The motion carried 3-2 in favor.

Mr. Haddad said that the Board also needed to make a determination on whether or not to require that masks be worn during Town Meeting adding that the meeting would be held indoors at the Performing Arts Center.

Ms. Manugian moved that they require that masks be work indoors at Town Meeting. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Manugian-aye; Degen-aye; Reilly-aye; Cunningham-aye

Ms. Pine asked if there were going to be distancing requirements if they held it inside. Mr. Haddad said that the PAC sat 800 people if they filled each seat, but could look at distancing people. There was a discussion about holding this outside and if distancing was required.

Mr. Degen moved that the Select Board hold the Fall Town Meeting on October 23rd beginning at 9am outdoors with the rain date being on Saturday, October 30th. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion.

Mr. Degen amended his motion for the rain date to be Sunday, October 24th. Ms. Manugian seconded the amended motion.

Ms. Pine said she was prepared to wait before voting on this allowing additional time to see what the Delta variant did. Mr. Cunningham asked if they could change their mind as time and information presented itself. Mr. Haddad asked if masks would be required outdoors. The Board said they would be required.

Roll Call: Pine-aye; Manugian-aye; Degen-aye; Reilly-aye; Cunningham-aye

There was a brief discussion about the Planning Board articles and whether public hearings by the Planning Board were forth coming.

4. Mr. Haddad said that he attended the Planning Board meeting last Thursday with Ms. Pine and Mr. Reilly to discuss the intersection redesign of Prescott Common. He said that Tom Delaney was able to work out a plan to address all concerns and hoped to have a final draft plan at the end of this week for final approval.
5. Mr. Haddad said that he wanted to let the Select Board know that they had now received fifty (50%) percent of the Coronavirus Relief Funds (\$1.6 mill). He said that the first expenditures of these funds would be for the School Department and the Communications Tower Project. He said that because they also had the County allotment, they could go forward with the payment to their employees in December as voted by the Board. Mr. Haddad said that he was wondering if they could also spend the money on adding a new Highway employee. Mr. Haddad said he would continue to update the Board on the Coronavirus Relief Budget as more information became available.

Mr. Degen asked if Dunstable had voted to allocate matching funds to the GDRSD. Mr. Haddad said he wasn't sure. Mr. Degen said he would vote contingent on finding that out. Ms. Manugian asked about the plan for the Highway position moving forward. Mr. Haddad said that \$360K would be the max amount they would use for this position with the goal of working this position in the budget so that at the end of 4 years it would be included in the budget. Mr. Degen asked what other projects were planned for with this ARPA funding. Mr. Cunningham said he just received word Dunstable was going to be setting aside matching funds. Ms. Manugian said there was no harm in making it contingent.

Mr. Haddad asked the Board to authorize them to spend half the ARPA funding on the payment to GDRSD contingent on Dunstable authorizing its share, money for the tower project, the DPW position, and employee pay in December. Mr. Degen made the motion as stated by Mr. Haddad with a limit not to exceed \$1.12M. Ms. Manugian seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Manugian-aye; Degen-aye; Reilly-aye; Cunningham-aye

6. Mr. Haddad reviewed the Board's meeting schedule through the beginning of January 2022. He said that they would be meeting pretty much every week with a couple of exceptions.

SELECT BOARD ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Mr. Haddad said he had provided the Board with a final draft lease with the Friends of Prescott for Prescott School. He said that it would take effect on September 1, 2021 and would last for three years. Mr. Haddad said that since the Board approved the Lease last Fall, they changed 3 items.

- a. Included the front and rear lawn areas to the Premises Description (Section 1.1). Added wording that the Select Board has the right to revoke the use of the rear lawn should the Town decide to put in a municipal lot (Section 2.1).
- b. Added wording that should the Friends wish to extend the lease for an additional three (3) year period, they need to notify the Select Board at least six months prior the expiration (Section 3.1).
- c. Added Select Board Member Peter Cunningham to the signature page.

Mr. Haddad respectfully requested that the Select Board approve this Lease adding it would go into effect on September 1, 2021.

Ms. Manugian moved that they approve the 3-year lease with the Friends of Prescott as amended and presented. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Manugian-aye; Degen-aye; Reilly-aye; Cunningham-aye

OTHER BUSINESS

1. Mr. Haddad asked the Board to authorize a member of the Board and the Town Manager sign off on the warrants for the next 30 days.

Mr. Degen made the motion that he and the Town Manager be designated to sign warrants for up to the next 30 days. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Manugian-aye; Degen-abstain; Reilly-aye; Cunningham-aye

2. Mr. Haddad said that he thought when he brought up the mandatory vaccination a few weeks ago but was wrong adding they were the leaders. He said that based on the vote, they had been working with their employees but going into tomorrow all but one employee had either scheduled their vaccine or would be fully vaccinated by tomorrow. He congratulated their employees and thanked them. He said that should this one employee not follow through; they would be terminated on Wednesday.
3. Mr. Robertson said that the Select Board and Finance Committee needed to talk about the FY23 budget guidance before the end of October. Mr. Haddad said he would talk to the Chair and plan a date to have this joint meeting adding he was waiting for a final new growth number before they could look at revenue projections.

MINUTES

Mr. Cunningham moved to approve minutes of regularly scheduled meeting of August 23, 2021. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. Roll Call: Pine-aye; Manugian-abstain; Degen-abstain; Reilly-aye; Cunningham-aye

Mr. Cunningham said that the Fire Department was holding their drive-thru chicken dinner on Labor Day and encouraged people to sign up to purchase one. Ms. Pine said that the boy scouts would still be holding their annual yard sale on Labor Day.

Ms. Pine adjourned the meeting at 8:17pm.

Approved: _____
Peter S. Cunningham, Clerk

_____ respectfully submitted:
Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant

Date Approved: 09/13/2021