

Select Board

February 8, 2021

Present:

- Select Board: Mr. Joseph Fisher (Chair) and Ms. Liz Klein, and Mr. Bill Ramsey
- Mr. Tom Mayo, Town Administrator
- Ms. Michelle Monsegur, Assistant Town Administrator for Finance
- Mr. Art Robert, Assistant Town Administrator for Operations

7:01 PM: Call to order

Mr. Fisher called the meeting to order and read the following statement:

“This meeting is being held remotely as an alternate means of public access pursuant to an Order issued by the Governor of Massachusetts dated March 12, 2020 Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law. You are hereby advised that this meeting and all communications during this meeting may be recorded by the Town of Hingham in accordance with the Open Meeting Law. If any participant wishes to record this meeting, please notify the chair at the start of the meeting in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, § 20(f) so that the chair may inform all other participants of said recording. “

Mr. Fisher asked if any participants were recording the meeting. No one indicated they were recording.

Select Board members participating in the meeting were himself, Mr. Bill Ramey and Ms. Liz Klein.

Approval of Minutes

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to approve the minutes dated January 25, 2022. Ms. Klein seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

Vote: Ms. Klein made a motion to approve the minutes dated February 1, 2022. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

Joint Session with the Advisory Committee and School Committee

7:03 PM: Ms. Julie Strehle called to order the meeting of the Advisory Committee.

7:03 PM: Ms. Kerry Ni called to order the meeting of the School Committee.

FY23 Preliminary Financial Forecast Update

Mr. Mayo presented the five-year preliminary forecast, including a summary of changes, which showed a current deficit of \$4.7 million, which is down from \$7.2 in the first forecast. Mr. Mayo noted that the forecast would be updated as soon as more information becomes available. Highlights included a summary of the ten-year history of local receipts, which are predicted to be \$10,203,476 for FY23, close to pre-pandemic levels. The preliminary forecast is as follows:

SUMMARY OF CHANGES	12/7/2021 Forecast	2/3/2022 Forecast	Positive/(Negative) Change
Sources			
Tax Levy	\$95,754,447	\$95,750,465	(\$3,982)
State Aid	\$10,139,491	\$10,304,961	\$165,470
Local Receipts	\$9,728,476	\$10,203,476	\$475,000
Fund Balance/ Federal Funds	\$800,000	\$1,783,115	\$983,115
WRWS	\$13,098,990	\$12,881,442	(\$217,548)
Uses			
State Assessments	\$1,253,184	\$1,188,439	\$64,745
Article 6	\$137,313,447	\$136,816,377	\$497,070
Article 4&5	\$947,539	\$364,854	\$582,685
Excess/(Shortfall)	(\$7,272,874)	(\$4,726,319)	\$2,546,555

Mr. Mayo went on to highlight his FY23 budget priorities, which included \$893,662 in requests. He anticipated some additional adjustments to the forecast in the following areas:

- Final State aid number
- Local receipts refinement
- Stabilization fund
- Excess overlay
- Final school and municipal recommended budgets
- Health insurance

There were some follow-up questions from the Advisory Committee and School Committee. Mr. Mayo concluded with saying that he could envision a path to a balanced budget with minimal cuts to additional budget requests.

FY23 School Department Budget Presentation (Gary Maestas, John Ferris)

Mr. Gary Maestas, Interim School Superintendent, and Mr. John Ferris, HPS Director of Business and Support Services, presented. Mr. Maestas recognized and thanked Mr. Ferris for his efforts on behalf of the Hingham community during his time with the Hingham Public Schools. Mr. Ferris went on to present the FY23 Hingham Public Schools FY23 Budget Presentation. The full presentation can be found at <https://hinghamschools.org/about/budget-documents/>. Mr. Ferris reported a FY23 budget request of

\$62,677,112, which is an increase of \$885,054 or 1.43% from the previous year. Major Budget Drivers include:

- Special Education Tuition “Age Outs”
- Increased Circuit Breaker
- Favorable Hiring for FY 2022 added positions
- Retirements and Resignations
- Zero growth Athletics budget using increased revolving account offset increased energy and electricity costs
- General Price Increases at 4.7% (3^r Quarter Government published Price Deflator Index (PDI) for state and local government purchases
- Trades Contract expenses increase assumed at 6.5% (4th Quarter PDI)
- Topics covered during the presentation included enrollment trends,

Special attention was given to enrollment trends, departmental budgets, personnel costs, offsets by grants, Special Education costs, and future priorities. Mr. Ferris explained that some risks of the FY23 proposed budget are

- Budget does not include 4 VoTech pending applications
- Soaring energy prices, including gas, diesel, therms, and electricity
- New Special Ed placements
- Significant ramp up of Covid expenses without reimbursement

FY23 Preliminary Proposed Budget Warrant Items include:

- 5-year lease for Special Education vans
- Tennis court reconstruction - \$864,000
- Correct the funding source for the Plymouth River windows project - \$3,993,600

Ms. Kerry Ni, School Committee Chair, made some comments regarding the effects of Covid-19 on the budget and on learning losses, which she anticipated could take years to recover from. She and the School Committee were hopeful that the schools were on the road to recovery and felt that the personnel additions made during FY22 were instrumental in this recovery. Ms. Ni reported that the School Department has unanimously voted to support the budget as presented by Mr. Ferris.

Dr. Maestas said that a school survey would be available online in the beginning of March. He said that the School Department is looking for feedback from current students, alumni of HPS, as well as parents and grandparents of Hingham students. Additional discussion regarding Special Education enrollment followed. Mr. Ferris approximated the financial impact of Special Education age-outs could be \$250,000-\$300,000 per student. Additional topics discussed included inflation, its effect on the budget and collective bargaining agreements and technology spending.

Ms. Pryia Howell, 26 Del Prete Drive, asked if it would be possible to make changes with respect to the starting time of the Middle School. Dr. Maestas said that any schedule change would likely need to go through the Strategic Planning Process as well as the schedule development process.

8:49 PM: Chair Strehle announce that the Advisory Committee would enter into a recess and would reconvene with the zoom link as posted on their agenda.

Town Administrator FY23 Budget Recommendations

Mr. Mayo presented his FY23 Budget Recommendations of additional budget requests beyond a level-services budget, prioritized as follows:

Priority	Department	Request	Amount
1	Elections	Additional poll pad & software	\$1,875
2	Fire	Paramedic school tuition	\$40,000
3	Select Board Office	Sustainability Coordinator	\$48,000
4	Public Works	Part-time Office Assistant (shared with WRWS)	\$26,366
5	Select Board Office	Part-time Grant Writer	\$40,000
6	Public Works	Town-wide turf maintenance: spring/fall landscaping of field, courts, and parking lots	\$27,600
7	Public Works	Assistant Town Engineer	\$85,000
8	Historic Preservation	Assess and prioritize historic markers/monuments	\$3,000
9	Human Resources	Expand quarterly employee training	\$2,000
10	Harbormaster	Remove/launch Town landing and boat ramp floats	\$3,000
11	Fire	4 additional firefighters	355,826
12	Police	3 additional officers	\$211,695
13	Police	Increase overtime	\$40,000
14	Health	200 flu shots	\$9,300
		Total	\$893,662

2022 Annual Town Meeting Warrant Article Discussion

Article X: High School Tennis Court Rehabilitation

Mr. John Ferris and Mr. Mark Thorell presented. Article X requests Town Meeting approval for reconstruction of six tennis courts at the high school at a cost of \$864,000. The courts would be constructed of post tension concrete, which is stronger than regular concrete and reinforced with steel tendons.

Mr. Ray Estes, 92 Fort Hill Street, was pleased with the use of the post tension concrete and felt it would be a good use of Town assets.

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to recommend favorable action of Article X. Ms. Klein seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

Article Y: Plymouth River School Windows Project - Funding Source

Mr. John Ferris explained that this Article was approved through 2021 Town Meeting, however, the Article was worded in such a way that it required a debt exclusion. Later, it was determined that the Town had no intention of using a debt exclusion and the School Committee took a new vote in

September to appropriate from their FY22 operating budget the amount of \$3,993,600 to apply towards the project in satisfaction of a MSBA requirement. Article Y would correct the funding source for the project.

Vote: Ms. Klein made a motion to recommend favorable action of Article Y. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

Article Z: Five-Year Lease for Special Ed School Transportation Vehicles

Mr. Ferris explained that Massachusetts Procurement Laws require that any lease or contract for a time-period longer than three years requires a Town Meeting majority vote for approval. After the five-year contract, the Town would own the two vehicles. The cost of each of the two vehicles included in Article Z is approximately \$13,000 each.

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to recommend favorable action of Article Z. Ms. Klein seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

Article EE: Foster School – Funds for Pre-Construction Costs and to open the Town Meeting Warrant for submission of a revised article for Foster Elementary School

Mr. Ray Estes, 92 Fort Hill Street, member of the School Building Committee, presented. This Article is being presented as a formality with some revised language, as required by the MSBA, regarding the useful life of the building. Article EE requests interim funding for the Foster School project to get through design development and the bid package this fall prior to funding the project construction at a Special Town Meeting this coming fall.

Vote: Ms. Klein made a motion to open the Town Meeting Warrant for submission of a revised article for Foster Elementary School and to recommend favorable action of Article EE. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

9:23 PM: Ms. Kerry Ni adjourned the meeting of the Hingham School Committee.

Human Rights Commission

Ms. Katie Sutton, 245 Leavitt Street, presented. She said that Human Rights Commissions promote community awareness and equitable policies and practices to promote the rights of all citizens and serve as a resource to community members in Massachusetts. There are over 40 municipal Human Rights

Commissions doing this work across a range of models. As Chair of the Hingham Unity Council, Ms. Sutton has examined many of these models, with a goal of identifying which, if any, would best serve the Hingham community. She noted that, over the years, the HUC has heard directly and indirectly of incidents of bias in Hingham. The HUC has studied the need for and potential structure of a Hingham Rights Commissions for Hingham. Members have met with representatives of Human Rights Commissions throughout the Commonwealth to learn about their experiences and initiatives, including regularly attending the monthly meetings of the MA Association of Human Rights Commissions. While various Hingham entities play a crucial role in ensuring the safety and well-being of Hingham residents, there is currently no civic body charged with ensuring that programs and initiatives are in place to protect human rights, promote diversity, equity and inclusion and to provide resources to our neighbors. The HUC feels that the creation of a Human Rights Commission would fill a role, as identified in the 2021 Master Plan, of creating a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee. She noted that they are not requesting any funding for the creation of this committee. The proposed Human Rights Commission would include representatives from key Town departments, such as the Police and Hingham Public Schools as well as a high school student. She felt that this would enhance communication and foster a more open and transparent dialogue and would benefit the community as a whole.

Mr. Andrew Turner, 172 Wompatuck Road, reviewed the responsibilities of the Commission and spoke about the composition of the team. He reported the charge of the Commission as follows:

1. Develop opportunities to build community awareness concerning human rights, including, but not limited to, diversity, equity, and inclusion within the Town. Of Hingham and beyond through educational programs, summits, panels, celebrations, and other community events.
2. Develop programs and initiatives and provide community resources to promote human rights, including but not limited to, diversity, equity and inclusion within the Town of Hingham.
3. Annually, or more often as requested by the Select Board, to provide written or verbal reports to the Select Board on Commission activities.

The Commission would be comprised of 13 members totaling 8 members that are recommended by various leaders within the community and 5 at-large members. The members would be appointed by the Select Board as follows

- One member recommended by the Chief of Police from the Hingham Police Department
- One member recommended by the School Committee from the Hingham Public Schools.
- One member recommended by the Council on Aging
- One member recommended by the Commission on Disabilities
- One member recommended by the Hingham Affordable Housing Trust
- One member recommended by the Housing Authority
- One member recommended by the Recreation Commission
- A Hingham resident and student at the High School that is recommended by the School Committee

The purpose of the Hunan Rights Commission is as follows:

“The establishment of the Commission represents the Town of Hingham’s commitment to support the rights of all persons in Hingham to enjoy the free and equal exercise of their rights and privileges as secured by the Constitution and Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and of the United States and to promote diversity, equity and inclusion within the Town of Hingham.”

Ms. Sutton added that not all members of the committee are required to be Hingham residents.

Ms. Klein felt that the creation of the commission would be an important step in creating a welcoming and inclusive community that is very much aligned with the community vision outlined in the Town of Hingham Master Plan. Mr. Ramsey and Mr. Fisher fully supported the creation of the commission as well.

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to establish the Town of Hingham Human Rights Commission as an advisory body to the Select Board in accordance with the attached document detailing the creation, purpose and charge of said Human Rights Commission. Ms. Klein seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

COVID-19 Report

Mr. Mayo gave the following update on the COVID-19 pandemic:

“DPH is reporting that the 7-day average of confirmed COVID-19 cases has declined substantially, from 4,803 on January 30 to 1,325 on February 7. Statewide hospitalizations have fallen, from 2,202 on January 28 to 1570 on February 7. The latest data show the Hingham case count is declining. DPH is reporting 118 new daily COVID-19 cases in Hingham during the 14-day period ending on 1/22/2022. During the 14-day period ending 1/29/22, DPH reported 71 cases in Hingham. It is important to note that many residents are now taking home-based testing which is most often not reported and therefore not in these statistics. As a result we are assuming that the actual number of positive cases is higher than these statistics show. The overall vaccination rate for Hingham is now 83% (for fully vaccinated individuals). Further, 49 % of Hingham residents have received a booster dose. According to DPH, 68% of Hingham residents ages 5-11 are fully vaccinated.

Hingham continues to conduct a regional COVID-19 drive through testing site, in partnership with Cohasset, Hull, and Scituate, at 335 Lincoln Street in Hingham. The Testing Center will be open on Mondays, Wednesday, Thursdays, and Saturdays, from 7a to 4p. PCR tests are available at no cost to the public. Residents and employees of the four communities will continue to have priority appointment access from 7a – 11a daily. Online preregistration is required; no tests will be administered without an appointment. All participants will be notified of test results by email. I am disappointed with test site performance. We have put the vendor on notice regarding needed improvements. If the vendor successfully meets my requirements, we will allow the site to remain open, though potentially under new operating procedures.

The Town of Hingham has received over 16,000 rapid antigen test kits from Plymouth County. The Town is planning to distribute these test kits to Hingham residents. Kits will be distributed on two days, including:

- Sunday, February 13 from 1-4 pm
- Tuesday, February 15 from 1-4pm

We will distribute the kits at our testing site, at 335 Lincoln Street. Two kits, holding a total of 4 tests, will be distributed to drivers of vehicles with a driver's license showing a Hingham address. We are finalizing details, including a web site posting and press release, which will be available tomorrow.

The Outdoor Table Service program in effect during the Covid-19 state of emergency will expire on April 1, 2022. While there is a possibility that the legislation may be further extended, we currently anticipate that our zoning regulations for restaurants will go back into effect in April. We encourage all restaurants that would like to maintain outdoor table seating areas approved during the state of emergency to contact Emily Wentworth, Community Planning Director, for guidance on any permitting applications that may be required. A typical special permit takes some time. Restaurant operators should reach out – now – to Emily by phone (781-804-2394) or email (wentworthe@hingham-ma.gov).

On March 5, from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm HPS will conduct a vaccination clinic. Vaccinations will be available for eligible Hingham students. The clinic will be run by the State and will make available Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. Pre-registration is required. Tomorrow, HPS will provide clinic information and a link to parents – and post this information on their web site, <https://hinghamschools.org/>.

Effective September 7, 2021, I instituted a COVID-19 mask policy, acting under Chapter 263 of the Acts of 2016. Under my policy, all individuals age 5 and over, regardless of vaccination status, are REQUIRED to wear a mask covering the nose and mouth when indoors in municipal facilities, with certain exceptions. This policy does not apply to Hingham Public Schools. I continue to monitor conditions and, in close coordination with our COVID Command Group, including Hingham's Executive Health Officer, are considering adjustments as improved conditions may allow.

Please continue to take precautions to protect yourself and others from COVID-19. As we all know, vaccination, wearing face coverings, practicing social distancing, and frequently washing hands, among other measures, help protect us all from COVID-19. On January 7, 2022, the Hingham Board of Health issued a Health Advisory strongly recommending the use of face coverings by all patrons, visitors, and employees within any indoor space open to the public in Hingham. The Health Advisory is directed to all visitors and employees within any indoor space in all public places, public housing, assisted living facilities, membership associations, and workplaces in Hingham. The [CDC](#) and the [Massachusetts DPH](#) guidance on face coverings can be found on their respective websites. The Board of Health recommends the use of an N-95, KN-95, or a (non-woven, multi-ply) surgical mask. Woven cloth masks, gators, and bandanas provide significantly less protection against this airborne respiratory virus. Also remember that any face covering should be fitted closely to one's skin to prevent unwanted gaps and leaks."

Appointments

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to amend the vote taken on February 3, 2022 regarding the appointment of Mona Pohl to the Library Board of Trustees by changing the ending date from June 30, 2024 to June 30, 2022. Ms. Klein seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

Public Comment

“The Hingham Select Board encourages community engagement and welcomes questions and comments as agenda items are discussed at the meeting. In addition, we have set aside up to fifteen minutes for public comment for items that fall under the purview of the Select Board and are not already on tonight’s agenda. If any guests wish to speak, please seek to be recognized. Once recognized, state your name and address and address your comments to the Chair. Comments will be limited to three minutes per speaker and must relate to topics within the scope of the responsibilities of the Select Board. Speakers are encouraged to present their remarks in a respectful manner and not to indulge in personalities. The Public Comment period is not a time for debate by members of the Select Board. The Select Board is not adopting or endorsing any of the comments made during the Public Comment period.”

There were no comments from the public.

Town Administrator/Select Board Reports

Ms. Klein reported that the Sustainable Budget Task Force plans to hold office hours tomorrow, February 9th at 12:00 PM via Zoom.

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Klein seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 PM.

Documents: A complete meeting packet of supporting documentation is on file and available for public review in the Board of Selectmen’s office