

**Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 28, 2023
Hingham Town Hall**

In Attendance: Chair George Danis, Nancy MacDonald, Brenda Black, Alan Macdonald, Carol Tully, Brian Stack, Sarah Melia, Joe Griffin, Tina Sherwood, Andy McElaney, Caitlyn Kirk, Lyndsey Kruser, Davalene Cooper

Absent: Jason Price

Participating Remotely: Kathy Curley

Call Meeting to Order: Chair Danis called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. 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 Chairman 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.”

Comments from the public on Items not on the Agenda

There were no comments.

Attended the Capital Outlay Committee Presentation for the Select Board and the School Committee

Bill Ramsey, Chair of the Select Board, called their meeting to order, adopting the language Chair Danis had read above.

Michelle Ayer, Chair of the School Committee, called their meeting to order, adopting the language Chair Danis had read above.

Eric Valentine, Chair of Capital Outlay Committee made the presentation.

- FY24 Capital Outlay Criteria
- FY24 COC RecommendationsFY24 COC Recommendations – Override
- Five Year History of COC Budget (Tax Levy)

The COC recommended funding of \$2,297,587 for various capital projects to be funded from the tax levy, the FY24 proposed override of \$500,000, and the excess ambulance receipts from available reserves. The total budget recommended for Capital Outlay, including user rates/charges and the Municipal Waterways Improvement and Maintenance Fund, is \$10,411,183. If the FY24 override does not pass, this amount will be reduced by \$499,706. Chair Valentine also explained the backlog of capital requests, which grows each year as the Town is unable to adequately fund its capital needs. This was especially demonstrated by showing the backlog of requests for the Department of Public Works.

Bill Ramsey, Chair of the Select Board, called for a motion, which was seconded and unanimously voted to adjourn the Select Board meeting.

Michelle Ayer, Chair of the School Committee, called for a motion, which was seconded and unanimously voted to adjourn the School Committee meeting.

The Advisory Committee meeting reconvened at 7:45pm

Warrant Articles: Hearing and possible vote on the following Articles:

O: Acceptance of MGL Chapter 59, Section N (Veterans)

The Valor Act allows communities to provide tax relief to veterans who offer volunteer services to the Town. There have been approximately 5 veterans who have provided services to the Town over the past 10 years, and this increased staffing has allowed the department to increase their efficiency. The Town has saved approximately \$10,000 in addition to paying for these tax abatements. The Town has the ability to increase the capacity up to 10 veterans to take advantage of this program. This has been offered since 2013 and there are slight modifications being added to this chapter. This will allow the Town to adapt to changes over time and stay in line with minimum wages and changes to the tax law.

A motion was made, seconded and was approved by a roll-call vote 13-0.

T: Naming By-Law

Victor Baltera, a member of the Naming By-Law committee, was in attendance at the meeting. This committee was created in 2018. The committee did due diligence to compare our by-law to surrounding towns and there were three towns with naming by-laws that were far broader than Hingham's current by-law. The committee set out to expand the Town's by-law in order to allow the Select Board to set policy to adjust the needs of naming issues around town.

Hingham is out of step with other communities naming by-laws. Concerns have been raised by sports groups and the country club, among others, who noted that the Town is leaving potential money on the table by not being able to accept donations with recognition naming possibilities.

This Article seeks to replace the Naming By-Law which removes the provision to name for living employees, except for current Town employees, and remove the restriction of naming for commercial entities. This would also allow for the potential name for a Town property to be discussed at both a Special Town Meeting as well as Annual Town Meeting.

The Article will be voted at a future meeting.

U: Plastic Bottle By-Law- Commercial

This Article asks if the Town will adopt a by-law to ban the sale of single-use plastic water bottles in Hingham. The by-law bans the sale of plastic bottles of water smaller than 1 gallon in all stores in Town. It does not impose any restrictions on a resident's use of such plastic water bottles. The goal of the by-

law is to reduce the amount of plastics in town and to encourage residents to adopt behaviors that reduce their use of single-use plastic bottles, and thereby the emissions generated in the production, transport and disposal of consumer plastics.

There was a robust discussion about the pros and cons of adopting this by-law at this time.

Not ambitious enough. Carbonated beverages and juice single-use plastic should be banned also. Only about 25% of plastic gets recycled and has proved that recycling is not the answer. Plastic is a persistent problem. Virgin plastic is cheaper than recycled plastic. If you want to get your arms around the volume of plastic, recycling is only going to take you part of the way.

We are facing a carbon emissions problem. And that is what this is about – helping us learn to think about our impact on carbon emissions and what we use plastic for? The basic infrastructure is in place, where we can get water from our taps. What can we use and what can we do without? This Article and by-law are an attempt to make behavioral change.

The Town may need to invest in more infrastructure and more education before instituting a ban. It is concerning to take this step and there is no available water at Carlson, Haley, Hersey, and Ward fields – and only at Lynch if the house is unlocked. At the high school during camps in the summer when the high school is locked, the children do not have access to water.

The committee went to 20 businesses in Town. Half of the businesses were in favor or inclined to support, and half of them were not in favor or not inclined to support. In Concord, the businesses had an adjustment period but have moved through this.

The state has not taken a position on this, and if the state isn't supporting this, why not? The state is going after the big emissions and not the individual carbon emissions. The state has waste ban goals and the state is putting their attention towards waste bans and recycling.

Is there any information from the towns, what has been the impact on plastics in those areas. It's very hard to track this data, and water bottles do not have a bottle deposit. The data is not currently available. As most of these bylaws have happened in the last two years. Some communities are showing progression in their plastic bans – expanding from bag bans, to plastic water bottles, to take-out containers and straws.

Do we have an estimate on how many plastic water bottles are sold annually in Hingham. Only one retailer wanted to share that information but others did not. What are the sales annually, and what would the impact be? Are we adding another reason to shop outside of our community? In terms of the impact on businesses, there has been no outcry. For example, Stop & Shop has already dealt with this before. For the smaller businesses, they're buying their supplies at places like BJs and not buying them wholesale.

Infrastructure component – have we looked into pushing out the date in order to allow for additional time to put this in place?

None of our surrounding towns have this in place. This would make us somewhat of an island. The objective is to reduce the tonnage of plastic that goes through the transfer station. Initially, that reduction of tonnage would be relatively small. There are options to go to neighboring towns and purchase this project. In Hingham, we don't have that many outlets who sell in bulk.

What could be more effective is if this initiative had more of a regional impact with many towns banning plastic water bottles together. We followed Cohasset with the plastic bag ban, and we would hope that other towns would follow us with this initiative. We have had letters from other towns noting that they are following this issue with interest.

This is impacting the consumer's choice because the scale of alternative offerings is not there yet. Its really a matter of timing and would do well to have the support of neighboring communities to work together. It would make sense to have more allies.

Put aside the pros and cons and look at the specific principles. Teach people the cost to the environment for the convenience and use of a single use bottle. Does the convenience outweigh the detriment of using plastic bottles. Are we doing great harm to ourselves by over-valuing convenience and under-valuing long-term goals. This is about teaching and educating ourselves and others about the bargain we are making between convenience vs. the substantial detriment to the environment, long term. Think globally but act locally.

We will defer the vote on this Article to a future meeting.

X: Senior Center Feasibility Study

This article asks if the Town will authorize an expansion of the purposes for which the \$525,000 appropriated under Article 14 of Annual Town Meeting 2020 may be used in the effort to identify the best solution for an appropriate Senior Center for Hingham.

The money that was set aside to the design for the Senior Center would now be used to look at a wider range of options. The committee is looking at how their senior centers in other towns are meeting the needs of their seniors and this committee wants to look at other options, including, but not limited to Town Hall. This Article would expand the use of the funds that were voted in 2020 including any property owned by the Town of Hingham. This is not a request for funds, it is the ability to use the funds for alternative options.

A motion was made, seconded and was approved by a roll-call vote 13-0.

Q: Capital Stabilization Fund

This Article was not substantially changed but added language stating the words "up to a million dollars" in the recommended motion.

A motion was made, seconded and was approved by a roll-call vote 12-0.

P: Tax Mitigation Stabilization Fund

This vote is going to be deferred due to the need to iron out operational requirements and timing for using this fund.

There were changes made to the Article to address items like the use of unassigned fund balance. And the Article will use less specific language regarding the specifics for moving money into this fund in the future. A question was asked whether this Article require making language changes to the AdCom financial policy.

Liaison Reports:

Planning Board (A. McElaney)

The Planning Board has put off voting on the ADU by-laws and have scheduled a vote for Monday night that will also include voting on minimum occupancy periods. The PB voted against the citizens request related to Resident District A. They approved the rest of the Articles including approving EVUs and the number of unregistered vehicles that citizens are allowed to have in their yard. Language was ‘cleaned up’ for the downtown overlay district. AdCom will vote on PB articles on Tuesday and Thursday next week.

ACES (N. MacDonald)

Yesterday the School Committee met with School Administration and they discussed the unmet needs budget line. The unmet needs included \$300k to capital, a nurse coordinator at \$115,174, and \$200k to professional development and doing away with the tuition fee for full-day kindergarten. The SC had a conversation and voted their budget at that meeting. They determined they were going to move the requests for the nurse coordinator and professional development into their level services budget. They determined they were going to reduce the kindergarten fee by \$800 per child, which has been pulled into their level services budget. Previous budget we saw was \$65,000,212 – which is an operating increase of \$7.48mm. The new recommendation is for \$65,703,985. By pulling these unmet needs into the level services budget the increase is 9.07% increase in the school budget.

The previous increase was a 5.14% increase in the budget. The increase for expenses alone is 7.48%. What was voted last night, the net effect was a 6.74% increase in the school budget, and in the expenses it was 9.07%.

Discussion of Advisory Committee housekeeping items:

Approval of Minutes from the February 7,16 and 23, 2023 AdCom meetings

The Meeting Minutes from February 7. 16 and 23 were voted unanimously, by roll call vote 12-0.

Next meeting: Thursday, March 2, 2023. The main focus will be the school budgets. The School Committee and Administration are not going to do a presentation other than the additional spending requests. The Advisory Committee will be able to ask questions, prior to the potential budget vote in two weeks.

Next Tuesday, a week from tonight, there will be a second session on municipal budgets.

In AdCom, the committee is not allowed to use Google docs due to a potential conflict with OML.

The meeting was adjourned at pm. by roll-call vote at 10:42 pm (13-0).

Documents Distributed for this Meeting:

AdCom February 28 2023, 2023 Meeting Agenda

Annual AdCom Calendar 2022 - 2023

Capital Outlay Budget FY24

Respectfully Submitted,

Tina Sherwood

Secretary, Advisory Committee