

# Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

**Date: March 2, 2021**

**Place: Remote Meeting via Zoom**

***In attendance:*** Committee Members Bob Curley, Julie Strehle, Andy McElaney, Evan Sheehan, Dave Anderson, Davalene Cooper, Kristin Dziergowski, Victor Baltera, Tina Sherwood, Libby Claypoole, Alan Macdonald, Brenda Black, Eryn Kelley, Nancy MacDonald, George Danis and Town Accountant Sue Nickerson.

***Absent:*** No one

1. ***Call meeting to order:*** Chair Curley called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm 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.

2. ***Comments from the public on items not on the agenda:*** None

3. ***Warrant Article hearing and potential vote: Article M- Community Preservation Committee:***

Julie Strehle and Bare Cove Park Committee (BCPC) Chair Claudia Eaton provided an update on the grant request from BCPC to install a bathroom at the Park. The grant request was discussed during the February 25, 2021 AdCom meeting and the proponents were asked to return to respond to questions raised during the meeting.

Ms. Eaton stated that the BCPC had decided on a hold and pump facility due to concerns that non-compostable items would be disposed of in the dry composting version. These items would disrupt the composting process. The cost of the hold and pump facility is about the same as the dry composting version.

Ms. Eaton further stated that the BCPC planned to use a \$50,000 grant from the Cove Apartment Complex to construct a pavilion with picnic tables near the proposed site of the bathroom and the existing museum building. She felt this would lead to more visitors to the Park and would heighten the need for a bathroom facility. Ms. Eaton stated that the BCPC had not yet approached the Board of Selectmen to obtain permission to use the \$50,000 for the purpose of building the pavilion.

AdCom members questioned the issue of hours of operation, maintenance and supplies cost, expected usage of the bathroom, and the alternative option of using a portable bathroom. Additional questions were raised about the process for gaining access to the \$50,000 grant and the approval process for the use of the funds. Members also pointed out that the National Park Service, Conservation Committee and the Board of Health would all have to approve any plans for development in the Park. Chair Eaton said that the bathroom would be open from sunrise to sunset and that a timed lock option could be pursued to opening and closing. Maintenance and supply costs would be covered by either the Committee's budget or separately through donations received and held in the BCPC's Friends of Bare Cove Park account for donations. While the part time Park ranger is expected to clean the facility it is uncertain how that would occur given that the Park is open 7 days per week and the ranger only works a part time schedule.

The AdCom voted a "no action" recommendation by roll call vote of 10 to 4. Voting "no-action" were Julie Strehle, George Danis, Alan Macdonald, Evan Sheehan, Nancy MacDonald, Davalene Cooper, Tina Sherwood, Eryn Kelley, Libby Claypoole and Kristin Dziergowski. Voting in favor of the grant were Victor Baltera, Andy McElaney, Brenda Black and Dave Anderson. The four members who voted to recommend approval of the grant included 2 who wished to be recorded (Victor Baltera and Andy McElaney) so they could retain the option to speak in favor of the grant at All Town Meeting.

***5. Budget hearing and possible vote (agenda item taken out of order): Capital Outlay:***

AdCom member Libby Claypoole presented this budget. Capital Outlay Committee Chair Eric Valentine requests, and Ms. Claypoole recommends the following amount: \$2,600,000.

Chair Valentine stated that the committee had received initial requests of \$4.8 million and that the Capital Outlet budget was \$2.6 million. Mr. Valentine stated that, in evaluating the requests, the committee prioritized items based on safety and a department's ability to perform its core mission... He further stated that the backlog of Capital spending requests has increased from \$15.0 million in 2019 to \$25.4 in 2020. While the Town policy is to fund capital items at between 2-5% of the operating budget the needs outweigh the available funding. He noted that the FY 22 capital budget represents about 2.75% of the operating budget.

Chair Valentine noted that there has been some discussion by the Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator about an additional \$500,000 in funding for capital items. This additional money is still under review, but the Committee does have a prioritized list of items if the funding materializes. In addition to approving the \$2.6 million in capital spending from the tax levy the Committee approved \$3.3 million in capital spending for the Sewer Department, Recreation Department and the South Shore Country Club. This spending would be repaid through user fees.

Chair Curley noted that the Board of Selectmen had not voted this budget yet and that, per custom, the AdCom would delay its vote until after the BOS vote.

**4. Discussion of tax consequences of an overrides and debt exclusions and further review of the Forecast Sensitivity Tool (agenda item order):**

AdCom member Dave Anderson demonstrated the use of a statistical modeling tool developed by former AdCom members John Asher and Jim Taylor. The model shows the tax impact on an average Hingham homeowner from various actions such as an override or a debt exclusion.

Mr. Anderson first presented a demographic review of Hingham and benchmark communities based on Census and Massachusetts Department of Revenue data. The information presented included data on the tax levy, income (per capita and household), and the average house value and assessed taxes for Hingham and its benchmark communities. Mr. Anderson used this information in combination with the modeling tool to show the impact to the average homeowner under various financial scenarios.

Mr. Anderson next used the Forecast Sensitivity Tool that had been reviewed with the AdCom at its February 25, 2021 meeting to show the impact of an override on both current and future Town budgets.

**6. Review and approval of minutes from February 23, 2021:** The minutes were approved, with revisions, by a roll call vote of 14-0-0.

**7. Warrant Articles Update:**

- Chair Curley noted that proposed Harbor Wharves Article Z was still on hold based on concerns raised from the Conservation Committee. The Harbor Development Committee, sponsor of the Article, is waiting for a report from the Woods Hole Advisory Group which will address some of the issues raised by the Conservation Committee;
- Chair Curley noted that proposed Article BB, calling for the names of recently deceased former Town volunteers to be read at All Town Meeting had been permitted by the Attorney General's office and was now under review;
- Andy McElaney stated that proposed Article BBB, which would allow for detached accessory dwelling units, was still being debated by the Planning Board. Mr. McElaney noted that one concern of the Planning Board was over having two housing units on one housing plot;
- Chair Curley noted that the two flood plain Articles might be combined into Article AAA with Article CCC then being deleted from the Warrant. Victor Baltera noted that this option had been discussed but that the Planning Board seemed to be considering moving both Articles forward without combining them;
- Brenda Black stated that the proposed Climate Action Planning Study, Article O, is on hold waiting for information on the financial contribution from Hingham Municipal Lighting Plant;

- Nancy MacDonald noted that proposed Article N, Design and Construction bids for the proposed Public Safety Facility, has been delayed while the Public Safety Building Committee waits for a cost estimate.

**8. *Liaison reports:***

- Andy McElaney stated that the Town Masterplan Committee has posted the draft plan to its website and urged AdCom members to read it to get an idea of the long term needs, wants, and desires of the Town's residents;
- Davalene Cooper noted that the Hingham Development and Industrial Commission is planning to send a letter to the Planning Board in opposition to the proposed Amazon distribution center.

**9. *Advisory Committee Housekeeping items:***

- Chair Curley stated that the AdCom would next meet on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>. Additional meetings will be scheduled as needed. He also noted that the BOS plans to vote the Town budgets on March 15<sup>th</sup>;
- Davalene Cooper said the Policies and Procedures review team is planning to present their findings at the March 9<sup>th</sup> AdCom meeting;
- Chair Curley noted that there have been no changes to the proposed dates for All Town Meeting and the Town elections.

**10. *Matters not anticipated within 48 hours of meeting:* None**

**11. *Adjourn:* Motion to adjourn at 9:56 pm by roll call vote of 14-0-0**

Respectfully submitted,

George Danis, Secretary

**List of Documents Distributed for this Meeting:**

- Agenda
- Warrant Articles
- 5-year Capital Plan
- Municipal Tax Rate Comparison information
- Financial Planning model and Forecast Sensitivity Model: Both models can be viewed at: <https://www.hingham-ma.gov/224/Board-of-Selectmen>

Approved on 03/09/2021 by roll call vote 14-0-0

