

## **Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Date: March 5, 2020**

**Place: Town Hall**

In attendance: Committee Members Victor Baltera, Bob Curley, Julie Strehle, Tom Belyea, Eryn Kelley, George Danis, Libby Claypoole, Evan Sheehan, Andy McElaney, Davalene Cooper, Dave Anderson, Nancy MacDonald, Ed Gaydos, Kathleen Almand, and Town Accountant Sue Nickerson. Eric Haskell joined the meeting halfway through.

Absent: None.

Chairman Baltera called the meeting to order at 7:38 pm.

***Comments from the public regarding items not on the Agenda*** None

### ***Warrant Article Hearings***

KK – Climate Action Planning – Ed Gaydos provided an overview of this Article and Comment. This Article was submitted by the Town’s Energy Action Committee (“EAC”), and asks the Town to approve a Climate Action Plan with goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% to 100% on or by 2050. The Article provides for the creation of a Climate Action Planning Committee (“CAPC”) consisting of 11 members (3 members of the Board of Selectmen (“BOS”) or its designees, 1 School Committee member or its designee, 1 member of the Hingham Municipal Light Plant, 1 member of the Planning Board or its designee, and four residents, two selected by the BOS and two selected by the Moderator).

The creation of a Climate Action Plan would be a means to combat changes in the environment threatened by the continued release of carbon and other climate changing gases. The CAPC membership is designed to include organizations throughout the Town who will need to enact provisions of the CAP and live with its consequences. The expectation is that the plan would take two years to complete.

The BOS discussed this Article at its meeting on 3/3/2020. While supportive of the intent of this Article, and that it is important for the Town to have a climate action plan with a timely way forward, the BOS concluded that the type of committee created by this Article has its disadvantages. Instead, the BOS would favor the creation of a task force to work directly with the Town Administrator (“TA”), bringing in the expertise of various Town departments, to begin work immediately after Town Meeting (without waiting for the talent bank process to conclude). This type of committee would be more nimble, flexible, and able to act more quickly. While not subject to open meeting law because of its reporting structure to the TA, the committee would report back to the BOS on a regular basis. The BOS voted no action, but stated its intention to include the EAC in any action going forward.

Bob Curley thanked the EAC for its efforts. He reported having recently re-read the 2015 Kleinfelder Climate Change Vulnerability, Risk Assessment and Adaptation Study for the Town of Hingham, which underscores the necessity for climate action planning. Many different Town departments and committees have a huge stake in climate action planning, such as Harbor Development, the Board of Health, and Hingham Municipal Light Plant, so the BOS plan to use Town employees would be a better approach.

Laura Burns, a representative of Hingham Net Zero (a group of Hingham residents who've come together to raise awareness of the need for aggressive climate action, support the Town's efforts to cut emissions, and lend grassroots impetus to efforts to reduce carbon emissions in our town as quickly as possible) spoke in support of any Town efforts to get to net zero. Hingham Net Zero has been following the EAC's efforts, with the idea of supporting this Article. While Hingham Net Zero, with 70 members, hadn't officially met to discuss the BOS vote for no action and its plan to move forward with a task force, Ms. Burns considers this BOS plan as a viable way to move forward. Ms. Burns asked the task force to please keep the public informed of its progress, and urged action items for future Town Meetings. Ms. Burns cited progress on climate change planning made in other towns in the Commonwealth, such as Concord, Belmont, and Brookline.

Mike Reive, a member of both the EAC and Hingham Net Zero, appealed to AdCom members to consider that the climate is in an emergency situation. The EAC studied climate planning in other towns, and wants concrete action taken in the Town within a year, such as a plan to move ahead, and work with peer towns on the South Shore. Mr. Reive explained that had the EAC had the opportunity to work with the BOS earlier in the fall, then this Article would have looked different. Mr. Reive encouraged AdCom to support the establishment of a task force by BOS to present a climate action plan deliverable to Town Meeting 2021.

BOS Chair Karen Johnson reported that the BOS had discussion with Hingham Net-Zero and EAC last fall, and had added climate planning as a goal for this past year. However, the meeting timeline with EAC didn't happen in enough time to work through this Article. Ms. Johnson agrees that the BOS is in full support of the concept of climate planning and the creation of a task force. Ms. Johnson added that Town Counsel John Coughlin offered a legal opinion that if the TA's office forms a task force, with Town employees plus volunteers, the task force operation would not be subject to open meeting law. But Ms. Johnson stressed that this type of task force is not an effort to skirt public transparency, just a mechanism to get moving faster, assign tasks individually, with the ability to accomplish work even if everyone can't attend a meeting, with regular reporting to the BOS.

Davalene Cooper asked when a working group would be created, and Ms. Johnson replied that it would start to formulate a group immediately after Town Meeting if no action was taken on

Article KK. Chairman Baltera asked whether the Town was considering Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program grant money that may be available from the State, and Ms. Johnson replied that the short term goal of the task force would be to identify grants and funding sources available to the Town.

Dave Anderson felt that the recommendation of “no action” sounded dismissive, and asked if the Comment could include details of Ms. Johnson’s discussion of the process of the creation of a new task force.

A vote on Article KK is scheduled for the AdCom meeting next Tuesday, 3/10/2020.

K – Transfer Funds to the Reserve Fund – Tom Belyea provided an overview of this Article and Comment. This Article asks the Town to transfer funds to the Reserve Fund in the event that the existing reserve is not adequate to cover unbudgeted and unanticipated expenses for the balance of the current FY2020. The recommended amount will be reported to Town Meeting.

Sue Nickerson reported that the process to identify any shortfalls has already begun. Budget areas which may need funds are Legal, Unemployment, Property and Liability Insurance (which increased because of large claims made at the end of the last fiscal year because of the fire at Hingham High School). She anticipates that the amount will be known by the April AdCom meeting. The AdCom vote will take place before the start of Town Meeting.

JJ – Transfer of Insurance Funds Related to East School Flood - George Danis provided an update on the status of this Article. Since the last payment check has not been received from the insurance company, with the exact dollar amount, AdCom will defer a vote until its meeting on Tuesday, 3/10/2020.

### ***Warrant Article Hearings and Votes***

O - Repair/Reconstruction of Town Pier - Libby Claypoole provided an overview of this Article and a Comment. Bill Reardon, Chair of the Harbor Development Committee, joined by Dan Gagne from Beals + Thomas engineering firm, were present to add information and answer questions. This Article asks the Town to fund the repair/reconstruction of the Town Pier, including the addition of resiliency measures to address sea level rise.

The current issues with this Article are whether the target height is still appropriate, given a recently changed estimate in sea level rise (based on comparison of tide gauge data in Boston Harbor from 2015 to 2020), and an increase in project cost. At the AdCom meeting on December 17, 2020, Mr. Reardon gave a presentation about the condition of the town wharves, and the decision to prioritize the repair/construction of Town Pier, with a target seawall height of 11 feet. Based on the selected design and height, Beals + Thomas engineering firm put plans together. Since that AdCom meeting, the cost estimate of the repair/reconstruction has

increased \$1.5 million, for a new total estimate of \$5.5 million, including a 30% contingency on construction costs.

Mr. Reardon added that the cost to repair/reconstruct Town Pier does not represent one-third of the total wharf work that is necessary in the harbor area. The Town Pier project would increase the seawall height to 11 feet, with a modular design component to allow a future course of granite to be added (to increase its height by 1.5 to 2 feet if needed). The seawall and revetment (retaining wall) have estimated useful lives of 85 and 60 years, respectively. Future work on Veterans Wharf will be revetment only, which is not as much work as Town Pier, and not include the use of granite. The scope of work on Barnes Wharf is unknown at this time because the plans for a new boat house to be built on that wharf are not yet available. The Town is eligible to apply for a state MVP action grant (from the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program) of up to 50% of the project cost, up to \$2 million. There is also the potential for grant funding to become available from the Seaport Bond Council.

AdCom members discussed the need to do this kind of repair, since inland facilities in Town, such as buildings in Hingham Square and Foster School, would otherwise be threatened by sea level rise. Questions included the methods used for cost estimating, contingency cost, and whether existing granite materials could be reused.

While the AdCom vote on this Article was scheduled for tonight, the BOS hasn't voted yet on this Article. If BOS votes at its meeting next Monday, then AdCom will vote at its meeting on Tuesday, 3/10/2020.

#### W - Design Funds for Senior Center Renovations

Chairman Baltera reported that this Article is being withdrawn, and will be replaced with a new Article for design funds for a larger senior center renovation. Further discussion will occur at the AdCom hearing next Tuesday, 3/10/2020.

N - Reopen Article N: Amendment to Council on Aging By-law - Julie Strehle provided an updated overview of this Article, Comment, and a favorable recommendation. After AdCom had voted to approve this by-law language update at its hearing on 2/13/2020, more outdated references were found in Section 1: an outdated reference to the name of the Commonwealth's agency responsible for elders affairs, and an outdated M.G.L. Chapter number.

AdCom voted to reopen the prior vote, 13-0-1 (Eric Haskell abstained because he was not present at the 2/13/2020 hearing). The recommended motion was updated to include the new updated language in Section 1. BOS member Karen Johnson confirmed that the BOS does not need to re-vote the Article because a vote for favorable action would not change the Article itself. The vote to approve the new recommendation was 13-0-1, with Eric Haskell abstaining because he had arrived after the discussion on the update to this Article.

### ***Discussion of Budgets***

AdCom discussed the budget. The BOS voted a budget at its meeting on March 3, 2020. Town Administrator Tom Mayo, Assistant Town Administrator Michelle Monsegur, BOS member Karen Johnson, School Superintendent Paul Austin, School Department Director of Business John Ferris, and Police Chief Glenn Olsson were present to provide information and answer questions. An updated forecast was provided on 3/3/2020, with the projected surplus of \$190,277. This result was achieved by the elimination of all TA recommended additional requests on the municipal side (\$512,655), and the elimination of School Department Tier 1 requests (\$930,743). These calculations include the allocation of \$123,828 from School Department revolving funds to fund expenses in the pre-Kindergarten program. However, \$90,000 of that revolving fund amount was intended to offset Tier 1 budget request expenses.

On the municipal side of the budget, because of the reorganization of the Engineering department (due to elimination of that department and reassignment of engineering functions to other departments), there are budget request number adjustments across several departments. In addition, offsets were identified to fund the FY21 restructuring of the Engineering function.

AdCom liaisons reviewed the additional requests from each municipal department, including those recommended by the TA: 1) Procurement and Contracts Manager (\$78,000), 2) Public Information Officer (\$44,735), 3) GIS Coordinator (\$78,000), 4) Training - New IT Director (\$61,460), 5) Legal Services annual increase (\$25,000), 6) Elections Computer Service Agreements (\$3,500), 7) Town Hall Custodian (\$21,914), 8) Police Officer (\$78,209), 9) Police Overtime (\$20,000, an amount half of original request), 10) Fire Fighter (\$74,055), 11) Fire Emergency Management Expenses (\$5,000, an amount half of original request), 12) Fire Promotional Examination Expenses (\$14,000), 13) Building Department Uniform Allowance (\$1,582), 14) Harbormaster Department Reorganization (\$4,000), 15) Elder Services Program Coordinator (\$42,186, not recommended by TA), 16) Historic Preservation Monument Upkeep (\$2,000), and 17) Historic Preservation Cemetery Maintenance (\$1,200).

The salaries of the requested additional positions of Procurement Manager and GIS Coordinator can be offset in FY21 with savings from the reorganization of the engineering department structure. These two positions are at the top of the priority order for the TA because with a Manager, the procurement process can be better managed across all Town departments; and GIS Coordinator could collect, analyze and use more GIS data, which can also be used by many town departments and functions, such as the new water company, emergency management, capital management, and sewer department.

To Ms. Claypoole's question about whether the offsets for engineering reorganization are temporary or permanent, Town Administrator Tom Mayo replied that the Town Engineer salary will be half offset from road building funds for the next two years, and the DPW Administrative

Assistant salary can be offset by \$33,000 from the CPC Administrative fund (which has \$90,000 left in it for future offsets). Mr. Mayo recommends that the Community Preservation Committee grant administrative funds to this fund in FY22.

Regarding additional requests from the School Department, the intent of Tier 1 funding requests are for intervention in the Pre-Kindergarten program, math enrichment needs, funds for assessment and professional development in intervention, administrative help, full funding for the Human Resources Director, and special education positions at Hingham High School. Mr. Ferris clarified that the Town's budget plan to take funds out of the revolving fund include \$90,000 earmarked for Tier 1 needs which weren't otherwise going to be funded by the budget amount recommended for the schools, leaving the school department less \$90,000. AdCom members discussed the revolving funds used by the School Department, including food services, and the need to find ways to use that money towards budget needs.

Mr. Mayo discussed his priorities for the municipal budget additional requests, for a total of \$87,967: Procurement Officer (\$21,621), GIS Coordinator (\$1,620), Building Department Uniforms (\$1,582), Elections Expenses (\$3,500), IT - Training New Director for 3 months (\$30,730), Fire Emergency Response Expenses (\$5,000), Monuments (\$2,000), and Town Hall Custodian (\$21,914). While public safety positions are important, difficult budget decisions need to be made, and at this point with staffing, public safety can function. Resident Brooke Brown spoke in favor of funding Tier 1 school budget requests.

BOS member Karen Johnson informed AdCom of the reasoning for the BOS budget vote on 3/3/2020. Although historic budget discussions have included whether the Town should consider an operational override, the driving factor not to entertain an override at this time is because the future Foster School building project would result in a debt exclusion override, and there is a new line of sight to other larger capital projects coming into focus, which will also include more debt. BOS voted for the TA recommendations of \$87,967, with the balance going to the school budget. Ms. Johnson recommends starting discussions after Town Meeting on revenue sources over the next ten years, a possible override, and balancing that with the financial policy of preserving economic diversity in this Town. At this time, a differential tax rate would need to be significant to make any impact. Chairman Baltera pointed out that a potential source of revenue could also be future development. Ms. Johnson reported that the Town has and will continue to have conversations with major landowners in South Hingham to get out in front of any development, to make sure that the ramifications of development are not too significant to homeowners in that area of Town.

School Committee Chair Michelle Ayer reported that there is a School Committee proposal to develop a financial subcommittee, which would intensively study revolving funds and school

budget needs. She reiterated the need for as much Tier 1 funding as possible to meet the most critical needs.

Chairman Baltera reminded members to review the Town Financial Policy on using Fund Balance to balance the budget (that excess Unassigned Fund Balance should not be used to fund recurring operating budget items). Also, Fund Balance is a ratio, and the Town must add about \$700,000 to Fund Balance each year to maintain the ratio. AdCom will resume its budget discussion and vote the entire budget at its meeting on Tuesday, 3/10/2020.

***Liaison Reports*** - None

***Warrant Process Update***

For the next AdCom meeting, there will be five more Articles for hearing and vote. Chairman Baltera is making assignments for these Articles. These new Articles include a feasibility study for a new public safety facility, for both police and fire, to be located on Route 3A near the Shipyard; feasibility and design for the expansion of the senior center space into the existing police station space in Town Hall; establish a building committee for the new public safety facility; establish a building committee for the senior center expansion; and an update to Article C to include the discharge of the current fire station building committee.

***Discussion of Advisory Committee Housekeeping Items***

The next AdCom meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 3/10/2020. A meeting will also be scheduled for Thursday, 3/12/2020, in case not all matters have been concluded on Tuesday.

***Matters Not Anticipated within 48 Hours of the Meeting*** - None

**Adjourn** - 11:23 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Julie Strehle, Secretary

List of Documents Distributed at this Meeting:

Agenda

Articles KK, O, N

Beals + Thomas memorandum to Hingham BOS on Wharf Infrastructure Resiliency

Improvement of Hingham Inner Harbor, dated 2/27/2020

Email correspondence from Daniel Gagne, Beals + Thomas, regarding Hingham Town Pier Cost Estimate

FY21 Budget: Path to a Balanced Budget (slide presentation)

Town Administrator Additional Requests, FY21 Reorganization, and New Priority Order spreadsheet

Written correspondence on a town budget recommendation

Memo to Advisory Committee from BOS member Mary Power regarding the budget

Correspondence from Jonathan Asher regarding the town budget vote recommendation

AdCom approved 5/12/2020