

Select Board

March 8, 2022

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

6:04 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 the Town of Hingham in accordance with the Open Meeting Law may record this meeting and all communications during this meeting. 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 Ramsey and Ms. Liz Klein

Approval of Minutes

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

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Hingham Library Staff Association, SEIU Local 888

Mr. David Pace presented. He said that this is the final collective bargaining agreement with the Libraries union, which includes the following changes:

- An equity adjustment to the compensation for Union members
- 3% general wage increase
- Includes Juneteenth as an official holiday
- A fifth week of vacation for employees that have worked for the library for five years

He said that the changes are consistent with the Town By-laws and all changes are retroactive to July 1, 2021. The changes will be effective for a three-year term.

Voted, Ms. Klein made a motion to sign the Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Hingham Library Staff Association, Local 888, SEIU, AFL-CIO effective July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2024. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:**Ms. Klein: yes****Mr. Fisher: yes****Mr. Ramsey: yes****Agreement with Energyzt Advisors, LLC to Assist in the Development of a Climate Action Plan**

Ms. Kathy Reilly and Mr. Brad Moyer presented. Ms. Reilly, Procurement and Contracts Manager, said that they are requesting approval of the Climate Action plan consultant. An RFP has been issued for the Climate Action Plan that had been approved at the past Town Meeting and the Town received four bids. The evaluation team, a sub-group of the Climate Action Planning Committee, reviewed the bids and recommended Energyzt Advisors. The cost of \$80,000 was anticipated and reserved for and would be paid on behalf of the Town by HMLP. Mr. Moyer added that Energyzt was the top choice due to their strong references and recommendations. Mr. Moyer noted that all four bids came in between \$78,000-\$80,000. The Committee hoped to have the contours of the plan sufficiently developed by September 30, 2022, followed by a Warrant Article recommendation for the Select Board and the Advisory Committee. They hope to present a draft to the State by December 31, 2022. Mr. Fisher noted that the execution of this contract would be contingent upon receipt of funding from HMLP.

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to authorize the Town Administrator to sign the agreement with Energyzt Advisors, LLC to assist in the development of a Climate Action Plan for the Town of Hingham in an amount not to exceed \$80,000 subject to receipt of sufficient funds from the Hingham Municipal Lighting Plant. Ms. Klein seconded.

Roll Call Vote:**Ms. Klein: yes****Mr. Ramsey: yes****Mr. Fisher: yes****Article BBB: Zoning By-law: Requirements for Accessory Uses**

Ms. Emily Wentworth, Planning Director, and Ms. Robyn Maguire, Chair of the ZBA, presented. This Article has been put forth by the Zoning Board of Appeals. Ms. Maguire said that the pandemic has provided a greater opportunity for residents to conduct activities from their homes and permitted uses in connection with a single or 2-family dwelling home have included resident offices, studios or customary home occupations. Most home-based businesses can be operated without impact on the surrounding neighborhood; however during the pandemic, the ZBA has seen some potential to cause disruption to neighborhoods, and thus they decided to put forth Article BBB. Hingham's Zoning By-law states that accessory uses, "shall not alter the character of the premises on which they are located or impair the neighborhood." The Board recently noted that more specific parameters would help the Building Department as well as the Zoning Board with respect to the administration of the By-law. This Article was unanimously supported by the ZBA for a favorable recommendation to Town Meeting. Potential alterations to the Article included changes to the language, specifically that accessory uses shall not impact the noise, light, odor, traffic, congestion, pedestrian safety, availability and safety of parking, and frequency of deliveries of the neighborhood. Ms. Maguire felt that the proposed changes would make the By-law more straightforward and easier for the Building Department to enforce. The Board fully supported the changes made to Article BBB.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to open the Warrant and insert the revised Article BBB in place of the prior version of the Article BBB and then close the Warrant. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

COVID-19 Report

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

“DPH is reporting that the 7-day statewide average of confirmed COVID-19 cases has declined substantially, from to 839 on February 27 to 648 on March 6. Statewide hospitalizations have fallen, from 445 on February 25 to 319 on March 4. The latest data show the Hingham case count is declining. DPH reported a 14-day daily incidence rate of 27 cases in Hingham through February 24. On March 3, DPH reported a 14-day daily incidence rate of 17 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 Town of Hingham has received over 8,000 rapid antigen test kits from Plymouth County. The Town conducted two successful distribution days for Hingham residents, and is now making additional tests available for pickup, at the following locations:

- Hingham Police Station, 212 Central St.
- Hingham Fire Station, 339 Main St.
- Hingham Recreation office, Hingham Town Hall and Hingham Health Department, 210 Central St.
- Hingham Farmers Market at Wompatuck State Park Visitors Center, 204 Union St.
- Hingham Senior Center, 224 Central St.

On March 5, HPS conducted a vaccination clinic at Hingham Middle School, administering vaccinations to 26 Hingham residents.

On March 4, I announced my lifting of the masking policy, effective Monday, March 7, 2022 reversing the policy I instituted on September 7, 2021. The decision to lift the policy was made based on the reduction of the number of reported COVID-19 cases in Hingham, high vaccination rates among Hingham residents, and statewide hospitalization trends. On Feb. 28, Hingham Public Schools implemented a mask-optional policy in its buildings and on its busses. On March 3, the Hingham Board of Health lifted its mask advisory. Taken together, these decisions leave masking an individual’s option in all town-owned buildings.

Effective today this group, led by Fire Chief Steve Murphy, decided to shift to bi-weekly meetings. This group will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and coordinate Town actions as needed. I will also be reducing the frequency of these COVID-19 reports. Of course, as new news occurs, I will report as appropriate. Chief Murphy is organizing input from Town departments, to assemble a Town wide

After Action review. This project will capture “lessons learned” to strengthen Town operations and resilience.

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. 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.”

Mr. Fisher announced that the government is again offering free Covid-19 tests to residents at www.covidtests.gov. He also reminded the public that the CDC still has guidance with respect to travel, especially international travel, and encouraged folks to consult their website prior to travel.

6:40 PM: The Select Board entered into recess.

7:00 PM: Joint Session with Advisory Committee, School Committee, and Capital Outlay Committee

7:04 PM: The Select Board reconvened and the three Chairs called their meetings to order.

FY23 Financial Forecast Update

Mr. Mayo announced that the final FY23 Financial Forecast would include a balanced budget. A balanced budget was achieved by removing all additional requests from both the Town and School budgets, subject to further consideration by the Select Board and the Advisory Committee. Ms. Michelle Monsegur presented the following budget, which summarized the recent changes.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES	2/18/2022 Forecast	3/7/2022 Forecast	Positive/(Negative) Change	Notes
Sources				
Debt Exclusions	\$3,685,718	\$3,506,882	(\$178,836)	Reverse Stabilization Fund use
Stabilization Fund	\$2,161,425	\$178,836	(\$1,982,589)	
Federal Funds/Fund Balance	\$1,783,115	\$2,256,617	\$473,502	ARPA funds to be released by Plymouth County for revenue replacement
Uses				
Capital Outlay	\$2,949,040	\$2,700,000	\$249,040	Reverse Non-Excluded Debt Capacity transfer to Capital Outlay
Non-excluded Debt	\$1,900,573	\$2,149,613	(\$249,040)	
Municipal Budget - Other Expenses	\$9,902,393	\$9,924,393	(\$22,000)	Conservation Dept.: Hingham FY23 Straits Pond contribution
Health Insurance	\$7,119,766	\$7,071,062	\$48,704	GIC voted FY23 rates on 3/3

EXCESS/(Shortfall)	(\$1,563,944)	(\$3,225,163)	(\$1,661,219)	
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ONE PATH TO A BALANCED BUDGET				
Uses: Article 6	\$136,789,673	\$135,045,402	\$1,744,271	Subtract all municipal and school additional requests
Sources: Federal Funds /Fund Balance	\$3,737,509	\$2,256,617	\$1,480,892	Plug gap with Unassigned Fund Balance
			\$3,225,163	

Federal Funds/Fund Balance	
	ARPA
1,383,115	(direct/State)
473,502	ARPA (P. County)
400,000	ESSER
<u>1,480,892</u>	Fund Balance
3,737,509	

Ms. Monsegur noted the following changes that have affected the forecast:

- New guidance from the Department of Revenue that clarified that Hingham would not be able to use its Stabilization Fund in the way the Town Administrator was hoping to in FY23. The Sustainable Budget Task Force has been looking into the Stabilization Fund to see if they could accelerate that use in FY23 to help bridge the budget gap by using the \$2.1 million balance. With the new guidance from DOR, the Town would have to revert to its prior practice of using about \$178,000 each year to reduce the interest related to certain debt-excluded projects. This new guidance widens the budget gap by \$2.1 million.
- New guidance from Plymouth County notes that they intend to make available \$10 million to member communities to use for revenue replacement. Hingham should receive \$473,502 from the County for this purpose, which would be put towards the FY23 budget. There could potentially be more funds available to Hingham if other communities do not seek to use their funds for this purpose, but these numbers will not be available before Hingham’s Annual Town Meeting in April.
- After careful analysis of current bond anticipation notes, it was noted that the non-excluded debt capacity would be used up with debt service, so that money would not be available to fund Capital Outlay.
- The Select Board has approved a Reserve Fund Transfer for FY22 for \$22,000 to fund Hingham’s share of the Straits Pond allocation for repairs to the tidal gate as well as some studies. Straits Pond monies are shared between Hingham (25%), Hull (50%), and Cohasset (25%).
- Proposed FY23 health insurance rates should decrease by \$48,000.

All of these changes still left Hingham with a deficit of \$3.2 million. Removing all additional budget requests would lower the number by \$1.7 million. An additional \$1.5 million would be filled with Unassigned Fund Balance.

There were a number of questions from members of the Advisory Committee relating to Unassigned Fund Balance, federal funds, and the newly identified \$1.7 million in unspent School funds. Ms. Kerry Ni, Chair of the School Committee, noted that the \$1.7 million in unspent School funds is a preliminary figure. Some of this may be put towards the Special Education Stabilization Fund or towards this year's budget and that the School Committee is still deciding the best way to use the funds. Some of the unspent funds were due to favorable hiring situations, where new teachers and staff were hired at a lower rate than had been anticipated. There was some additional discussion regarding using Unassigned Fund Balance to offset the cost of the new Foster School, the new Public Safety Facility, tennis courts at the High School, and Fire Department capital projects. Ms. Monsegur also noted that the recent wage and classification study and any collective bargaining agreements that have been settled have been included in the FY23 budget as presented.

CAPITAL OUTLAY RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Eric Valentine, Chair of the Capital Outlay Committee, presented. He said that the committee has completed their annual review process, in which they meet with each of the departments that are requesting capital items. They have had detailed discussions with each department to best understand the nature of each request, such as the need and the priority, etc. After the department meetings, the Capital Outlay Committee meets to deliberate over which items to fund with their projected budget for that fiscal year. Items are then prioritized by the committee.

Mr. Valentine reported that they have received requests for \$5.2 million. Based on their projected budget of \$2.7 million, he anticipated that they could fund about 52% of the requests. After annual baseline requests for capital, the balance of \$1.8 million could be spent on Priority 1 items. Some Priority 1 items include:

- \$722,000 – Police
 - 7 hybrid cruisers (\$378,000)
 - dash cams and radios (\$145,000)
 - Body cams (\$139,000)
- \$220,000 – front end loader for the DPW
- \$180,000 – a Town-wide IT upgrade
- \$884,000 – School Department

The Committee recommended the following funding sources for capital projects in FY23:

- \$2.7 million from the tax levy
- \$125,000 from the Municipal Waterways Fund for the Harbormaster's capital requests
- \$4.3 million from user rates and fees for the Country Club, Recreation Department, Sewer Department and Water System

There was some additional discussion regarding deferred items, specifically DPW items and user fees and potential grant money to fund Police body cams.

He said that the Capital Outlay budget needs more funding and noted that there always are requests that they are not able to fund. In conclusion, the committee is recommending the following funding sources:

There were some questions from the Advisory Committee and School Committee members. Some attention was given to capital requests from the Fire Department, including a pumper truck

Mr. John Borger, 53 Lafayette Avenue, member of Hingham Net Zero, asked about the budget process and timeframe going forward. Mr. Mayo said that the Select Board would be discussing Warrant Articles and the proposed budget. The Select Board vote would be followed by a vote of the Advisory Committee.

Vote: made a motion to approve the FY23 Capital Outlay Budget as recommended by the Capital Outlay Committee. Seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

8:35 PM: Ms. Kerry Ni adjourned the meeting of the School Committee.

8:36 PM: Mr. Eric Valentine adjourned the meeting of the Capital Outlay Committee.

2022 Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles

Article GG: Real Estate Transfer Fee (version 3)

Chair Fisher stated that he would like further refinement of Article GG prior to voting by the Select Board. Mr. Ramsey and Ms. Klein agreed. They both noted that there has been considerable community engagement regarding this Article. Ms. Klein encouraged residents to keep this Article in mind as the Town looks for alternative revenue sources. Mr. Fisher said that once an Article such as this is voted favorably by Town Meeting, it would then require approval by the MA Legislature, which would make it hard to amend in the future. He felt that there should be further analysis of a residential application versus a commercial application.

There were differing opinions from the Advisory Committee regarding Article GG, resulting in a consensus that further refinement is needed.

Ms. Mary Power, 1 King Philip Path, agreed with Mr. Fisher that this Article is not quite ready to be presented to Town Meeting yet. She felt that the tax implications that could result from a FY24 override, as well as implementation of several capital projects could raise taxes significantly. She encouraged further exploration of the Real Estate Transfer Fee as a way to lessen the tax implications for residents

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to remove Article GG from the Warrant.

Vote: Mr. Fisher amended the motion to open the Warrant, remove Article GG and then close the Warrant. Ms. Klein seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

9:17 PM: Ms. Strehle announced that the Advisory Committee would enter into recess before signing back in to their meeting on a separate zoom link from the agenda.

Article F: Budgets

- Mr. Mayo explained his recommendations for additional expenses that he feels are critical for the Town, including:
 1. New poll pad for elections (\$1,875)
 2. Sustainability Coordinator shared with the Town of Cohasset (\$48,000)
 3. Part-time Office Assistant for the Weir River Water System (to be shared between the WRWS and the Town Engineer (\$26,366)

There was some discussion regarding whether Mr. Mayo felt that it would be essential that items on his recommended list be funded during the next year.

Mr. John Borger, 53 Lafayette Avenue, voiced his appreciation that Mr. Mayo and the Select Board has made the Sustainability Coordinator a priority.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to recommend a FY2023 Budget as follows:

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

- SELECT BOARD: \$854,851
- HUMAN RESOURCES: \$163,742
- RESERVE FUND: \$709,291
- TOWN ACCOUNTANT : \$396,965
- INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY: \$633,138
- ASSESSORS: \$431,000
- TREASURER/COLLECTOR: \$451,359
- LEGAL SERVICES: \$395,372
- TOWN MEETINGS: \$46,653
- TOWN CLERK: \$205,241
- ELECTIONS: \$5,126
- CONSERVATION COMMISSION: \$234,406
- COMMUNITY PLANNING: \$60,376
- LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT: \$163,294
- BARE COVE PARK: \$33,528
- TOWN HALL: \$710,184
- GRAND ARMY MEMORIAL HALL: \$24,187

Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to recommend a FY23 Budget as follows:

PUBLIC SAFETY

- POLICE DEPARTMENT: \$7,187,179

Ms. Klein seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: abstain

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to recommend a FY23 Budget as follows for the following categories:

- FIRE DEPARTMENT: \$7,171,768
- DISPATCH SERVICES: \$991,420
- BUILDING COMMISSIONER: \$278,751
- ANIMAL CONTROL: \$81,896
- HARBORMASTER: \$307,880
- PUBLIC SAFETY UTILITIES: \$558,251
- TOTAL PUBLIC SAFETY: \$16,577,155

Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to recommend a FY23 budget as follows for the following categories:

PUBLIC WORKS AND FACILITIES

- HIGHWAY/TREE & PARK: \$4,354,087
- TRANSFER STATION/RECYCLING: \$1,738,195
- SEWER COMMISSION: 3,703,041

Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to recommend a FY23 budget as follows for the following categories:

HUMAN SERVICES

- HEALTH DEPARTMENT: \$387,063
- ELDER SERVICES: \$312,734
- VETERANS' SERVICES: \$307,609
- HEALTH IMPERATIVES: \$2,700
- SOUTH SHORE WOMEN'S CENTER: \$3,700

CULTURE AND RECREATION

- LIBRARY: \$2,181,736

Ms. Klein seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to recommend a FY23 budget as follows for the following categories:

- RECREATION COMMISSION: \$371,227
- TRUSTEES OF BATHING BEACH: \$40,672

Ms. Klein seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: abstain

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to recommend a FY23 budget as follows for the following categories:

- HISTORICAL COMMISSION: \$90,846
- CELEBRATIONS: \$17,567

ENTERPRISE FUND

- COUNTRY CLUB: \$1,988,015
- WEIR RIVER WATER SYSTEM: \$12,881,442

DEBT SERVICE: \$5,835,331

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

- GROUP INSURANCE: \$7,071,062
- OTHER POST EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS: \$1,289,173
- CONTRIBUTORY RETIREMENT: \$5,837,513
- WORKER'S COMPENSATION: \$330,000
- UNEMPLOYMENT: \$30,000
- MANDATORY MEDICARE: \$1,061,995

TOTAL EMPLOYEE BENEFITS: \$15,619,743

UNCLASSIFIED

- PROPERTY AND LIABILITY INSURANCE: \$1,114,464

Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

EDUCATION

- SCHOOL DEPARTMENT: \$850,609

The Board and the Town Administrator discussed the school budget and whether to allocate at a ratio of 60/40 with the Town. Mr. Fisher suggested that they allocate a bit higher than the 60/40 ratio to account for the salary of a Fine Arts Director. There was some discussion of the \$1.7 million surplus in the current school budget. Mr. Fisher felt that the Advisory Committee could decide whether funding the Fine Arts Director would be included in the budget or paid for from the surplus. Ms. Klein and Mr. Ramsey were also in favor of supporting the Fine Arts Director.

The Board heard comments from several School Committee members and residents including:

Liza O'Riley, 19 Porter's Cove Rd.

Ms. Dorothy Galo, 19 Volunteer Rd.

Ms. Nes Correnti, 17 Ward St.

Ms. Jen Benham, 300 Gardner St.

The following were suggested as reasons for the large surplus in the School Budget:

- No Special Education transportation during the pandemic
- A lack of substitute teachers during the pandemic
- Difficulty in hiring para-professionals
- A favorable hiring season where many positions were hired at lower than anticipated rates
- Special Education age-outs
- The receipt of ESSR funds

The School Committee members said that they are looking forward to further evaluation and discussion of how best to use this surplus and how they could best work with the Town to apply these funds to next year's budget. Ms. Galo reminded the Board that this projected surplus could change before the end of the school year, given that there is still one third of the school year left.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to recommend a FY23 budget for the School Department of \$61,946,743. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Ramsey: 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.

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to approve the FY23 Capital Outlay Budget as recommended by the Capital outlay Committee. Ms. Klein seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Klein: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Mr. Fisher: yes

Town Administrator/Select Board Reports

Mr. Mayo announced that Mr. Russ Conn plans to retire from the Personnel Board.

Ms. Klein reported that the HHS boys hockey team won their game tonight.

Mr. Ramsey added that both the boys and girls basketball teams are still in their tournaments. He encouraged the public to support the teams.

Mr. Fisher said that the Town has benefitted much from Russ Conn's work with the Personnel Board.

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 10:38 PM.

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