

Board of Selectmen

June 30, 2020

Remote meeting via telephone conference call

Present:

- Board of Selectmen: Ms. Mary Power (Chair), Mr. Joseph Fisher, and Mr. Bill Ramsey
- Mr. Tom Mayo, Town Administrator
- Ms. Michelle Monsegur, Assistant Town Administrator
- Ms. Sue Nickerson, Town Accountant

Call to order: 6:30 pm

Ms. Power 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.”

Ms. Power welcomed new Selectman, Bill Ramsey, and said that the Board was looking forward to working with him. Mr. Ramsey thanked the people of Hingham for giving him the opportunity to serve on the Board of Selectmen and said he was looking forward to working hard for the people of Hingham.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Fisher mad a motion to approve the minutes dated June 10, 2020. Ms. Power seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: abstain

Ms. Power: yes

Reorganization of the Board

Ms. Power noted that Karen Johnson’s term as Chair of the Board of Selectmen has expired.

Vote: Mr. Fisher nominated Ms. Power to be the new Chairman of the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Ramsey seconded. Ms. Power accepted the nomination.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Review and approval of inter-department, intra-department, and Reserve Fund transfers for FY 2020

Ms. Power said that today, June 30, 2020 was the last day of the fiscal year and that the process of approving the reserve fund transfers was a typical process that the Town goes through. Town Accountant, Sue Nickerson, explained that the Reserve Fund is used for unanticipated emergencies in any department. She explained that there are different types of reserve fund transfers including Inter-department transfers (from one department to another) and Intra-department transfers (transfers between different accounts within a department). She stated that the Reserve Fund balance was \$605,104 prior to the following transfers. Mr. Fisher read the following statement from the Town Warrant that explains the use of the Reserve Fund.

“Massachusetts General Law provides for annual appropriations to a Reserve Fund from which transfers for extraordinary or unforeseen expenditures may be made from time to time with the advice of the Board of Selectmen and the approval of the Advisory Committee. The Reserve Fund is used to save the time and expense of a Special Town Meeting for relatively low cost items. Per the Town Financial Policy, the annual appropriation amount for the Reserve Fund should be approximately 0.75% of the operating budget.”

Mr. Fisher noted that the Town is operating consistently within Massachusetts Law and the Town’s Financial Policy.

Reserve Fund transfers

Legal: Ms. Nickerson noted that all legal fees relating the purchase of the Water System and Covid-19 are expected to be reimbursed in the beginning of the next fiscal year. Mr. Fisher asked for some clarification regarding the amounts to be reimbursed. Ms. Nickerson explained that, of the \$509,125 transfer amount, \$231,542 was related to the Water System purchase and would be reimbursed by the water system, and \$30,764 was related to COVID-19 issues for which the Town would seek reimbursement from federal and state funds. Ms. Power felt it was significant to note that, not including Water System and COVID-19 related expenses, the Town’s legal fees were actually lower this year than the past several years.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to recommend a transfer from the Reserve Fund to Selectmen-Legal Services in the amount of \$509,125. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

South Shore Country Club: Ms. Nickerson said that, due to the COVID-19 closure of the Country Club, no revenue was coming in, creating a loss of approximately \$200,000. Since reopening, she reported that the shortfall has decreased to \$50,000. Mr. Fisher asked if there would be an opportunity to recoup the \$50,000 from this transfer. Mr. Kevin Whalen of the South Shore Country Club said that he expects the shortfall to further decrease, but he requested the \$50,000 because there are some additional expenses that will be coming in including unemployment, Medicare and credit card services. He said that the Country Club would pay the Town back from the Club’s Fund Balance over the next few years. Ms.

Power asked if the Country Club could recoup any of their losses through Cares Act reimbursements. Mr. Mayo noted that the Cares Act is not reimbursing for “lost revenue” so the Country Club would not be able to receive reimbursement. Ms. Power also said that, prior to COVID-19, the Country Club was running a surplus. She also commended Mr. Whalen’s stewardship, the work of his team at the Country Club, the creative efforts of the Greenside Grill to keep operating, and the Country Club Committee for their management of the very difficult past few months. Mr. Whalen thanked the Board and Mr. Mayo for all their help during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to recommend a transfer from the Reserve Fund to South Shore Country Club in the amount of \$50,000. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Town Meeting: Ms. Nickerson said that this transfer would pay for bills associated with the outdoor Town Meeting due to COVID-19 and will be reimbursed next fiscal year. Mr. Ramsey said that he felt the Town Meeting was run very smoothly and felt it was a great effort by everyone.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to recommend a transfer from the Reserve Fund to Town Meeting Expenses in the amount of \$20,000. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Information Technology: Ms. Nickerson said that this transfer would pay for contract renewal and overtime pay due to COVID-19. She noted that all COVID-19 related fees would be reimbursed.

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to recommend a transfer from the Reserve Fund to Information Technology Salaries in the amount of \$17,175. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Inter-Department Transfers

Property & Liability Insurance: Ms. Nickerson explained that this transfer will come from the surplus in Group Insurance and will be transferred to Property and Liability Insurance to cover the costs related to premium increases due to a fire and flood at two schools. Mr. Fisher asked how much money was in the

Group Insurance category. Mr. Nickerson said that there is a surplus of approximately \$200,000 in Group Insurance.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to recommend an inter-department transfer to Property & Liability Insurance from Group Insurance for \$58,320. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Unemployment: Ms. Nickerson stated that this transfer would cover the Town's unemployment costs. She said that unemployment has been overloaded with claims and invoices from March through June that have not yet been received. She stated that there was no way to know what the final amount would but she felt that this transfer would be suitable. Mr. Mayo added that the unemployment claims were high due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the related economy issues. Ms. Power asked for some examples of positions that have been filing for unemployment. Ms. Nickerson stated that 90% of the claims have been from school employees.

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to recommend an inter-department transfer to Unemployment from Group Insurance for \$50,000. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Town Meeting: Ms. Nickerson said that this transfer would pay for the indoor audio-visual system that was set up in case of rain and additional expenses for the outdoor meeting tents. Ms. Nickerson stated that there was a surplus of \$200,000 in engineering salaries.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to recommend an inter-department transfer to Town Meeting Expenses from Engineering Salaries for \$19,000. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Intra-Department Transfers

Fire Expenses-Ambulance Supplies: Ms. Nickerson said that, due to COVID-19, the Fire Department had to purchase additional PPE and deep contamination equipment and were not in the budget. She anticipated that these expenses would be reimbursed through the Cares Program or other reimbursement programs.

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to recommend an intra-department transfer from Fire Salaries to Fire Expenses-Ambulance Supplies for \$40,000. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Engineering Expenses: Ms. Nickerson explained that this transfer would cover expenses during the reorganization of the Engineering Department, and expenses incurred due to the required reporting to the Department of Environmental Protection of the Whitney Wharf remediation project. Ms. Monsegur further explained that, due to the reorganization of the Engineering Department, there were not many employees in that Department. Because of this, the Town hired some outside consultant to help with engineering projects. This transfer would cover the cost of those consultants. She said that this transfer would also cover the cost of a remediation project and required reporting to the DEP of some contaminated soil found during a State project to refurbish Whitney Wharf.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to recommend an intra-department transfer from Engineering Salaries to Engineering Expenses for \$16,626. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Police Expenses: Ms. Nickerson said that this transfer would cover expenses related to the purchase of COVID-19 related items such as signboard rentals, PPE, and other related items. She anticipated that most of these expenses would be reimbursable. Mr. Ramsey expressed his gratitude to the public safety departments for the risks they have done during the pandemic and continue to do. Mr. Ramsey noted that he would abstain from voting because his brother is a police officer.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to recommend an intra-department transfer from Police Salaries to Police Expenses in the amount of \$10,000. Ms. Power seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: abstain

Ms. Power: yes

Human Resources: Ms. Nickerson said that this transfer would cover the cost of renovating the Human Resources/Benefits office at Town Hall.

Mr. Ramsey made a motion to recommend an intra-department transfer from Human Resources Salaries to Human Resources Expenses in the amount of \$7,835. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Animal Control: Ms. Nickerson said that this transfer would cover the cost of updating some equipment, including a Motorola radio and a laptop computer. The members of the Board commended the Animal Control Office for the great work she does around Town.

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to recommend an intra-department transfer from Animal Control Salaries to Animal Control Expenses in the amount of \$4,300. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Town Accountant: Ms. Nickerson stated that this transfer would cover the cost of an unaccounted for salary step.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to recommend an intra-department transfer from Town Accountant Expenses to Town Accountant Salaries in the amount of \$2,865. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Board of Selectmen Code of Conduct

Ms. Power explained that the Town Administrator By-Law Committee created the Selectmen Code of Conduct in 2015. She added that the document could be found on the Town of Hingham website, on the Board of Selectmen page. She felt that the Code of Conduct reaffirms the role that the Board has and underscores the responsibility they have to the Town. Mr. Fisher said that, at some point in the future, he would like amend the document to recognize the important role of the Assistant Town Administrator to the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Fisher read the following excerpt from the Code of Conduct:

“It is truly a privilege to serve as a member of the Board of Selectmen for the Town of Hingham. You, the citizens of the Town, have placed your faith in us to serve in the best interest of the entire community. This code is an expression of our expectations of one another and serves as our promise to you that we will strive to the best of our abilities to fulfill our duties as a Board in accordance with the highest standards of governance set by our predecessors since the founding of Hingham in 1635.”

There was a discussion about the Board’s practice of responding to media inquiries. Ms. Power said that she felt that the Board’s liaison to a particular issue is sometimes the best person to respond. She also said that it was her practice to notify the Town Administrator of media inquiries and to coordinate responses. She stressed striving for a single voice in the community. Mr. Fisher agreed that, to avoid

confusion, coordinating with the Town Administrator is the best practice. Ms. Power suggested that the Board reconfirm the Code of Conduct on an annual basis.

Mr. Ramsey made a motion to reconfirm the Board of Selectmen's Code of Conduct. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Preliminary Discussion of FY21 Goals and Objections

Ms. Power stated that it is the practice of the Board of Selectmen, at the beginning of the fiscal year, to identify their goals and objectives. She drew their attention to a document prepared by Mr. Mayo, which catalogued ongoing projects of the Board as well as projects resulting from the 2020 Town Meeting. She suggested that the Board members review this document and identify which projects they felt appropriate to continue and which projects they felt they would like the Board to address in the upcoming fiscal year. She said that she felt it was helpful to organize projects under the following categories: fiscal sustainability, asset utilization, service delivery and general welfare and stewardship. She also urged the Board to keep in mind their responsibilities with running the Town when choosing goals and objectives. Mr. Mayo offered his support to the Board with respect to choosing goals. Mr. Fisher stated his preliminary goals as follows:

1. To ensure effective Town government throughout the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, including helping schools, senior citizens and businesses adjust to the new norms that govern our conduct
2. To address issues of racial equality and justice in our community, including working with the Police Department to create sensitivity to racial and cultural issues
3. To enhance coordination between the Town administration and the schools to ensure proper allocation of resources
4. To ensure a smooth transition between private ownership and municipal ownership of the water company
5. To continue our growth of affordable housing
6. To get more bike paths in Hingham for the enjoyment of youths and adults

Mr. Ramsey agreed with Mr. Fisher's goals and said that one major goal of his is to get the local economy open again while at the same time keeping everyone safe. Working on the budget was another of his objectives. Ms. Power added that an important objective was the facility work the Town was about to embark upon this year with the feasibility study for the Public Safety facility and the Senior Center. She added that the Board would appoint members to building committees

Memorial Bell Tower Bell Ringing Components Restoration Project

Ms. Monsecur said that this is a contract between the Town and B.A. Sunderlin Bellfoundry, LLC to restore the bell frames and other components on six of the ten English change ringing bells in Hingham's Memorial Bell Tower, next to the Old Ship Church. She told the Board that Andrea Young, Historic Administrator, Martha Ryan and Daniel Cushing, members of the Bell Tower Committee, were also on

the line in case the Board had any questions. She reported that she had the opportunity of climbing up the bell tower and seeing the beautiful bells and learned how to ring one of the bells, under their guidance. She said that they have worked together as a team over the past few months as they worked with Town Counsel to put this contract together. She said that they have sought Greenbush and CPC funds in two phases and added that they are now in the second phase of the project. The first project included work on four of the ten bells. She noted that the work for both phases would be done at the same time since Sunderland Bellfoundry is located in Virginia. This would save money on travel expenses. She added that Sunderland Bellfoundry is the only organization that could undertake this work. She added that the bells are all over one hundred years old and had been made as exact copies of the bells that hang in a bell tower in Hingham, England. She said that they were all excited to get the work started and to protect this asset of the Town.

Mr. Fisher asked about the ease of working with an out-of-state contractor. Mr. Cushing said that there were only two other bell foundries in the world that could do this work and they are both located in England. Mr. Fisher also asked about the payment process for the work. Ms. Monsegur said that the Town does not pay for services until they are rendered, so as he fabricates materials, the Town will pay for services. It was also noted that Town Counsel has reviewed the contract and is comfortable with it. Mr. Fisher also asked who would be the point person to oversee work. Ms. Young said that she was comfortable being the representative for the Town and would work with the Bell Tower Committee. Mr. Mayo added that the Town Engineer would be available if needed. Mr. Ramsey commented that the Bell Tower was one of Hingham's many historical gems. Ms. Power asked for some details of the timing of the project. Ms. Monsegur said that the contract has a timeline of eight months. Ms. Power also commented that it was nice to see this project come to fruition and she was pleased that they have been working with Town Counsel John Coughlin. She also said that one of the pleasures of being involved in Town government is that it makes one aware of groups of people who have stewardship over things that are part of the fabric of our community. Ms. Ryan thanked everyone for their support during this process

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to authorize the Town Administrator to sign the Agreement with B.A. Sunderlin Bellfoundry, LLC for the Memorial Bell Tower Bell Ringing Components Restoration Project. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Ms. Johnson: yes

Smile Zone, LLC d/b/a Menchie's

Ms. Sharon Perfetti of the Board of Selectmen's Office stated that the following is an issuance of a Common Victualler license for an establishment in the Hingham Shipyard. She noted that all their paperwork is in order and the Chief of Police has signed off on it as well.

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to approve the issuance of a Common Victualler license to Smile Zone, LLC d/b/a Menchie's Hingham Shipyard. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes
Ms. Power: yes
Ms. Johnson: yes

COVID-19 Update

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

“In a letter to Massachusetts municipal officials today, the Department of Public Health stated that we have been successful in ensuring COVID-19 cases continue to trend downward due to the vigilance of our residents and our collective action in planning and preparation. Governor Baker has not yet announced the move to Phase 3 of the State’s Reopening Plan. The Commonwealth is taking a cautious and measured approach to reopening to assure that we continue to see a decrease in positive cases. The DPH stated that moving too quickly, as we have seen in states like Florida and Arizona has the potential to create a resurgence of the virus and burden the healthcare system. As of today, DPH is reporting 108,882 cases in Massachusetts, of which 8,684 are in Plymouth County. As of last Wednesday, the DPH was reporting 275 COVID-19 cases in the Town of Hingham. The number of hospitalized COVID-19 patients, the percentage of people testing positive for COVID-19, and the number of COVID-19 deaths across the State do continue to decline at this time.”

Mr. Ramsey encourages residents to continue to be vigilant in an attempt to keep their families and community safe.

Public Comment

None

Selectmen/Town Administrator Reports

Ms. Monsecur extended a warm welcome to Mr. Ramsey and said she was looking forward to working with him this year.

Mr. Mayo reported that today was Rick Knowland’s last day of work. He was the Town’s long-time Assessor for more than 13 years. Mr. Mayo wished him luck in his well-deserved retirement.

Mr. Mayo said that the Town Election was on Saturday. He said that Town Clerk, Eileen McCracken and her team always do a great job making sure the elections run smoothly.

Mr. Fisher also welcomed Bill Ramsey to the Board of Selectmen. He thanked Ms. McCracken for her work on the elections, especially during the COVID environment. Finally, he congratulated Ms. Power on her new appointment as Chair of the Board of Selectmen.

Ms. Power commended everyone who ran for an elected office this year and said that it was especially difficult to campaign during the COVID pandemic. She thanked Hingham’s citizens for their continued willingness to contribute their time and talent. She reminded the public that they are still accepting Talent Bank applications for Town Committees and encouraged residents to volunteer. Talent Bank applications can be found on the Town’s website.

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Meeting adjourned at 7:58 pm

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