

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES

JUNE 26, 2023, AT 6:00PM

LEICESTER TOWN HALL, LEICESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01524

Acting Chair Rick Antanavica, Vice Chair Dianna Provencher, Selectman Allen Phillips, Selectman John Bujak, Selectman Kevin Menard, Town Administrator David Genereux, and Assistant to the Town Administrator Maria Cataloni were in attendance. Acting Chair Antanavica opened the meeting at 6:17 PM.

ATTENDANCE:

Select Board

Acting Chair Antanavica	Present
Vice Chair Dianna Provencher	Present
Allen Philipps	Present
John Bujak	Present
Kevin Menard	Present

Advisory Committee

Chair Peter Cusolito	Present
Bill Brennen	Present
Sandra Wilson	Present
Mary Kay Hannant	Present
Dorothy Dudley	Present
Ashlyn Coyle	Present

Administrators:

David Genereux, Town Administrator	Present
Maria Cataloni, Assistant to the TA	Present

06262023-1a(1) – End of Year Transfers (Fire Department)

Mr. Genereux stated that there are a couple ways funds can be moved to cover money can be moved, including at Town meeting, or up to six weeks after the close of the fiscal year. End of year transfers require an affirmative vote of both Select Board and Advisory Committee. He stated that there were two sets of end of year transfers. The Fire Department is seeking a transfer of \$20,000.

Mr. Bujak inquired about 63% of staff hours being mutual aid. Chief Dupuis confirmed that is true. Mr. Bujak asked how we demonstrate how the mutual aid calls effect the department, and what is the pattern of this assistance. Chief Dupuis replied that there is no pattern all towns are hurting. Mr. Bujak commented that Worcester on the list an extensive amount. Chief Dupuis clarified that when we sent help to Spencer, Worcester came to cover Leicester. During the day we are short-staffed, but Worcester has the people and at the airport, and our tanker helps out for Worcester. Mr. Phillips stated one of the downfalls of strictly call departments, is we that we are short staffed, but still must offer mutual aid.

Peter Cusolito stated that we are paying for what we hope we never need. It is an indication of a strong department that we can send help out for mutual aid and we need to start looking for full-time coverage down the line. It's becoming a struggle because volunteers don't live in-town anymore.

Mr. Phillips agreed. He stated that many towns half our size are fully staffed. Mr. Cusolito stated that 65% of firefighters in MA are call/volunteer and a small percentage are mixed. He stated that all call departments are shrinking. Mr. Phillips stated the conversation would be had later. Mr. Bujak asked whether contractual increases would lead to budget issues next year. Chief Dupuis stated that it depends on allowances and certifications. Mr. Bujak asked if any of this qualifies for the fire safety grant. Chief Dupuis said that grant usually applies to equipment. Mr. Antanavica stated we had more mutual aid coming in than going out. It comes in spurts, then evens out after a year or two. Chief Dupuis stated there is a push to call quicker and faster. Fires are faster and hotter due to various plastics.

Select Board: A motion was made by Ms. Provencher and seconded by Mr. Bujak to approve the transfer of \$20,000 from various accounts. The motion was approved 4-0-1 (Mr. Phillips abstained).

Advisory Committee: A motion was made by Ashlyn Coyle and seconded by Sandra Wilson to approve the transfer. The motion was approved 6-0-0.

08262023-1a (2)EMS Department

EMS Director Brian Kelley stated that he was seeking \$61,000, out of a fully anticipated expenditure of \$73,017. He explained that when an employee is out on IOD, while the Town gets reimbursed by insurance, those funds cannot go back into enterprise account. He also stated that the MRI contract for the EMS Director was not factored into the budget, as well as an investigation regarding an EMS incident. He stated there is a lot of maintenance and repairs, due to old fleet. The department is on-pace to shatter 911 calls, with a significant increase in two years. He went over building maintenance, bay door issues, unexpected cost increases, office supplies, and uniforms.

Mr. Bujak asked if the overage will be \$130,000? Mr. Kelley explained that if we did not have unexpected expenses, there would have been a surplus and they are requesting \$61,000. Going forward cannot come from free cash. Allison Lawrence, Town Accountant stated that the Ambulance EMS enterprise fund was established 7-1-22, and funds are not certified and do not get certified until the Fall. Mr. Bujak asked if the enterprise funds would be available in budget year 2024. Ms. Lawrence stated that it would. Mr. Bujak asked if the benefit is paid out of the workers comp account, can we charge the Enterprise fund for those costs? Ms. Lawrence stated indirect costs could be voted at Town Meeting.

Mr. Kelly stated the Enterprise Fund already started transferring stuff over, and they are trying to take responsibility that EMS has not paid before. He stated that IOD payments will come from insurance directly. And that he is easing the way into EMS being 100% self-funded. Tax-base is back in the general fund. The fund did pretty well this year, so that the revenue will make the funds available for to pay for ambulance funds outside of the tax levy, including 450k for new ambulance. If you increase what you pull out now, 5-7 years from now the town will have to replenish that. Slowly taking things over, comfortable with a \$25k increase, giving us options.

Mr. Bujak stated that we need a true and accurate picture. Mr. Kelly stated that we are on-track for 1.3 million, without COLA increases. Mr. Bujak stated that no financial reports that we see. Mr. Kelly stated that he loves EXCEL and will show all the numbers. Mr. Cusolito stated that we have not seen enterprise fund accounting, by line-item. Revenue projections and we have not seen this. It would help us. Mr.

Kelly stated that he receives a monthly report of prior month collections. On top of that, we applied for supplemental reimbursement in the ballpark of \$40,000. The fund will take in 1.25 million, plus \$40k.

Mr. Cusolito stated that he would send forms from the state of what enterprise is supposed to look like. Normally water/sewer. There is a format, standard business sheet. Ms. Dudley asked is the EMS director position is this not in the budget? Mr. Kelly stated that he has been interim since 2021. MRI is an independent 3rd party that was hired to do the assessment. Mr. Bujak asked if Brian's report could be sent to both Boards? Mr. Genereux stated that there is an AT2 that goes on the report. Ms. Lawrence stated that there is a schedule of monthly enterprise reports. Mr. Genereux stated that making reports for Vadar would make it more user-friendly. Enterprise funds are more complicated.

Select Board: A motion was made by Ms. Provencher to approve. Seconded by Mr. Bujak, the motion was approved 4-0-1 (Mr. Phillips Allen abstained).

Advisory Committee: A motion by Ms. Coyle was made to approve the transfer. Seconded by Ms. Wilson, the motion was approved 5-0-0.

08262023-1(3) Town Hall telephones

Select Board: A motion was made by Ms. Provencher to approve the transfer. seconded by Mr. Bujak, the motion was approved (5-0-0)

A motion was made by Mr. Brennen to approve the transfer. Seconded by Ms. Wilson, the motion was approved 6-0-0.

6262023-2 6:15pm – Host Community Agreement – Core Technologies Inc.

Mr. Genereux stated there are 2 different companies on a single agreement, those being Core Technologies, Inc. , and WeeDeliver, with the agreement following the anticipated new rules of the CCC, which includes a ceiling of 3% of gross revenues, with all municipal costs for service of the property being directly billed to the company. He stated that April Aristate is present and she will be happy to speak on it.

April introduced herself as CEO of Core Technologies, a women-owned business. The Operator is mandated to be an equity position. Core Technologies have relationship with Vangarden at 88 Huntoon Highway and would like to take on part of the space. WeeDeliver is seeking licenses for Delivery Courier and Delivery Operator. Core Technologies is seeking licenses for manufacture, cultivation and laboratory analysis, but they will beginning with manufacturing, and they have already raised the capital. They are now waiting to be settled into a spot and are excited to be part of Leicester. Mr. Genereux explained they are replacing Social J and the Hempest, which are no longer going forward. Mr. Bujak asked Ms. Aristate if they would be growing cannabis. Ms. Aristate stated that they would be making products, gummies and juices, and a few other items.

Mr. Bujak asked where the anticipated deliveries to be. Ms. Aristate stated that deliveries would be in Boston proper and there are no limits on where delivery can go. Mr. Phillips asked if there had been any discussion with police chief regarding safety. Ms. Aristate stated that all of Vangarden security would become their security as well and she is familiar with the Cannabis Control Commission's heavy regulations. Mr. Phillips requested that she still be in touch with police chief. Ms. Aristate assured that they will certainly have that relationship. Mr. Antanavica expressed that it is very important to contact police chief because there will be two businesses with two different names in one place. Mr. Phillips

asked Ma. Aristate if she had the fire department. Ms. Aristate stated that they plan to talk with the fire department. She stated that cannabis delivery vehicles are unmarked.

A motion was made by Ms. Provencher and seconded by Mr. Phillips to approve the Host Community Agreement. Motion carries 5-0-0.

06262023-2a Executive Session – Mr. Philipps made a motion to enter into executive session to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel; M.G.L. c. 30A, §21(a)(2) – Building Commission/Zoning Enforcement Officer. Seconded by Ms. Provencher, the motion carried 5-0-0.

The meeting reconvened at 7:20 PM

06262023-3a Change of status – Chris Harrington - FT EMS to per-diem EMS

A motion was made by Ms. Provencher to approve the change of status to of Chris Harrington from FT status to per-diem. Seconded by Mr. Bujak, the motion carried 5-0-0.

06262023-3b Appointment/Contract – Harold Leaming – Building Commissioner/Zoning Enforcement Officer

A motion was made by Mr. Phillips to appoint Harold Leaming as Building Commissioner. Seconded by Ms. Provencher, the motion carried 5-0-0.

06262023-3c/d Appointment – Assistant Library Director & Library Assistant

Suzanne Hall requested that the Board promote Kaeleigh Hart, children's librarian to the role of Assistant Director/Children's Librarian. Ms. Hall Stated that Kaeleigh would fill in, when she wasn't at the Library. Mr. Antanavica asked if there were funds in the budget for this? Ms. Hall Stated that there was as there is a recent retirement.

Ms. Hall further requested that Meaghan Casey be hired as a 10 hour per week Library Assistant. Lives in Charlton, recent graduate of Keene State. Love to read, talk about books, recommend books. Able to pick up skills easily. Art Paquette, of LCAC asked - produce newscasts, can you help fix this?

Ms. Provencher made the motion that the Board promote Kaeligh Hart to Assistant Library Director/Children's Librarian. Seconded by Mr. Philipps, the motion carried 5-0-0.

06262023-3e Appointments to the Council on Aging: Bill Moore, Dianna Provencher, Diane Bergen

Ms. Provencher stated that Diane Bergen has been with the Senior Center for a long time. Bill Moore was the chair of COA a few years ago. Mr. Bujak asked if there were resignations? Mr. Antanavica explained that some people did not get reappointed.

A motion was made by Mr. Bujak to appoint Bill Moore, Dianna Provencher, and Diane Bergen to the Council on Aging. Seconded by Mr. Menard, the motion carries 4-0-1 (Ms. Provencher abstained).

06262023-3f Resignations – Kathleen Cherry - Library Assistant, John Charbonneau – Director of Inspectional Services

Mr. Genereux stated that Mr. Charbonneau was leaving the Town because he has been offered an Assistant Town Administrator/Economic Development in another community. Mr. Antanavica – read Mr. Charbonneau’s resignation letter. Mr. Bujak said that the last sentence is extremely concerning and recommended asking Mr. Charbonneau for more details in an exit interview. Ask him in an exit interview for more details. He further stated that this is why he has been asking for a Personnel Board. The Board needs more context, it is a pretty heavy statement.

Mr. Phillips stated that in general, this whole resignation does not surprise me, it ticks me off. We need an exit interview. He says he is not getting resources, hostility from residents/applicants. We need multiple people to do exit interviews. Other towns are hiring at higher rates, but we need to keep people for more than 3-6 months.

Dianna - I was on conservation for many, many years. You will get irate applicants, sometimes with lawyers. They do threaten you because they think they can. Anyone on a committee could share horror stories. Because we didn’t hear about it, we are shocked. But I am not shocked. Some people don’t want certain things in their backyard. I feel bad for all those boards – it is not easy for any of those people. It the same for Select Board, one day people love you, the next they are upset with you. Reading his letter, I feel bad for that last sentence, but he did find another job.

Mr. Philipps stated that he has been on many boards himself. He feels abused, has experience in many different towns. John was very highly recommended. He says he has never been treated this way before. We need to look into it. Mr. Bujak stated that he echo’s Allen – and that Mr. Charbonneau had an extensive resume. His predecessor left with a similar statement. It is very concerning and frustrating.

Mr. Philipps stated that employees cannot be left feeling abused. An HR person could have spoken with Mr. Charbonneau and then bring it to David. Mr. Menard asked if Mr. Charbonneau bring any of this up prior or make any complaints? Mr. Genereux stated that in speaking to him this morning, he said it was because of the new job offer that he received.

Mr. Genereux further stated that as far as saying that people went over his head – yes, that has happened. Applicants have called the Town Administrator’s Office to see where things were at. They come upstairs and we go back down to figure it out. We are working with three different issues currently. One has to do with an unbuildable lot that goes back to 1948. The second has to do with a zoning issue on Huntoon Highway. We are working with the owner to get information to forward to Town Counsel. The third problem is a restaurant with a parking issue that is nobody’s fault, but it exists, and they want to put in a full service restaurant. Mr. Bujak stated that you don’t burn bridges so quickly and to put it in a letter like this, there is something more.

Mr. Antanavica stated that a lot of it has to do with our stringent bylaws. Everything is by special permit and takes a long time. The exotic car place application came in over 6 months ago. John came in and solved some problems. Town counsel researched back to 1948 on an unbuildable lot. Lots of frustration for the zoning/bylaws.

Mr. Phillips stated that we need to do an exit interview. It is more than one thing. We also have Assistant Town Administrator position coming open. This person left in anger, person before left in anger. We need to figure that out. Assign 2 board members and David to conduct exit interviews. Ask that one be Kevin since he is new and was not here when John was appointed. Ms. Provencher stated

that— we started doing exit interviews, then they fell off. She said that she is more than happy to do them, since she used to do them. Mr. Antanavica made the motion to accept the resignation, seconded by Ms. Provencher, the motion carried 5-0-0.

06262023-3g Reappointments – Ivel, McCue Hall, Lamb, Valinski, Poce, Whitney, Croteau, Jubinville & Ferdella

Mr. Genereux related that this agenda item is tied to appointments to various committees. Mr. Phillips asked if these reappointments affected the prior Council on Aging votes. Ms. Provencher confirmed that it did not. Ms. Provencher further clarified that the appointment to the May House Committee was a reappointment because the group was formed just prior to the fiscal year.

Mr. Phillips made the motion for reappointment. Seconded by Ms. Provencher, the motion carried 5-0-0.

06262023-4a - Town Buildings Report

Mr. Genereux read from the written report.

July 10th Borger ADA handrail bids are due. First floor will then be ready for occupancy. Target is August 23rd for substantial completion. Sprinklers to be installed next summer.

Winslow Hall is almost 5,000 square feet. Bid specifications have been finalized with the auctioneer. There will be open houses leading up to auction. The 1812 House will not close until after Town Meeting.

Mr. Menard asked if the Town got appraisals for the Victorians. Mr. Genereux stated that the Assessor determined their values. Mr. Menard asked if there were minimum bids in place. Mr. Genereux said no. Mr. Phillips stated that the Town opted not to do that in the end.

Barrett Hall is 80% done, needing to get some appliances in. The plumbing is finished, and cabinets installed. Wi-fi networks are being set up. The goal is to make sure it is done by July to make sure we do not lose a month's lease payment. The same contractors working on Hampshire and Berkshire. Mr. Bujak asked about the 26 TV's that were there and where they will go. Mr. Genereux explained that the existing microwaves are being returned for a credit towards other items. One TV will go to the Fire Department, six will go to the Emergency Management and the rest will go to the schools to use. Mr. Bujak asked if that causes issues since they were purchased from an emergency fund. Mr. Genereux stated that the funds were not from a grant.

Central MA Housing asked if they could use Town Hall gym for an employment fair . Mr. Phillips asked that this be posted on the Town website.

There have been talks with interested parties regarding the Vet Clinic, but nothing substantial.

Preliminary plans for the High School folding walls are in.

The gym sewer system will require an engineer.

Leicester Housing Authority has a possible interest in the Memorial School. They are a government agency, so the Town will likely not have to bid it. They are looking for money from the State. It would be an inter-municipal transfer. Mr. Bujak asked about a timeframe. Mr. Genereux stated the Housing Authority needs to further explore the fund source and the timeline. Mr. Phillips stated that he would like to see the plan start to finish, since more housing is needed in town. Ms. Provencher stated it would be very valuable to the elderly in town. There are no houses for our younger people. There are no places for the elders to downsize into. If this comes to fruition, it would be ideal. Mr. Phillips stated that this is a multi-million-dollar project. Ms. Provencher stated that the building at the four-corners got renovated into housing. Mr. Antanavica stated such projects were done with private money. When state and federal money is used, it opens all places up to all residents.

EHLOC seems to be moving fairly quickly.

The Police Department canopy has specifications for connection of waterless sprinkler system.

Mr. Bujak asked about the Winslow Ave school, since it is not in great visual. Mr. Genereux stated that Superintendent Kustigian has talked about the back garage being worked on the vocational program. The gym used for pickleball. There is not another set purpose for it right now. Mr. Bujak asked about all the surplus supplies left at the school and what the plan would be for those. Mr. Genereux said the plan is to clean out the Victorians first and get all the items into one place have one sale.

The Copeland Library is in fairly decent shape. People are complaining about peeling paint. Change door and window locks.

0626-2023-4b. Economic Development Report

Mr. Genereux stated that new members are needed for the Economic Development Committee as some members did not seek re-appointment.

a. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Ashlyn Coyle town has recognized residents. Do some sort of recognition. I will pay for the plaque if it is a concern of money. Rick - I remember him very well. AP – we would have to vote as a board, it could be put on the next agenda. Ashlyn – I will make the donation. The way he died was so tragic. They are my neighbors and good people.

b. CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Concerts on the Common
July 5 – Dan Gabel and the Abletones
July 12 – New Black Eagle Jazz Band
2. Happy Fourth of July

At 8:31pm a motion was made by Mr. Phillips and seconded by Ms. Provencher to adjourn and wish everyone a happy and safe 4th of July. Motion carries 5-0-0.

ADJOURN

