

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 11, 2023 AT 6:00PM
LEICESTER TOWN HALL, LEICESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01524**

Chair Rick Antanavica, Vice Chair Dianna Provencher, Selectman Kevin Menard, Selectman John Bujak, Town Administrator David Genereux, and Assistant to the Town Administrator, Maria Cataloni were in attendance.

ATTENDANCE:

Rick Antanavica	Present
Dianna Provencher	Present
Kevin Menard	Present
John Bujak	Present

Administration

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

Chair Antanavica opened the meeting at 6:00 PM.

1. SCHEDULED ITEMS

a. 6:00 – License Renewals

Common Victualler – Ms. Provencher made a motion to approve the licensees. Seconded by Mr. Bujak. Motion passes 4-0-0

General Entertainment - Ms. Provencher made a motion to approve the licensees. Seconded by Mr. Bujak. Motion passes 4-0-0

Junk Dealer - Ms. Provencher made a motion to approve the licensees. Seconded by Mr. Bujak. Motion passes 4-0-0

Outdoor Business - Ms. Provencher made a motion to approve the licensees. Seconded by Mr. Bujak. Motion passes 4-0-0

Games - Ms. Provencher made a motion to approve the licensees. Seconded by Mr. Bujak. Motion passes 4-0-0

Sunday Entertainment - Ms. Provencher made a motion to approve the licensees. Seconded by Mr. Bujak. Motion passes 4-0-0

Auto Body - Ms. Provencher made a motion to approve the licensees. Seconded by Mr. Bujak. Motion passes 4-0-0

Motor Vehicle Repair - Ms. Provencher made a motion to approve the licensees. Seconded by Mr. Bujak. Motion passes 4-0-0

Car Rental - Ms. Provencher made a motion to approve the licensees. Seconded by Mr. Bujak. Motion passes 4-0-0

Class II - Ms. Provencher made a motion to approve the licensees. Seconded by Mr. Bujak. Motion passes 4-0-0

Class III - Ms. Provencher made a motion to approve the licensees. Seconded by Mr. Bujak. Motion passes 4-0-0

BYOB - Ms. Provencher made a motion to approve the licensees. Seconded by Mr. Bujak. Motion passes 4-0-0

b. 6:15 - Valley Gas – Liquor License

Rick read the public hearing notice and asked owners to explain what they like to do.

Mr. Martin Bitar stated he would like to sell beer and wine since they have had empty shelving since 2021. Had to wait for convenience store open. Ms. Laura Bitar got approval from all town departments. Kevin inquired if the parking issue was resolved.

Mr. Antanavica inquired if he got the bollards in.

Mr. Bitar stated he believed there was some misunderstanding and he was told either speed bumps or bollards and the business has both and there is 10 feet for the fire lane.

Rick inquired if there was 1 handicap spot and if there was any additional spots.

Mr. Bitar replied there are 3.

Mr. Antanavica asked about the car that is always there and if it was his wife's. He stated he was previously on the Fire Department, so the parking needs to be clear. He said everything else appears to be in order.

Mr. Bujak asked if liquor was sold or it was just beer and wine?

Mr. Bitar stated it was just beer and wine.

Ms. Provencher made a motion to approve the license. Seconded by Mr. Bujak. Motion passes 4-0-0.

c. 6:30 – Liquor License Renewals

Mr. Bujak made a motion to approve the licensees. Seconded by Ms. Provencher. Motion passes 4-0-0

2. RESIGNATIONS & APPOINTMENTS

None discussed.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

a. Mr. Doug Belanger discussed abuse of the public comment period by a resident at a recent meeting. He stated he knows the person because he wrote to them and there was a clear purpose behind the speech. He stated in the 3 to 5 minutes, what he watched was a diatribe of half-truths and attacks. There was no opportunity to respond. He asked that all members review the policy and the plan to address some issues in town is January 30th.

Mr. John Bujak inquired about a special Town Meeting in January? Mr. Genereux responded that it was likely possibly.

4. CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS

a. December 16th – Santa Run

Mr. Antanavica stated the list is on Facebook and on the Town Website.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

a. Tax collections policy (2nd reading)

Mr. Antanavica read the definitions and asked if it was published online.

Mr. Genereux responded it will be.

Mr. Bujak asked if partial payments were not accepted after the notice is published and asked if it was Mass General Law?

Mr. Genereux once it is published, there is a 2-week window. The town will hold payments, but not apply them. It is a cleaner record and one cannot enter into a payment plan to avoid a tax taking. We will collect them until the date of publication. They hold so everything stays organized.

Mr. Bujak asked if the town was placing liens on people paying but still in arrears.

Mr. Genereux stated when collector and treasurer were separate, treasurer collector would take it, then hand over to treasurer. After June 30th they could work out payment.

Mr. Bujak said he was confused. If there is payment what is the status of tax title.

Mr. Genereux stated the interest rate goes from 14 to 16%.

Mr. Bujak asked if someone is actively paying the town is not taking property from them. He asked if the Board become made aware, since they are not part of the process.

Mr. Genereux said generally speaking, it has been administerial and handled by employees. Most of the previous issues were improper books and pages, or addresses. In that case the town reassess them as the legal work is expensive.

Ms. Provencher states the board used to get a copy of everything that was in tax title but they hadn't done that for a long time.

Ms. Bujak stated he didn't think we should be involved in day-to-day.

Mr. Antanavica stated it is good to have multiple eyes on it.

Ms. Provencher asked about land court and if it went against town taxes or 3rd party?

Mr. Genereux stated the town hasn't done anything with 3rd party at this point. The state is considering new legislation. If anybody has payment agreement, they will not go to land court.

b. FY2025 budget – first look

Mr. Genereux stated he is presenting the first short-form version of the budget. This is the first step in the process. Departments got copies of their budgets. Anything with expenses is planned to be zero-based. He stated he will be working with the Town Accountant over next few weeks as the due date is 1/2/24. The department lines will be redone with whatever is presented. After that is settled he stated

he will make recommendations for discussion with the Board. He said he has made forecast changes in State Aid and would not be waiting for the governor's budget. The debt schedule in 2025 has been finalized and he expected the numbers to change when department's submit their expenses. SB/TA has \$140k increase due to updates to compensation schedule as the board has talked about getting rid of lower lines on the scale which resulted in an increase of \$252 to \$291. Increases of 1.8 million. To figure all of this out, there are 3 questions the needed to be discussed.

1. Is shelter funding. Put income toward maintenance of property as nobody expected 2 million dollars in revenue.
2. Should school department pay some of it? Union contracts currently under negotiation. Possible increase of School Choice Out.
3. Is there an appetite to continue to use Free Cash? The town will need to review 300k for snow and ice and will need \$350k for campus expenses through July.

Mr. Bujak inquired about HCA funds and if they were set aside or buried in free cash?

Mr. Genereux responded the town hasn't used HCA for anything else. It's still in Free Cash.

Mr. Bujak asked if there was roughly 900k that should come out of free cash.

Mr. Genereux stated they are still waiting for the Cannabis Control Commission to finalize.

Mr. Bujak stated he has always said "spend it" before they want to take it back.

Mr. Genereux stated the town moved some money in, but not all. If everything remains the same, they have a debt to that fund.

Mr. Bujak asked if free cash is about \$300k and said they have to change the presentation to make it all make sense.

Mr. Genereux stated they not getting any further HCA funding and they are one of the few towns to start an HCA.

Mr. Bujak stated he thought that is a better idea for tracking.

Mr. Bujak asked if the state paying was paying for the shelter kids?

Mr. Antanavica stated he would have to speak to the superintendent.

Mr. Bujak stated there new program on Winslow ave too and the town needs to know the value as that cost could be reduced.

Mr. Genereux stated that the governor signed last week and the superintendent has a standing meeting next week.

Mr. Antanavica stated that it would be crucial.

Mr. Bujak asked about the MSBA project and said that he has heard nothing. He expressed that the town cannot pull from any other coffers.

Mr. Genereux stated they would be repurposing and the state covers about 58%.

Mr. Bujak said longer term, they will need a debt exclusion and the million dollar override is not that bad, but when coupled with debt exclusion it adds up.

Mr. Antanavica stated the PD project comes off this year.

Mr. Bujak asked does the enterprise fund have some money and that hopefully enrollment goes up.

Mr. Menard stated the town just got approved for two new Chapter 74 funds and that the school may be adding another one?

Ms. Mary Kay Hannant spoke of changing nursing to professional medical.

Mr. Bujak stated the building needs an investment.

Mr. Genereux stated that will change over 3 weeks.

Mr. Bujak about the status of the school budget.

Mr. Menard stated the school committee chair wanted to get the 3 boards together.

Mr. Bujak stated those 3-board meetings are useless. He said he is not knocking our board, but nothing happens.

Mr. Genereux stated it comes down to the board is responsible for the policy that creates the budget. Advisory opines about it. Board has authority to give more direction. He stated he is not sure we will get information any time soon.

Mr. Bujak stated he would prefer the school committee does a budget like the town as they spell it out by name and the school budget should be itemized.

Mr. Genereux stated the Vadar report lists by salary, professional services, supplies/utilities. Everything should be part of final budget pack.

Mr. Bujak stated moving money is fine and it is hopefully building.

Mr. Genereux stated the long report will probably be 280 pages.

Ms. Hannant mentioned bond street and the 21 million that school approved last year and asked if that included \$200k?

Mr. Genereux stated the school asks for more because they do not have to have an additional public hearing.

Mr. Bujak stated he thought Ms. Hannant was correct as the esser funds go away so they'd have to make 400k.

Mr. Antanavica asked to see if we can have them come to the next mtg.

Ms. Hannant stated she would be wiling to help.

Mr. Bujak made a motion to enter into executive session at 7:09 PM. Ms. Provencher seconded. Motion carries 4-0-0 (roll call vote)

6. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- a. To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21(a)(3) if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares – Kelly O’Brien vs. Town of Leicester

Ms. Provencher made a motion to adjourn at 7:48 PM. Mr. Bujak seconded. Motion passes 4-0-0.