

**Minutes of the
BOXFORD SELECT BOARD
HYBRID VIA ZOOM
Monday, April 22, 2024**

Present: Barbara Jessel, Chuck Costello, Peter Perkins, Margaret Chow-Menzer, Judi Stickney

Others Present: Town Administrator Matthew Coogan, Daniel Volchok, Barbara Bisceglia, Mel Buttaro, Josh Rathbun, Ross Povenmire, Pam Blaquiere, Christine Dean, Liz Murphy, and Minutes Recorder Donna Grieco

6:30 PM Call to Order

Select Board Chair Jessel called the Select Board Meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

6:35 PM Announcements

Boxford Community Electricity Information Session - Select Board member **Stickney** announced that Boxford will launch its electricity supply program, *Boxford Community Electricity* in June 2024. The program is a municipal aggregation, which is already offered by nearly 170 cities and towns in the State. You are invited to attend a community meeting on April 23rd at 6pm at Town Hall or virtually at BoxfordElectricity.com to learn more about the program.

Trash and Recycling Public Information Session - Select Board member **Stickney** announced that a public information and Q & A session regarding the new trash and recycling program will be held on April 24th at 7:00 PM at Town Hall, 7A Spofford Rd., Meeting Room #1. Jason Mello of G. Mello Disposal Corp. was present as was Alex Constan of the Board of Health.

Town Meeting/Election/Moderators Forum - Select Board member **Costello** announced that the Town Meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 14, 2024, at 7:00 PM, at Masconomet Regional High School Auditorium and that the Annual Town Election will be held on Tuesday, May 21, 2024, at 7:00 AM - 8PM, at Boxford Town Hall located at 7A Spofford Road. There will also be a Moderators Forum held on Tuesday, May 7, 2024, at 7:00 PM also at Boxford Town Hall, 7A Spofford Road.

Town Meeting Warrant is Available – Select Board member **Costello** announced that residents can access the Annual Town Meeting Warrant and supporting materials for each of the articles on the Town of Boxford Website at www.boxfordma.gov/TownMeeting2024 or by using the QR Code. Printed copies of the Annual Town Meeting Warrant are also available at Town Hall, The Center at 10 Elm, and the Boxford Town Library.

DPW Public Information Session - Select Board member **Chow-Menzer** announced that residents can learn more about the DPW facility planning at an Open House on Earth Day, April 27th from 11 AM to 3 PM at 7B Spofford Rd. There will be a raffle to win

a ride to school in a dump truck. A Public Information Session and Q and A will be held on April 29th at 7PM at Town Hall, 7A Spofford Rd. in Meeting Room #1 or virtually via Zoom.

Earth Day - Select Board member **Perkins** announced that the Boxford Village Garden Club and the Boxford Recycling Committee are sponsoring Earth Day on Saturday, April 27, 2024, from 11 AM to 3 PM. Residents who collect litter around town and drop it off at Boxford's Recycling Center will receive a free ice cream sundae from Benson's Ice Cream at Town Hall. Also on April 27th, there will be a textile recycling event. On April 20th, there will be a paper shredding event. One box will be free, and there will be a cost of \$5 for every extra box.

Candidates Night - Select Board Chair **Jessel** announced that Candidates for Boxford's May 21, 2024, Town Election, have been invited by the League of Women Voters of the North Shore to introduce themselves and answer questions. The public is invited to attend. This event will be broadcast on cable television, Channel 22 (Comcast) and Channel 39 (Verizon) and will be recorded to view on demand at Government Videos on Demand (Boxfordcabletv.com).

6:40 PM Appointments

Josh Rathbun, discussed his qualifications and reasons for wanting to join the Conservation Commission. After having interviewed a total of three candidates, his candidacy was fully supported by Ross Povenmire and the entire Committee.

On a **MOTION** made by **Costello**, second by **Stickney**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously by roll call vote to appoint Josh Rathbun to the Conservation Commission with term ending 6/30/24.

Erin Bisisetti's resume and qualifications were read by the Town Administrator. He noted that Ms. Bisisetti was recommended, and her candidacy enthusiastically supported by the Council on Aging.

On a **MOTION** made by **Stickney**, second by **Perkins**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously by roll call vote to appoint Erin Bisisetti to the Council on Aging with term ending 6/30/24.

6:45 PM Meeting with Regional School Planning Committee

Presentation of the Regional School Planning Committee efforts to study the regionalization of elementary schools in the Tri-Towns. They are conducting a study to determine the feasibility of such a proposal and noted that this topic is investigated every ten years. Their research began in the summer of 2022. After their presentation, the Select Board noted that much work has been conducted thus far and that the presentation was well done despite the fact that much of the proposal is still under review. For example, it is still undetermined as to the voting structure, how the buildings will be maintained and how the budget would be approved. The pros and cons of the proposal were discussed as were the steps necessary to form a region. The Planning

Committee sought feedback and reactions from the Select Board. Select Board Chair Jessel voiced her opinion that there is currently a collaborative working relationship in place with the unions and her approval would depend on what the Regional Agreement would look like. Select Board Clerk Chow Menzer reiterated that the current working relationships with the union and the Boxford School Committee are good, and while she is not totally opposed, but since things are working well now, perhaps the three towns could pursue working together rather than regionalizing formally. Select Board member Stickney felt similarly and stressed that without an agreement in writing, it is difficult to garner her support. Select Board member Perkins stated that he needs to know more about the proposal before making up his mind and wondered what the other towns think of the proposal. He also noted that teachers moving from school to school is concerning. Finally, select Board member Costello, who is also a working member of the Regional School Planning Committee, said that he wants to know, and has asked this question numerous times, what gets better for the students academically. He noted that forfeiting local control is a big deal to a lot of folks, and a lot of young parents and that public input is still needed. Middleton's Board reaction was not supportive, and Topsfield's was as yet undetermined. The Committee asked if they should move forward with drafting an agreement and most Select Board members mentioned a concern that it may have a life of its own. One member said it could grow legs while another said it could become an unstoppable train. The Town Administrator summed things up by saying there is a gamut of interest here and Select Board member Costello praised the committee for all of their hard work.

8:15 PM Meeting with 10 Elm Community Committee

A discussion of proposed rates and processes for reserving events at the Center at 10 Elm took place. The 10 Elm Community Committee presented a 6 Tier Plan for priority usage of the Community Center at 10 Elm for public activities of all kinds and for all ages. They noted some issues and concerns with the location such as the difficult to operate AV equipment, doors which auto-lock and need to be propped open, lack of kitchen access/water, difficulty opening/closing the room divider, and lack of building staffing for evening events. Rates based on a two-hour rental period for each tier were discussed as were additional fees for increments of an additional two hours, the new online software used for reservations and cleaning fees. The Committee will continue to work on rules and regulations with the Town Administrator and try to have them in place for July 1st. They also mentioned that they would like to see a *Friends of the Community Center* group formed. They could advertise this on the Town's website and on Facebook. The Select Board thanked them for their work.

8:40 PM Meeting with Town Moderator and Town Clerk -

Demonstration of voting keypads for May 14, 2024 Town Meeting was **postponed** until the next meeting.

8:45 PM Report of the Town Administrator

A discussion on May 14, 2024 Warrant Article presenters ensued. The Chair and each Select Board member were assigned to present 1 or more of the 24 articles at Town

Meeting. Others who are not Select Board members were also assigned to present various articles.

Discussion on Town and Masco's Cherry Sheet Estimates, Proposed FY25 House of Representatives Budget and Local Aid - Now that the House Ways and Means Committee has submitted its budget for FY25, the Town's and Masco's estimated Cherry Sheets have been updated. Summary from the Asst. Town Administrator: With the House Ways and Means budget only increasing UGGA 1% vs. FY24 (as opposed to the 3% increase that the Governor proposed), Boxford still does well with an estimated \$37,608 more in total state aid under the HWM proposal, due to the additional money that HWM put towards Chapter 70.

Discussion of Cable TV contract negotiations

Comcast's license expires on June 30, 2025, and Verizon's expired on September 18, 2023. In Verizon's case, while their license has technically expired, their current license is actually still in effect and will remain so until the terms of a new license are agreed upon. Under Massachusetts regulations, the Select Board has the ability to appoint a Cable Advisory Committee ("CAC") to advise the Board through the licensing process. The Asst. Town Administrator recommended that the Select Board vote to reconstitute the Cable Advisory Committee with the following membership: one representative of the Select Board, one representative of Boxford Cable Access Television (BCATv), and the Town Administrator or his/her designee.

On a **MOTION** made by **Costello**, second by **Perkins**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the Asst. Town Administrator's charge to reconstitute the Cable Advisory Board.

On a **MOTION** made by **Costello**, second by **Perkins**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously to assign Select Board member Stickney to the Cable Advisory Committee.

SAFER Grant Update – Boxford Fire Department application

The Fire Department did apply for the maximum grant amount to hire call firefighters. Chief Geiger will attend a future meeting to discuss this in more detail.

Park Program 2024 Update – The Town will extend the application period by one week to potentially attract more staff to hire. Twenty staff members are required to run the program. As soon as staff is in place, the program will be announced and advertised. Registration should begin in mid-May and the program at Spofford will begin in late June and run for approximately five weeks through the last week of July.

Boxford Community Electricity Update- Discussion of letter sent to Boxford residents explaining the new Boxford Community Electricity Plan and options. A letter was sent to all residents who do not have an existing supplier other than National Grid. Those who already have a supplier other than National Grid will not receive a letter advising them of the aggregation program. All residents can opt in to the program at any time.

9:15 PM Routines

Approval of Select Board Minutes of 3/25/24, 4/1/24 and 4/8/24.

On a **MOTION** made by **Costello**, second by **Perkins**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously, with Select Board Member Stickney abstaining, to approve the Minutes of 03/25/24 as amended.

On a **MOTION** made by **Costello**, second by **Stickney**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the Minutes of 04/01/24 as amended.

On a **MOTION** made by **Stickney**, second by **Costello**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the Minutes of 04/08/24 as amended.

9:30 PM Executive Session

The purpose of the Executive Session was to conduct a strategy session for negotiations with nonunion personnel, Town Administrator Coogan.

On a **MOTION** made by Select Board Chair **Jessel**, second by **Costello**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously by roll call vote to go into Executive session for the purpose of conducting a strategy session for negotiations with nonunion personnel, Town Administrator Coogan, and declared that an Executive Session is necessary since an open public discussion may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating, bargaining or litigating position of the Select Board, and upon completion of the Executive Session to return to open session and immediately adjourn without conducting any further business.

Adjourn

Next Meeting – May 6, 2024

Documents either distributed to the Select Board before the meeting in a packet or at the meeting:

Agenda

New Call to Order

Announcement: Boxford Community Electricity Information Session

Announcement: Trash and Recycling Public Information Session

Announcement: Town Meeting/Election/Moderators Forum

Announcement: Town Meeting Warrant is Available

Announcement: DPW Public Information Session

Announcement: Earth Day

Announcement: Candidates Night

Appointments: Letter from Josh Rathbun supporting his candidacy Presentation -
Regional Feasibility Study

Memo - 10 Elm Committee Recommendations
May 14, 2024 Town Meeting Article Presenter Worksheet
Memo - Cable Advisory Committee Information
Boxford Preliminary Cherry Sheet FY25 (State Aid)
Masco Preliminary Cherry Sheet FY25 (State Aid)
Boxford Community Electricity Notification Letter
Draft Meeting Minutes – 3/25/24, 4/1/24, 4/8/24
Executive Session Motion