

**Minutes of the  
BOXFORD SELECT BOARD  
HYBRID VIA ZOOM  
Monday, February 12, 2024  
Draft**

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

Others Present: Town Administrator Matthew Coogan, Ross Povenmire, Joe Hill, Angela Steadman, Holy Langer, Bob Gore, Michael White, Lisa Donahue, Asst. Town Administrator Brendan Sweeney, 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**

**Community Newsletter:** Select Board member Stickney called for residents to visit: [www.boxfordma.gov/newsletter.winter2024](http://www.boxfordma.gov/newsletter.winter2024) to read the 10th issue of the Boxford Community Newsletter.

**Scholarship Opportunity:** Select Board member Perkins announced that the Commissioners of Trust Funds are now accepting applications for the Perley-Parkhurst-Cole Trust Scholarship Fund. For guidelines and application information, please visit this website: [www.boxfordma.gov/PPC-Scholarship](http://www.boxfordma.gov/PPC-Scholarship)

**Real Estate Tax Exemption:** Select Board member Costello announced that the period for filing Real Estate Tax Exemptions for residents who are eligible for property tax relief is currently ongoing. Some of the programs available include:

- Legally Blind
- Disabled Veterans
- Seniors 65+ years with low to moderate income
- CPA Surcharge Exemption

Anyone interested in applying for an exemption should contact the Assessor's Office at 978-887-6692, Monday – Thursday, from 8:00am - 4:30pm. Applications will be accepted until April 1, 2024, for the current tax year.

**6:40 PM Joint Meeting with the Boxford Planning Board**

Joint vote to appoint James Barnes to the Planning Board

The Select Board and Planning Board voted to recommend James Barnes for appointment to the Planning Board to fill the remainder of the term vacated by John Adams. The term expires May 2024.

On a **MOTION** made by **Bob Gore**, the Planning Board unanimously VOTED to open the Planning Board meeting.

On a **MOTION** made by **Costello**, second by **Stickney**, the Select Board VOTED unanimously by roll call vote to appoint James Beard to the Planning Board with term expiring in May 2024.

The Planning Board VOTED unanimously by roll call vote to appoint James Beard to the Planning Board with term expiring in May 2024.

Newly appointed Planning Board member Beard thanked the Select Board and is looking forward to working with them.

On a **MOTION** made by Ellen **Guerin** and second by Angela **Steadman**, the Planning Board VOTED unanimously to adjourn the Planning Board meeting.

### **6:45 PM Appointments**

Election Workers recommended by Robin Phelan with terms to expire on August 15, 2024 include:

Judith Andersen  
Lois Bell  
Suzanne Cox  
Karen Collari-Troake  
Suzanne Cox  
Christine Delaney  
Jack Eaton  
Judy Gore  
Virginia Keilty  
Stephen Knowles  
Holly Langer  
Sandy Lieto  
Kirsten Manton  
Kelly McVey  
Charlene Mead  
Cynthia Middleton  
James Middleton  
Robyn Muetterties  
Tatjana Gijbrechts -Nugteren  
Katherine Pedersen  
Beverly Perkins  
Sandra Pinkham  
Rebecca Potts  
Jayne Smallman  
Linda Shea  
Carolyn Tanner  
Caroline Troake  
Henry Troake  
Jan Vernet  
June Wilson  
Scott Wilson  
Michael White

On a **MOTION** made by **Costello**, second by **Perkins**, the Select Board VOTED unanimously by roll call vote to appoint

Judith Andersen  
Lois Bell  
Suzanne Cox  
Karen Collari-Troake

Suzanne Cox  
Christine Delaney  
Jack Eaton  
Judy Gore  
Virginia Keilty  
Stephen Knowles  
Holly Langer  
Sandy Lieto  
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Cynthia Middleton  
James Middleton  
Robyn Muetterties  
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Katherine Pedersen  
Beverly Perkins  
Sandra Pinkham  
Rebecca Potts  
Jayne Smallman  
Linda Shea  
Carolyn Tanner  
Caroline Troake  
Henry Troake  
Jan Vernet  
June Wilson  
Scott Wilson  
Michael White  
as election workers with terms to expire on 8/15/24.

### **6:50 PM Meeting with Boxford Housing Partnership Committee**

The Select Board met with the Boxford Housing Partnership Committee to discuss potential Town Meeting Warrant Articles, and Boxford Common Community Housing. BHPC Chair Joe Hill sought support from the Select Board in the potential development of Boxford Commons as was presented in his slide show. In addition to providing housing to seniors in the affordable income bracket below 80% of the AMI, the proposed Boxford Commons development will address an underserved demographic, seniors between 80% and 100% AMI. This group has an income level that prevents them from accessing affordable units, but their income and assets may not allow them to qualify for market rate units in today's current market. The Committee thanked the CPC for the grant that was awarded at the 2022 Town meeting and will be back before the Select Board in March.

### **7:05 PM Meeting with Recreation Committee**

The Select Board and Lisa Donahue, Chair of the Recreation Committee discussed the proposed By-Law change for Town Meeting Warrant. The changes appear in red below. Amendment proposal to read:

#### ARTICLE III

#### Recreation Committee

[Adopted 5-20-1980 ATM, Art. 40, as Secs. 3-7-1 and 3-7-2 of the 1980 Bylaws]  
§ 7-4. Membership; term. [Amended 5-17-1989 ATM, Art. 35; 9-12-2020 ATM by Art. 19]

A Recreation Committee of seven members shall be appointed by the Select Board for three-year overlapping terms of office.1 § 7-5. Purpose.

The Committee's purpose shall be to oversee the recreational needs of the Town, to recommend development of recreational areas as needed and **assist with** the care, maintenance and operation of such areas. **The committee will meet as needed throughout the year to assess the recreational needs. The Department of Public Works Superintendent will work with the Recreation Committee.** The Select Board supports this change to the by-laws.

### **7:15 PM Presentation of Proposed Fiscal Year 2025 Operating Budget, Assistant Town Administrator/ Finance Director**

After consultation with all departments, the FY25 draft operating budget was presented to the Select Board by the Finance Director. The total budget is \$43,178,704, a \$2,789,489 (+6.91%) increase above FY24. Revenue for FY25 is projected to be \$42,367,328, a \$1,490,770 increase above FY24's estimated revenue collections, though, after adjustments (setting aside funding for Free Cash replenishment, Snow and Ice deficits, and tax abatements) the Town's FY25 revenue is projected to be \$41,667,328. Notable factors impacting the FY25 revenue estimate are: a significant increase in new growth revenue from the ongoing construction of the 66-unit Willows at Boxford project and a recent increase in local receipts. The FY25 tax levy is projected to grow at the standard +2.5% increase above the sum of the FY24 tax levy and FY24 new growth, and we are projecting a moderate increase in state aid, based on the FY25 budget that Governor Healey filed with the Legislature in January.

As currently presented, **the FY25 budget is out of balance by \$1,511,377**, as shown in the table on the next page. In order to balance the budget, one (or some combination of) the following three options will need to be pursued:

- Cut \$1,511,377 from the Town Government or Elementary Schools budget. Through the Masconomet School Committee, the Town could encourage Masconomet Regional School District to further cut their FY25 proposed budget as well, which would reduce the Town's assessment.
- Utilize up to the \$941,167 of the Town's excess levy capacity, which would grow the FY25 tax levy above the standard +2.5% increase without requiring an operational override, but would still result in a corresponding increase in the property tax rate. Even if the entirety of the Town's excess levy capacity is utilized, an operational override of at least \$570,210 would still be required to balance the budget without making any spending cuts.
- Put before the voters of Boxford two (or more) significant operational override votes, totaling at least the amount of the deficit shown above. The Finance Committee guidance for Town departments and both school districts was to present level-service budgets with a target of keeping budget increases for FY25 within +2.5% above their FY24 budget. Furthermore, any amount above that target limit would need to be funded outside the levy limit through an operational override.

The Finance Director thanked all those who helped in the creation of the proposal, specifically, Town Accountant Kathy Benevento, who consistently made herself available to answer numerous questions regarding the development of this proposal, and Town Administrator Matt Coogan.

#### Key Takeaways from Revenue Estimates

- The FY25 tax levy is the standard +2.5% increase above the sum of FY24's tax levy and new growth
- New growth is projected to increase significantly, with \$365 K of the \$500 K estimate coming from new construction at The Willows
- State aid figures are from the Governor's FY25 proposed budget
- Both the House and Senate need to submit their budgets before a final version is agreed upon this summer
- The estimate for local receipts, which increased significantly in FY23, is based on a five-year average

#### Key Takeaways from Proposed Spending (Non-Town Government, Masco, or Elementary Schools)

- Boxford's enrollment at Essex Tech increased from 22 to 25 students
- Non-excluded debt service is increasing to fund previously approved fire truck purchases, as well as the DPW Garage and Spofford School HVAC design costs (not yet approved)
- Annual OPEB contribution restored to \$300 K
- Savings on Essex Regional Retirement assessment

#### Town Government Budget Highlights

Notable spending increases in FY25 include:

- \$194 K for increased salary costs
  - Combination of FY24 non-union and FY24 CBA union salary increases (funded from Salary Reserve in FY24 budget), plus FY25 CBA union salary increases
  - FY25 cost-of-living and merit-based increases for non-union employees will be funded from Salary Reserve
- \$132 K for an estimated increase in insurance costs
  - +\$80 K (+9% vs. FY24) for health insurance
  - +\$52 K (+12% vs. FY24) for liability insurance
- \$42 K for increased building maintenance and utilities expenses
- \$20 K in increased IT funding for Office 365/Microsoft Cloud migration
- \$19 K for increased fuel costs

Boxford will save \$155 K from switching to automated collection trash/recycling collection, with bi-weekly (every other week) recycling.

This was followed by a review by the Town Administrator of his Budget Narrative Document, a summary document which lists all department specifics including HR, IT and others. The Town Administrator also outlined four goals he has set as follows:

**Goal 1:** Continue to improve Town Facilities and Infrastructure

**Goal 2:** Provide fiscally sound management and maximize return on taxpayer dollars

**Goal 3:** Lead in building a collaborative and engaged community through maintaining a high level of communication

**Goal 4:** IT improvements

#### 7:35 PM Presentation of 5-Year Capital Improvement Program

Discussion on CIP

Administrator Coogan presented the *Proposed Capital Improvement Program FY2025-FY2029* for the Select Board's review. This draft 5-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for the Town of Boxford was created in collaboration with Department Heads and School

Administration and includes 78 projects and a total capital investment of \$51 Million over five years, beginning Fiscal Year 2025 through Fiscal Year 2029. It includes a financing plan to fund projects, with a combination of free cash, debt, CPA funds, and various grant programs, including Boxford's federal Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (CLFRF) through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), and state sources. As presented, 30% of the total project costs would be funded without the reliance on Boxford taxpayer dollars.

Timeline:

October: Launch process with templates sent to Department Heads

November: CIP department requests due to Town Administrator

December/January: Meetings with Department Heads to review requests

February 12, 2024: Submit DRAFT CIP to Select Board

February – April: Boards and Committees review and deliberate (Select Board, FinCom, PBC)

May 14, 2024: Annual Town Meeting

Project Costs by Department were listed as well as funding sources. Potential projects to be funded in Capital Omnibus Warrant Article, CIP Funding, May Town Meeting Free Cash Capital, the Masco Capital Plan and Potential Debt Authorizations at May Town Meeting were also presented.

Next Steps Include:

- Select Board Review
- Finance Committee Review
- Permanent Building Committee Review
- Final Financing Plan
- Finalize FY25-FY29 CIP
- FY25 Appropriation Requests
- Annual Town Meeting

**7:50 PM Report of the Town Administrator**

**Common Victualler Licenses:**

**Application for Common Victualler License- West Village Provisions**

On a **MOTION** made by **Costello**, second by **Perkins**, the Select Board VOTED unanimously to approve CVL# 24-09, to West Village Provisions, 561 Main Street, W. Boxford.

**Application for Common Victualler License- Stone House Farm, LLC**

On a **MOTION** made by **Costello**, second by **Stickney**, the Select Board VOTED unanimously to approve CVL# 24-03, to Stone House Farm, Inc., 276 Washington Street, W. Boxford.

**Sign Approval for Boxford's 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Soup Chowder Fest-** Requesting approval for a 3' x 3' black and white painted wooden sign with a picture of a soup bowl with the words "Chowder Fest, Saturday, March 16, 5-6:30 pm - Chowda, Soup, WBIS" in front of Lincoln Hall, 563 Main Street from March 2 through March 16, 2024, for Boxford's 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Soup & Chowder Fest.

On a **MOTION** made by **Perkins**, second by **Stickney**, the Select Board VOTED unanimously to approve the sign request for Boxford's 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Soup Chowder Fest.

**MSBA Statement of Interest draft vote language - Cole School Roof Project Resolved:**

Having convened in an open meeting on February 12, 2024, prior to the SOI submission closing date, the Select Board of Boxford, in accordance with its charter, bylaws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated 28 February 2024, for the Harry Lee Cole Elementary School located at 26 Middleton Road which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future:

**Priority 1.**

Boxford Public Schools seek to replace a section of roofing of approximate 7500 sq. ft. in size located in the southeast area of the school. The roofing is original to its section of the school building, constructed in 1995-1996. The roofing is of built-up construction using asphalt membrane and aggregate cover ballast. The roofing has exceeded its service life and is in need of replacement to secure the safety, health and function of the classroom wing it serves below; and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the Town of Boxford to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

On a **MOTION** made by **Stickney**, second by **Costello**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the above language relative to the MA School Building Authority Statement of Interest.

**Dorman Property - Request for Abatement** - There is an outstanding tax balance of \$48.29 on the Dorman property (28-05-16.1, 0 Herrick Rd). Per M.G.L. Ch 59 S72A, the Assessor's Office can abate this at the request of the Select Board. Once the Assessor receives the request, that Board will take care of this at a future meeting.

On a **MOTION** made by **Stickney**, second by **Costello**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously to request that the Board of Assessors abate the amount of \$48.29 for the Dorman property located at 0 Herrick Road, Boxford.

**DPU Approval of Boxford Municipal Aggregation Plan** – LSO Energy Advisers submitted the Town of Boxford's revised municipal aggregation plan and associated documents in response to the Order dated December 22, 2023, issued by the Department of Public Utilities. Included with this submission were clean and redlined versions of the noted documents compared to the Exhibit 1 versions submitted on November 10, 2023, in response to the Department's First Set of Information Requests and the Exhibit 2 version submitted on October 5, 2022, with the Town's initial filing:

- Key to Compliance Filing
- Exhibit 1 – Municipal Aggregation Plan (clean and redlined)
- Exhibit 1, Attachment A – Education and Outreach Plan (clean and redlined)
- Exhibit 2 – Exemplar Electric Service Agreement ("ESA") (clean and redlined)

Additionally, as directed in the Order, at page 48 (bullet 1), the Town confirms that the enrollment and pricing procedures identified in the ESA are fully consistent with the enrollment and pricing procedures in the Plan and Education Plan.

**Boxford Municipal Aggregation Launch Presentation-** The following were discussed as they pertain to the Municipal Aggregation launch:

- Aggregation Plan Recap
- Launch Window
- Market Update

- To-Dos for Launch
- Timeline
- Voluntary Renewable Energy

**Memo: Boxford Legislative Priorities -**

The Select Board will be meeting with our legislative delegation, including Senator Bruce Tarr, Representative Tram Nguyen, and Representative Adrienne Ramos, as part of the February 26th Select Board meeting. The Board has been holding this meeting annually for the last few years to discuss the Town's legislative priorities and fiscal priorities for the state FY2025 budget process which include:

- Municipal Empowerment Act
- Municipal and School Aid
- Capital Budgeting

**Funding Requests:**

Pertaining to funding requests, there are items in the next few years of the Town's draft 5-year Capital Improvement Program for which state support would be beneficial to the Town such as:

- IT – Replacement of Wireless Network \$35,000
- Digitize Building Department files \$25,000
- Design and permitting of Balmoral Rd Drainage System \$50,000
- Assessment and design of Main Street retaining wall \$20,000
- Lincoln Hall exterior repairs \$30,000
- Lincoln Hall interior repairs \$30,000
- Backup Police and Fire radio repeaters \$65,000
- Fire Mutual Aid network radio \$20,000
- Fire Dept. SCBA Compressor \$55,000
- Fire Department vehicle stabilizers \$21,000
- Fire Department Thermal Imaging Camera \$10,000

Finally, the Town will be actively pursuing outside funding sources to finance major projects, including state funds. Some of the larger projects include:

- New DPW Facility: \$1,500,000 design + \$15M construction
- Culverts: \$1.4M for 4 culverts in need of critical repair
- Endicott Street Bridge: \$1.5M repairs of a bridge that spans over the border with the Town of Topsfield.
- Spofford Pond School HVAC Electrification Project
- Cole School Electrification Project
- Vehicles/ Apparatus
- Fire Rescue Vehicle: \$500,000
- Mini Excavator with Brush Side Mower Attachment: \$150,000
- One Ton Dump Truck \$100,000
- Tractor \$75,000

Our Legislative Delegation has been successful over the last few years in providing the Town with over \$200,000 in state budget earmarks, as well as supporting the Town's successful efforts in receiving state grants that total nearly \$600,000. The Town thanks them for their support.



**Vision Zero Regional Plan Participation** –Boxford will meet with the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission to draft a list of safety priorities, identify barriers, and discuss other issues related to transportation safety.

**Building Department Report January 2024** – The Building Inspector provided a report detailing the number of permits issued by the department for the month of January and their associated fees.

**Waste Stream Task Force Update:** The Town is looking to negotiate a five-year deal including automated trash pick-up, and bi-weekly recycling.

**ARBA Committee Update:** The ARBA committee will meet tomorrow with an agenda focusing on a meeting with a real estate broker regarding 188 Washington Street, its possibilities, and comp data. There was a walk-through of 4 Middleton Road by the Tri-Town School unions as they are in search of a venue to consolidate all of their administrative offices into one location.

**Town Meeting Potential Warrant Articles:** will be discussed next meeting.

**Cell Phone Reception-** Select Board member Stickney asked if there had been an update on poor cell reception to parts of Boxford. The Town Administrator informed the Select Board that he and Select Board member Perkins had a conversation with a Verizon representative. In the first couple of weeks of March the representative will do a walking site visit to determine if boosters can be added for better cell reception to the Town center area and especially inside Town buildings.

#### **8:10 PM Routines**

**Approval of Minutes** – The Minutes for the Select Board Meetings of January 8 and 24, 2024, will be reviewed next meeting.

#### **8:20 PM Adjourn**

On a **MOTION** made by **Stickney**, second by **Perkins**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously to adjourn.

#### **Next Meeting – February 26, 2024**

Respectfully submitted,

Donna M Grieco  
Minutes Recorder

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

Agenda  
New Call to Order  
Announcement: Community Newsletter  
Announcement: Scholarship Opportunity  
Announcement: Real Estate Tax Exemption  
Appointments: James Beard to Planning Board supporting documentation  
Appointments: Election Workers list  
HPC Boxford Commons Housing Report and Recommendations  
HPC Warrant Article Proposal  
Recreation Committee Bylaw Amendment Proposal  
Recreation Committee meeting notes  
Presentation of FY25 proposed Draft Operating Budget  
Memo-Draft FY25 Operating Budget Overview  
Town Administrator Department Budget Narrative Draft  
Draft CIP Presentation  
Boxford Capital Improvement Program Draft Fiscal Years 2025-2029  
Common Victualler's License Application & Supporting Documentation: West Village Provisions  
Common Victualler's License Supporting & Supporting Documentation: Stone House Farm  
Boxford's 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Soup Chowder Fest Sample Sign  
MSBA SOI Draft Vote Language – Cole School Roof Project  
Dorman Property- Abatement Request  
DPU Approval of Boxford's Municipal Aggregation Plan  
Boxford Municipal Aggregation Launch Presentation  
Memo: Boxford Legislative Priorities  
Vision Zero Regional Plan Participation  
Building Department Report January 2024  
Draft Meeting Minutes – January 8, 2024  
Draft Meeting Minutes – January 24, 2024