

**Minutes of the
BOXFORD SELECT BOARD
HYBRID VIA ZOOM
Monday, February 26, 2024
Draft**

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

Others Present: Town Administrator Matthew Coogan, Senator Bruce Tarr, Representative Tram Nguyen, Representative Adrienne Ramos, Library Director Angelina Miller, Kathryn Lemaire, Linda Shea, Carolyn Anderson, Krystal Parker, Kimberly Putney, Christina Eckert, Dena Ramos-Pachucki, Allison McNeill, Patrick Roche, Greg Kokorda, Police Chief Riter, Warren Gould, Ross Povenmire, 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

In-Person Early Voting: Select Board member **Chow-Menzer** announced that early voting for the March 5th, Presidential Preference Election will take place at Town Hall, 7A Spofford Road, in the Town Clerk's Office, Monday through Thursday, February 26-29, from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM.

Excise Taxes Are Due: Select Board member **Stickney** announced that excise taxes are due March 18th. For payment instructions, please visit: www.Boxfordma.gov/excisetax3/18

West Boxford's 13th Annual Soup Chowder Fest- Select Board member **Perkins** announced that the West Boxford's 13th Annual Soup Chowder Fest will be held on Saturday, March 16, from 5-6:30 pm in front of Lincoln Hall, 563 Main Street to benefit various causes. The cost is \$15 per adult and \$6 for kids ~ for all you can eat New England soups, various chowders, stews and desserts. Tickets can be purchased at the door. There will also be a 50/50 raffle. More information is available on their Facebook page.

In Memoriam – Select Board member **Costello** memorialized Bob (Bobby) Flynn, Director of Far Corner Farm Golf Course, who passed away last week at the age of 61. He spoke of his many qualities and accomplishments and noted that Bobby will be missed by many.

6:40 PM Meeting with State Legislative Delegation, Senator Bruce Tarr, Representative Tram Nguyen, and Representative Adrienne Ramos

Discussion on Governor's House 2 Fiscal Year 2025 Budget – Senator Tarr discussed pertinent reasons that the State budget is not as robust as in previous years. He cited a lack of federal funds received as compared to those during Covid times, and the continuing decline in revenues collected among others. He praised Boxford's Town Administrator for the list of funding requests provided to him and his delegation and said that it is an extremely useful tool for them as they determine which projects, etc., can be funded. The delegation asked that the Town prioritize their needs for them. Listing needs vs. wants is key and was stressed since there is a very good chance not everything will be able to be funded. Senator Tarr said they see Public Safety as a priority. To which, Select Board member Costello mentioned some priority items that would fit the bill such as radio repeaters for Police and Fire, a fire vehicle stabilizer, and thermal energy cameras.

Discussion on FY25 State Budget requests –Town Administrator Coogan provided the Senator and his delegation with a comprehensive list of foreseeable requests from the Town of Boxford. The Senator noted some limitations as to what might be funded and noted that it might be possible to partially fund some of the projects. The Bond Bill may also assist in the funding of some of the larger items on Boxford’s list. The Senator left some literature regarding the IT Bond Bill which could be used for tightening up cybersecurity.

7:10 PM Joint Meeting with Library Board of Trustees

Introduction of new Library Director, Angelina Miller – The Select Board welcomed the new Library Director. Trustee Linda Shea of the Library Board of Trustees thanked Robin Luna for serving as the interim Director and thanked Asst. Town Administrator Sweeney for his assistance with the talent search. The Library Board of Trustees called their meeting to order by roll call and then moved to appoint two members to the Library Board of Trustees. Each new member was asked to provide some background information, which they did, and there were no questions asked of them. They were thanked for having volunteered.

Appointment of Trustee Candidates: Kathryn Lemaire and Krystal Parker

On a **MOTION** made by **Costello**, second by **Perkins**, the Select Board and Library Board of Trustees **VOTED** unanimously by roll call vote to appoint Kathryn Lemaire and Krystal Parker as Library Trustees with terms ending 05/21/24.

On a **MOTION** made by Shea, second by **Anderson**, the Library Board of Trustees **VOTED** unanimously by roll call vote to adjourn.

7:20 PM Meeting with Sustainability Committee

Municipal Aggregation Update from Good Energy on timeline to launch Boxford Community Electricity - Two representatives from Good Energy, Allison McNeill and Patrick Roche, presented a status update on the Town’s Municipal Aggregation Plan. The plan has been approved and will go out to bid on March 12, 2024. Public outreach will be conducted by various means including letters to residents, social media postings, flyers, and public forums. Boxford will choose a supplier if prices are favorable or can choose not to move forward. Residents will choose from among three options; National Grid will do the rest. The plan is slated to launch in June.

On a **MOTION** made by **Costello**, second by **Stickney**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously to authorize Town Administrator Coogan as the bid day designee to approve the bid recommendation of Good Energy and to sign the Municipal Aggregation contract if the Boxford Standard rate is less than National Grid’s current basic rate.

Discussion on proposed By-Law, adoption of Specialized Stretch Code – This is a new DOER program for Green Communities. It is required to access funding for: studying, designing, constructing, and implementing energy efficiency measures and projects; procuring energy management services; adopting energy efficiency policies; and citing activities related to and construction of renewable energy generating facilities with battery storage on municipally owned property. You must be a Green Community, have a Sustainability Committee, commit to eliminate on-site fossil fuel use by the year 2050, create a municipal decarbonization roadmap, adopt a zero-emission vehicle first policy and adopt the specialized Opt-in building code.

7:50 PM Meeting with Recreation Committee

Kimberly Putney appeared to request that the Select Board establish a donation fund for use towards the Johnson Field Playground Renovation Project.

On a **MOTION** made by **Costello**, second by **Stickney**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously to create a donation fund for the purpose of restoring Johnson Field Playground.

7:55 PM Meeting with Stiles Pond Advisory Committee

Establishment of gift fund for the Stiles Pond Restoration Project.

On a **MOTION** made by **Costello**, second by **Perkins**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously to create a gift fund for the purpose of the restoration of Stiles Pond.

8:00 PM Meeting with Police Chief James Riter

Fiscal Year 2025 Department budget – Chief Riter came before the Select Board asking for less money for the Police Department budget. He noted the following strategies:

- 1) Reduce from 13 to 12 full-time officers (along with 3 midnight officers).
- 2) Increase his assistant's hours to 32 or 33 hours.
- 3) Increase 2 officers' salaries by providing them with an earlier step raise.
- 4) Increase the detectives' stipends to \$2000 and \$1000 respectively.
- 5) Add \$14000. to the overtime account.
- 6) Reserve \$8000 for a promotion to lieutenant next Nov. or Dec.

8:15 PM Meeting with Communications Director Warren Gould

Fiscal Year 2025 Department budget review- Director Gould noted that the actual FY'24 budget shows an increase due to two years of pay increases, plus step increases and operators' salary increases. There was also a line item of \$7291 representing the final percentage of a 40-hour position added five years ago. This amounts to a 7.15% overall department increase. Non-salary expenses, repairs, quarterly service plans and the replacing of security cameras around Town have also added to budget costs as well as software maintenance, cell phones and tablet purchases.

CIP department requests- replace Fire and Police radio repeaters and the network radio.

8:30 PM Report of the Town Administrator

Approval of Warrant for Presidential Preference Primary.

On a **MOTION** made by **Stickney**, second by **Perkins**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the Warrant for the Presidential Preference Primary.

Consider application for 1-day liquor license on non-Town owned property, 2nd Congregational Church.

On a **MOTION** made by **Stickney**, second by **Costello**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the 1-day liquor license on March 15, 2024, on non-Town owned property, requested by the 2nd Congregational Church.

Request to proclaim Saturday, April 27, 2024, as "Boxford Earth Day" and the use of Town Hall facilities, Boxford Village Garden Club and Boxford Recycling Committee.

On a **MOTION** made by **Costello**, second by **Stickney**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously to proclaim Saturday, April 27, 2024, as "Boxford Earth Day" and to approve the use of Town Hall facilities, Boxford Village Garden Club and Boxford Recycling Committee for said purpose.

Warrant Articles for May Town Meeting – The Town Administrator reviewed his Warrant Article Tracking List line by line, citing a total of 25 warrant articles that will be brought to Town Meeting.

Waste Stream Task Force Update – The task force has decided to select automated trash collection, with bi-weekly recycling and to go with a local provider, G. Mello who offered the best possible price, and has an excellent reputation in this area for service and customer support. They are discussing whether to charge a collection fee, annual fee or add the cost of trash removal to the tax base. They also must determine the size of trash barrels to be used.

ARBA Committee Update – The committee is contemplating the creation of a B1 Zoning District for 188 Washington and 4 Middleton Road. There has been some interest in 188 Washington by the Historic Documents Center for their possible expansion. Tri-Town is also still interested in 4 Middleton Road.

Update on Changes to Employee Health Insurance Plans – PEC's proposal is to modify benefits up to the current deductibles and copayments of the GIC Benchmark plan (HPHC Explorer) under the current HMO and PPO plans. There are no proposed changes to the Medicare supplement plan. The Town's proposed mitigation plan would share 25% of the total first year savings with employees and non-Medicare retirees over and above the savings realized by reduced rates. This proposal would reduce the total projected costs in the first twelve months after implementation by approximately \$202,381. Therefore, based on these projected savings, the mitigation fund that would be set aside by the Town to offset the cost of the benefits for employees/non-Medicare retirees would be \$50,595.

MVPC Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant Letter of Support – The letter of support is for two critical East Coast Greenway and Border to Boston bridges, one of which falls within Boxford. The proposed NEPA/MEPA documentation and associated design work will help integrate our community into the continuous, national East Coast Greenway network by connecting the trail over Interstate 95.

On a **MOTION** made by **Perkins**, second by **Costello**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously to submit a RAISE grant letter of support.

9:40 PM Routines

Approval of Minutes

On a **MOTION** made by **Stickney**, second by **Chow-Menzer**, the Select Board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the minutes of 02/12/24 as amended.

9:55 PM Executive Session

The Select Board entered into Executive Session to comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements; Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA).

Adjourn

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

Next Meeting – March 11, 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: In-Person Early Voting
Announcement: Excise Taxes Are Due
Announcement: West Boxford's 13th Annual Soup Chowder Fest
Legislative Priorities Memo
Library Trustee Candidates Supporting Documents
Boxford Community Electricity Launch Update
Boxford's Cover Letter for DPU
Climate Leader Communities Presentation
Memo Johnson Field Playground Project donation fund
Police Department Budget and CIP
Police Department Structure
Communications Department Budget and CIP
Presidential Preference Primary Warrant
One Day Alcohol Permit Application and Supporting Documents - Second Congregational Church
Earth Day Request
PEC Proposal
RAISE Grant Letter of Support
Draft Meeting Minutes – February 12, 2024
Executive Session Motion