



Town Administrator's Report Select Board Meeting of January 18, 2022

Matthew Coogan

Meeting Agenda Items

Medical Response Pilot Report – The 4-month Medical Response Pilot Program concluded in December. The pilot program creates a new shift for a firefighter dedicated to respond directly from their home to a medical call during hours not covered by career firefighters (evenings and weekends). I have met with the public safety departments to determine the efficacy of the program. The medical response call data indicates that response times have decreased overall for the 4-month period from September to December 2021 as compared to the same period in 2020. Upon consultation with the public safety departments, I recommend the Select Board extend the pilot program through June 2023.

Boxford Electric Aggregation Plan – Tonight is the required public hearing for the Boxford Community Electricity Program. John O'Rourke of Good Energy, the Town's consultant for municipal aggregation, will provide a summary of the program as well as the public comment received to date. Public comment opened on December 9th. There's a project website that includes the draft plan and a place to leave public comment: boxfordelectricity.com

Based on the guidance of the Department of Public Utilities (DPU), Good Energy recommends that the Board does not take any action during the meeting tonight. There may be some modest revisions from DPU as well as the Department of Energy Resources, the two state bodies responsible for reviewing aggregation plans. There may also be suggested changes based on public comment. The Board would have an opportunity to vote on the plan once revisions are incorporated.

Town Priorities for Community One Stop Letter of Interest – I recommend the Town submit a letter of interest to the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development's [Community One Stop](#) program. It's a single application portal for towns to work with the state on matching projects with various grant programs. I envision various capital projects, including the school site projects, would qualify for one of the grant programs. There's also funding programs available for technical assistance as we create a plan for the reuse of 4 Middleton Rd. Towns can submit a letter of interest for 2 projects by March 18th, or 5 projects if submitted by February 4th. I recommend we target the February 4th deadline in order to take advantage of the consultation process offered by the various state agencies for early submissions.

Rail Trail Funding Opportunities – The State’s MassTrails program offers up to \$300,000 in funds to support recreational trail and shared use pathway projects. I would like to discuss with the Select Board whether the Town should pursue a grant application to fund 25% design of the off-street portion of the unimproved trail from Pond St to Georgetown Rd. There’s a required local matching amount, which could be obtained through a CPA application. I have been in correspondence with Stantec, the design engineer who has been working on various segments of the B2B trail for several years. They are preparing to provide a proposal and scope and can assist in the grant application. MassTrails grant applications are due February 1.

Other Updates

COVID Rapid Tests – Residents are able to purchase COVID rapid tests through the Town of Boxford Communications Department by calling (978) 887-8137 between the hours of 8am and 4pm. The iHealth kits of 2 tests are being offered to residents at cost, \$10 per kit. Today was the first day of distribution, and 70 households received nearly 140 kits today. There is a limit of 2 kits per Boxford household. The Town has already submitted for an additional order of kits and we are awaiting a delivery date.

COA Vaccination Requirement - The Council on Aging is working on implementing strategies for keeping seniors healthy while maintaining their programming during the COVID-19 Omicron surge. The COA is interested in enacting a vaccination mandate for participating in any COA activities/ events and has reached out to the Board of Health for guidance. The Board of Health will be considering whether to enact a proof of vaccination mandate for entering the COA through an Emergency Health Order at their scheduled meeting Wednesday night.

The Board Health has emergency powers that cannot be overridden by the Select Board. They are found in M.G.L Chapter 111 Section 122:

The board of health shall examine into all nuisances, sources of filth and causes of sickness within its town, or on board of vessels within the harbor of such town, which may, in its opinion, be injurious to the public health, shall destroy, remove or prevent the same as the case may require, and shall make regulations for the public health and safety relative thereto and to articles capable of containing or conveying infection or contagion or of creating sickness brought into or conveyed from the town or into or from any vessel. Whoever violates any such regulation shall forfeit not more than one thousand dollars.

I have discussed with Town Counsel, and KP Law considers implementing a proof of vaccination order through the Board of Health specific to entering the COA building as a reasonable action due to the susceptibility of a vulnerable population such as seniors becoming seriously ill as a result of contracting COVID-19. However, there may be managerial, logistical, or enforcement challenges to take into account. Furthermore, I am not aware of a COA in Massachusetts with a proof of vaccination mandate.

MBTA Communities - Last month, the Department of Housing and Community Development issued draft compliance guidelines applicable to MBTA Communities that are part of the amendments to the

Zoning Act enacted by the Housing Choice Act. The draft compliance guidelines outline steps communities must take to adopt the required as-of-right multi-family housing district in order to remain eligible for certain state grant programs, including Housing Choice, Local Capital Projects Fund, and MassWorks Infrastructure Program. There are several webinars and meetings over the next several weeks that Ross Povenmire, Land Use Director, and I will be attending to better understand how this impacts Boxford. Jim Barnes our MVPC rep is also aware and we will be looking for MVPC support as well. We will schedule time during a February meeting to discuss. Some additional information:

MBTA communities (those with a commuter rail station in the MVPC region) and MBTA Adjacent communities (includes Boxford) must adopt a zoning district that supports a minimum of 15 units/acre of multifamily housing. The zoning district must be 50 acres in size (does not have to be contiguous) and must support by-right development equivalent to 10% (or more) of the total housing units for "adjacent communities". However, the fewest number of multi-family units needed to meet the requirements is 750 units (10% of Boxford units would be much lower at approximately 300 units).

The districts must be adopted by 2023 for commuter rail and 2024 for adjacent communities. The legislation mandates creation of the zoning district but does not currently include any stipulations related to time of performance.

To comply, each municipality must hold a briefing with the Board of Selectmen by May 5, 2022 and submit the "MBTA Community Information Form".

DHCD is accepting public comment through March 31, 2022.

School Regionalization Committee - Last week the Middleton Select Board voted to create the Regional School District Planning Committee. All 6 voting elected bodies (Tri-Town Select Boards + Elementary School Committees) have now voted to create the Committee. The next step would be to identify the membership, which would consist of 3 members from each of the Tri-Town communities. By state law, one member of each community has to be from the respective school committees and appointed by a Town Moderator. The remaining members are appointed by the Select Boards.

Quarterly Newsletter

The Town's second quarterly newsletter went out on Friday. Link: www.town.boxford.ma.us/home/news/town-boxford-community-newsletter

Upcoming Select Board Meeting

- January 31, 2022
 - DPW Update
 - Presentation of Capital Improvement Plan
- February 15, 2022
 - Meeting with State Legislative Delegation on Town priorities
 - MBTA Communities discussion

- Joint meeting with PBC on Little Red School House project
- PD Update
- Tri-Town Council Update