

BOARD OF SLEECTMEN
MARCH 17, 2021
REGULAR SESSION

Members Present: Justin Sullivan, Chris Zorra, David Viera,
David Andrade, Adam Petronio

Town Administrator: Shawn E. Cadime

Asst. Town Administrator
Director of Human Resources: Carol-Ann Days

Chairman Sullivan opened the meeting at 6 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and moment of silence.

He announced that, per Governor Baker's Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 20, the public will not be allowed to physically access this Board of Selectmen meeting. Public comments and questions could have been submitted to the Board in advance of the meeting by completing the Google form prior to the meeting by Tuesday, March 16, 2021 at 4:30 p.m.

The meeting will be broadcast live via Seekonk Cable TV9, streamed live on TV9's Facebook, and streamed live on the Town of Seekonk's YouTube channel.

M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 20(f) requires any person recording must notify the Chairman at the beginning of the meeting.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE OPENINGS

Mr. Zorra announced that volunteers are needed on the Board of Assessors (1 Board of Selectmen appointment), Capital Improvement Committee (2 BOS), Commission on Disability (5-13 BOS), Economic Development Committee (5 BOS), Energy Committee (1 BOS), Historical Commission (3 BOS), Parks & Recreation (1 BOS), Recycling Committee (3 BOS), Zoning Board of Appeals (2 Alternates).

GENERAL BUSINESS

Consider the Appointment of Edward Monigan to the Position of Truck Driver/Laborer for the Department of Public Works

A motion was made by Mr. Zorra, seconded by Mr. Petronio, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To appoint Edward Monigan to the position of truck driver/laborer with the Department of Public Works.

The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Aye; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Chairman Sullivan – Aye.

Consider the Conditional Offer of Employment to Laura Majed to the Position of Part-time Kennel Worker

ACO Andrea Russo recommended the appointment.

Mr. Cadime recommended as mentioned by Ms. Russo.

A motion was made by Mr. Petronio, seconded by Mr. Zorra, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To extend a conditional offer of employment to Laura Majed for the position of part-time kennel worker.

The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Aye; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Chairman Sullivan – Aye.

Prior to the vote, Chairman Sullivan asked if Ms. Majed would leave her employment at Ocean State Job Lot.

Ms. Russo said this is a part-time position on Sunday and Monday. Ms. Majed would most likely keep her employment at Ocean State Job Lot.

Budget Discussions

Schools

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Rich Drolet, School Committee Chairperson Kim Sluter, and Business Manager Jill Brilhante were in attendance.

Dr. Drolet stated that he presented this budget to the School Committee on two occasions and members should vote on the FY'22 budget at the next School Committee meeting on Monday, March 22. District resources revenue \$3.6M and school budget \$30M.

He proposed six new positions totaling \$400,000 primarily to reduce class size. There is an additional \$10,000 for transportation for homeless and special education students. Also, \$22,000 for consultant services and \$30,000 for summer programs for special education students. With respect to technology, \$14,000 increase for software and \$34,000 for network contracted services. Every student has a new chrome book and all teachers have updated computers. They have added new technology support and several more updates in technology. There are several additions at the high school.

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The School Department will ask residents at the Fall Town Meeting to support \$350,000 for a program for 18 to 22-year old students.

Dr. Drolet reported \$2M (unbudgeted) was spent associated with COVID-19. Federal funding received so far is \$840,000 to help with those costs. Looking for additional federal funding coming in FY'22.

Starting in a couple of weeks, students will be in school full time five days a week. They have a three-year district improvement plan.

Dr. Drolet thanked and acknowledged the School Committee, Mr. Cadime, Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, and Capital Improvement Committee for their support.

He advised the School Department is requesting a 3% increase (\$876,000 including Chapter 70) from the town.

The plan is to hire a 4th teacher in kindergarten, third grade, fourth grade and fifth grade at Aitken School. Class size will be too high without these hires. An English teacher and World Language teacher will be hired at the high school.

Dr. Drolet said he met with the Capital Improvement Committee members in December 2020. He outlined the three-year plan. The cost of the heating system at the middle school is \$6,430,000. About \$200,000 was spent this year patching it up. They will apply for MSBA funding once it opens up. Capital Improvement items are not in the budget.

Dr. Drolet said he is looking forward to FY'23. Bringing back out-of-district students to the school system will save about \$200,000 each year. The number of out-of-district students over the last three years was reduced from 40 to 33. The goal is to get it to 20 students. Out of district funding is about \$3M.

Mr. Andrade asked if there is any correlation to the savings that goes along with that.

Dr. Drolet said they will add a special education teacher and assistant and maybe a job coach. There might be an expense in the first year of the program but there will be a savings as time goes on. He could prepare a cross benefit analysis starting in 2017-2018. He noted it is bringing students back but also preventing some from going out of the district.

Mr. Petronio asked how much it cost on average to send students out of district.

Dr. Drolet said about \$100,000 per student. There are a couple of students in residential placements that are up to \$300,000.

He said they have identified students that would benefit from the 18 to 22-year old program.

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Mr. Andrade said it would be good to know the savings bringing back or preventing students from going out of district.

Chairman Sullivan said there are those people who watch the schools closely and there are those who don't understand why making this investment.

Mrs. Sluter said this is a win-win for the community. It is what is best for those families to have students educated with their neighbors.

Mr. Petronio asked about the ESSER II grants.

Mrs. Brilhante said the grant in the amount of \$642,000 goes until the FY'23 school year. The School Department has not used any of it. There was a COVID relief grant in the amount of \$77,000.

Mr. Petronio inquired about grants for technology.

Dr. Drolet explained some of the funds has been used to increase cyber security and also to upgrade.

There was discussion about MBSA monies. Mr. Andrade said it would have been good to apply for it several years ago.

Dr. Drolet said the School Department will return more surplus funds to the town this year.

There was also talk about the school buildings being old and eventually the need for a new school.

Mr. Viera not in favor of band-aid effect. He felt emergency repairs should be done now and then apply for the grant.

Mr. Andrade disagreed. He said a needs analysis should be done.

Mrs. Sluter said this fall a committee will be set up to study options for long term planning for school needs.

In response to Mr. Petronio's question, Mrs. Brilhante said all buildings are working properly and needs being met to keep population safe.

Mr. Andrade required about the new positions to be filled and whether those positions were included in the budget.

Chairman Sullivan thanked the School Department staff in attendance.

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Mr. Cadime explained how they get to the 65%/35% split.

Town FY'22 – No discussion.

A motion was made by Mr. Viera, seconded by Mr. Zorra, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To move to the Public Hearing for Departmental Fees.

The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Aye; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Mr. Andrade – Aye; Chairman Sullivan – Aye.

A motion was made by Mr. Viera, seconded by Mr. Petronio, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To open the Public Hearing on Departmental Fees at 7:04 p.m.

The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Aye; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Mr. Andrade – Aye; Chairman Sullivan – Aye.

Mr. Cadime thanked Mrs. Days and Mr. Alexander for preparing the document.

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Fees that have changed

Building – Commercial - re-inspection fee increased from \$50 to \$75 Gas Fee Fixture both commercial and residential at \$25

Fire Department – solar panel radio alarm box permit \$50 and inspection fee \$50

Flammable – inspection of tank truck. The state has changed to per location increase to \$100 per location (amendment required)

Conservation – Category 11 re-inspection fee \$40

Parks and Recreation – bus trip fee \$85 to \$150 and a \$20 charge for non-residents (amendment)

Cole Street Soccer Complex – non-resident for tournament \$250 for three fields per day.

Field hockey - \$95 non-resident and \$85 resident

League fee - \$2.00 per player for residents

Summer program \$225 for non-resident.

Water Lane field – no fee before and now \$85

Water Lane lavatory for tournaments -\$300

Water lane light - \$25 per day for non-residents

Mr. Zorra clarified about lavatory fees. He asked about changing lights on Water Lane to LED.

Recreation Director John Pozzi said the lights are owned by the town.

Mr. Cadime will have Mr. Alexander look into it.

Mr. Viera questioned the increase of fees in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Mr. Cadime said it is mostly for non-residents and also for the care of the fields.

Mr. Petronio said there is a difference between league and recreation programs. The fees are to offset costs of maintaining fields.

Police – tow truck \$37 up from \$36. Mr. Zorra suggested \$40.

Mr. Petronio asked about the Nuisance fee proposed by Chief Isabella.

Mr. Cadime advised it has to go to Town Meeting.

DPW – increase in trash fee of \$2.49 and trash bags .01 cent..

In response to Mr. Viera's question, Mr. Cadime said the Town collects \$1.3M per year in the Enterprise Fund.

Town Clerk – Amendment to Vital Record at \$25. Perpetual care \$250 for residents and non-residents \$450.

Chairman Sullivan thanked Department Heads and all those who are on line.

A motion was made by Mr. Viera, seconded by Mr. Petronio, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To close the public hearing on departmental fees at 7:38 p.m.

The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Aye; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Mr. Andrade – Aye;
Chairman Sullivan – Aye;

A motion was made by Mr. Viera, seconded by Mr. Zorra, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve the FY'22 departmental fees with the Amendments to the Fire Department and Parks and Recreation as recommended by the Town Administrator.

The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Aye; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Mr. Andrade – Aye;
Chairman Sullivan – Aye.

Presentation of the Department of Public Works Facility

Mr. Cadime noted that the Spring Town Meeting in 2019 authorized moving forward with a feasibility study. He thanked DPW Supt. David Cabral and Asst. Supt. Scott Olobri for working closely with the people at Brewster Thornton Group to prepare the feasibility study.

Mr. Cadime said the DPW building was built in 1950 as an auto dealership. It is insufficient for current staffing levels. The office space is tight. Lavatories are not split between female and male and are located in the office with no privacy. The building is not ADA compliant. It lacks infrastructure for security, modern IT equipment and energy efficiencies. It is undersized for many of the vehicles. The vehicles are outside year-round. There is no place to do any kind of training.

The proposed facility is the Fall River Avenue transfer station site that at one time was considered for a cemetery. It would have administrative building with an area for clerical staff and offices for the superintendent and assistant superintendent as well as a conference room. There will be space for up to 25 crew members with a lunch room and showers. The garage would house all vehicles and include a drop-in space with an entrance for in and out. It has a mechanic's area. It would include the relocation of the fueling station and looking to add a salt shed and a wash space for trucks to get hosed down.

Mr. Cabral explained the situation at the present facility on Taunton Avenue.

Mr. Cadime said salt is always a concern.

It was noted the current salt shed is 2,800 sq. ft. with the dome. The new shed will be 6,400 sq. ft.

There was discussion on the plans prepared by the architect.

Mr. Cadime said the total project cost is \$14.6M.

Mr. Ginsberg from Brewster Thornton added explanations. He said the need is apparent.

Mr. Zorra suggested residents should tour the old DPW facility.

Chairman Sullivan thanked them. He felt this is the time to get a new building.

Mr. Petronio agreed about the need for a new building. He said DPW is the core of the infrastructure.

Discussion of Capital Improvement Recommendations

Mr. Steve Rutter, Chairman of the Municipal Capital Improvement Committee, provided the updated list of recommendations:

Conservation – Conduct dam assessment of the Attleboro Dye Works and Burr's Pond dams
\$40,000

Conservation - Burr's Pond Conservation Area: Improve existing trails, trailhead, and staging area
\$50,000

DPW – Heavy duty dump truck, 3-year lease \$65,000
DPW – Medium duty dump truck – replace \$81,000
Fire – two fire trucks \$80,000 and \$87,000
Fire – Replacement of 2007 Ford Explorer \$47,000
Fire - SCBA Replacement Program – five packs and 4 additional bottles \$40,000
Police – replace backup disaster & recovery server \$25,000
Police – enhance safety of property and personnel \$30,000
School Department – repoint glass block wall \$50,000
Town Hall – scan all paper files for past permits and records \$40,000
Town Hall – Tyler Content Management system implementation \$95,000
Total \$781,000

Discussion with Seekonk Public Library and Trust regarding MBLC Grant Status and Warrant Article

Library Director Kate Hibbert and Board of Library Trustees President Michael Durkay presented The Initiative for a New Seekonk Public Library.

Ms. Hibbert noted the library was challenged last year due to COVID-19.

Mr. Durkay talked about the lack of space. The current building does not meet accessibility standards nor provide the differently-abled with the library experience they deserve. It would take \$2.2M for repairs as a band-aid approach.

Ms. Hibbert said the library does not meet the needs of the future. Six years ago, the Library Building Committee created a vision for a new Seekonk Public Library. The committee solicited public input. In July 2017, the library was told it would receive a \$7.3M construction grant.

She had photos of the proposed library. The total cost would be on the ballot but reduced by the grants and Capital Campaign (\$1M). They hope to be at Spring Town Meeting.

Ms. Hibbert said Seekonk is #7 on the state list for grant award.

Mr. Andrade felt the state number should change when the town's number is finally called. It could be several years from now. Previously, it was an \$8M project and now it is at \$12M.

Mr. Viera concerned there is methane gas under the slab.

Mr. Durkay said there is an alarm and it has never sounded in 40 years.

Mr. Zorra shocked that the library was built on property that had methane gas and then couldn't open it for 5 years.

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Mr. Petronio said, in researching what libraries provide back to the community, there are studies on how it reduces crime rate. He asked if there are numbers that measure how many residents and non-residents utilize the library. In the end, Seekonk residents pay for it.

Ms. Hibbert said she has that information.

Mr. Petronio hoped consideration will be given before putting a building over what was a landfill.

He asked Mr. Cadime about the bond rating.

Mr. Cadime said we are not near the capacity for our debt capacity. He said there are projects that are retiring.

Mr. Petronio said it comes down to priority. The DPW building is top on his priority.

Chairman Sullivan suggested the library wait until Fall Town meeting to present the plan to residents.

Mr. Petronio said time is the issue. He said to put it on the fall warrant.

Mr. Andrade said six months doesn't buy much time.

Mr. Petronio said the library is important. He, too, is concerned about where it will be built.

Mr. Andrade said it takes about 18 months to get an OPM, architect, procurement, construction bids. They will be in the current library for maybe three years.

Ms. Hibbert said they have the architect and OPM.

Ms. Alyssa Richard made it clear the building does not sit on the landfill; it is adjacent to the landfill. The new building will not sit on the landfill. Everybody is aware exactly where deed restrictions sit. It is important to note the library would be moving to a temporary location.

Mr. Durkay said he would have to take this Board's recommendation to postpone to the Trustees.

Mr. Andrade felt it would make sense to get a recommendation from the Board of Selectmen. It might look like a negative without the recommendation.

Mr. Durkay agreed.

In response to Mr. Durkay's question, Mr. Cadime explained that Town Meeting would have to authorize the entire amount. They would work with bond counsel.

Consider the Amendments to Sections 2.8.3; 2.8.4; 2.8.5; 2.8.6; and 4.1.2.4 Zoning Bylaws and forward to the Planning Board for a Public Hearing

Town Planner John Aubin III stated that the five proposed amendments came out of discussion on March 9 with Town Counsel and also the Planning Board. This set represents procedural issues. He explained each Amendment. Two Amendments were not included: specific authority to Planning Board to deny site plan and radius element. This is going to be a multi-step process.

Mr. Andrade asked the Planning Board to extend the 300 ft. to 600 ft. radius.

Mr. Petronio felt it should be with industrial.

Mr. Aubin said site plan rezoning will apply to industrial only.

A motion was made by Mr. Viera, seconded by Mr. Petronio, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To consider the Amendments to Sections 2.8.3; 2.8.4; 2.8.5; 2.8.6; and 4.1.2.4 Zoning Bylaws and forward to the Planning Board for a public hearing and include the 600 ft. radius..

The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Aye; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Mr. Andrade – Aye; Chairman Sullivan.

Discussion of the Comcast Contract

Mr. Cadime advised Comcast has agreed to financial terms, 5% cap, \$175,000 capital monetary value and ten-year contract. Language is still under review by town counsel.

A motion was made by Mr. Andrade, seconded by Viera, and it was unanimously

VOTED To table the Comcast Contract until the next meeting.

The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Aye; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Mr. Andrade – Aye; Chairman Sullivan – Aye.

Consider Signing the Contract with Hague, Sahady & Co., CPAs, P.C. for the Town Audit

A motion was made by Mr. Andrade, seconded by Mr. Viera, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To sign the contract with Hague, Sahady & Co., CPAs, P.C. for the Town Audit

The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Aye; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Mr. Andrade – Aye; Chairman Sullivan – Aye.

Read into the Record the Town Moderator Appointment of Michael Bradley to the Finance Committee

Correspondence from Town Moderator Peter Hoogerzeil that Michael Bradley was appointed to the Finance Committee to fill an unexpired term.

Considering Accepting the Regular Session Minutes of February 24, 2021

A motion was made by Mr. Viera, seconded by Mr. Zorra, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To accept the Regular Session minutes of February 24, 2021.

The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Aye; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Mr. Andrade – Aye; Chairman Sullivan – Aye.

COMMUNITY SPEAKS – None.

OTHER BUSINESS – None.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT – None.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN LIAISON REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Bristol County Advisory Board – None.

Aitken School Expansion Building Committee Report – None.

540 Arcade Avenue Building Committee Report

Mr. Viera said the meeting with the OPM did not go well.

Mr. Cadime said it was re: change order within the scope of work. The Building Committee held its ground.

Veterans’ Council

Mr. Viera said they agreed to have a Memorial Day Parade. However, the Veteran Agent received notification from the Veterans Administration on what should happen during a parade.

South End Fire Station Building Committee

Mr. Viera said OMP was selected.

Mr. Cadime said the price proposal was submitted and it is higher than anticipated.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 11:32 p.m., Mr. Petronio motioned, seconded by Mr. Viera, to go into Executive Session to:

- A. Consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)(6) as having the discussion in open session would be detrimental to the negotiating position of the town (472 Taunton Avenue);
- B. Conduct strategy sessions with respect to Seekonk Public Library Employee Association, MLSA AFT Massachusetts, AFL-CIO per M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)(3) as having the discussion in open session would be detrimental to the negotiating position of the town;
- C. Consider accepting the executive session minutes of January 20, 2021; not to return to open session.

The vote: Mr. Petronio – Aye; Mr. Viera – Aye; Mr. Zorra – Aye; Mr. Andrade – Aye; Chairman Sullivan – Aye.

Respectfully submitted,

David Viera, Clerk

Prepared by:

Patricia Gamer, Secretary

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Items Distributed at the March 17, 2021 Board of Selectmen Meeting

Resume and Application for Edward Monigan, III for position of truck driver/laborer

Resume and Application for Laura Majed for the position of part-time kennel worker

Seekonk School Department Budget

Brewster Thornton Group Architects – Plans for proposed DPW Facility

Capital Improvement Recommendations

Seekonk Public Library and Trust – Presentation regarding plans for new library

Proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendments for Sections 2.8.3, 2.8.4, 2.8.5, 2.8.6, and 4.1.2.4

Contract with Hague, Sahady & Co., CPAs for the Town Audit

Peter Hoogerzeil – Appointment of Michael Bradley to Finance Committee

Departmental Fees