

Approved



SELECT BOARD WORK SESSION

**Minutes of Wednesday, March 20, 2024
6:00 PM**

Board Members participating were Select Board Chair Marshall Hook, Vice-Chair and Clerk Rafael McDonald and Select Board Member Lynne Bermudez (left at 6:56PM to run the zoom Planning Board public hearing) and Cameron Brown. Select Board Member Boyd Jackson was absent. Of the Select Board's staff Town Administrator Kevin Harutunian, and Executive Assistant Samantha Morin were present. KP Law Attorney Jonathan Murray (left at 7:01PM), Fire Chief Jen Collins-Brown, and Finance Committee Member David Larson were in attendance.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair and Clerk McDonald called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice Chair and Clerk McDonald made the following announcements:

"The meeting is being recorded by the Recording Clerk via ZOOM in the event that the connection is lost at any time during the meeting a device is being used by the recording clerk for the purpose of taking minutes; is there anyone else present who wishes to record the meeting?" There was no response.

"The Select Board meetings can be viewed by going into the Cable Videos icon on the homepage of the Town's website."

Meeting Updates

Chair Hook shared modifications to the April Select Board meeting schedule. The April 10th virtual work session at 6pm is going to be moved to 7pm in person to meet with the School Union Regional Planning Board to discuss potential regionalization of the tri town elementary schools. The April 15th meeting is going to be moved to the 22nd because April 15th is a holiday.

FY2025 BUDGET

TA Harutunian reviewed language options for several warrant articles and possible overrides.

Article 32nd – Retirement Buy-Back came from a request of a Town employee that allows time to be bought back as a reserve police officer for their pension. Currently the state allows up to 5 years to be bought back, but if Topsfield adopts this article, it increases the allowable years to be bought back to more than 5 years of service. Call firefighters need to transition to a full-time firefighter in the same community to be eligible, but reserve police officers are allowed to become full time in any department. While a state law, local communities need to vote to adopt the law. There was no exact estimate of how the adoption would change the financial assessment to the Town by the Essex Regional Retirement Community but it was estimated to be minimal. The Finance Committee voted to move this article forward. The Select Board was agreeable to move the article forward after being convinced that the estimated cost increase would be small.

Article 33rd – Public Employee Active Military Duty Compensation allows the Town to compensate the pay difference if a Town employee is called to duty. This applies to long term deployment as well as short term reserve deployments. The funding for this request would come from the operating budget of the salary line item. The overtime line would increase if the deployment was for a public safety member. There are currently no employees that would benefit from the adoption of this article. The spirit of the article was well supported but agreed there are multiple variables and hypotheticals that make determining an actual cost difficult. The Finance Committee tabled discussion on this article in their last meeting as more information is needed. The Select Board agreed to revisit this discussion in the next work session.

Article 41st – Masconomet Regional School Miscellaneous Capital Improvements was approved by the Finance Committee. TA Harutunian explained the Town is still waiting for a final number and an itemized list of items to be repaired or purchased by Masconomet with this article.

Article 43rd – The Elementary School Special Education Stabilization is to be funded through tailings, or money not spent in the prior year's school budget. This fund would be used to defray the increase of extraordinary costs for special education that cannot be anticipated. There was conversation around language to ensure clear intent of where the money is to come from but also allow creative uses for monetary sourcing, such as a grant. The Select Board agreed the language of the article only creates the fund, but does not address how it would be funded. The Finance Committee voted 4 in favor, 2 against and 1 abstention due to the need for more information on the school's budget and what constitutes Special education.

Article 14th – The language of the police cruisers was revised to include more details of what the purchase of the police cruisers could entail. Questions

around what equipment is needed to outfit the cruiser, such as communication technology and lights, were posed and answered. The select Board is ok with the language changes provided by Member Bermudez. There was a request from the Finance Committee to reduce the amount appropriated since the dollar amount listed was for the Chevy Blazer electric vehicles (which will not be purchased) and the gas vehicles was less expensive. The Select Board had a similar discussion in prior work sessions but agreed to keep the amount originally requested since any money not used is returned to free cash. The Select Board agreed the choice of car is up to Police Chief Hovey, but the intent is for two Chevy Tahoes and not the Electric Blazer which has experienced some significant issues after being released late last year.

Article 18th – There is new language to show exactly where the new AEDs would be installed. Finance Committee member Larson explained the need for the recommended language change and that this is actually an expansion of services. The Select Board agreed to accept the new language proposed by Member Bermudez.

The Select Board agreed to go through the warrant and vote on articles they were comfortable approving.

Vice Chair & Clerk McDonald motioned to approve articles first and second of the 2024 Annual Town Warrant. Member Brown seconded the motion by a roll call vote¹ as follows:

Chair Hook	Yes
Vice Chair and Clerk McDonald	Yes
Select Board Member Brown	Yes

The specific dollar amounts for articles first and second will be provided to the Board for a vote at the meeting immediately preceding the 2024 ATM. The Select Board will revisit ATM articles third through sixth in the next work session.

Vice Chair & Clerk McDonald motioned to approve articles seventh through thirteenth of the 2024 Annual Town Warrant. Member Brown seconded the motion by a roll call vote as follows:

Chair Hook	Yes
Vice Chair and Clerk McDonald	Yes
Select Board Member Brown	Yes

¹ Member Bermudez left the meeting before this voting began.

Vice Chair & Clerk McDonald motioned to approve articles fourteenth through eighteenth of the 2024 Annual Town Warrant. Member Brown seconded the motion by a roll call vote as follows:

Chair Hook	Yes
Vice Chair and Clerk McDonald	Yes
Select Board Member Brown	Yes

Article 19th Fire Truck- Chief Collins-Brown let the Select Board know that the trade-in value of the current truck is estimated at \$3,000 and there may be more value to declaring the item as surplus. There was an estimate of \$650,000 to refurbish the current fire truck. The breakdown of the purchase price and which accounts will fund it and past practice was discussed.

Vice Chair & Clerk McDonald motioned to approve article nineteenth of the 2024 Annual Town Warrant, as amended. Member Brown seconded the motion by a roll call vote as follows:

Chair Hook	Yes
Vice Chair and Clerk McDonald	Yes
Select Board Member Brown	Yes

Article 20th - Fire Department Storage – There is an aesthetically pleasing storage box that fits into the historical district. This is an anticipatory article and the storage container will only be purchased if the Old Highway Garage is sold. There is flexibility on storage solutions for a temporary fix until the 2025 Annual Town meeting so the article could be removed from the 2024 Warrant. The Select Board agreed to table the discussion and not remove the article without the vote of the full Select Board.

Vice Chair & Clerk McDonald motioned to approve articles twenty-first through thirty-first of the 2024 Annual Town Warrant. Member Brown seconded the motion by a roll call vote as follows:

Chair Hook	Yes
Vice Chair and Clerk McDonald	Yes
Select Board Member Brown	Yes

The Select Board will revisit articles thirty-second and thirty-third in the next work session.

The Select Board will revisit articles thirty-fourth through fortieth in the next work session as the Planning Board is holding a public hearing tonight to discuss the articles with residents.

The Select Board will revisit articles forty-first and forty-second in the next work session.

Vice Chair & Clerk McDonald motioned to approve articles forty-fourth and forty-fifth of the 2024 Annual Town Warrant. Member Brown seconded the motion by a roll call vote as follows:

Chair Hook	Yes
Vice Chair and Clerk McDonald	Yes
Select Board Member Brown	Yes

TA Harutunian asked for any edits on the articles not voted on before the next work session.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:16 PM, Chair Hook made a motion to adjourn. Member Brown seconded the motion by a roll call vote as follows:

Chair Hook	Yes
Vice Chair and Clerk McDonald	Yes
Select Board Member Brown	Yes

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Morin, Executive Assistant & Recording Secretary

DOCUMENTS

1. Agenda
2. Ambulance Contract
3. Enforcer Specs 3.7.24
4. 2024ATM_Warrant – V5.1
5. 2024STM_Warrant – V1.1
6. Modified Police Cruiser and AED Language
7. Modified Police Cruiser and AED Language - LB