



**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
Working Session  
Topsfield Town Hall Conference Room  
461 Boston Street, Unit E-6, Topsfield, MA**

**March 22, 2017  
5:00 PM**

Board Members present in addition to Chairman Stephen Lais were Clerk Mark Lyons, Boyd Jackson, Martha Morrison and Laura Powers. Of the Selectman's Staff, Kellie Hebert, Town Administrator, and Susan Winslow, Administrative Assistant, were in attendance. Also present were Town Accountant Catherine Gabriel, Treasurer/Collector Barbara Michalowski, Director of Community Development and Purchasing Donna Rich. Other persons present during all or part of the meeting were, Tri Town School Union Director of Facilities Steve Clifford, Interim Fire Chief Richard Harris, Masconomet Regional School District Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations Susan Givens, Tri-Town School Union Assistant Superintendent of Operations Steve Greenberg Superintendent of Schools Scott Morrison, Masconomet Regional School District Committee Member John Spencer, Town Moderator Steve Whelan. Also in attendance were Director of Land Conservation for Essex County Greenbelt Christopher LaPointe and residents, Doran Donovan, Richard Gandt and Martha Sanders.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Stephen Lais called the meeting to order at 5:03 PM.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Chairman Lais announced, "Please be informed that the Board's Recording Clerk has a recording device for her record-keeping. Is there anyone else

present who wishes to record the meeting?" There was no response to this question.

## **NEW BUSINESS - FY18 BUDGET**

### Safety and Security Capital Assessment

Town Administrator Hebert informed the Board that a power surge at Masconomet Regional High School damaged the electrical system. The insurance claim by Masconomet to repair this hardware will reduce the scope of the Safety and Security Capital expenditure.

### Topsfield Elementary Schools Building Envelope Projects

Article Twenty-second on the ATM Warrant - \$7,651,757 is the total cost, with MSBA reimbursing 41.1% of the costs, leaving the Town to pay approximately \$5.3 million through bonding over a period of 25 years. Superintendent of Schools Scott Morrison informed the Board that they do not want to split the schools into two separate Warrant Articles.

### FY18 Capital Budget Plan

Article Twentieth on the ATM Warrant - The Police Station HVAC unit has been removed from the Capital Budget Plan, as \$15,000 from the Facilities Fund will be used to complete this project before summer.

### \$300,000 Pay-As-You-Go Items

Ms. Hebert said that based on DOR recommendations and Best Practices, these recommendations should be grouped in one Warrant article contemplating separate motions. As currently structured, any funds not used will default to the Facilities Repair Fund. Ms. Hebert will confirm this with Town Counsel and report to Steve Whelan.

### Citizen Petition - Donibristle Farm

Town Accountant Catherine Gabriel and Town Treasurer/Collector Barbara Michalowski informed the Board that using the Stabilization Fund to pay for this purchase will have a negative impact when the Town goes for a Bond Rating in the coming year. Discussion ensued regarding options for funding the purchase of this property including whether the Town or Essex County Greenbelt would own the land and which entity would hold the Conservation Restriction. The proposal includes a goal of \$400,000 to be raised through private fundraising and the possibility of the Town receiving a grant from the Commonwealth of

\$400,000. Christopher LaPointe from Essex County Greenbelt discussed the possibility of Greenbelt purchasing the property to meet the seller's closing date and allowing the Town to reimburse Greenbelt for the purchase price. Concern was raised that there is no guarantee the Town will receive the grant. Mr. LaPointe informed the Board that if private donations do not reach their fundraising goal, this deal will not move forward.

#### Essential Unfunded Budget Requests

The Board considered the following:

Council On Aging Request for Increased hours for Director to 40 hours.

Council On Aging Request for Tracking Software – Ms. Hebert pointed out that the \$390 per month noted on the Essential Unfunded Budget Request form represents \$390 beyond what the COA is currently paying per month for technology. The proposed software will use scanning cards to record participation in COA events. Currently, all information is recorded by hand. The implementation of this new technology will result in a reduction of man-hours required to record this information and enable the COA to gather and disseminate information more easily when applying for grants.

Creating One Benefitted Position at the Library from two Part-Time Positions – Ms. Hebert explained that this was originally a benefitted position, but it had been split into two part-time, non-benefitted positions at the request of a past employee. Ms. Hebert further explained that by making this a benefitted position, staff turnover at the Library would be reduced, thus increasing productivity and benefitting the Town in the long run.

Restoration to 30 hours for Assistant Town Clerk – Ms. Hebert explained this position was cut to a 19 hour non-benefitted position during a past budget reduction. She supported this request, citing the many duties required by this job along with additional responsibilities related to new Public Records Access Laws and the maintenance of the new Town Website under development.

Health Insurance Plan Design Change – Ms. Hebert informed the Board that there will be substantial savings to the Town with the upcoming Health Insurance Plan Design change, resulting in a surplus of \$64,000.

### Other Items Discussed

Police Department – Ms. Hebert asked the Board if they would be in favor of a Captain position if funds are available to support it. The Board indicated they would likely be in favor.

Fire Department – Ms. Hebert asked the Board if they would be in favor of two Lieutenant positions if funds are available to support this. The Board indicated they would likely wish to hold off until a Permanent Fire Chief is in place.

333 Perkins Row Citizen Petition for Zoning change – Selectman Morrison informed the Board that the Planning Board has received no additional information from the owner since this Citizen Petition was filed despite requests to his lawyer. The Planning Board will be holding a Hearing on this proposal on March 28, 2017.

Selectman Morrison will send descriptions for the Zoning Items to Kellie Hebert for inclusion in the Town Warrant before Thursday.

Chairman Lais informed Ms. Hebert that he would like the next draft of the Town Warrant before Friday and he asked all parties involved to be mindful of version control.

Ms. Hebert informed the Board that there will be two (2) ballot questions.

### **ADJOURN**

Selectman Morrison made a motion to adjourn. Selectman Powers seconded, so voted 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Winslow

Recording Secretary

Per the Open Meeting Law, the following documents that were either distributed to the Board of Selectmen before the meeting in a packet or at the meeting were:

1. Agenda
2. Draft Warrant for May 2, 2017 Town Meeting
3. FY18 Capital Items
4. FY18 Essential Unfunded Requests

5. Document, "Topsfield Proposed Accelerated Repair Program"
6. Document, "Topsfield Elementary Schools Budget Analysis Draft 1"
7. Letter from Susan K. Givens, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations, Masconomet Regional School District
8. Document, "Masconomet Regional School District F18 General Fund Budget dated March 16, 2017"
9. Document, "Masconomet Regional School District FY18 Assessment Worksheet dated March 16, 2017"
10. Document, "Masconomet RSD FY17 vs. FY18 Official Town Assessments"

Pursuant to the 'Open Meeting Law,' G.L. 39, § 23B, the approval of these minutes by the Board constitutes a certification of the date, time and place of the meeting, the members present and absent, and the actions taken at the meeting. Any other description of statements made by any person, or the summary of the discussion of any matter, is included for the purpose of context only, and no certification, express or implied, is made by the Board as to the completeness or accuracy of such statements.

*These Minutes were accepted as written at the April 24, 2017 Board of Selectmen Meeting.*