

Approved



**SELECT BOARD  
Town Hall**

**Minutes of Monday, February 5, 2024  
7:00 PM**

Board Members participating were Select Board Chair Marshall Hook, Vice-Chair and Clerk Rafael McDonald and Select Board Members Cameron Brown, Boyd Jackson and Lynne Bermudez. Others participating of the Select Board's Staff were Town Administrator Kevin Harutunian and Executive Assistant Samantha Morin. Of the Council on Aging Board, Penny Rogers and Mary Connor were present. From Town Hall, Town Clerk Beth Willis and Health Agent Gerry McDonald were present.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Hook called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Vice-Chair and Clerk McDonald made the following announcements:

**Announcement of Recordings:**

"The meeting is being recorded 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.

**Attendance:**

"To attendees of the meeting, a sign-in sheet is being circulated; The Board asks that you please sign in to indicate your attendance at today's meeting."

**SB Videos on Demand (VOD):**

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

**Select Board Meetings:**

"The next Select Board Meeting will be on Wednesday, February 14th at 6:00 PM. On Monday, February 26th, the Board will hold a work session at 7:00 PM. Please check the meeting postings on the Town Website for information to either join via zoom or for the location of that particular meeting/work session."

### **CITIZEN QUESTIONS & COMMENTS**

There were no questions or comments.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Select Board Vice Chair & Clerk McDonald motioned to approve the minutes of the Select Board meeting held on November 6, 2023. Select Board Member Brown seconded the motion and it was approved by a vote of 5-0.

Select Board Vice Chair & Clerk McDonald motioned to approve the minutes of the Select Board meeting held on November 20, 2023. Select Board Member Bermudez seconded the motion and it was approved by a vote of 5-0.

Select Board Vice Chair & Clerk McDonald motioned to approve the minutes of the Select Board work session held on November 29, 2023. Chair Hook seconded the motion and it was approved by a vote of 5-0.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **Topsfield Council on Aging Board of Directors: Appointment of Mary Connor**

COA Chair Penny Rogers explained there was an open seat on the COA Topsfield Board for a remaining 5-month term ending June 30, 2024 they would like Ms. Connor to fill. Ms. Connor would then be appointed to a full three-year term after the initial appointment. Ms. Connor is well versed within Town Hall through other volunteer work.

Member Bermudez motioned to appoint Mary Connor to the Topsfield Council on Aging Board of Directors for a term ending June 30, 2024. Select Board Member Brown seconded the motion and it was approved by a vote of 5-0.

#### **Topsfield School Committee: Add Open Seat**

Clerk Willis explained that the Select Board needs to vote to add a two-year position to the election ballot to fill a just-vacated Topsfield School Committee seat. Whoever fills this role will not be represented on the ballot as an incumbent.

Select Board Vice Chair & Clerk McDonald motioned to add an open seat of the Topsfield Elementary School Committee for a term ending June 30, 2026 to the 2024 Election Warrant. Member Jackson seconded the motion and it was approved by a vote of 5-0.

### **2024 State Election Warrant: Approve Warrant**

Clerk Willis explained that the Select Board is required to vote and sign the state election warrant to be posted for the March 5, 2024 Presidential Primary. This is mandated by law and will be posted in five locations by the constable throughout Town.

Member Brown motioned to approve the State Election Warrant for the March 5, 2024 Presidential Primary. Select Board Vice Chair & Clerk McDonald seconded the motion and it was approved by a vote of 5-0.

### **Public Health Excellence Grant: Contract Amendment**

TA Harutunian explained this is a grant which the Select Board had previously accepted in the amount of \$200,000 from the Public Health Excellence Grant. The additional funds for a vote tonight are provided through a capacity assessment of services provided within the community to create equitable health services throughout the state.

Gerry McDonald explained this grant is for the Tri-Town of Topsfield, Boxford and Middleton. The funds will be used to hire a social worker. The grant pays for training and credentialing. There is a risk that the grant money does not come to the Town yearly, although it is likely that it will. Those hired with grant monies are aware their jobs are contingent upon the refunding of the grant each year. Middleton will be the host of the grant in the upcoming fiscal year. If funds are not spent, they will go back to the State. There is an expectation that the FY2025 grant will match the total funds provided in FY2024.

Member Brown motioned to amend the Department of Public Health's Public Health Excellence Grant for an additional amount of \$136,329.41 for a total of \$336,329.41. Select Board Vice Chair & Clerk McDonald seconded the motion and it was approved by a vote of 5-0.

### **Approval of FY2025 V2 Omnibus Budget**

TA Harutunian explained the changes made from Version 1 to Version 2 including incorporating all contractual increases into the base budget instead of as an over ask. Version 2.2 also reflects that change. Elementary and Masco budgets simply reflect guidance from FinCom as placeholders – they are not the actual budgets.

There was discussion on whether additional hours have to go through the FinCom by default before being added to the base budget. From a procedural standpoint, all additional hours are to be voted on by the Finance Committee. MIA insurance numbers came in at 7.4% increase that will appear in Version 3, which is a decrease from the budgeted 10% increase.

There are still unknowns with the school budgets. The goal is to have the Town come in under guidelines. Projected revenues are still outstanding. There was overview of individual line items. There was discussion on taking one-time costs out of the budget and instead listing them as warrant articles.

Member Bermudez motioned to approve the FY2025 Topsfield Omnibus Budget as presented. Member Brown seconded the motion and it was approved by a vote of 5-0.

### **Approval of FY2025 Water Enterprise Budget**

TA Harutunian introduced the newest version of the budget which reflected a 2% decrease in costs over the previous version. A significant water main break was recently discovered and National Grid is covering the cost of the repair. The break led to an estimated 150 gallons per minute water loss. Fixing that leak is estimated to reduce the electricity (pumping) and treatment (chemical) costs in the upcoming year. The majority of the increase in the budget over last year is due to the short-term debt for the water tank replacement.

There was a question on what the "transfer out" line item means. TA Harutunian will find out more information from Water Superintendent Krom.

Member Brown motioned to approve the FY2025 Topsfield Water Enterprise budget as presented. Member Bermudez seconded the motion and it was approved by a vote of 5-0.

### **Select Board Updates**

Member Jackson had no updates.

Member Brown thanked all the work from department heads and the Finance Committee for working through the budget and explaining all line items.

Member Bermudez announced the Planning Board would hold a presentation on Wednesday, March 6 for the new MBTA Multi-family Housing Plan.

Vice Chair & Clerk McDonald discussed Masconomet School Committee meetings around Turf Fields and FY2025 Budgets.

Chair Hook had no updates.

### **Town Administrator's Update**

- Town Accountant Hiring Update
- Recreation Department Transition

- Mediation with Call Firefighters
- Dog Licenses and Census
- Pothole Season
- Library HVAC is complete
- AARP is offering tax aid through the library and COA
- Police department will receive both Tahoes tomorrow

### **Correspondence**

None.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

At 8:24PM Member Bermudez made a motion to adjourn. Vice Chair & Clerk McDonald seconded the motion and it was approved by a vote of 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Morin, Executive Assistant & Recording Secretary

### **DOCUMENTS**

1. Agenda
2. November 6, 2023 Minutes
3. November 20, 2023 Minutes
4. November 29, 2023 Minutes
5. COA Letter of Support
6. COA – Mary Connor Application
7. Appointment Process
8. Pres Primary Warrant
9. DPH Engagement Form
10. FY2025 Omnibus Budget V2.2
11. FY2025 Water Enterprise Budget V4