



SELECT BOARD WORK SESSION

**Minutes of Thursday, January 10, 2024
6:00 PM**

Board Members participating were Select Board Chair Marshall Hook, Vice-Chair and Clerk Rafael McDonald and Select Board Member Boyd Jackson, Lynne Bermudez and Cameron Brown. Of the Select Board's staff Town Administrator Kevin Harutunian, and Executive Assistant Samantha Morin were present. Finance Committee Member David Larson was also present.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Hook called the meeting to order at 6:01 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."

LED STREETLIGHT CONVERSION

David Larson provided an overview of the 158 high pressure sodium street lights in Topsfield. There was support to convert the lights to 3000k LED lightbulbs, which is softer than a typical LED light. The biggest change is going to be the color of the light, not the light intensity. Mr. Larson and Chief Collins-Brown offered a cost breakdown for the Board to decide if the Town should continue leasing the poles from National Grid or if the Town should purchase and maintain on their own.

The street poles may be at the end of their lifespan and the Town would be responsible for replacing the poles. The Board agreed that leasing would be more beneficial than the Town purchasing and maintaining the streetlights. It was recommended to complete a test phase on a handful of streetlights to

ensure wattage is appropriate for the Town. The ideal would be to have one street split with one side or one end having the existing high pressure sodium and the other the proposed LED light bulbs to see the difference. Ultimately, it is under the purview of National Grid on how to roll the trial phase out. The proposed kilowatt of the LEDs meets the requirements for many dark sky ordinances in other communities.

FY2025 BUDGET

TA Harutunian introduced the FY2025 budget and provided an overview of the budget schedule. Today's meeting is just to introduce the budget and not to balance. The Town Administrator read the budget letter to the Select Board.

The certified free cash in the budget is on target with past years. Historically, 1% of the free cash is used to reduce the tax burden to residents.

There were no changes to moderator and all wages are adjusted per contractual increases.

There was an additional ask of \$10,000 for legal due to potential costs for litigation.

The Accounting department has an adjustment to salary and a \$1,000 increase for auditing services due to contractual increases with Powers and Sullivan.

PEG/Cable has a 4% increase on the contract for Boxford Cable and additional streaming and website services totaling about \$2,000.

For stipends, the sealer of weights and measures has no change. The animal control officer was traditionally a stipend position but was changed to a third party who charges based on calls received from the Town. The kenneling expenses was increased as there is a need but the cost of the ACO has decreased 40% from the stipend position in years prior. Animal inspector has no change. Tree warden has an increase to the stipend which reflects the education and certification the current Tree Warden now has. Stormwater does not have contractual increases. The Conservation Agent had a stipend added as she has been working extra time to coordinate with MS4.

Streetlights currently have no change, but as per the previous discussion, has the potential to be reduced if the Town transitions to LED lights. If the Town does not transition to LEDs, the budget may need to be increased. The Select Board would like to ensure the Town moves quickly with the LED transition to realize these savings.

Refuse expense was adjusted to account for contractual increases and hazardous waste was increased by \$800 due to an increase of "incidents" over the past few years.

Recreation has two changes. There is a \$920 ask for new software to collect field fees. This software will require payment to be made at the time of the field reservation request. This also will track permits and allow for cross-departmental efficiencies. DPW would be able to see what fields and public spaces are being utilized so they can landscape the field prior to use. There is an ask of \$15,000 to cover items typically the Town relies on donations for including downtown planters, holiday lights, and hanging plants on the solar streetlights.

Treasurer Collector Morgan Dwinell stated the only over ask in the Treasurer Collector budget for is the evaluation of Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) funds which is required every two years.

There is a decrease in debt payments.

Unclassified funds have an \$1,100 increase. This is due to valuations assigned by the Essex Regional Retirement System.

Topsfield was estimated to have a 10% increase in the insurance budget, but actual numbers will come in the latter half of February.

The Town Hall budget was discussed by Procurement Agent Debi Morong. A part time Town Hall facilities employee has a line item to pay for wages. There was a transfer of \$24,000 from the facilities management contract with a savings of \$1,000 with this hire. There may be a decrease in electricity costs due to Town Hall receiving a lower electricity rate. There will be a deeper dive to offer a more accurate number.

Munis software has a contractual increase. Computer/Other contracts has an additional cost for regional IT security.

Postage meter is based on actuals. Copier paper has increased in price, not usage, so there is an ask of an additional \$200.

The Select Board had discussion how to ensure there was communication between the Select Board, Finance Committee, Topsfield School Committee and the Masco School Committee.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:52 PM, Member Bermudez made a motion to adjourn. Member Brown seconded the motion by a roll call vote as follows:

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Select Board Member Brown	Yes
Select Board Member Bermudez	Yes
Select Board Member Jackson	Yes

The zoom disconnected at 7:53PM, quorum was met to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Morin, Executive Assistant & Recording Secretary

DOCUMENTS

1. Agenda
2. Topsfield Street Lights Proposed Conversion to LED
3. FY2025 Omnibus Budget-Dept Level 1
4. Budget Letter
5. Schedule of Departments

<p>Pursuant to the 'Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18-25, 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</p>
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