

**TOWN OF DEDHAM
450 WASHINGTON STREET
DEDHAM, MASSACHUSETTS**

**MINUTES OF THE SELECT BOARD MEETING
VIA TELECONFERENCE
MARCH 10, 2022, 6:30 P.M.**

BOARD MEMBERS:

Dimitria Sullivan	Chair
Sarah MacDonald	Vice-Chair
James A. MacDonald	Member (from 8:15 p.m.)
Kevin R. Coughlin	Member
Dennis Teehan	Member

TOWN OF DEDHAM STAFF:

Leon Goodwin	Town Manager
Doreen LaBrecque	Administrative Assistant
Nancy Baker	Assistant Town Manager

Minutes prepared by Mary-Margaret Scrimger of Minutes Solutions Inc. from an audio/video recording.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Board recited the pledge of allegiance. The Chair, Ms. Sullivan, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Ms. Sullivan noted the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. She asked Ms. Christine Caswell, a former Dedham resident with an adopted Ukrainian daughter, to address the community. Her friends who were inspired by her adoption process moved to the Ukraine, setting up a house for orphans that age out of orphanages. This couple is safe in Romania and are involved with action to help evacuate Ukrainians.

There was discussion on how citizens of Dedham can help. Mr. Goodwin noted that town staff would like to help and engage with this crisis.

2. CITIZEN OPEN DISCUSSION

Mr. Patrick McGee provided his address. He noted that he has full support for the Dedham Town Planning Committee for the town green using the former police station lot. He is overjoyed by the original vision and is extremely concerned with the downgraded version of the town green. He requested that more effort be put towards finding other funding sources.

Ms. Janet Homes provided her address. She noted her disappointment that the town is not supporting the original town green development. She asked that the Select Board reconsider the full project.

Ms. Carla Foley provided her address. She suggested that the effort regarding Ukraine be a county effort in order to reach a large population.

Ms. Jean Zeiler provided her address. She noted disappointment with the changes to the town green, especially with all of the effort that went into the plan.

Mr. John Dashe provided his address. He noted disappointment that the town is no longer proceeding with the full town green plan. He believes that the modified plan does not meet the objectives of improving the town. He noted that in all of the meetings there was only a small minority that did not support the plan. He also encouraged people to connect with Spirit of America NGO to help Ukraine.

Mr. Steven Reileya provided his address. He asked for more information regarding the bridge on High Street. He requested that the town continue looking into the truck ban and investigate other changes. He asked that the town discuss this issue with the state government. Ms. Sullivan noted that a listening session for this project will be scheduled in the next two weeks and there are discussions with the state.

Ms. Virginia Hickey provided her address. She supported Mr. McGee's statement and voiced disappointment in the changes to the town green plan. She thanked Mr. Dashe for providing information regarding Ukrainian support.

Ms. Sherry Cross provided her address. She noted her support in the original town green. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for Dedham that would positively impact the next generations. It is an opportunity that should not be squandered.

Ms. Joanne XX provided her address. She noted full support in the original town green and agreed with previous speakers.

Ms. Mary Jane Pamell provided her address. She noted that she attended every open meeting regarding the green space. The opposition to the green space was nil. She requested that the original plan be followed. It was noted that e-mail records have been kept that include opposition to the plan.

Mr. Gustavo Burkett provided his address. He supported the original town green plan and agreed with previous speakers. He asked that the Select Board reconsider the proposal.

Ms. Sullivan noted that the town green will be addressed in a future meeting. Dr. Teehan thanked everyone for voicing their opinion. He noted that the project is being evaluated in a phased approach to allow for more funding. What was presented earlier in the week was for phase one. Ultimately, the decision will be decided by the citizens at a town meeting.

3. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Goodwin noted that there was a general listening session regarding the parking meters. There were approximately 50 attendees. The feedback is being consolidated and will be presented to the Select Board. The contract with MPS, the parking vendor, expires at the end of June 2022. There is a warrant prepared to extend the contract, but this will be based on the decision of the Select Board.

The town is working with MBTA to work on the High Street bridge. There will be a listening session scheduled with residents in the future. The town is working the MBTA regarding the Crane Street

flooding. Ms. Sullivan noted that this has been a long process and there have been many roadblocks. Mr. Goodwin agreed and noted frustration.

Mr. Goodwin noted that meetings will be hybrid going forward and that there will be effort to improve the acoustics.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Mr. Coughlin to approve the minutes from the July 7, 2021, Select Board Executive Session. The motion was seconded by Ms. MacDonald. A roll call vote was taken:

Dimitria Sullivan	Yes
Sarah MacDonald	Yes
Kevin R. Coughlin	Yes
Dennis Teehan	Yes

Motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

A motion was made by Mr. Coughlin to approve the entertainment licenses for Blue Ribbon BBQ and the Liberty Main Bistro. The motion was seconded by Ms. MacDonald. A roll call vote was taken:

Dimitria Sullivan	Yes
Sarah MacDonald	Yes
Kevin R. Coughlin	Yes
Dennis Teehan	Yes

Motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

A motion was made by Mr. Coughlin to approve the Juneteenth Event on June 18, 2022 at the Endicott Estate from 9:00 a.m. until 10:30 a.m. The motion was seconded by Ms. MacDonald. A roll call vote was taken:

Dimitria Sullivan	Yes
Sarah MacDonald	Yes
Kevin R. Coughlin	Yes
Dennis Teehan	Yes

Motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

A motion was made by Mr. Coughlin to approve the One Day Beer and Wine for James Joyce Ramble and Take a Walk occurring on April 4, 2022. The motion was seconded by Ms. MacDonald. A roll call vote was taken:

Dimitria Sullivan	Yes
Sarah MacDonald	Yes
Kevin R. Coughlin	Yes
Dennis Teehan	Yes

Motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

A motion was made by Mr. Coughlin to approve the change of date for Big Dan's Kids Mile to March 26, 2022. The motion was seconded by Ms. MacDonald. A roll call vote was taken:

Dimitria Sullivan	Yes
Sarah MacDonald	Yes
Kevin R. Coughlin	Yes
Dennis Teehan	Yes

Motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

A motion was made by Mr. Coughlin to approve the Great Strikes Walk at the Endicott Estate on May 22, 2022. The motion was seconded by Ms. MacDonald. A roll call vote was taken:

Dimitria Sullivan	Yes
Sarah MacDonald	Yes
Kevin R. Coughlin	Yes
Dennis Teehan	Yes

Motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

A motion was made by Mr. Coughlin to approve the signage for Fairbanks Garden Club Plant Sale on March 7, 2022. The motion was seconded by Ms. MacDonald. A roll call vote was taken:

Dimitria Sullivan	Yes
Sarah MacDonald	Yes
Kevin R. Coughlin	Yes
Dennis Teehan	Yes

Motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

5. **DISCUSSION AND VOTE: SPECIAL LEGISLATION**

A motion made by Ms. MacDonald moved to submit to the general court the special legislation to address the specific situation created by the town's 2003 acceptance of *Mass general law chapter 31, section 58a*, where a qualified candidate would otherwise be prohibited from being eligible for original appointment as a police officer and in connection therewith to request that the Governor submit such bill in accordance with the provisions of section 8 of the home rule amendment where this matters of great import to the town and requires immediate action and to authorize the town manager to take such action to effectuate this vote. The motion was seconded by Dr. Teehan. A roll call vote was taken:

Dimitria Sullivan	Yes
Sarah MacDonald	Yes
Kevin R. Coughlin	Yes
Dennis Teehan	Yes

Motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

Chief D'Entremont explained that the number one ranked candidate to replace a retired officer was over the legislated age limit of 32 when he took the relevant exam. He noted that this restriction means the police department has lost out on excellent candidates. This specific candidate is excellent and was ranked first by four of the six interviewers. He has already been trained as a police officer and has an extensive work history in this field.

There are many police departments that do not have age caps. Chief D'Entremont requested permission to make an exception regarding the age restriction and this candidate. Ms. Baker noted that the permanent change to legislation will be going to town meeting.

6. DISCUSSION AND VOTE: LAYOUT OF BONHAM ROAD

A motion was made by Ms. MacDonald resolved to approve the alteration to the layout for 116 Bonham Road as laid out in the Revised Right of Way plan dated March 4, 2022. The motion was seconded by Dr. Teehan. A roll call vote was taken:

Dimitria Sullivan	Yes
Sarah MacDonald	Yes
Kevin R. Coughlin	Yes
Dennis Teehan	Yes

Motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

Mr. Jon Flannagan noted a layout issue where the town layout line cuts through a resident's front porch. This is not uncommon in older areas of town. He requested a vote to change the layout line to change from 50 feet to 25 feet.

7. DISCUSSION AND VOTE: INCOME LIMITS FOR SENIOR TAX WORK OFF PROGRAM

A motion was made by Ms. MacDonald it was resolved to approve an increase to income limits for the senior tax work off program to \$45,000 for an individual and \$55,000 for married couples. The motion was seconded by Mr. Coughlin. A roll call vote was taken:

Dimitria Sullivan	Yes
Sarah MacDonald	Yes
Kevin R. Coughlin	Yes
Dennis Teehan	Yes

Motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

Ms. Sheila Pranksy noted that the senior tax work off program provides the opportunity for qualified individuals who are 60 and older to work in the town. They can earn up to \$1,500 per year applied to their property tax bill. These individuals are paid \$10/hr. Currently, there is an income limitation for participants of \$30,000 per year for individuals and \$40,000 for married couples. Ms. Pranksy proposed that the individual limit be \$45,000 for individuals and \$55,000 for married couples.

The hope is to allow more folks to be qualified and, in the long term, to remove the income limitation to capitalize on higher skill sets. Currently, there are only nine participants, but there were 42 in 2015. It was expressed that this is unsurprising due to COVID-19, as well as dealing with an aging population.

Mr. Kevin Doyle believes that there is potential for more participants due to inflation impacting costs of goods and services but fixed incomes not increasing. Other communities have higher limits for incomes. Ms Pransky also noted that Medicare is now on a sliding scale, and is becoming more expensive for some seniors.

Ms. MacDonald asked for information regarding the hourly wage, as it is below minimum wage. Ms. Pransky noted that there has been discussion regarding the hourly wage. It may be time to increase the wage. There was discussion on when the Council for Aging should return to the Select Board with requests such as changing the maximum annual income of participants and hourly wage.

Ms. Pransky noted that volunteers in this program are needed for the upcoming election.

8. DISCUSSION AND VOTE: SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

A motion was made by Mr. Coughlin it was resolved to appoint Mr. David Ward to the Sustainability Advisory Committee for a term of one year, expiring in March 2023. The motion was seconded by Dr. Teehan. A roll call vote was taken:

Dimitria Sullivan	Yes
Sarah MacDonald	Yes
Kevin R. Coughlin	Yes
Dennis Teehan	Yes

Motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

A motion was made by Ms. MacDonald it was resolved to reappoint Mr. Lee Haffery to the Sustainability Advisory Committee for a term of three years, expiring in March, 2025. The motion was seconded by Mr. Coughlin. A roll call vote was taken:

Dimitria Sullivan	Yes
Sarah MacDonald	Yes
Kevin R. Coughlin	Yes
Dennis Teehan	Yes

Motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

Candidates for the Sustainability Committee were invited to present.

Mr. David Ward: Mr. Ward noted that he is a consulting engineer with significant experience in sustainability. He believes this will be a significant contribution to the committee. He noted that he does not sit on any other committees.

Ms. Nancy Baker: Ms. Baker read a statement from Mr. Lee Haffrey, a candidate looking for reappointment, who was unavailable for this meeting due to work. Mr. Haffrey has an interest in preserving natural resources and recycling. His experience has allowed him to understand the internal infrastructure and challenges that the town faces.

9. BUDGET PRESENTATION

Mr. Goodwin presented the 2023 budget. The town bylaws require that a balanced budget is presented before the town meeting. The revenue summary is projections. There is a 9% expected increase in state aid. There is a 7.4% projected increase in local receipts, which includes user fees such as building permits. Free cash is the town's savings account that is available for appropriation in future years. It has been appropriated in past years to offset operating costs.

It was noted that the Robin Reyes fund is both a revenue source and an expenditure. Pre-pandemic, it generated approximately two million per year and it was used to pay for debt service on buildings. The transfer for the next fiscal year from the Robin Reyes fund is above two million as the debt service attributed to this fund is above its capacity. As a result, money is transferred from the general fund into Robin Reyes.

For the next fiscal year, \$4.5 million will be paid from Robin Reyes to debt service. Approximately one million will be appropriated from ARPA for operations. The ARPA funds are based on lost revenue.

Regarding expenditures, there is a 6.4% increase in the public safety category because of contractual increases. The school budget is increasing by 4.9%. The majority of this increase is due to contractual increases. Employee benefits have a 7% increase. Debt service is a larger expense in this fiscal year due to capital investments, which were necessary investments. The expectation is that the debt service will increase next year and then begin to decrease, unless the town takes on additional capital projects.

Mr. Goodwin addressed personnel changes. New IT employees will be hired to rectify IT deficiencies. Currently IT is outsourced and much of this expense will be reduced. The public safety building will open in October 2022. With the increase in space, there is a request for an additional janitor to maintain the facility. A purchasing and grants manager will also be hired.

Purchasing has become more complicated, and a purchasing and grants manager has been recommended by external parties. This will be funded by ARPA for next year. An archivist will also be hired. Dedham has a wealth of documents and history, and an archivist can utilize this resource and create programs for the public.

Mr. Goodwin noted that the town sewer is provided through an enterprise fund. For the next fiscal year, \$469,694 from this account will be used to balance the fund. Currently, there is approximately \$1.7 million of retained earnings in this account. Mr. Goodwin suggested that the sewer rate to citizens be reviewed for future budgets.

The capital improvement budget is approximately \$6.6 million for FY23. Approximately \$6.2 million will be bonded. Mr. Goodwin noted that the town is in excellent fiscal condition and these bonds will be rated AAA.

The largest budget drivers are personnel, debt service, operating capital, and employee benefits. Mr. Goodwin noted that the town runs based on personnel. Operating capital is a new fund and addresses repairs and maintenance to items such as vehicles. Employee benefits include items such as health insurance and OPEB. The town took a break from OPEB funding during the pandemic and is increasing contributions back to regular levels.

There have been significant increases to debt service. This is expected to increase until 2024. For transparency, Mr. Goodwin suggested that there be a line item that shows money coming from the general fund to pay for debt service. Currently, the presentation shows that debt service is being covered by Robin Reyes.

Mr. Goodwin noted that the levy increase is not directly related to an increase in residential tax bills. For example, last year the levy increased by 4% but tax bills went up 6%. This was due to an increase in property value. The residential increase is still being calculated for 2023. Dedham has been average for tax increases within the county.

Mr. Goodwin thanked Mr. Arnett and the finance team for their assistance creating the budget.

Mr. MacDonald asked for the town to investigate the accelerated repair program as there is a significant amount of grant money available. Dr. Teehan thanked the staff for the excellent presentation. He also noted that in better economic times, there was more free cash that was used to lower taxes rather than pay for debt services. This is part of why debt service is so high now. Dr. Teehan asked the impact of school expenses on the levy. Mr. Arnett did not have the answer on hand and confirmed that he would get back to Dr. Teehan.

Mr. Coughlin asked for clarity regarding the Robin Reyes fund. Mr. Goodwin noted that COVID-19 caused a significant decrease in town tax revenue. This is returning to regular levels. However, there has been additional capital projects that have incurred debt, increasing debt service. The Planning Board recently approved a new hotel and there will be other economic development that will improve the Robin Reyes fund. Mr. Goodwin noted that there are plans to improve financial planning for the town.

Ms. MacDonald commented on the new operating capital line. Mr. Goodwin noted that capital maintenance that is done year over year is being included in this line item. By having a line item, it reduces the need to bond this and pay interest on the expense. Ms. MacDonald noted concern regarding the new purchase and grant employee. She requested that measurable metrics for success within a specific timeline be outlined and included in the hiring process.

Ms. Sullivan asked for information regarding the possibility of an economic downturn that decreases home values and how this would impact taxes. There was discussion regarding the market, interest rates, how to meet obligations, and continual changes. The average family home is valued at approximately \$580,000. Funding pension is important and there was discussion on having a balance to meet this obligation.

10. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Coughlin noted that the potential new elementary school project has been invited to move forward with the feasibility study.

11. MOVE TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

A motion was made by Ms. MacDonald that, pursuant to MGL c.30A Sec. 21(a), Exemption 3, the Select Board would move into executive session to discuss strategy respective to collective bargaining. The motion was seconded by Mr. Coughlin. A roll call vote was taken:

Dimitria Sullivan	Yes
James A. MacDonald	Yes
Sarah MacDonald	Yes
Kevin R. Coughlin	Yes
Dennis Teehan	Yes

Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

DISCLAIMER

The above minutes should be used as a summary of the motions passed and issues discussed at the meeting of the members of the Select Board. This document shall not be considered to be a verbatim copy of every word spoken at the meeting.

Director

Director

Date

Date