



Town of Abington

Board of Selectmen

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Minutes
Board of Selectmen
February 10, 2025
Cotter Room
6:00 p.m.

Members Present: Kevin Donovan, Chairman, Suzanne Djusberg, Roger Woods, Paul Bunker, Amanda Zompetti, Scott Lambiase, Town Manager

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Moment of Silence: Sheila Burke, former nurse in the School Department; and the anniversary of former Police Chief Thomas Lynch, who was killed in the line of duty in Abington on February 15, 1942. He and patrolman John Litchfield were in a cruiser chasing a speeder and a wrong-way driver hit the cruiser head-on and killed the Chief and Litchfield was in the hospital for months. When he came out, the Board of Selectmen named him Chief of Police.

Announcements:

- Mr. Donovan thanked Nate Elliott, Elliott Tree, for taking poles down from Memorial Field, which is undergoing a lot of rehabilitation work. Mr. Elliott donated his tree company to take the poles down.
- The Annual Town Election is April 26, 2025. The deadline for filing nomination papers is March 10th. People have yet to take out papers for Sewer Commission, School Committee, Water Commission, Water Commission Unexpired Term, Sewer Commission Unexpired Term, Board of Health Unexpired Term, and Housing Authority. If you are interested, contact the Town Clerk.
- Tomorrow at Martin's Bakery there is a public hearing at 6 p.m. on the grant for North Abington Center.
- Mr. Donovan explained why we don't have Public Comments listed on the agenda. On the advice of town counsel, it has been taken off the agenda, but the Board still allows people to speak on anything that is on the agenda at the appropriate time. The reason for this is that there are groups that go around to test us with compliance audits, with the goal to provoke.
- There is a Retiree Luncheon the Board of Selectmen is sponsoring on April 4th. Friday, February 14th is the deadline to RSVP.
- Roger Woods wished his daughter Emerson, who turned five today, a Happy Birthday,

Department Presentations

1. **Police Chief John Bonney** – they are putting a huge focus on community outreach and gave a rundown of all the community events the department has taken part in. Chief Majenski set him up perfectly to lead the department into the future. The Department responded to 20,000 calls for

service last year. Right now, they have eleven police officers which includes an SRO, nine work the street, one is assigned to the schools, one is on light duty; they have eight Sergeants assigned to them, one is deployed overseas, one was attacked after a domestic and has been injured for weeks. They expect him back in a few weeks hopefully. The detective sergeant is not a patrol sergeant, so they have five others working the street. To answer nearly 20,000 calls for services is incredible. They had over 600 arrests; 800 incident reports; issued over 1,300 citations, which doesn't include verbal warnings; issued over 1300 firearms permits, which doesn't include the number of license requests that were said "no" to.

In 2025, they had 63 incidents, 85 arrests, and written 159 citations. They are working on a missing person now. In the last five months, they have taken five guns off the street; two of them were fake, which they didn't realize at the start. One of them John Flannery answered, arriving at a call for a guy trying to hurt himself, he saw the gun and ripped it out of his hand. Officer Sayers did the same thing on a report of a road rage incident with someone coming from Weymouth who was armed and was able to disarm him when he pulled into an Abington driveway. They have had four officers injured. They have solved several missing persons cases. They had a fatality and two swatting calls. He will be making an announcement on an investigation that will lead to criminal charges and unbelievable work by Officer Jimmy White.

Goals for the year – they have a vote coming up in April and hopes to get out of civil service because they have 36 applicants who want to work in Abington. He would like a detective unit, a traffic unit, increase training, leadership training, and get the lieutenants a class that he had in the past. They are going to have an awards night to highlight the work that our police officers have done and bring in the officers' families. They will be getting in two new drones and a side-by-side ATV all purchased with grant money. They had two civilian police dispatchers start, scoring very high on the police exam as well. He would like to create a cadet program to funnel them into becoming police officers. They have one officer starting the academy in March and three officers graduate at the end of this month. They are trying to get more hours for their clinician. The three officers will be ready to go after about 12 weeks of field training. Regarding burglar alarms, they may be looking for a bylaw as far as responses. It may be that there should be a fine if it's a faulty alarm and it's going off on a daily basis.

Police & Fire did a combined training at the end of the year at Abington High School for the first time. Both chiefs have agreed to go forward with this training and build it up as they go along.

2. **Fire Chief Jack Glynn** – they are at full capacity as far as staff. They have four six-person shifts, an administrative assistant, a fire prevention captain, the deputy and himself. 2024 was the busiest for them in the history of the Department. There was more of everything. They are seeing a lot more mental health crisis issues and calls for service. Every member of the Department is now a cross-trained paramedic, and the group has such a good blend of experience and young blood the citizens are going to get the highest trained emergency trained medical technicians. They are having good results with resuscitations. They are setting the bar high for other communities on the South Shore. Their call volume last year was approximately 4,470 calls, which is 600-700 more than the highest they have ever had.

There are a lot of buildings going up. The Fire Prevention Department is overwhelmed. Captain Cotti does a phenomenal job. He does a lot of the plan reviews on some of these buildings. One of them will be 215 Central Street – the new Fire Station/DPW Project.

They have a terrific term – peer councilors come in and make sure they are taken care of. Mental health is a big issue these days, and they have done work with the Police Department on this and

have gotten a private screening from the Hope Foundation of a PTSD 911 movie that is out there for families of fire and police.

One of the challenges they are working on is lithium batteries and electric vehicles. They are seeing more car accidents that have fires, and even laptop batteries. They have to have specialized equipment to handle that. They just qualified for a state grant in which they are replacing outdated multi-gas meters, two thermal imaging cameras through a grant. They are trying to condense their training to things they don't see much of. They have partnered with Fall River Training Tower, and it's going to help with ISO ratings also. Twice a year they arrange a day to take an engine down there. Going forward, they are working to keep their people healthy, working with Chief Bonney and the police and the active shooter training, and working on some of the mental health stuff. They want to keep and attract the best people they have.

Mr. Donovan – re ambulance – there seems to be multiple calls at a time. Chief – he did some research. In 2024, they had 1,480 occasions during the year that there were two or three or more calls at once. You can't pick a certain time or day. They are relying on mutual aid. They had five calls at once at 9 a.m. this morning. Ms. Djusberg – felt they are doing a terrific job. The staff is set right now unless something changes. Ms. Zompetti – the focus on mental health is huge and so helpful.

Public Hearing:

6:05 P.M. Continued hearing, Request for a transfer of a Class 11 license from ABC Tech Squad and a new Used Article and Pawn Broker License for Auto Avenue LLC, 201 N. Quincy Street, Robert Bretoux, Manager. Mr. Bretoux was to bring down the number of vehicles on the lot and provide a plan to show the other businesses on the location. He showed a plot plan. The Building Inspector went out and there were 25 cars. Some were waiting to be fixed. He moved eleven vehicles to Brockton. Mr. Donovan – it was explained at the last meeting the number needed to be brought down. Ms. Zompetti – there needs to be a better plan for that property. Motion by Mr. Woods to deny the transfer. He had two weeks to submit a delineated plan; the cars should have been gone after the last meeting. Motion seconded by Mr. Bunker, unanimous. As far as the pawn broker license, the lot is noncompliant. Motion to deny by Mr. Woods. He can get it straightened out and re-apply. Seconded by Mr. Bunker, unanimous.

Items:

1. Schedule the Perambulation of the Town Bounds by the Board of Selectmen per MGL c. 42, s. 2. This was done 30 years ago. The bounds are granite structures. Mr. Donovan found nine of them. Two of them on the Rockland/Abington line got turned around. The law requires it to be done every five years with two Selectmen. He contacted Whitman and Rockland Selectmen and set the date for Saturday, April 5th at 9 a.m. starting with Whitman on the Washington Street end, then the base.
2. Consider and Vote on possible sale of Town-owned dwelling at 22 Bedford Street. Mr. Donovan – the Town purchased the Strawberry Valley Golf Course in 1986, and there was a house that came with it that has been rented since that time. We have a \$1.1 million deficit; next year it is probably going to be worse. We are looking for anything to close that gap. They have looked at tax title property, had a tax title auction and will have additional auctions. They had postponed this to give the SVGC Committee a chance to discuss it. If the Board votes to sell, it will still have to be approved at town meeting, so there will still have to be an article submitted on the warrant for consideration at Town Meeting.

Steve Wakelin, Chairman, SVGCC – the income goes into an Enterprise Account like a 13th month of income for the course, and they have been able to use those monies to put back into the course. At their meeting last month, the Board's vote was 4-0 not to sell the property. They are 100% with not being landlords. There have been issues up there that they have had to spend money on, but they have made a lot of money over the years. They would be ok to tear the house down and have the property as part of the course. The property is located between the 6th and 7th holes on Rt. 18, and they have talked about using the property as storage. They have talked about redoing the 6th and 7th holes to improve the course, making them longer and making it so the balls don't go onto Rt. 18. They've also talked about redesigning the clubhouse and the course, with the potential of getting some donated land. He is asking the Board not to sell the house; it would be such a short term fix.

Beau Ryan, recent member of the SVGCC - the Committee has done a tremendous job since it was taken over by the Town. The repairs have all been within the SV house budget. They have a plan for the property, so it's not a surplus property. There will be a donation of land on the Town Meeting Warrant to improve the course, and the lot is part of the long-term plan to possibly increase from 9 to 18 holes.

Steve Wakelin – the property was sold to the Town for \$1.2M. The Town received a state grant for \$750,000 in 1989 and was under the impression the property couldn't be sold because of the grant. He suggested someone look into this to see if the grant would stop it from being sold.

Mr. Donovan – the grant was awarded on the basis that it would be maintained for Park & Rec. with an Urban and Self-Help Grant. The grant was for the use of a public course, and the requirement of the grant was that it had to be open to the public in general. Motion by Mr. Woods to sell the house and put it on the warrant for Town Meeting to decide. We have no mechanism to manage tenants, and we need the money. He doesn't want to tear down a \$500,000 asset, but respects Mr. Wakelin's opinion. It would also bring in about \$8,000 in taxes. Mr. Donovan seconded the motion. Discussion by Board. Ms. Zompetti – could it go under the Housing Trust? If Town Meeting says no, at the end of the lease, can it be torn down and the property turned over to the SVGCC to maintain? Mr. Donovan – it would be subject to appropriation. We could authorize it to be torn down if Town Meeting said no if the Board was in favor of that and there was funding. The vote was 4-1 (Ms. Zompetti).

3. Consider and Vote on By-Law Change for the Annual Town Meeting Warrant to adjust the Quorum for Annual and Special Town Meetings. A lot of nearby towns have less than 150 person quorum. Shawn Reilly, Town Moderator, provided a survey from the MA Moderator's Association of 15 surrounding towns. A lower quorum becomes more efficient because you can start the meeting on time, which is one of the complaints he has received from people who go to Town Meeting. One hundred is more the norm. It also tends to increase attendance because people don't want a small group to be making the decisions and makes for healthier debate.

Mr. Donovan – they are proposing an article in the Warrant: “To see if the Town will vote to amend the General By-Laws by striking Section 152-4 Quorum in its entirety and inserting in place thereof the following new “Section 152-4. Quorum. The quorum for any annual or special town meeting shall be 100 registered voters of the Town.” or take any other action relative thereto. Motion by Mr. Woods for a zero quorum. Motion by Ms. Djusberg for a 100 quorum. Discussion followed. If quorum is at zero, the meeting starts at 7 p.m., and there is no waiting. If 100 is put in the article, it can't be lowered; if zero is in the article, it can be voted higher. Motion seconded by Mr. Bunker on the zero quorum motion, with the understanding that it can be

amended along the process, unanimous.

4. Minutes: January 14, 2025 – motion by Mr. Woods to approve, seconded by Ms. Zompetti, unanimous.
5. Report on Potential Commercial Development at Southfield formerly the NAS-South Weymouth. Mr. Woods attended a meeting yesterday at the Joint Water Works with Krystal Cameron, Tom Royal, their engineers Weston & Samson, Olson, representatives from the Town of Rockland and the developer. They are trying to recognize areas that can be fixed and what can be done to increase capacity for us to be able to capture some of the potential commercial development on the Abington/Rockland land at the base which is important for us to increase our tax base. The Selectmen don't need to be involved after tomorrow.
6. Status of Center School RFP. Mr. Lambiase – we didn't get any results from the second attempt to bid the project out. We did have interest for the two schools in a bundle. We didn't initially bundle them together because we are using North School as a staging site for DPW for the next year and a half. When talking to the larger developers who were interested, they said the time frame is not a problem for them. If they were awarded this project, it would be a year and a half before they would line up Mass. Housing, and they would have to go through our ZBA. It is not feasible right now for a developer to come in and do more than the minimum of affordable units; they don't make any money off those units. They could try again and bundle the properties. It would still be 25% affordable and still would have the same restrictions that we put on Center School as far as level of expansion. The level of expansion at North gives them greater opportunities. They could scale it down to more of a conceptual plan to allow them to come in and speak with the Board and not scare them away with high up-front costs.
7. Report on Status for date of Surplus Land Auction – will be held on Wednesday, March 12th.
8. Report on Status for date of Surplus Vehicle Auction – will be held on Wednesday, March 12th.
9. Status of State Department of Revenue approval of Schedule A – has been sent into the State.
10. Status of Free Cash Certification – has been sent in and waiting for the State.
11. Vote to set the Annual Town Meeting Warrant and authorize the submission of articles to the Finance Committee and Planning Board – deadline is 4 p.m. today and will be submitted to Planning Board and Finance Committee. On March 24th we will take a position on each of the articles after Finance Committee has made a recommendation on the articles that the Board talked about it. Motion by Mr. Woods to approve, seconded by Ms. Djusberg, unanimous.
12. Vote to place Debt Exclusion Question on the Annual Town Election Ballot for VoTech – “Shall the Town of Abington be allowed to exempt from the provisions of proposition two and one-half, so called, the amounts required to pay the Town of Abington's apportioned share of the costs for bonds issued by the South Shore Regional Vocational Technical School District in order to pay costs of designing, constructing, originally equipping and furnishing a new District high school and related athletic facilities, including the payment of all other costs incidental and related thereto?” Motion by Mr. Woods to approve, seconded by Mr. Bunker, unanimous.
13. Town Manager Report on FY26 Budget Process –
 - Schedule A has been submitted, and we need to get the Free Cash certified.
 - Working with the Department Heads and School Department to bring our budget into

balance. They are working hard not to have any staffing cuts and maintain level services. We will be proposing the use of some free cash to balance this budget but are not sure of that number yet. We are still at a \$1M deficit. The big drivers are health care costs, pension, state aid lagging behind inflation and general inflationary costs. The towns surrounding us are going through the same difficulties in his discussions with other town managers and administrators. There are many communities that are planning on operational overrides – Hingham, Hanover, Whitman, Easton, Duxbury, Halifax, Hanson, Kingston, Lakeville, Norwell. We're doing the best we can to avoid that.

- Mr. Donovan – there will be an article on the warrant for an enterprise fund for trash this year to fund it in its entirety from free cash and for a four-year process of weaning trash out of our budget. It has gone up \$500,000, over 56% over the last six years and it is an unsustainable cost. Local aid has only increased 1.9%. The plan will take into account the two previous overrides that were enacted. They will have a four-year plan. The first year would be fully funded out of free cash. We were going to have a seminar on March 19th, which has been changed to March 26th at the Senior Center at 6 p.m. to explain the entire process. We have asked the legislators to come to the last meeting in March for more local aid and to see where the state stands on their revenues.

Motion by Mr. Woods to go into EXECUTIVE SESSION Pursuant to the provisions of MGL chapter 30A section 21 (3) to discuss strategy with respect to Collective Bargaining to wit: Abington Clerical Employees, Public Employees Local Union 1139 and to reconvene, seconded by Mr. Bunker. Roll call vote: Ms. Zompetti, yes; Mr. Bunker, yes; Mr. Woods, yes; Ms. Djusberg, yes; Mr. Donovan, yes.

The Board discussed the Clerical Union Employees' Contract. They had not settled, so it is retroactive for one year – 2, 2, and 2, as well as step adjustments to keep level with the marketplace. Motion by Mr. Woods to ratify the contract subject to funding, seconded by Mr. Bunker, unanimous.

Motion by Mr. Woods to adjourn at 7:32 p.m., seconded by Ms. Djusberg, unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Hurst