

Minutes
Board of Selectmen
February 26, 2024
Cotter Room
6:30 p.m.

Members Present: Kevin Donovan, Chair, Tim Chapin, Suzanne Djusberg, Kevin DiMarzio (via Zoom), Scott Lambiase, Town Manager

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Announcements:

Rick Collins, Charter Review Committee – The Committee has been reviewing the Charter for 18 months. All the changes they are proposing are on the town's website. Their next meeting is Thursday, 2/29.

Action/Discussion Items:

1. **Presentation of ARPA funds.** Senator John Keenan, Representative Alyson Sullivan-Almeida, Congressman Stephen Lynch, County Commissioners Jared Valanzola and Greg Hanley, and County Treasurer Tom O'Brien attended. Funds are to help where money was not collected because of the lack of economic activity due to the pandemic. This is a grant for the Joint Water Program re PFAS for filtration systems to remove 100% of PFAS in the water. Rockland received an equal amount for this project - \$493,160.50. Everyone worked together as one team, working hard for Abington. They all felt this was where the money needed to go.

Shawn Reilly – thanked them all on behalf of the kids on some of the projects that the town has done with ARPA funds – the guardrails on Gliniewicz Way around the school area, speeding signs on the main streets, renovated the varsity baseball field, renovated the varsity softball field, bought new football scoreboard and new softball scoreboard. He thanked them all for their investment in Abington.

2. **Vote to transfer OPEB Funds to Plymouth County OPEB Trust.** Motion by Mr. Chapin to transfer the funds, seconded by Ms. Djusberg. Roll call vote: Ms. Djusberg, yes; Mr. Chapin, yes, Mr. Donovan, yes, Mr. DiMarzio, yes.

3. **State Senator John Keenan and State Representative Alyson Sullivan-Almeida with legislative update.** There are 9C cuts which fund seniors, police, fire and veterans, due to lower revenues than anticipated. The numbers for 2025 aren't looking any better. Usually there is an agreement between the Governor, the Senate and the House on Chapter 70 and unrestricted general government aid, which hasn't happened yet. To use rainy day fund could affect their bond rating interest rate. They hope this isn't a long time problem for the Commonwealth. They are doing everything they can to see that local aid is as high as it can be because they know the town needs that money, and it's always spent wisely here in Abington.

Mr. Donovan – asked if they would consider diverting monies that would have gone into the Stabilization Fund by statute, if that could be directed to the Local Aid account, which may be a compromise. He appreciates that they help as much as they do.

4. **Tom Hickey, Superintendent of South Shore Vocational, presentation of new school project.** Mr. Hickey gave the presentation, showing new construction behind existing building. Hopefully, it will go to voters in January 2025, and is hoping for an opening for the '28-'29 school year. They have just welcomed Marshfield as the ninth participating town and are talking to Pembroke. They will be adding two new programs – plumbing and veterinary science.

Mr. Donovan was concerned with a January 2025 vote re weather. Suggested March or April, closer to town elections. He was very cognizant that this would effect people on a fixed income. There would be two questions on the ballot – district agreement and debt exclusion. Mr. Hickey - this will be the same election with same polling hours in all the communities. Mr. Donovan suggested a tax calculator to figure out tax impact on people's homes. Mr. Hickey – they will have finite figures at October 2024 MSBA Board meeting. They will have to coordinate with Town Clerks and Town Managers to come up with a date and would prefer a March/April time frame.

They are estimating this project on the history of what the state has reimbursed other high school projects. Will they be considered a regional school or an independent agricultural and technical school? They are in a blue collar school district and hope the reimbursement rate reflects that. If they brought the existing building up to code, it would cost \$110M. Mr. DiMarzio – would they be looking for grants for the two new programs? Mr. Hickey – they are always looking for grants.

Plumbing would be similar to the HVAC program or construction in terms of supply budget. The veterinary science program would have some initial costs for equipment that would be specialized, but successive administrations have been supportive of Skills Capital grants, and they have scored considerable grants over the years. Mr. DiMarzio - is an advocate for vocational schools but worries about the fixed income residents. Mr. Hickey – they are expanding their region, getting as many partners as possible to share the cost, fighting for more reimbursement money, looking for more outside revenue streams to bring costs down. They are amending the regional agreement so that oversubscribed communities are not locked into a rate that is artificially high for periods of time. The amended regional agreement could also contain conditions for a new member town.

5. **Police Chief DelPapa, Department update.** There was an overall increase in calls of 4,000 between 2022 and 2023, a 45% increase. The biggest increase was thefts from automobiles. They started a trend on Face Book called the 9 p.m. Routine – at 9 p.m. people should make sure they remove all valuables in their cars and that they are locked. This will help dramatically and will help cut down on these types of calls. There was a 57% increase in motor vehicle enforcement which doesn't include verbal warnings.

Regarding budget, he had put in a cadet program, but it doesn't look like it will be possible for this year. With that cut, they hope to level fund their services minus contractual obligations. As far as the Deputy Chief of Police search, they have narrowed it down to a final candidate and hope to make a final conditional offer of employment.

As far as traffic enforcement is concerned, they are out in the streets and hitting the problem areas daily. He has 23 officers now, fully funded is 28. Mr. Donovan would like to be notified when the background check is completed on who the candidate is for Deputy Chief of Police.

6. **Adam Gun, VSO, with update and introducing Abington Veterans' Muster with Travis Partington.** They have \$40,000 in the SAVES Fund (Supporting Abington Veterans with Emergency Services) and are issuing grants of \$1,400 for veterans and widows in Abington who qualify and gave the qualifying parameters. He also outlined Chapter 115 benefits. He has been utilizing the veterans tax work-off program and currently has four volunteers coming in two to four hours every week to staff the office and answer phones. Adam welcomed Travis Partington who is a

Marine Abington veteran and is on the Advisory Council. Mr. Partington – served in the Marine Corps from 1995-1999 as a radar operator. He explained the Abington Veterans Muster, which is a monthly program based on people who have served in the military and civilians who support veterans here in Abington. They are trying a TV program to connect people's stories with people in Abington so that hopefully more veterans will want to become more involved in the community. The first episode will air tomorrow at 6 p.m. The Board thanked Travis and wished him good luck with the show.

7. **Request to be appointed to the Open Space Committee – Mark Grassa, Joshua Swasey.** There is one opening. With Joshua Swasey already serving on Conservation, there was a motion by Mr. Chapin to appoint Mark Grassa to Open Space, seconded by Ms. Djusberg. Roll call vote: Ms. Djusberg, yes; Mr. Chapin, yes; Mr. Donovan, yes; Mr. DiMarzio, yes.
8. **Approve Minutes** – motion by Mr. Chapin to approve January 22, 2024, and February 12, 2024, seconded by Ms. Djusberg. Roll call vote: Ms. Djusberg, yes; Mr. Chapin, yes; Mr. Donovan, yes; Mr. DiMarzio, yes.
9. **Vote to refer the proposed zoning articles to the Planning Board** – motion to approve made by Mr. Chapin, seconded by Ms. Djusberg. Roll call vote: Ms. Djusberg, yes; Mr. Chapin, yes; Mr. Donovan, yes; Mr. DiMarzio, yes.
10. **Town Manager Report:**
 - The Finance Committee is still looking for one volunteer.
 - The new website will be up on March 1st.
 - Still working on the budget. The deficit is \$1.2M, but we are still waiting for some numbers to come in. It is an on-going process. It will be a level service budget.

Motion by Mr. Chapin to adjourn at 8:05 p.m., seconded by Ms. Djusberg. Roll call vote: Ms. Djusberg, yes; Mr. Chapin, yes; Mr. Donovan, yes; Mr. DiMarzio, yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Hurst