



Town of Abington

Board of Selectmen

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ABINGTON, MA 02351
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Minutes
Board of Selectmen
January 13, 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: There was a Moment of Silence for Wallace “Hap” Howe, retired Fire Chief, who passed away on 1/11; George Roberts was a former call firefighter; and James Counter was a former member of the Zoning Board of Appeals

Announcements:

- April 4th at the Senior Center at 11:30 a.m., the Board of Selectmen is hosting a Retiree Appreciation Luncheon for all employees who formerly worked in the Town of Abington and have retired both from the Town side and the School side. The Board is accepting private donations for this event.
 - The Fire Station /DPW Project is proceeding. General bids will be due back on April 2nd and a ground-breaking sometime in the summer. The DPW will be relocating its operation to the North School and letters will be going out to the neighbors informing them of that. DPW will begin moving some of their material to the site of the North School while the current DPW facility is demolished, and a new facility is constructed.
 - Saturday, January 25, is an election for the question as to whether we’ll have a new vocational high school. It’s going to be held in the nine communities. The polls will be open from 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
 - Center School bids are due back on January 29th and hopefully will be before the Selectmen after that.
 - The Annual Town Reports are due back to the Town Manager on January 31st. Mr. Donovan has been insistent that he wants to upgrade the report as a historical document.
 - Absentee voting is available in the Town Clerk’s office.
1. Discussion with South Shore Regional Superintendent Tom Hickey on ballot question and possible vote on recommendation. The MSBA process started in early 2022. It is a district-wide election which means that the determination of whether the project is successful depends on the aggregate or cumulative vote of all the voters from the 9 communities. They have a growing application list. The new school would be designed for 900; they are at 215. They have over 425 applications now for 180 seats in the ninth grade class, 78 applicants from Abington for what is currently 18 seats. The demand is there. The design would include a new plumbing program and a veterinary science program. They anticipate the cost would be about \$162M to split between nine towns. They have a tax impact link on their project website southshoretechproject.com.

They see the average payment for Abington of \$231 a year or a more aggressive level of \$287. It depends upon student enrollment percentages. The total obligation to the town would be level principal \$1.6 M starting in 2029. P & I 35.5 or 37.6 level debt. Mr. Hickey's direct # is 1-781-766-4002 if anyone would like to speak directly to him.

Mr. Donovan – if this passes in the aggregate at Town Meeting, we will be asking to debt exclude the amount and then it would have to go on the Town election ballot as well. It would have to be a positive vote on those two. Mr. Hickey – they would do interest only in '26, '27 and '28 and the tax pdf would show that to scale, but if they go on the high water mark, on a reasonable path, it would be '29. It is definitely a debt exclusion topic.

Show Cause Hearings:

JD Variety, Manjulan Patel, 201 N. Quincy Street – Mr. Donovan swore in Mr. Harsh Patel. He has corrected what he can. The rest is the landlord's responsibility. The landlord has been in touch with the Building Department, and it is something to do with the chimney area outside that needs repair or removal. Mr. Donovan – they can't approve a license in a building that isn't safe. They can continue the hearing and get a further update on an action plan from the Building Department and the owner. Motion by Mr. Woods to continue to January 27th to get a report from the Building Department as to what the situation is with the owner and the building's public safety, seconded by Mr. Bunker. He can still operate while this is pending. Unanimous.

2. Habitat for Humanity Grant Agreement, 871 Plymouth Street. Motion by Mr. Woods to approve, seconded by Mr. Bunker, unanimous.
3. Minutes: December 9, 2024 – motion by Mr. Woods to approve, seconded by Mr. Bunker, unanimous.
4. Requests for appointment: **Conservation Commission**, 1 voting, 1 associate – Amanda Connelly, Joanne Demack-Harding, Alvin Schneider. Ms. Connelly and Mr. Schneider both spoke about their reasons for wanting to go on to the Commission. Motion by Mr. Woods to appoint Mr. Schneider as voting member, seconded by Ms. Zompetti, unanimous. Motion by Ms. Zompetti to appoint Ms. Connelly as associate member, seconded by Mr. Bunker. Ms. Djusberg was not in favor of associate members on boards, had not had favorable experiences with them in the past. Mr. Bunker spoke to their importance on the Commission, having served on Conservation for four years. The vote was 2-3 (KD, RW, SD against) and didn't carry.
Community Preservation Committee – motion by Mr. Woods to appoint Jeffrey Cotter, seconded by Mr. Bunker, unanimous.
Commission on Disabilities – motion by Mr. Woods to appoint Josh Del Viscovo, seconded by Mr. Bunker, unanimous.
5. Vote to endorse LIP Application for 161 North Quincy Street Development. The Town Manager explained this will be two buildings. The property abuts open lot storage. There will be 249 units. This is a good opportunity for development in that area on the Brockton line. It would allow them to file with the state in a more expedited manner. They still have to go through all the same 40B processes within the town. The vote should be contingent on them having a successful intermunicipal agreement with Brockton re water and sewer services. Motion by Ms. Djusberg to approve contingent upon intermunicipal agreement with Brockton regarding water and sewer services, seconded by Mr. Woods, unanimous.
6. Discussion and vote on Abington Street Hockey Courts at Arnold Park. Mr. Woods thought the courts were going to be built on Gliniewicz Way. Is not against street hockey, but the Selectmen

can't vote on this; it's Park and Rec's. Thinks Gliniewicz Way is a better spot than Arnold Park, but is 100% for hockey and two street hockey courts. It is not a vote by the Selectmen tonight. Mr. Lambiasi – they had a meeting a couple of months ago – with Peter Serino, Athletic Director, Brian Woodford, Alex Bezanson, Shawn Reilly, John Stone, DPW, Kelly Johnson, Park & Rec. – because we were lucky enough to get an earmark for a design of a multi use outdoor sports area. We are in the process of doing some work at Memorial Field, and people have asked about street hockey, and the need to replace the basketball courts over at the Police Station campus because those are going to have to come down soon with the new Fire Station/DPW project. He wanted to get everyone together to see what the options were. Gliniewicz Way, Arnold Park, Memorial Field and even Green Street were brought up with a proposal for some pickle ball courts. It was decided that pickle ball courts would be best at Memorial Field where they wouldn't bother anyone.

We have the earmark, and the Bruins Foundation has pledged up to \$50,000 to build a street hockey court. Peter Serino suggested beach volleyball court. This got sidelined with Special Town Meeting and the early budget season. At the meeting, other folks liked the Arnold Park spot better for street hockey. The Town Manager needs the Board's approval on Gliniewicz Way before doing anything and would like to go forward with that earmark.

Mr. Donovan gave a brief history on Arnold Park. It was donated in 1935 by Abby Arnold, conditional that no structures be built on it. That is why it is important to have detailed Town Reports – for historical research. He was a Park Commissioner when Prop 2 ½ went in, and she had left a bequest, and they wanted to access the money in order to build something at Arnold Park and were told the terms of the will prevented it. He went through the Town Reports and could only find in 1956 she donated a park at Adams and Washington Streets that is called Johnson's Corner in memory of her mother. He was told they couldn't put up a fence because that violated the terms of the will. He's sure the land was given under the authority of the Park Commission. He doesn't think the Board's powers extend to Arnold Park, but that is something they will have to research. They will look at Gliniewicz Way and come back with a plan that they can all discuss with the athletic director. He is concerned that they are losing two basketball courts at the Police Station and thought they could go on Gliniewicz Way with an expanded facility. He would like the Board to direct the Town Manager to come back with a plan as it relates to Gliniewicz Way and investigate the terms of the will.

Ms. Zompetti – is concerned that if this gets stalled, the kids will be aged out of it. Would like it to go forward at Town Meeting. She doesn't want the project on Gliniewicz Way to be stopped because they want to add more things to it. We need more recreation and more opportunities for the children, and we have the earmark for Gliniewicz Way. She was on CPC for a while, and CPC, Park & Rec and DPW have been working on this for a long time.

Mr. Woods asked if there was a timeline for the Bruins Alumni funding. Mr. Bezanson – it has been delayed several times and doesn't care where it goes but thinks it should be done this year to avoid the chance of losing it. The Bruins license plates are what funds this. They have done rinks all over the state.

Brian Woodford – has dedicated 13 years to the program, and there are no hockey facilities in town. Doesn't think Gliniewicz Way is the right place. He has the support of John Stone, DPW, and Park & Rec, the Depot. There are many places for food within the area which would be a benefit to those businesses. They would need a porta potty. There is one down by baseball, but they may have to add one. Arnold Park needs revitalization, and this would do the basketball courts and benches. They will need lights, and it would be easier at Arnold Park than it would be

at Gliniewicz way. Arnold Park would be more conducive than a highly dense residential area. He supports basketball and volleyball courts at Gliniewicz Way.

Mr. Donovan – the Board’s direction will be for the Town Manager to work with the group and come back to the Board with a plan.

7. Establishment of a gift account pursuant to the provisions of MGL Chapter 44, Section 53A 1/2 for the purpose of receiving donations to fund the Retiree Appreciation Luncheon. Motion to approve made by Ms. Djusberg, seconded by Ms. Zompetti, unanimous.
8. Town Manager Report and Outline of FY26 Budget Process. The process was described. The budget is presented to the Town Manager. An analysis is done by the Finance Committee and Town Manager. After the edits, each department meets with the Finance Committee and FinCom reviews the draft, makes recommendations, the budget gets tweaked and then goes to Town Meeting. Mr. Lambiase thanked Mr. Donovan and Ms. Djusberg for sitting in on multiple meetings.

Some of the big factors are the waste hauling cost which is a big burden on the budget. The year-to-year increase outpaces inflation, and we can expect this to continue unfortunately. Recycling will no longer be able to offset the cost; landfills are at capacity. They are proposing to enter these costs into an enterprise fund. Health insurance is another big driver with an over 12% increase. They are looking to reduce expenses and looking at other plans – MIIA and Mayflower. Inflation increased costs for goods and utilities. We are currently facing a \$1.6M deficit. State aid is expected to remain flat. Chapter 70 is allocated mostly to schools and there is unrestricted government aid and that is general fund aid. We don’t anticipate an increase right now on either of those. The state right now is having difficulty making their own projections.

Some solutions they have discussed are transitioning waste hauling into an enterprise fund. We would still have a deficit but propose to move \$1.6M into an enterprise fund in establishing waste hauling outside of the general fund and outside of the general tax base. If this goes forward, we will phase it in over a four year period. We would use free cash to offset the cost 100% in the first year so there would be no additional expenses for the homeowners, and it would be a way to subsidize and of recognizing that in the past there have actually been two overrides to help fund waste hauling. The overrides were a total of \$800,000 about 15 plus years ago and they are no longer helping. They recognize they are asking a lot of the community, but many communities have done this many years ago. They will put together a proposal and have some public input sessions on this. They want to work with the community and stakeholders and hope that everybody understands that this is something that needs to be done one way or another. It just continues to erode the budget.

It will be a level service budget, prioritizing essential services and will have to meet contractual obligations. Not looking to add any services or positions to the budget this year. The Finance Committee meets every Wednesday night and department heads will come in and present their budgets. We will have budget hearings with some of the larger budgets – DPW, Police, Fire, and will get more information on waste hauling. We’ll wait and see when the Governor and the House will submit the State budget in two weeks and that will give us an idea where the Chapter 70 school aid is going to come in and unrestricted government aid. We’ll make more decisions depending on that.

Mr. Donovan – the finance team has made a concentrated effort to selling off a lot of parcels from tax title to get as much as it can. In terms of health insurance, the town made a mistake in going

out of Mayflower Municipal Health Group. It has expanded quite a bit. The Town Manager will look into Mayflower. By Town Meeting, they will have a plan to present and be able to say they have looked at everything they could.

9. Set Deadline (February 10) for submission of Articles for Annual Town Meeting. Motion by Mr. Woods to set the deadline of February 10th for submission of Articles for Town Meeting, seconded by Mr. Bunker, unanimous.

Motion by Mr. Woods to go into Executive Session, Pursuant to the provisions of M.G.L. Chapter 30A, section 21 (3) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining to wit; International Association of Fire Fighters, Local 2080, and to reconvene, seconded by Mr. Bunker. Roll call vote: Ms. Zompetti, yes; Mr. Bunker, yes; Mr. Woods, yes; Ms. Djusberg; Mr. Donovan, yes.

The Firefighters have negotiated in good faith and have come to an agreement that was ratified by the union this past Thursday for a successor agreement for three years – 1st year 2%, 2nd 2 ½%, 3rd 2.9%, with increases for stipends and education. It is a very good team. The paramedic industry is very tough to recruit and retain, and we have to be competitive in the market. It was a fair process. Motion by Mr. Woods to approve, seconded by Mr. Bunker, unanimous. It will go into the budget at Town Meeting. The Board and the Firefighters signed the contract.

Motion by Mr. Woods to adjourn at 7:10 p.m., seconded by Ms. Djusberg, unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Hurst