

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Monday, March 17th, 2025, 7:00 PM

Veterans Memorial Building, Room 229

900 Main Street, Millis, MA 02054

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Rosenfeld called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

The following persons were present Chair Ellen Rosenfeld, Vice Chair Erin Underhill, Clerk Craig Schultze, Town Administrator Mike Guzinski.

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sel. Rosenfeld brings up A few recent articles in the Boston Globe, the article centers around the rising costs of new schools across the commonwealth, something that all districts are feeling the impact of. The article being referenced can be found here: <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2025/02/26/metro/massachusetts-school-construction-projects-cost/>

The second article talks about the downward spiral of money coming into school districts, and how over 200 districts across the state have gotten the lowest levels of increases allowed under state law.

The Joint Committee on Ways and Means will be having a hearing at UMass on Monday March 24th. It is encouraged that municipal members attend to share their voices and concerns with what has been going on regarding chapter 70 funding across the Commonwealth. If you are unable to attend the hearing, you are still encouraged to participate whether that is a written, personalized letter, or sending an email to your elected official telling your story and voicing your concerns.

A resident stood up to ask a clarification question, regarding the hearing being held the following week, she asked- what exactly is to be expected. Sel. Rosenfeld and Mike Guzinski responded that it is a legislative hearing, being held at UMass Amherst by the Ways and Means Joint Committee, they encourage the public to show up to the hearing to show their support.

Living streaming update from Sel. Rosenfeld, Finance Committee and Select Board meetings are now live streamed and easily accessible on the town's website. The next to be live streaming meetings will be the Planning Board.

Sel. Rosenfeld also gives an update that the RFI for the train station Lansing Millis Building Project has gone out this week and will remain open until April 16th .

III. **SCHEDULED APPOINTMENTS & HEARINGS**

25-040: A Municipal Moment: Real Estate Tax Process

Teresa Gonsalves, Principal Assessor, joins the Finance Director Jody Kurczy to explain how taxes are calculated in Millis. They dive into the billing cycle, primary bills and actual bills. Starting with that, bills are only sent out twice a year, but they are to be paid four times a year.

A resident stood up to ask, what triggers a tax increase? Is it a leavy or is it the value of the house based in the market? The response was that it is both, it also has to do with the rising cost of running the town.

The first thing to be cut when there is a deficit in the town is road repairs, with the growth deficit we previously experienced, it was clear our roads were being neglected. In the last five years, with enhanced growth across town, we have been able to budget more efficiently, resulting in a better cycle of paving periods. Jim McKay, DPW director, speaks about how there is an increase in trucking costs due to our location to both 495 and 95, two major roadways here in Eastern Mass. Since Millis is a bedroom community, there has not been much development recently, and there is no commercial industry to help aid the rising costs within Millis.

25-041: Council on Aging Study Update- UMASS BOSTON

Doctor Coyle and Anne Marie of the Millis Council on Aging talk about shared services. Last year there was the first part of the council on aging study with Millis and its neighboring town Medway. The towns looked at the programs and services provided by their individual COAs. This year the town received another legislative earmark, to continue with part two of the study this year. Doctor Coyle along with her colleagues at UMass Boston can do some demographic research and along with her team will run a needs assessment for older residents (age 60+) in Millis and Medway. To see what factors play into how these individuals feel about aging and the access that they must programs and services. On May 5th there will be postcards being mailed out and on 5/13 there will be a survey being mailed out to residents.

The overall purpose is to identify, understand and prioritize the needs of older residents of Millis and Medway that must be addressed to maintain the community as a place to age well. The results are intended to identify areas for possible collaboration to broaden the range of services available to residents, particularly related to all aspects of health-

physical, mental and social, access to programs, services and caregiving. They also want to raise awareness of ageing-related issues Town-wide, inform other municipal departments as they consider their own practices.

IV. **OPEN SESSION ITEMS**

25-042: Road Paving Update & Authorization for Snow/Ice Deficit Spending & Discuss Reserve Fund Transfer Request for Repair of Street Lights

Jim McKay, DPW Director presented FY23, FY24 and FY25 paving schedules. He explains that there is about \$560,000 left of Town Money and approximately \$600,000+ from Chapter 90 funding that will be available as of July 1st. Jim proposes the following paving routes for FY26, beginning with Orchard Street from Middlesex to Ridge Street, as well as the small section that toll brothers did not pave when they made repairs. Myrtle street from Himelfarb to Pleasant Street, including the parking lot of Fire Station two located over there. Next will be Park Road, the entrance to Main Street. The driveway from Park Road between the tennis courts is a separate issue, it will need to be reclaimed as it was never actually built as a road. The DPW plans to make it into an official road. Next is Milliston Road from stoney brooks entrance to main street. Keeping the budget in mind, if possible, they would also be paving Pollard Drive from Union Street into Clark Road.

The last section to be paved is entirety of 109, Senator Rebecca Rausch put funding in as an earmark for \$1.7 Million in paving assistance for the town. It is unknown the exact timeline, but it has been in the works for many years. It is likely to be completed in this construction season, near October of 2025. The paving would run from the Medway Town Line, all the way to Tractor Supply, and then from Hammond Lane to the police station. The largest section would be from Milliston Road all the way to the Medfield Town Line.

This year DPW has exceeded their budget for snow and ice by \$54,000. Mike Guzinski recommends that the board approve the deficit spending in an amount not to exceed \$75,000 in snow and ice accounts. This number is adjusted with other factors annually, and it is not something you can put more money into as you cannot reduce the amount you put into it ever. It is such an unknown living in new England, that it is safer to under-fund than to over-budget.

Sel. Underhill moved that the board approve deficit spending not to exceed \$75,000 in the snow and ice account in accordance with Mass General Laws Chapter 41 Section 31D. Sel. Schultze seconded this motion. Chair Rosenfeld polled the Board. Schultze- yay. Underhill- yay, Rosenfeld- yay. The motion passed unanimously

25-043: Approval of Contract for Williamson Pump Replacements/Repairs

The Timberline Sewer Lift Station currently only runs on one pump, but it is required to have two pumps to function properly. This is an emergency request, as they tried to fix the pump but were unable to do so, resulting in the need for a replacement. A replacement would be \$17,330.

Sel. Underhill moved that the board approve a contract with Williamson Pump and Motor to install a new motor at the Timberline Road Sewer lift station for an amount to not exceed the amount of \$17,330 and to authorize the Town Administrator to sign a contract on behalf of the Board. Sel. Schultze seconded this motion. Chair Rosenfeld polled the Board. Schultze- yay. Underhill- yay, Rosenfeld- yay. The motion passed unanimously.

25-044: Review/Approval of Rate Study Contract for Water/Sewer/Stormwater

Jim McKay gave the Board and the Town Administrator an insight into the importance of a 3-5 year-long outlook as the current reserve funds are very low and there is no room for major work. Ty and Bond have been working with the town for almost ten years, and this fund would be split between storm water, sewer and water.

Sel. Underhill moved that the board approves a contract with Ty and Bond to develop an electronic rate model for water, sewer and stormwater for an amount not to exceed \$20,000 and authorize The Town Administrator to sign on behalf of the Select Board. Craig seconded the motion; Chair Rosenfeld polled the board. Schultze- yay, Underhill-yay, Rosenfeld- yay, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

25-045: Vote to Approve/Sign Contract – Permitting- Zoning Guidebook BID Blueprint

Bob Wiess, Energy Manager for the Town, spoke about how they have received an earmark for \$170,000 from the 2022 chapter 268 earmarks. The goal was to use this money to create a business improvement district for the town, the economic development committee along with Mr. Weiss prefer to create a permitting and zoning guidebook for business that may want to develop in Millis. The scope of the project was altered and approved by the state so long as the business improvement plan was still an aspect.

There are currently two projects, in November of 2024 they issued an RFP for a consultant and in January the economic development committee interviewed two contestants for the project. The selection was unanimously in favor of Erin Shaffer. He requests approval from the board to move forward with his projects.

Sel. Underhill motioned the board to approve a contract with Erin L. Shaffer Land Use Consultants LLC to create a permitting and zoning guidebook and a business

improvement district blueprint for an amount not to exceed \$100,000. And authorize the Select Board Chair to sign the contract on behalf of the Board. Sel. Schultze seconded the motion, Chair Rosenfeld polled the Board, all were in favor, the motioned passed unanimously.

25-046: Vote to Approve/Sign Millis Zero Emissions Vehicle Policy

The Energy Committee was going to present a zero-emission vehicle first policy; however the committee has decided to amend the states template to reflect the town and committee's current goals, and they are working with the state for review. It will be discussed more in-depth next time.

25-047: Vote to Refer Proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendments to Planning Board for Public Hearing – Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

Mr. Weiss spoke on behalf of the Planning Board Chair; he wishes to inform the Board of a public hearing of proposed amendments to the zoning bylaws. The proposed amendments regard the by- right permitting of the accessory dwelling units (ADU) to provide more housing options that are affordable to people. This will also give home and property owners more flexibility in their properties. The proposed public hearing is set for Tuesday April 8th at the Planning Boad Meeting. The chair asks the Select Board to refer the proposal back to the planning Board to prepare for the Town Meeting.

Sel. Underhill motions the Board to refer the proposed zoning bylaw amendments for accessory dwelling units (ADU) to the Planning Board for a public hearing on Tuesday April 8th, 2025. Sel. Schultze seconded the motion, Chair Rosenfeld polled the Board, Schultze- yay. Underhill- yay, Rosenfeld- yay. The motion passed unanimously.

25-048: Discuss/Consider Special Act for Qualified Seniors for Waiver of School Construction Costs

Mr. Guzinski spoke about a special act that was established for the town of Hopkinton. He gives background to allow the Board to take a similar approach into consideration. This act was filed in the House by Rep. Arena De-Rosa, the act is the first of its kind in MA and it was approved last summer. It essentially allowed Hopkinton seniors within the community who meet specific financial criteria to be exempt from property taxes or school building construction projects. If this were to be implemented within the town of Millis, there would be some similarities, and some differences in the qualifications.

If this were to be something the Board is considering pursuing the town pursuing, it would require approval at a Town Meeting to authorize the select board to request the filing of the special act by our legislative delegation.

Things to consider as noted by Sel. Schultze, for every senior except from property taxes, there will be an increase in the property taxes paid by everyone else in town. He also makes a note that this will not impact people at Glenn Ellen as they have not been in those homes for 10 years. The filing would be required annually if this were to be implemented. There will be more research done on this topic before a decision is made.

25-049: Discuss Town Clerk Position – Elected vs. Appointed

Chair Rosenfeld notes that for many years there has been consideration of making the Town Clerk position an appointed position, rather than continuing with the current elected position. The Board discussed the various pros and cons of moving forward with something like this, beginning with The Town Administrator, Mr. Guzinski.

The town established a charter review committee, appointed by the moderator, one of the results of the study was a recommendation to change the position from an elected town clerk to an appointed town clerk. For several reasons, some are the growing workload and complexity of the job, and the legal aspects involved within the office. Over the last 15-20 years many communities have changed their approaches, as the job has expanded simply from just record keeping.

One reason to switch is to establish more continuity within the town, rather than the potential of the person in the position changing every 3 years. The tenure and expertise could be better managed through an appointed process. The next reason is accountability, the current town clerk is only accountable to the electorate once every 3 years, as an appointed position, the town clerk would be accountable to the Select Board, The Town Administrator, and more important the people of the Town.

If this were to be passed at the town meeting in May, it would then be submitted to the state and could be up to if not over a year before there is any act being signed by the state. Ultimately delaying the appointment opportunity and process until roughly June of 2026. After the election the only remaining step would be the approval of the legislature.

25-050: Open 5/5/25 Annual Town Meeting Warrant (ATM)

Sel. Underhill moved that the Board open the Warrant for the spring annual town meeting scheduled for Monday May 5th, 2025. Sel. Schultze seconded the motion, Chair Rosenfeld polled the Board, Schultze- yay. Underhill- yay, Rosenfeld- yay. The motion passed unanimously.

25-051: Discuss, Add/Remove ATM Articles

Mr. Guzinski gave a brief overview of the draft warrant to the Board. There are 21 articles on the draft warrant, the first 7 are standard annual meeting articles, consisting of unpaid bills, additional wages/expenses, the operating budget, water, sewer and storm water enterprise funds. There will also be changes in the expenditure limits for two of the revolving funds, these funds are the animal control shelter fund and the board of health food funds. There are also requests from the COA program services fund.

The next meeting will include the personnel plan and the COLA decisions as contracts begin to be wrapped up. As well as updates from the Capital Planning Committee and their May 2025 report. The warrant also includes special acts for seniors to be considered, as well as the appointment of the Town Clerk position.

25-052: Close 5/5/25 ATM Warrant

Sel. Underhill moved that the Board accept the articles as listed in the draft annual town meeting warrant contained in the agenda packet into the warrant for the spring annual town meeting scheduled for Monday May 5th, 2025. Sel. Schultze seconded the motion, Chair Rosenfeld polled the Board, Schultze- yay. Underhill- yay, Rosenfeld- yay. The motion passed unanimously.

Sel. Underhill moved that the Board close the Warrant for the spring annual town meeting scheduled for Monday May 5th, 2025. Sel. Schultze seconded the motion, Chair Rosenfeld polled the Board, Schultze- yay. Underhill- yay, Rosenfeld- yay. The motion passed unanimously.

25-053: Vote to Declare Town-Owned Land Parcels Surplus

Mr. Guzinski comments on the two parcels of land that were approved at the previous spring town meeting. He recommends The Board vote to declare those two parcels as surplus so that they can move forward with the proper sale process.

Sel. Underhill moved that The Board declare parcels 21-012-000 and 40-100-000 recorded with the Norfolk County Registry of Deeds in Book 5470 page 77 in the book 2773-page 2045 as surplus property available for disposition by sale in accordance with articles 101 of the November 2024 Fall Annual Town Meeting. Sel. Schultze seconded the motion, Chair Rosenfeld polled the Board, Schultze- yay. Underhill- yay, Rosenfeld- yay. The motion passed unanimously

25-054: Review/Approval of Recreation Event: Carnival & Fireworks

Sel. Underhill moved that The Board authorize the Millis Recreation Department to hold its annual Carnival at The Town Park from June 26th through June 29th 23025 with Finelli Amusement Company. Sel. Schultze seconded the motion, Chair Rosenfeld polled the Board, Schultze- yay. Underhill- yay, Rosenfeld- yay. The motion passed unanimously.

25-055: Approval of Fiber Optic Municipal Area Network Contract

The IT Director received a \$150,000 grant to update the town's Fiber Optic Capabilities, creating better communication and collaboration opportunities for municipal employees. As well as enhancing security and risk services that are essential to the town.

Sel. Underhill moved that The Board approve a contract to expand the fiber optic municipal area network in the Town of Millis for an amount not to exceed \$120,004.65, and to authorize The Town Administrator to sign the contract on behalf of the Select Board. Sel. Schultze seconded the motion, Chair Rosenfeld polled the Board, Schultze- yay. Underhill- yay, Rosenfeld- yay. The motion passed unanimously.

25-056: Board/Committee Liaison Updates

Sel. Schultze attended the School Building Committee and two Capital Planning Committee meetings, but he has nothing to share.

Sel. Underhill attended a Community Preservation meeting; it was essentially a house-keeping meeting.

Chair Rosenfeld attended the Energy Committee Meeting as well as the Energy Committee Forum, it went well but there wasn't a great turnout unfortunately. There was a great discussion about composting, and wastewater and the current initiatives of the Energy Committee. Chair Rosenfeld also attended the Sewer Commission; she has no update on that. Earlier in the afternoon she also spoke with Verizon to renegotiate their contract.

25-057: Review/Approval of Water/Sewer Commitment

Mr. Guzinski Recommended that The Board approve and sign the Water/Sewer Department Commitment to The Collector for February of 2025 in the amount of \$1596.40, Sel. Underhill moved, Sel. Schultze seconded the motion, Chair Rosenfeld polled the Board, Schultze- yay. Underhill- yay, Rosenfeld- yay. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Guzinski Recommended that The Board approve and sign the Water/Sewer Department Commitment to The Collector for the third quarter of fiscal year 2025 in the amount of \$977,378.31, Sel. Underhill moved, Sel. Schultze seconded the motion,

Chair Rosenfeld polled the Board, Schultze- yay. Underhill- yay, Rosenfeld- yay. The motion passed unanimously.

V. EXECUTIVE SESSION & ADJOURNMENT

Sel. Underhill motioned to enter executive session at 9:25 PM to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the government's bargaining or litigation position (Fire, Police, DPW, and SEIU) only emerging to adjourn. Sel. Schultze seconded the motion. Sel. Rosenfeld polled the Board, Schultze – yay, Underhill – yay, Rosenfeld – yay. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Samantha Beaudry