

Tuesday, January 25, 2022 at 6:P.M.
Hanson Board of Selectmen
Selectmen's meeting room, Town Hall
Open session

Members Present: James Hickey, Matthew Dyer, Laura FitzGerald-Kemmett, Joseph Weeks
Members Absent: Kenny Mitchell
Others Present: Lisa Green, Town Administrator; Lucia Silveira, Executive Assistant; Steve Moberg, IT Director

I CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Dyer called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS & UPCOMING MEETINGS

Mr. Weeks read the public announcements and upcoming meetings.

III PUBLIC HEARING - 6:00P.M.

Chairman Dyer opened the public hearing regarding the Community Aggregation Plan and introduced Patrick Roche from Good Energy and members from the Energy Committee. Chairman Dyer also briefly reminded the audience that the discussion would focus on the bulk purchasing program for the electricity consumption in the Town of Hanson. The goal of the bulk purchase is to get a better rate without affecting the current cost for residents of Hanson.

MOTION by Ms. FitzGerald-Kemmett, seconded by Mr. Hickey, to open the public hearing.
Voted 4 - 0.

Mr. Roche began his presentation on Hanson's community power by reiterating what steps had already been completed, including authorizing the aggregation at Town Meeting, and partnering with Good Energy to develop a draft Aggregation Plan. The public review process for this draft had begun on December 14, 2021.

Mr. Roche noted that they had received 3 comments thus far, and the first comment was in opposition of the opt-out design. He explained that the primary reason for the current opt-out design is that the state law that enables the program, M.G.L. c164 section 134, explicitly authorizes the program as an opt-out. The purpose for the current opt-out was further explained, and he also noted that those who *did* qualify to opt-in will have a 30 day period to then opt-out if they so desire before automatic enrollment.

The second comment asked about the performance of other Town's aggregations. In response to this, Mr. Roche emphasized that while they could not 100% guarantee savings, he shared findings of National Grid published performance data in Rhode Island over a 4 year period from 2016 - 2020. The data showed that the average electricity rates for regular residents (R-1) and low-income residential (R-2) customers were both about 8% lower in aggregation.

The final comment was in support of moving ahead with the program which Mr. Roche appreciated and wanted to include in the discussion.

Chairman Dyer expressed concern he had heard from community members regarding those with low-income plans and how the rate will affect their separate plan, and also regarding how the

change will affect those with solar panels. Mr. Roche first explained that low-income plans operate at a percentage discount on the entire bill that would not be affected by the rate change. He then explained that with solar panels, the credit you earn is based on the energy used, and the value of those credits do not change with the rate change. This will only affect the cost of the energy pulled from the grid.

There were few questions from the Board concerning things like the potential savings and if there was a required threshold of residents to opt-in for the plan to go through. Mr. Roche addressed these concerns and also specifically stated that there was no minimum threshold in order to continue with the aggregation. He also spoke briefly on the length of the contract and the means of extending or terminating as needed.

Chairman Dyer and Mr. Roche clarified that following the meeting tonight, they would have the Department of Energy Resources to do a review, and from there would bring a revised plan to the Board with the hope of sending it to the Department of Utilities before soliciting bids. Discussion was then opened to the audience as well.

MOTION by Ms. FitzGerald-Kemmett, seconded by Mr. Weeks, to close the public commenting period. ***Voted 4 - 0.***

IV

NEW BUSINESS

Recognize Antonia Leverone, Library employee, retiring after 30 years with the Library

Chairman Dyer read an email from the Library Director recognizing the hard work and dedication that Ms. Leverone had contributed to the many projects and activities over her years of service. Ms. Leverone had assisted in projects like the automation process in the 2000s when the Library began using computers, and was also instrumental in the receipt of a grant used to fund materials and equipment for the blind and low-visioned individuals among many other projects. Chairman Dyer emphasized that Ms. Leverone was the perfect example of a public servant who cared about her community. They wish her many happy years in retirement following her amazing work with the Library.

Don Howard detention and retention presentation

Mr. Howard began his presentation by noting that of the 25 ponds in Town, 22-23 of them had become breeding grounds for viruses carried by mosquitoes and that this should be of concern to the Town. He showed the Board specific ponds in Town where the vegetation has disrupted the flow of the detention area as well as different retention areas where the water is still flowing. He emphasized that the detention sites should be underground to prevent what is currently happening with the current mosquito breeding.

It was decided after brief discussion with the Board that Lisa Green, Town Administrator, would work with Mr. Howard to gather the necessary committees and individuals to address this issue. There was more discussion on steps moving forward as well as the potential grant money that could be allocated to a project like this.

Budget update

Ms. Green clarified that Todd Hassett, Town Accountant, would be available for the February 22 meeting and would present the budget update to the Board then.

De-Regionalization study presentation*

Joint meeting with De-Regionalization Feasibility Study Committee

Ms. Green summarized that previously, the Board had selected this specific company, TMS, to perform a de-regionalization study for the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District. The company had since spent much time gathering documents and they were ready to report their findings to the Board.

Dr. Judy Houle and Michael DeBarge of TMSolution, INC. began their presentation to the Board by introducing the company and the relevant work that they had previously conducted. Dr. Houle reminded the audience that the scope of this study focused on whether the WHRSD should separate or remain together, and they had looked at this decision through a variety of lenses.

She began by showing different assessments like transportation and operating assessments before finally showing that the assessment percentage for Hanson had increased by 3.7% between FY19 and FY22. This increase is most apparent between FY21 and FY22 where the impact of the shift to the statutory method was fully in place. These assessments are based on enrollment in the district, of which Hanson's enrollment has decreased at a greater rate than Whitman over the course of the past 10 years.

Dr. Houle shared that Hanson's share total costs for the capital plan projects necessary for each school were as follows: Indian Head Elementary/Hanson Middle School - \$710,650.00, WHRHS - \$1,643,706.12. These bring the total liability for Hanson with capital projects is \$2,354,356.12.

Dr. Houle then explained that there were specific areas identified through the technology assessment that needed to be addressed. Upgrades would be necessary for network switches, the wireless network, and physical/virtual servers in order to meet security standards and to ensure efficient use given the increased use of technology in teaching.

In the educational assessment, Dr. Houle explained that they were comparing the alignment of the current curriculum documentation to the state framework. They found that the current curriculum for ELA and Mathematics did in fact align with the state framework for rigor with adequate support for differing needs of students. The History/Social Studies and Science curriculum also aligned with the state framework. From these findings, it was concluded that WHRSD students, grades K-8, were receiving sufficient curriculum in terms of standards and there were a variety of opportunities for students to excel outside of the classroom as well. The needs of disabled students were currently being met sufficiently between the two towns, and if they were to separate Hanson would need to implement support towards this area of education.

Financial impacts of the separation were assessed and summarized by Mr. DeBarge. Regarding foundation enrollment (students for which you are financially reliable), Mr. DeBarge showed a decline of nearly 14% over the past 6 years to emphasize the decrease in financial liability. Yet he also showed that over the same period of time, there had been an increase in budget, meaning that the decrease in foundation enrollment doesn't necessarily translate to financial savings. This begs the question of if separation would yield cost savings for Hanson.

He summarized the transportation assessment by first explaining that they currently received reimbursement from the state for the increased travel distance for buses across the two towns, then

explaining that they would lose this reimbursement should the towns separate (although they would then not be affected by greater travel distances any longer). Should the town's decide to partially separate, some of this reimbursement would still be available, although it's more likely to be at the high school level.

In terms of staffing, for just the elementary school and middle school, the Town can expect an immediate 4-5% increase in the financial obligation. The number of teachers both with and without Master's degrees were discussed as this would create another potential financial obligation for Hanson, and the majority of teachers employed have a Master's degree or greater indicating increasing salaries as years progress. Mr. DeBarge also noted that the custodial contract would have to be addressed considering the current contract is out through the district, and a multitude of other factors would have to be considered given financial liability.

Given the financial information discussed, Mr. DeBarge presented 3 potential options for the de-regionalization. They could fully separate the PK-12 district with considerations made about the WHRS facility, create a PK-8 supervisory union and region for 9-12, or maintain the institutional status quo but increase collaboration to contain costs without sacrificing educational quality.

Mr. DeBarge continued in detail about each of the options including discussions on the different considerations that would be impacted. Different domains of these considerations included the WHRHS Facility, central offices, governance, staffing, transportation, and the impact on towns.

Moving forward, Dr. Houle recommended engaging with the stakeholders so they can consider feedback from the impacted citizens. She recommended they move forward as quickly as possible considering the length of the process following the Towns voting to amend or dissolve the Regional Agreement. The earliest they see the separation happening isn't until at least 2025 given all the approvals required. Given all this influx of information, Dr. Houle reminded the audience that the goal was to do what is best for the children of Hanson while considering what is fiscally prudent.

Following the presentation, a lengthy question and answer period was held by the Board. During this discussion, Mr. Weeks addressed broad concerns on the budget for each of these options and the financial burden each option would potentially put on each town. Mr. Hickey brought attention to the potential legal options they would have to pursue should the two towns disagree on the final decision. Ms. FitzGerald-Kemmett expressed extreme concern over the lack of information on the specific cost of each option and even options that weren't discussed. She further stated that there was not enough information to make a cost effective decision and the study left many unanswered questions on a complete deregionalization. The Board asked Ms. Green to continue to have discussions with TMS to see how to move forward.

Members of the De-Regionalization Feasibility Committee were invited to ask questions, and different topics were discussed like what members of the district or Town Hall were involved in the collection of data and cost projections.

Moving forward, the Board would require more information in order to even begin making a decision.

IT Update

Steve Moberg, IT Director for the Town of Hanson, gave a brief update to the Board regarding some of the recent activities of the Department. Mr. Moberg was able to apply for the Security Awareness grant available through the State. He had also been looking into First Net, a cell service dedicated to First Responders, which allows for greater access to the network for first responder activity with a guarantee from the State. This service would save the Town of Hanson somewhere around \$200 per month on the cell lines. He concluded his update by informing the Board that there was only one old server yet to be addressed and he was hoping to get to it soon, and then all the servers will have either been upgraded or shut down depending on the needs.

Appoint a Selectmen as liaison to Council on Aging

Mr. Hickey clarified that this position would act as a liaison to the Council on Aging and not necessarily the Senior Center or the programs associated with the Center. Considering this was previously a position that had since been vacant for years, Mr. Hickey along with members of the Council on Aging felt it best to elect a representative for the senior population.

Open Warrant for Annual Town Meeting

MOTION by Mr. Weeks, seconded by Ms. FitzGerald-Kemmett, to open the Warrant for the Annual Town Meeting. *Voted 3 - 0 - 1.*

Ms. Green asked what the will of the Board was for the location of the Town Meeting this year. It was decided that Ms. Green would reach out to the High School to hold the meeting there on Monday, May 2 to air on the side of caution in regard to COVID-19.

Chairman Dyer also wanted to reinforce the habit of Selectmen presenting articles they want in the Warrant in order for everyone to have a full understanding of what is included and why.

Lakeville Animal Shelter agreement

Chairman Dyer explained that the Lakeville Animal Shelter agreement was something they had been entering into annually and they continue to do amazing work. The boarding rate would increase from \$15 to \$25 per dog per day effective January 1, 2022.

MOTION by Mr. Weeks, seconded by Mr. Hickey, to enter into the agreement with Lakeville Animal Shelter. *Voted 4 - 0*

Recognize disclosure from Gerald Davis

While Ms. FitzGerald-Kemmett expressed concern over potential conflicts that may arise during a storm having a member of the Water Department plowing for the Town, Chairman Dyer clarified that as a public employee, he would primarily answer to the employer, which in this case is the Town and the Water Department.

MOTION by Ms. FitzGerald-Kemmett, seconded by Mr. Weeks, to accept the disclosure provided by Gerald Davis. *Voted 4 - 0*

Recognize disclosure from Marianne Dimarsio

MOTION by Ms. FitzGerald-Kemmett, seconded by Mr. Weeks, to accept the disclosure provided by Marianne Dimarsio. *Voted 4 - 0.*

OLD BUSINESS

Revisit town building mask mandate

Ms. Green explained that she had just spoken with the Health Agent and it was reported that Hanson currently has 406 active COVID cases as reported to the Board of Health. The numbers across the board seem to be stabilizing. Ms. FitzGerald-Kemmett recommended continuing the mask mandate at least until the next meeting, and the rest of the Board was in agreement.

Update on Natural gas, Sprague Energy contract

Ms. Green provided an update on the contract that had been discussed at a previous meeting with Sprague Energy. The 15-month contract as discussed came in with a rate of .7080, and initially the 26-month contract came in with a rate of .711. When Ms. Green received the updated contract, the 26-month contract had a confirmed rate of .7080 and the Town decided to continue with this contract given the lower rate. They will be confirmed with this rate until April 30, 2024.

Request to continue utilizing Jillian Tully in the Selectmen's office to assist with clerical operations of the office

Chairman Dyer explained that Jillian Tully had stepped in at the Selectmen's office to assist while they searched for the new Administrative Assistant. Although they have since acquired a new Administrative Assistant, Ms. Green requested that they continue to accept the support of Ms. Tully in the Selectmen's office.

MOTION by Ms. FitzGerald-Kemmett, seconded by Mr. Weeks, to accept the request to continue utilizing Jillian Tully in the Selectmen's office to assist with clerical operations of the office.
Voted 4 - 0.

VI

APPOINTMENTS

Appoint Scott Varley as the alternative Wiring Inspector

MOTION by Mr. Hickey, seconded by Mr. Weeks, to appoint Scott Varley as the alternate Wiring Inspector for the Town of Hanson. ***Voted 4 - 0***

Consider and discuss application of Caroline Mills for appointment to the Recreation Commission

Ms. Mills briefly summarized her desire to join the Recreation Commission. She emphasized that given her familys' involvement in the community, she wants to give back and help the community. She emphasized that she wanted involvement in the family related programs running at Camp Kiwanee currently, and stated that her creativity and past experience in special education will help bring what is best with the families.

MOTION by Mr. Hickey, seconded by Ms. FitzGerald-Kemmett, to appoint Caroline Mills to the Recreation Commission. ***Voted 4 - 0***

Appoint Timothy Van Amringe as the Skilled Laborer with the Highway Department

MOTION by Mr. Hickey, seconded by Mr. Weeks, to appoint Timothy Van Amringe as the Skilled Laborer with the Highway Department for the Town of Hanson. ***Voted 4 - 0.***

Appoint Tenant Elect position at Hanson Housing Authority, Dorothy T. Marrocco*

Joint meeting with Hanson Housing Authority

MOTION by Ms. FitzGerald-Kemmett, seconded by Mr. Weeks, to select Tenant Dorothy Marrocco as the Town appointed Tenant Board member of the Hanson Housing Authority. Term will begin upon the swearing in of Dorothy Marrocco and will expire on August 13, 2025. ***Voted 4 - 0.***

Appoint Selectmen Jim Hickey as liaison to the Council on Aging

MOTION by Ms. FitzGerald-Kemmett, seconded by Mr. Weeks, to elect Jim Hickey as Selectmen liaison to the Council on Aging. ***Voted 4 - 0.***

VII

ONE DAY LICENSES

August 13, 2022 from 5:00p.m. - 10p.m., Daniel Doyle and Julia Mannetta - Wedding
July 23, 2022 from 5:15p.m. - 10:15p.m., Amanda Freehoff - Wedding
November 06, 2022 from 2:00p.m. - 7:00p.m., Brian T. Roach - Wedding
November 12, 2022 from 5:00p.m. - 11:00p.m., Lisa Semple - Wedding
April 03, 2022 from 12:00p.m. - 5:00p.m., David Winters - Baby Shower
June 05, 2022 from 5:00p.m. - 10:00p.m., Stephanie Lapointe - Wedding
July 03, 2022 from 3:30p.m. - 9:30p.m., Jake Pendrak - Wedding

MOTION by Ms. FitzGerald-Kemmett, seconded by Mr. Hickey, to approve the One Day Liquor Licenses as listed above. ***Voted 4 - 0.***

VIII

APPROVE OPEN SESSION MEETING MINUTES

MOTION by Ms. FitzGerald-Kemmett, seconded Mr. Weeks, to approve the open session meeting minutes for the November 9, 2021 meeting. ***Voted 4 - 0.***

IX

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Ms. Green updated the Board on recent events, as follows:

1. Ms. Green explained that, with the help of the individuals in the office, they were able to put together the packages for General Code for the By-Law Codification.
2. Ms. Green had commented on the Community One Stop for Growth grant program that the State had implemented, and the Town Planner and Ms. Green had a meeting with a licensed site professional with ESM. This company will assist the Town with the processes for this grant program including the Statement of Interest.
3. Ms. Green had recently virtually attended the MMA open meeting, and she noted that in the Governor's budget, they are adding a 2.7% increase for local aid. They will also be implementing additional grants for road improvements.
4. Ms. Green noted that it was the second week in the office for Lucia, the new Executive Assistant, and she was doing excellent thus far in helping the office run smoothly.

The Board briefly discussed their intentions moving forward with the operations for the future and the workshops they intend to hold.

X

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Hickey, seconded by Mr. Weeks, to adjourn the meeting to convene into Wage and Personnel. ***Voted 4 - 0***

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Guindon
Minutes Clerk