



Tuesday, July 11, 2023
Hanson Select Board
Select Board Meeting Room, Town Hall
Open Session

Members Present: Laura FitzGerald-Kemmett, Joseph Weeks (via Zoom), Edwin Heal, David George, Ann Rein

Members Absent:

Others Present: Lisa Green, Town Administrator; Lynn McDowell, Executive Assistant; Mark Abrahams (via Zoom), John Madden, Eric Kinsherf, Interim Town Accountant

I CALL TO ORDER

Ms. FitzGerald-Kemmett called the meeting to order. She requested a moment of silence for Russell King, former Police Chief in Hanson, who passed on July 1, 2023.

Mr. Weeks attended via Zoom and did not participate in voting.

II PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING MEETINGS

Ms. Rein read the public announcements and upcoming meetings.

She noted the Transfer Station is also looking for volunteers. For those interested, please contact the Board of Health directly.

III APPOINTMENTS

1. Appoint Kyle Thompson as a Skilled Laborer for the Highway Department

Ms. Green updated the Board of a skilled labor position in the Highway Department. As this is a union position, it was first posted in house. With no applicants, she did an outside posting and received several responses. Mr. Thompson is a Town resident, honorably discharged by the Air Force. The Highway Director believed him to be the best candidate and with the Board's approval would like to have Mr. Thompson start as soon as possible.

MOTION by Ms. Rein, seconded by Mr. Heal, to appoint Kyle Thompson as a Skilled Laborer to the Highway Department, starting Monday July 17, 2023.

Voted 4 – 0

IV NEW BUSINESS

1. Mark Abrahams /Chapter 70 Net School Spending Presentation

The Select Board introduced Mr. Abrahams, stating that he was hired by the Town to present the wealth method management and how it is determined, hopefully providing some clarity and answers to questions related to it determination. Due to the lengthy agenda, any questions not answered this evening will be collected by the Town Administrator and forwarded to him.

Mr. Abrahams introduced Chapter 70 and Net School Spending. Through his presentation, he shared how the formula works, how the numbers are compiled – for the Town of Hanson, the Town of Whitman and Whitman-Hanson Regional, and answered related questions. He has done several presentations on this topic since the late 1990s.

Starting with the Chapter 70 formula, he confirmed that the goal is to ensure that every district has sufficient resources to meet its foundation budget spending level, through an equitable combination of local property taxes and state aid. He explained the foundation budget is a target of expenditures. Also, while the District has the ability to spend as much as it wants on education, the state calculates a minimum local required contribution which is based on the Town's wealth factors. As this formula is a municipal based formula, both Hanson and Whitman's respective numbers must be determined to create the Regional numbers.

He continued, stating Chapter 70 continues the implementation of the Student Opportunity Act, providing additional spending towards targeted student populations. It also increases the assumed in-district special education enrollment percentages; currently the rate for vocational students increases from 4.75% to 5.0%; for non-vocational students it will be 3.75% to 4.0% .

After explaining the Chapter 70 key terms, Mr. Abrahams continued with explaining the three primary steps used to determine each district's Chapter 70 aid –

1. The State defines and calculates a foundation budget for each district, given the specific grades, programs, and demographic characteristics of its students,
2. Determines an equitable local contribution requirement, being how much of the foundation budget should be paid for by each city/town's property tax, based upon the relative wealth of the municipality,
3. The calculation of state aid, providing the necessary funds to reach the foundation or mandated minimum aid increases.

He then explained the Town's contribution is based upon two factors – income and property – that are split 50/50. Property and income percentages are applied uniformly across all cities and town to determine the combined effort yield from property and personal income. The same is done for the town of Whitman, then again for the Region. When reviewing the Chapter 70 aid for both, he noted the overall foundation, that the State will compare the current foundation aid to the prior year, to determine if there will be any increases or to hold steady. The State is guaranteeing a minimum of \$30 per pupil in aid. These two numbers are the calculated annual Chapter 70 aid. For the current fiscal year, while both foundation budget and required district contributions increased, the Chapter 70 aid increase did not match.

In comparing the two towns side by side, he noted that both towns have similar numbers and shortfalls –

1. Both towns are below their effort target
2. Both towns have large shortfalls from target
3. Both towns will see increases in their local contributions going forward to include increments.

Whitman is the larger community, shown through all data points, however, Hanson's target local share is larger (63% to 49%), making it considered to be the wealthier community. The Select Board remarked, according to this data, Hanson's numbers are lower across the board, yet the Town is charged a higher percentage – how does that happen? He followed by presenting the foundation enrollment, showing Whitman having nearly 50% more students enrolled than Hanson. When looking at the per pupil wealth, the contributions are close to being the same. He stated what skews the number is the Town of Whitman has more students than the Town of Hanson. While Whitman is higher in numbers, the State views Hanson as the wealthier community based on wealth factors.

The Board asked what other factors, through forecasting, could change the equations. He suggested reviewing the municipal growth factor, as it is related to Prop 2½. The Board also questioned whether a city/town questioned or appealed the numbers/calculations. He stated 1993-2000 numbers were used to establish foundation numbers. From 2000-2005 the State listed the inequalities in the formulas. This led, in 2007, for the State tried to fix the local contributions, as many towns with similar populations having dramatically different numbers, by developing the wealth formula. The State put out a calculator during this timeframe for communities to determine alternative ways for the State to calculate. However, the State decided to remain with the wealth formula. For the Town of Hanson, it was not using this formula as it was using the per pupil method, thus it did not submit a challenge.

He shared there is an excel spreadsheet for the municipal growth factor that is published annually by the Department of Revenue, showing the calculations of the Town's growth factor. It is one of thirty steps in calculating a very complicated formula.

The Board questioned if any city/town appealed or forensically reviewed the calculation process. He stated approximately three years ago, the State solicited comments about changing the formula, and shared reports on the website. It is not an appeal, but a way to make the formula more equitable. He will forward the link to Ms. Green to share.

The Board thanked Mr. Abrahams for his time. While it agreed there are still questions about the calculation process, it has a better understanding of the baseline.

To hear this presentation in complete detail, please view the meeting here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7SoFzuaFXEo> at 14:14. The presentation is posted on the Select Board's webpage on the Town website.

Ms. FitzGerald-Kemmett affirmed the Board's vote for a forensic audit, and the approval from Town Meeting for the allocation of funds, based on a partnership with the Town of Whitman's previous board. She asked Mr. Kinsharf and Ms. Green to investigate the current status, as the funds may have been redistributed. She requested Mr. Kinsharf speak with Mr. Abrahams for a proposal; the Board will then reevaluate how to move forward. Mr. Kinsharf commented on the status of the original RFP, noting Mr. Abrahams had several questions. Mr. Kinsharf create an agreed upon engagement procedures, instead of an audit, that would narrow the scope of focus on accounts that have a direct effect on the Town of Hanson's assessment, with a five year look

back with contributing factors (deficiencies). He also suggested including a salary review to regionals with similar demographics; grants would only be included in how they affect the assessment. The Board would like to also include benefit packages and historical one-time spending costs that remain active in following budgets. And, when asked for appropriation at Town Meeting for capital expenses, is there transparency in the spending of such allocated funds.

MOTION by Ms. Rein, seconded by Mr. Heal, to have Mr. Kinsherf approach Mr. Abrahams for a proposal for the scope of work as discussed this evening.

Voted 4 – 0

2. John Madden/Financial Analysis Presentation

Mr. Madden introduced himself, thanked the Select Board and Ms. Green for providing him with this opportunity. He has 32 years government finance experience, last working with the Town of Duxbury. He had several challenges there, including increasing the Town's bond rating and building a new school.

For the Town of Hanson, he expects the document he creates to be a "living" and working document to move forward. The overall scope of the document was to analyze the financial position of the Town, its stability, and the trends for the next five years. He intends to review all options, tweaking where necessary. He noted he created a similar document for the Town of Whitman, which is still in use today. The Board stated it is aware of that and one of the reasons he is here this evening. The Board also expressed one of the challenges both towns have experienced is holding meaningful discussions with the District for the school budget. Often these conversations commence too late in the process. Having this tool in place will demonstrate exactly what is available. Mr. Madden suggested focal points to keep it simple for everyone to use and understand.

Mr. Madden met with a couple of departments already to pull documents for preparing and creating the strategic document. He noted since 2021 the Town has made a concerted effort to have management staff salary competitive, allowing it to attract and retain talented staff. The Town also bolster current positions to reflect the respective work load, elevating from parttime/shared to fulltime. And, with collective bargaining, union positions are more competitive with comparable communities.

While these moves make Hanson more competitive and professional, the operating budget has increased over the past two years 5.88% with revenue growth being relatively flat (about 4.77%). His initial review suggested the period of correction needs to slow as the current spending rate cannot be sustained; free cash is being used to balance the budget.

He intends to meet with all department heads to learn their respective needs, both operation and capital, to provide a better understanding the any anomalies needed to be incorporated in the strategic plan. He will then incorporate all information and discuss all options to the Select Board; how to provide required services with the Town's limited resources.

Mr. Kinsherf expressed his concern for FY25, as the current projection is \$1.4M shortfall, based on the District's own projections from last year's budget. He shared with the Select Board the process the Town of Rockland uses, consisting of looking at all projected revenues, compare to the previous year's revenues, then determine a percentage to be allocated to the schools. Mr. Madden agreed that allocation formulas can work. He also noted the schools have issues and needs that differ from the towns but no less of importance. The Board's priorities include maintaining strong education for students; however, it also needs to balance that against all competing needs within the Town.

3. Open October Special Town Meeting warrant

The memo requesting articles was forwarded to all who have previously placed articles on July 3, detailing the dates and timeline. Once the articles are received, Ms. McDowell will create a draft and share with all who submitted for accuracy.

The Board is rescheduled to meet on August 8, 2023. It suggested rescheduling for August 15, 2023, allowing time to gather all articles for the Board to review. As it will be reviewing articles that day, the August 22, 2023 meeting will be canceled. Closing the Warrant will still occur on August 29, 2023.

The Board doesn't expect to have many articles itself. A couple were discussed previously; there may need to be some bylaw updating. Ms. Green stated there will be capital articles submitted by the School District that were not included in the May Annual Town meeting. She will schedule time to meet with Mr. Milisi to discuss the Capital Improvement Committee's approval of this items for the October Special Town meeting.

MOTION by Mr. Heal, seconded by Ms. Rein, to open October Special Town Meeting warrant. ***Voted 4 – 0***

4. Kerry Glass certifications update

Tabled for July 25 to be discussed during Executive session.

5. Facilities/ Hawks Avenue update

Ms. Green updated the Board of a meeting she had last week. Previously KW Commercial submitted an RFP when senior housing was proposed at the Maquan property. Last week a representative from there called her about the current status of that property. She shared with him the status of the Hawks Avenue property and suggested they meet to look at the buildings and property. He found it to be impressive and offered to assist with an RFP when the time comes to lease the property for the possible use for indoor fitness/recreation facilities.

The Board reminded Ms. Green that the deed requires municipal use of the property. Ms. Green noted she understands that but believes there may be some flexibility. She noted the deed states the property can be used for general municipal use, which is a broad term and could be

interpretative. She will confirm with Town Counsel before moving forward with any leasing options.

The Board also discussed if there is any conclusion related to the property. It noted a study initiated by a previous board's, discussions from a previous Highway Building Committee, but no conclusive presentation as to why it should or should not be the new location for the Highway Department. Ms. Green communicated that the reconfigured Highway Committee met on March 28, 2023 and recommended not to move forward. It met again earlier today and approved the prior meeting minutes. The next step for the Committee is to present its conclusions to the Select Board so the Board can vote. Then the Board will have a discussion what can be done with the buildings/property.

Regarding the cleanup on the property, it was determined there were contaminants. A partial remedy documented by Conservation Commission's meeting minutes, with limited updating by the Commission to the Select Board. Department of Environmental Services has signed off on the cleanup. Key points to this are remediation occurred primarily in one of the lots, and there are deed restrictions that need to be heeded.

Ms. Green commented she received correspondence in March 23, 2023 from the Department of Fish and Game expressing its concerns of a proposed salt shed being located in close proximity to the Burrage. Ms. Rein stated Weston and Sampson is currently working to determine the costs of building new buildings on the property vs renovating the current ones.

6. Vote to approve \$418,801 in ARPA funds for Maquan Demolition

Ms. Green noted this amount of \$418,801 is the allocation for the ARPA funds; the balance will be borrowed. The Treasurer-Collector is currently working on that process. There will be an additional charge of \$35,000 to EFI Global to cover the cost of the asbestos abatement monitoring. She clarified this was all approved at Town Meeting, up to \$1M.

MOTION by Ms. Rein, seconded by Mr. Heal, to approve the request to fund the Demolition of the Maquan School Project out of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA Funds) in the amount of \$936,666, with \$418,801 being requested through the Plymouth County ARPA allocation. ***Voted 4 – 0***

7. Maquan Inventory as surplus

Ms. Green presented a comprehensive list of property, created by Mr. Baker, remaining in the school the listing. With the Select Board naming all as surplus, she will begin the auction process. She met prior with Auctions International, who has worked with the Town in the past, to take pictures needed to place on the website. They will also coordinate materials to create appealing lots to improve the revenue the Town will receive. Ms. Green spoke with all departments, letting each take what could be used. With the Board's approval, she will give the go-ahead tomorrow morning.

MOTION by Ms. Rein, seconded by Mr. Heal, to declare the items on the Maquan School auction list created by Mr. Baker as surplus items for the purpose of Ms. Green working with an auction house to get said items sold. **Voted – 0**

8. Vote to approve FY23 budgetary transfers

Mr. Kinsherf presented FY23 budgetary transfers, requesting approvals of the Select Board and Finance Committee. There will be no additional charges to the budget as all consist of transfers of money from accounts still having cash to those that ran short. Once both the Board and the Finance Committee sign off, he will make adjustments.

MOTION by Ms. Rein, seconded by Mr. Heal, to transfer a total of \$84,735.94 between departments appropriations in accordance with Chapter 77 of the Acts of 2006 amending Chapter 44, Section 33B(non-expiring), of the Massachusetts General Law, as printed in the year end line transfer request sheet provided this evening. **Voted 4 – 0**

9. Vote to accept the following gifts

- a. Needles Lodge – Camp Fire Girls vest, bead craft machine, and beads for display from Doris Baker Fraher

MOTION by Mr. Heal, seconded by Ms. Rein, to accept the gift of Camp Fire Girls vest, bead craft machine, and beads for display from Doris Baker Fraher for Needles Lodge. **Voted 4 – 0**

- b. Bridal Cottage – Couch from Hanson Housing Authority

MOTION by Mr. Heal, seconded by Ms. Rein, to accept the gift of a Couch from Hanson Housing Authority for the Bridal Cottage. **Voted 4 – 0**

- c. Bridal Cottage – Bed from Roger Means

MOTION by Mr. Heal, seconded by Ms. Rein, to accept the gift of a Bed from Roger Means for the Bridal Cottage. **Voted 4 – 0**

- d. Bridal Cottage – Blue stone and cobble stone for the walk way from Dori Jamison

MOTION by Mr. Heal, seconded by Ms. Rein, to accept the gift of blue stone and cobble stone for the walkway from Dori Jamison for the Bridal Cottage. **Voted 4 – 0**

10. Acceptance of donation from Michael Eosue for Hanson Conservation Properties

MOTION by Mr. Heal, seconded by Ms. Rein, to accept a donation of \$300 from Michael Eosue of Hanson, MA, which will be used for the purchasing of materials for future alternate mitigation that will be located on Hanson Conservation Properties. **Voted 4 – 0**

11. Accept resignation of Sharon LaPorte from the Conservation Commission

MOTION by Mr. Heal, seconded by Ms. Rein, to accept the resignation of Sharon LaPorte from the Conservation Commission, with regret. **Voted 4 – 0**

12. Vote to declare Hanson Day

Ms. FitzGerald-Kemmett shared during last month's Economic Development Committee meeting, it was voted to hold Hanson Day on Saturday, September 16, 2023, with the rain date, if needed, on Saturday, September 23, 2023.

MOTION by Mr. Heal, seconded by Ms. Rein, to declare Saturday, September 16, 2023, with a rain date of Saturday, September 23, 2023, to be Hanson Day. **Voted 4 – 0**

V

ONE DAY LIQUOR LICENSES

1. 08/05/2023 – 3:00pm – 8:00pm – Melissa Scartissi – Anniversary Party
2. 10/01/2023 – 1:00pm – 4:00pm – Carol Allen – Baby Shower
3. 04/20/2024 – 6:00pm – 10:00pm – Plymouth County League of Sportsmen – Banquet

MOTION by Mr. Heal, seconded by Ms. Rein, to approve the one-day liquor licenses as printed on the agenda. **Voted 4 – 0**

VI

COMMITTEE UPDATES

1. Economic Development Committee

Ms. FitzGerald-Kemmett reiterated the dates for Hanson Day. She stated Mr. DeFrias has mailed correspondence to local businesses informing them of the Economic Development Committee and its purpose.

Lastly, she mentioned the recent TIF committee meeting. Its initial intention is to also send a mailing to local businesses informing them of possible tax incentives available.

2. High Street Park Committee

Mr. Weeks shared this committee is scheduled to meet on Thursday to walk the property and check the well. He does expect to submit articles for the October Special Town Meeting, to requesting funding for some of the projects the committee has.

3. Highway Committee

Ms. Rein shared this committee met today and she will provide an update at a future meeting.

4. Maquan Property Reuse Committee

The Select Board announced to any who may be interested in the way the property is reused, please reach out to be a volunteer. It is the goal of the committee is to use this property to benefit as many residents as possible.

The decision to not sell relates to the property being contiguous to the school, library and senior center. It will also be ideal for various playfields. As part of the Maquan Reuse Committee, quotes to see the property were requested and reviewed; none were in excess of \$1M. And included in the Select Board's mission is future growth in the community. It is a critical piece of property to the center of the Town.

5. Recreation Committee

Again, the Select Board announced to any who may be interested, please reach out to be a volunteer.

6. Transfer Station Taskforce

Mr. Weeks stated the next meeting is scheduled in August.

7. Other Committee updates

No additional updates.

VII APPROVE OPEN SESSION MINUTES

1. June 27, 2023

MOTION by Mr. Heal, seconded by Ms. Rein, to approve the meeting minutes as printed on the agenda. ***Voted 4 – 0***

VIII TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Ms. Green updated the Board she posted both the Information Technology Assistant and Select Board/Town Administrator part time positions, placing each with the Whitman Hanson Express

and Indeed, as well as posting them to the Town's website. July 27 is the submission deadline for both.

She completed the annual insurance renewals. This year's cost increased \$8,000 in general liability, but there was a small reduction in the workers' compensation premium. The Town also received reward a \$1500 credit to be applied toward the premium due to employees participating in various trainings that MIIA offers. Regarding the Bonney House, Ms. Green did not any additional update as MIAA is still looking for an underwriter. However, as the power was turned back on in the building, the electrician was able to work again in the building. This will be helpful to getting insurance as it demonstrates activity within the building.

Ms. Green reminded the Select Board of the Perch Community Solar agreement. In 2018, the Town entered into three Net Metering Agreements, which would allot net metering credits across the Town's fifteen National Grid accounts. Determining whether it is still financially beneficial to the Town, she reached out to Beth Greenblatt, managing director at Beacon Integrated Solutions as she was recommended to Ms. Green as an expert in the energy services industry by other municipalities. They discussed what would be the best options for Hanson and Ms. Green requested a proposal. She will share with the Board once she receives it.

During the monthly department head meeting, Human Resources Services presented its plan for updating the Town's personnel policies. As this project will impact department management, department head participation is necessary.

For the Maquan property, Southern Middlesex Industries (SMI) began the asbestos abatement process. EFI Global will also be involved, monitoring the process as well as the air quality to ensure no asbestos is escaping. SMI will close off the areas where the asbestos abatement is happening in phases, estimating it to be a six-week process. Notifications will be posted on Facebook to keep residents apprised. For the auction, the items will be moved to the cafeteria, away from the asbestos cleaning. SMI has been accommodating with the dual purposes of the building in motion.

IX ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. George, seconded by Ms. Rein, to adjourn. ***Voted 4 – 0***

*Respectfully submitted,
Lynn McDowell*