

***Hanson Board of Selectmen
Selectmen's Meeting Room, Hanson Town Hall
Tuesday, December 3, 2019
Regular Meeting 7:00 P.M.***

Members Present: Wesley Blauss, James Hickey, Laura FitzGerald-Kemmett and Matthew Dyer
Members Absent: Kenny Mitchell
Others Present: Meredith Marini, Town Administrator; Greer Getzen, Executive Assistant

I CALL TO ORDER

At 7:00 p.m., Chairman FitzGerald-Kemmett called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Blauss read the public announcements and upcoming meeting dates.

II NEW BUSINESS

Owen Golden to discuss Eagle Scout project proposal

Mr. Owen will be presenting to the Board at its December 17th meeting.

New Bedford Waste to discuss the trash & recycling fee increases with the Board of Selectmen & Board of Health

The Board of Health (BOH), which has jurisdiction over the operations at the Transfer Station, joined the Selectmen this evening to hear from Mike Camara, President of New Bedford Waste Services, LLC (NBW) about the current trash and recycling disposal crisis in Massachusetts. NBW has been providing the Town of Hanson with solid waste and recyclables hauling services since 2014 under a 10-year agreement. The Town was informed in a letter from Mr. Camara dated November 21, 2019 that NBW “...will be implementing a price increase effective January 1, 2020, under Section 13, “Uncontrollable Circumstances’ of the contract, because the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has lost disposal capacity which has resulted in increased disposal costs per ton...on January 1, 2020, the Town of Hanson base rate will be at \$60.71 per ton...”and “...will be charged an additional \$33.04 surcharge per ton.” Further, The Board of Health was notified on November 22, 2019 that NBW would stop hauling recyclables immediately, alleging that the Town owes a balance of \$17,000.00 for this service. The BOH disputes that there is an outstanding balance, that the contractual monthly fees are up to date.

Mr. Camara made a presentation to both boards to provide background explaining what led to NBW to increase its rates significantly. In summary, 20 years ago the state implemented bans on the expansions of Waste-to-Energy facilities with the goal of increasing recycling by 46% and thus reducing solid waste. ZERO Waste Solutions was developed in 2013 with the goal of assisting the state in handling recyclables and municipal solid waste, and using a process to make fuel bricks out of the solid waste. In 2017 the market in China, which had been reliable for over 100 years, stopped accepting imported recyclables (which were largely trash) from the U.S. to reduce contamination rates in factories and in the environment. The brick strategy

failed, and there are severely reduced disposal options in state with a number of landfills previously available now closed and waste-to-energy plants aging, resulting in outages. Currently NBW is working with multiple brokers with the goal of installation of a municipal solid waste baling operation at the Zero Waste facility, for export to states still accepting waste.

Mr. Camara told the boards that, as a result, communities NBW serves will see increased tipping fees in the fourth quarter of 2019 and beyond. He recommended that Hanson consider a ban on the disposal of food waste to reduce tonnage, and instead issuing biodegradable bags to residents for scraps to be used in composting. He is urging town officials to reach out to state leaders to get them involved in developing solutions to the Massachusetts disposal crisis.

Board of Health Chairman Arlene Dias stated that NBW's claim of underpayment for recyclables hauling is without merit, and that despite Mr. Camara's claim that NBW reached out several times, the Town was never been notified that rates would be increasing. Mr. Camara responded that NBW is billing at market rate, and making no money on recyclables at this time. Chairman FitzGerald-Kemmett told Mr. Camara that if it can be proven that NBW did in good faith reach out to Hanson about a rate increase that would be taken into consideration. Mr. Hickey made it clear that the interpretation of whether there is a rate change provision in the contract is a matter to be worked out between Town Counsel and NBW's lawyers, not in this evening's meeting since parties to this discussion are at an impasse. Mr. Camara ultimately agreed to pick up Hanson's recyclables for the next two weeks starting tomorrow morning. Mr. Hickey then impressed upon both boards that practically speaking Hanson needs to have pick up at least through the holidays while the BOH is looking into alternatives, and it was mutually to enter into that a short-term agreement for services through the end of January at NBW's current rate.

Mr. Camara apologized for the inconvenience that Hanson has experienced and thanked both boards for their patience during these very difficult times.

Renew contract with Town Accountant

Town Administrator Merry Marini asked the Board to vote to continue Town Accountant Todd Hassett's contract from January 1, 2020 to June 30, 2023 [subject to appropriation by the Town], and to authorize Mrs. Marini to execute it.

So Moved by Mr. Hickey, seconded by Mr. Dyer. ***Voted 4 – 0***

High Point Memorandum of Understanding

Police Chief Michael Miksch shared the genesis of the Memorandum of Understanding between High Point Treatment Center, Inc. and the Town of Hanson that he is requesting the Board to enter into this evening. He informed them that both the middle and high schools have benefited from a grant addressing youth drug use and risky behaviors without the Town actually being a party to that grant. There is a new grant opportunity with High Point for Hanson middle school students to participate in an anonymous 30-day survey on drug use and risky behaviors to help target those behaviors, particularly in students with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE), as those children are more likely to engage in those behaviors. The police would get an

overview of the survey results, which would allow them to plan and implement programs to address these behaviors.

MOTION by Mr. Hickey, seconded by Mr. Dyer to have Mrs. Marini enter in this contract with High Point. **Voted 4 – 0**

Appointments/Resignations

Energy Committee - Marianne DiMascio, 552 Indian Head Street – Term to expire 6/30/2020

MOTION by Mr. Hickey, seconded by Mr. Dyer to appoint Marianne DiMascio to the Energy Committee for a term to expire on June 30, 2020. **Voted 4 - 0**

The Board is looking forward to having Ms. DiMascio share her expertise with the Energy Committee from her leadership in Green Hanson, a grassroots organization which not only fosters a culture of environmental awareness and supports stewardship of community and natural resources, but also develops and implements energy efficient and sustainable practices.

III OLD BUSINESS

Discussion & possible vote to contract with Auditing Firm for School Budget review

Mrs. Marini offered that she has spoken with the Town Accountant about whether he could recommend consulting firms that might conduct an independent audit of the regional school budget to more clearly define costs. He has three colleagues who he will speak to about availability to conduct an audit by the end of January. A Request for Proposals will be sent to interested firms who express an interest to Mr. Hassett, whose names Mrs. Marini will provide to the Hanson Selectmen at their December 17th meeting.

New Regional Agreement Amendment Committee

Chairman FitzGerald-Kemmett said that she, Mr. Hickey and Mrs. Marini will meet with other members of the newly formed Regional Agreement Amendment Group, which includes Whitman Selectmen Randy Lamattina and Carl Kowalski, and WHRSC members Bob Hayes and Chris Scrivens, tomorrow evening to commence a dialogue about whether some alternative regional school assessment formula could be agreed upon by both towns.

The Chairman read the following statement:

“I want to recap where we are at right now with respect to the school assessment issue and how we got here and then I want to discuss next steps.

Since 1991, the school assessment to Whitman and Hanson have been based on a per pupil cost. This methodology is spelled out in the Regional Agreement and was agreed upon by all parties. It is considered an “alternative method” and is still permissible under the current regulations.

In September, we had a visit from the District’s Superintendent indicating that the Whitman Override Committee believed that the District School Committee should have been

using a statutory method of assessment which takes a variety of data points into consideration including average income and average home values. Under this methodology, Hanson would be required to pay approximately 1.5 million more to the District per year.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has since clarified in writing and in a recent WHRSD Committee meeting that the District School Committee may vote to use EITHER the regional agreement per pupil methodology OR the statutory method. WHRSD School Counsel and Hanson's Town Counsel both agree with the conclusion that both are permissible under the law.

It is important to note that regardless of which assessment methodology is used, the District budget remains unaffected. It doesn't increase the budget. Using a different assessment method simply divides up the cost for running the District.

Since learning that it was the intention of some folks in Whitman to push for the WHRSD School Committee to use the statutory method, this Board has actively looked at the options available to us here in Hanson:

We have actively engaged our legal counsel in looking at this issue and in helping us determine the best path forward.

We have asked the District to provide us with the information we need to be able to discern how much the District is spending on average to educate a student in Hanson versus a student in Whitman. We recently received some very raw data in response to our request. We may need additional data and we may need to massage the data we received so that we get the bottom-line numbers we need.

Matt Dyer, Merry Marini and I met several weeks ago with Randy LaMattina and Justin Evans and Frank Lyman from Whitman to explore whether there was any willingness on Whitman's part to renegotiate the regional agreement. These talks will continue but I want to caution that regardless of whether we can reach an agreement, ultimately the voters in each town will determine how the towns are assessed.

Last, but not least.... Both towns have voted to pay for an outside auditor to audit the District. We want to make sure that whatever decision we make is done after we are armed with all of the facts about the ways in which our tax dollars are being spent. Regardless of which methodology is used, we need to have full transparency and confidence in the District and its financial practices.

As I mentioned earlier, tomorrow night's meeting will be a discussion about whether there is in fact a possibility of negotiating something other than the statutory method or the current method of per pupil as outlined in the current regional agreement. If we are able to agree upon a different methodology, we will need to modify the regional agreement and hold a Special Town Meeting in each town in order to adopt the new regional agreement. There is a chance that the revised regional agreement will not pass at one or both of those Special Town Meetings.

Regardless of whether we are able to meet that milestone, at May Town Meeting, both towns will have to agree to the method of assessment proposed by the School Committee, if one town does not agree and the other does, this will set off a chain of Town Meetings and Special Town Meetings that will ultimately result in the District being given a budget by the state that is equivalent to the budget they had in the prior fiscal year. This is not a path that this Board wants to go down nor is it a path Whitman wants to go down.

In summary, please know that this Board is and will do everything in its power to prevent the state from setting our budget as we do not believe it is in the best interest of the citizens of Hanson or the students in the Whitman Hanson Regional School District. But, the true power to effectuate a positive outcome comes from the voters in both towns.”

IV TOWN ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT

Personnel Matters:

- **Recreation Admin. Assistant** – Mrs. Marini, Recreation Commissioner Diane Cohen and Recreation Director Billy Boyle will conduct interviews next Tuesday, Dec. 10th with five candidates.
- **Planning Admin. Assistant.** – Mrs. Marini has received two applications for this position, and she and the Town Planner are in the process of setting up interviews.

FY2021 Budget & Capital improvement:

- The FY2021 Budget and Capital Improvement plans have been turned in by the various departments. Mrs. Marini and the Town Accountant started meetings to review each budget in detail with department heads today and will continue tomorrow. She has not received the School Capital Plan yet.

Meetings:

- **Maquan Reuse** – Mrs. Marini, Chairman FitzGerald-Kemmett and several department heads with a potential congruent interests in this property had a conference call with Keller Williams on November 20th. They are waiting for the finalized the Request for Information (RFI) at this time.
- **Cranberry Building** – Mrs. Marini recently toured the Cranberry Building with Town Planner Deb Pettey and two representatives from MassDevelopment. The representatives thought that there is a lot of potential for the building, and will try to assist and support the property owner in pursuing grant opportunities for building improvements.
- **Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) meeting** – Ms. Pettey held a meeting with Laurie Muncey and Bruce Hughes of the Old Colony Planning Council last Tuesday at 1:00 p.m. which included the Fire Department, Police Department, Water Commission, Highway Department, Conservation Commission, Board of Health, Council on Aging and Building Department regarding potential climate change impacts. The North River Watershed has expressed interest in being involved. Ms. Pettey is seeking other interested parties, such as local businesses, to attend the next meeting which will be held

on January 7th. Anyone interested in joining the MVP focus group should contact Ms. Pettey at (781) 293-9035.

Miscellaneous:

- ***Main Street Revitalization survey*** – The Planner has posted a survey on the home page of Town website: www.hanson-ma.gov . The deadline for responses is December 15th. Mrs. Marini encouraged residents to take the brief survey as their input is a very important component in moving forward with the revitalization of the South Hanson area.
- ***Town Hall generator installation*** – The Town has received permission to connect the gas. At this time, Mrs. Marini is waiting on the gas company.
- ***Town Hall parking lot*** - The Highway Department has patched the parking lot.
- ***Boiler Project at Indian Head*** – Mrs. Marini is still waiting for the project to be put out to bid.
- ***Holiday schedule*** – The Town Hall will close at 1:00 on Christmas Eve. The Library will be open 9:00 – Noon. The Senior Center will be closing at Noon. At this time, Mrs. Marini is in discussions with Town Hall employees to decide whether or not to close the Town Hall at 5:00 p.m. on New Year's Eve.
- **Annual Wage & Personnel Hearing** – Mrs. Marini told the Board that since the new Town Administrator, John Stanbrook, will not be starting until January 6th, and his first Board meeting will be January 7th, she recommends holding the annual Wage & Personnel Hearing on January 14th , separate from the Selectmen's meeting. The Board concurred with her recommendation.

Mr. Dyer thanked Mrs. Marini for spending this past weekend decorating the Town Hall in an 1820s theme in celebration of Hanson's upcoming 200th anniversary and in anticipation of the Christmas Tree Lighting on the Town Green on December 7th. Residents will be able to enjoy touring the Town Hall and watching fireworks, sample some treats and have a visit with Santa. Mrs. Marini in turn thanked Mr. Dyer and Chief Miksch for checking in on her at the Town Hall.

Chairman FitzGerald-Kemmett gave a shout out to the Highway Department for doing a great job with snow and ice clean up after the recent storms. She went on to thank Marcus Linn for decorating the Nathaniel Thomas Mill for the holiday season.

V APPROVE MINUTES

November 19, 2019 Reg. session minutes

MOTION by Mr. Hickey, seconded by Mr. Dyer to approve the minutes. ***Voted 4 - 0***

VI ONE DAY LIQUOR LICENSES – Camp Kiwanee

Mary King, Hanson, Sunday, December 15th, 1:00 – 5:00 p.m., family party

MOTION by Mr. Dyer, seconded by Mr. Hickey to approve this license. ***Voted 4 - 0***

VII COMMITTEE REPORTS

200th Anniversary Committee

Chairman FitzGerald-Kemmett was pleased to announce that 70 of the 200 tickets (available on www.Eventbrite.com) for the 200th Anniversary Gala on February 2nd to be held at Lakeside Villa, 550 Monponsett Street, Halifax, MA have been sold. The theme of the evening is a formal-Roaring Twenties gathering - dress in keeping with this theme encouraged, but not required. She acknowledged 200th Anniversary Chairman Audrey Flanagan for doing a fabulous job keeping the committee on track. Swag was available last Sunday and will be available again this Saturday at the Thomas Mill. The South Shore Vocational Technical School will publish a calendar of anniversary events throughout 2020 in the near future.

Final Plymouth County Hospital Reuse Committee – Mr. Dyer reported that this committee will meet again tomorrow to finalize their proposed reuse plans for the Selectmen's consideration. If approved, an article will be placed on the May 4, 2020 Town Meeting warrant.

Maquan School Reuse Committee – Chairman FitzGerald-Kemmett recounted that a plethora of interested department heads participated in a conference call with Keller Williams regarding possible future reuses for the closed Maquan School. Awaiting the RFI.

Highway Building Committee - No report this evening.

VIII EXECUTIVE SESSION

To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations for collective bargaining sessions with the Hanson Police Relief Association and further to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel Highway Director and Town Administrator if the chair has declared that it would be detrimental to conduct in open session.

To conduct contract negotiations with nonunion personnel, if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body and the chair so declares, to wit: Highway Director and Town Administrator.

So moved by Mr. Hickey, seconded by Mr. Dyer to convene in executive session, not to return to open session. ***Roll call vote Blauss aye, Hickey aye, FitzGerald-Kemmett aye and Dyer aye. Voted 4 - 0***

IX ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Hickey, seconded by Mr. Dyer to adjourn at 9:01 p.m. ***Voted 4 - 0***

Respectfully submitted,

Greer Getzen
Executive Assistant