

Town of *Dunstable* Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
November 14, 2017
Town Hall, Dunstable, MA 01827

Convened: 6:30 pm

Present: Walter F. Alterisio, chair, Ronald J. Mikol, member; Tracey Hutton, Town Administrator; Joan Simmons, Community Preservation Committee; James W. Dow, Chief of Police; Christine Muir, Harold Simmons, Advisory Board; Kempton P. Giggey, Dunstable GLTHS School Committee Member; Joseph Mastrocola, Superintendent GLTHS

Selectboard Reviewed & Signed the Following:

- Vendor & Payroll Warrants

Open Forum

Mr. Alterisio explained the purpose of the public forum and went over the Boards agenda which included Appointments & Resignations, Discussion with GLTVHS Representatives, Town Meeting Recap & Related Projects, and Swallow Union Playground Steps.

Discussion with GLTVHS Representatives

The Superintendent, Mr. Mastrocola, started off by introducing himself. From there he explained that it is his intention to reach out to the communities that Greater Lowell Technical High School students represent and inform them of some exciting things going on. Most importantly that the school has keep things stable both on management and on the fiscal side, and that while there only a few students that come from Dunstable, about 10 currently, Dunstable remains important to GLTHS. The schools mission continues to be to provide a useful education to students, whether that be purely in education or in alternative job fields. Unfortunately, the school does anticipate challenging budgets going forward given the uncertainties on the Commonwealth and Federal levels for funding. However, the GLTHS School Committee has sought to alleviate this as much as possible. One of the biggest things they have done involves contributions and management of OPEB. Mr. Mastrocola then went over the various programs for students, including the schools cooperative program and some of the other vocational programs being run by the school. There has been a blossoming in engineering, health, and medical fields. GLTHS is now the largest vocational school in the Commonwealth. The communities that are part of Greater Lowell have a good history of working affably together, and Mr. Mastrocola hopes this continues. The Board then had some questions regarding the upcoming budget needs for the school and what avenues are available for communication with the town. Ms. Hutton responded by noting how well she knows the Business Director and emphasizing the strength of the communication with GLTHS and how healthy it is.

There was then an inquiry as to the School Committees meeting minutes and how available they are. Mr. Giggey explained that they are posted to the school's website, although usually a little bit behind. But as soon as minutes are available they are sent to various town officials such as Ms. Hutton. Discussion then turned to the school's cooperative program. Mr. Mastrocola explained the current participation level and noted some of the complications students face in whether to participate. Age requirements, as well as others, often get in the way. But the school continues to seek out opportunities for students. The school looks for authentic positions. It's not about the kids just getting a job to get a salary. It's about them getting a job that teaches them good skills and provides them a career path and upward mobility. Mr. Giggey then went over some of the alternatives to the cooperative and the reasons why they might not go into the cooperative. Many students are pursuing athletics, and others are actually graduating from the tech school and going on to college. There was some light discussion regarding the career opportunities of trades' workers. Many people can make excellent livings as electricians, plumbers, gas fitters, mechanics, cooking, and other fields. The opportunities provided by these fields are significant and it is important to preserve technical vocational schools. The relationship between GLTHS and Dunstable has always been warm and the Board hopes to see it remain so and grow further. The Board expressed admiration for the education Dunstable students have gained there. Education

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should not only prepare students for opportunities for the rest of their lives, but it should also build good citizens. Although the relationship is warm, the Board cannot help but remind GLTHS that the recent court case over its School Committee's membership and voting rights. This case has left the Board with concerns and reservations about the future. Education today is far different than it was even 35 years ago. Costs continue to increase, technology changes, and greater resources are needed. To that end, the Board asks that the School Committee consider making their voice heard at the General Court. Only when towns and schools speak with one voice with the General Court and the Governor hear them. The demands being placed on education and on the towns today to fund education is extraordinary. Mr. Giggey responded that while the changes in voting power are significant, whoever serves on the School Committee will do so without compensation and as a result must truly wish to serve. The School Committee attempts to oversee the budget and its implementation as closely as possible, and searches for all other outside sources of funding including grants. They are highly attuned to expenses, and constantly seeking ways to eliminate or lower them. Mr. Giggey noted that he is nonpolitical and seeks only to serve the best interests of the community and the students. Discussion ended there.

Appointments & Resignations

Ms. Hutton started by informing the Board of the passing of Robert Irzyk, a longtime member of the Zoning Board of Appeals who also served in numerous other capacities for the town for a number of years. He will be greatly missed. The Board extended its condolences to Mrs. Irzyk and the rest of the Irzyk family. From there Ms. Hutton informed the Board of several resignations received by the Town Clerks office. These include Pamela Crocker who resigned from the Advisory Board, Nathaniel St. Jean who resigned from the Zoning Board of Appeals, and Mark Cullen who resigned from the Water Commission. The Board noted that all of this means multiple openings coming up on Advisory Board, and a serious need for people to serve on the Zoning Board of Appeals. Ms. Hutton informed the Board that the ZBA chair is already acutely aware and is working to put together a list of candidates. Advisory Board is elected, so the resolution will be found at the ballot box. Finally, Ms. Hutton presented the Board with two candidates for the Safe Pathways Committee. None of these entities are unable to function. In that light the Board accepted the resignations and determined to proceed with the appointments. Ms. Muir promised the Board she would meet with candidates for Advisory Board on December 5th, and intend to have a nominee before the Board by its earliest meeting subsequent.

Fanny Littmarck is appointed as a member of Safe Pathways Term Expires: June 30th, 2018
Motion by Mr. Mikol, seconded by Mr. Alterisio, passed without objection

Eugene Cheney is appointed as a member of Safe Pathways Term Expires: June 30th, 2018
Motion by Mr. Mikol, seconded by Mr. Alterisio, passed without objection

Town Meeting Recap & Related Projects

Ms. Hutton started by noting some projects coming out of Town Meeting. The first is the boiler for the Town Hall. The boiler will be installed on November 29th, 30th, and December 1st. The Town Hall will have to be closed for three days as temperatures will not allow the town to reach the minimum temperature required by regulations authorized by MGL. The Board inquired whether this work could be done over a weekend. She responded that unfortunately, due to prevailing wage concerns, it would cost too much. The Board determined it would be appropriate that employees affected be paid normally. Ms. Hutton then turned to the hiring of an actuary for the OPEB analysis. The firm she has in mind has done work for Townsend, Harvard, and a few others. Their cost is under \$10,000 so under MGL, in terms of procurement, the town can hire them. The Board was amendable. Ms. Hutton then turned to the survey for David Simmons's property which is being donated for the proposed Public Safety Building. The Board was uncertain what decision to make on that front for now and tabled the matter.

Ms. Hutton then turned to the question of title insurance. The Board did not feel it necessary. The donor, David Simmons, is doing a great service to his community and there is no immediate need. There was a question as to how long the owner has owned the land. Harold Simmons, a relative of David Simmons, noted the house was built in 1969 and the property has remained in the family ever since. It was determined title insurance is unnecessary in this instance. From there Ms. Hutton turned to Master Plan and the Market Analysis. The Board

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elaborated on what it would like to see identified and encouraged for the community. What impact all of that would have on the community should be quantified as much as possible. The only concern is avoiding things we already know, in other words avoiding replication. Ms. Hutton interjected noting that she has been told that about 20 years ago an analysis was done. But she has yet to find the analysis. She inquired whether the Board was aware of it. The Board suggested reaching out to NMCOG. They may have records regarding it as they likely assisted with it as they have with the current Master Plan. There was an inquiry regarding where the Master Plan Committee stands. Ms. Hutton elaborated on where they stand. They are closing in on the final chapters of the plan. But, the thing is, once they finish the Master Plan, they hand it off to the town to implement. Implementation is a whole other ball game.

From there the Board turned to recapping the town meeting. This included noting when GDRSD's next School Committee meeting is. The Board continues to be concerned about the mechanics of how this new Capital Stabilization fund will work. Understanding what Article 6 means, and what the capacity of the town will be. The School Committee promises good will, and the Board is willing to accept that. But there are concerns about the future. It appears that how the town is presenting its position is not being fully understood by the community and by the school district. Finding ways to fully address and properly express the concerns of the Board is paramount on this topic. From there the Board turned to some complaints that have been heard that not enough was done to drive turnout and to make the public aware. In the future, more utilization of the town's website needs to be at core of things so that the public has a central place. Ms. Hutton noted that she intends to seek a redesign of the website. Currently it is old and outdated and many of the things that people want to see on the website, the town simply can't do. Starting in FY19, we should have the funds seek out those changes. There was some further discussion of how to best use the website for public communication. Ms. Simmons noted that since so much is done by volunteer, that when people come forward with complaints, thoughts or concerns, they should also volunteer their time. The Board was uncertain in an age of security concerns at giving out access.

But clearly there has to be a way to hear feedback and then translate it into something useful. The Board then turned discussion to some of the events of the town meeting. The Board was, in particular, concerned with some questions regarding the donation of David Simmons's property, and the related intention to build a public safety building. Some at the meeting wanted to know what the number, the cost, for the construction of that building would be. That number is not known at this time. Although some have found a number in a report done for some of the engineering for the project, it has to be understood that that particular number is highly subjective and not at all finalized. The town hasn't even decided to build the building and the cost won't be understood until much closer to the actual decision. Ms. Hutton then elaborated on some of the ways by which citizens have not only questioned the town government, but also defended. This is important because it means the community process is working like it should. The performance of town government has improved over the last few years, and hopefully this will garner more public trust. The Board agreed. People should not be discouraged from getting involved and trying to continue improving Dunstable. Discussion ended there.

Swallow Union Playground Steps

Ms. Hutton started off by presenting the Board with the results of her request from the Building Inspector and Zoning Enforcement Officer regarding his official written opinion as to whether the steps constructed at the new Swallow Union Playground conform to code. According to the Inspector, Section(s) 1009.4 and 1009.4.2 of the 2009 International Building Code (IBC) require that stair riser heights must be 7 inches maximum, with a minimum of 4 inches. The riser height is measured vertically between the leading edges of the adjacent treads. Rectangular tread depths must be a minimum of 11 inches. This is measured horizontally between the vertical planes of the foremost projection of adjacent treads and at a right angle to the tread's leading edge. According to the Inspector's own measurements, the rise is approximately 7.25 inches and the depth is 11.5 inches. Ms. Hutton noted that there is a variable with Granite of about .25 inches. It would appear by the Building Inspector's measurements that the rise and depth are within the requirements of the code. However, Ms. Hutton noted that the code referenced by the Building Inspector may not be quite accurate, as it appears to refer to interior stairs rather than exterior ones. In light of that the Board determined to table the matter until its next meeting. This will give the Building Inspector the opportunity to reconsider the matter using the appropriate citation of code.

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Town Administrators Report

Ms. Hutton started off by reporting where things stand with the search for a new Electrical Inspector. A job posting has been placed in the Lowell Sun starting this Sunday, and members of the community have also put forth possible candidates. It appears all the bases will be covered by a formal search. From there she reported on the progress towards moving the Inspectors to a set amount per year paid via a stipend in equal sums each month. This type of setup has worked out well in other towns. She finished her report there noting most everything else was covered under the town meeting recap.

Where Things Stand with the Budget

The Board briefly went over where accounts stand on the topic of expenditure about 5 months into the fiscal year. The Board focuses on accounts and departments for which it either has direct responsibility for or over which it has some concern or governance. So far things look good and the Board is generally pleased where things stand.

Minutes

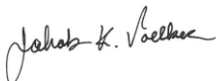
The Board considered the minutes for the meeting held October 31st, 2017. The Board determined to table the minutes until the next meeting so that Ms. Basbanes has an opportunity to review them prior to adoption.

Warrants & Mail

Mr. Alterisio reported on the warrants he has signed. This included highlighting the sums spent, including some of the larger payments made to vendors as well as brief discussion of the payroll. The Board then reviewed its mail.

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Basbanes at 8:05 pm. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mikol and passed without objection.

Respectfully submitted by



Jakob K. Voelker
Admin. Assistant to the Selectboard & Town Administrator

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