

# ~ PLYMOUTH BOARD OF SELECTMEN ~

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 10, 2012**

TOWN HALL MAYFLOWER ROOM

The Selectmen held a meeting on Tuesday, January 10, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. at Town Hall in the Mayflower Room.

Present: William P. Hallisey, Jr., Chairman  
John T. Mahoney, Jr., Vice Chairman  
Sergio O. Harnais  
Mathew J. Muratore  
Belinda A. Brewster

Mark Stankiewicz, Town Manager  
Melissa Arrighi, Assistant Town Manager

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Hallisey called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Robert Nassau called a meeting of the Advisory & Finance Committee to order.

Dennis Begley called a meeting of the School Committee to order.

## **TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

**Municipal Health Care Reform** – Town Manager Mark Stankiewicz reported that, on January 6, 2012, the Selectmen and a Town-employee-comprised Public Employee Committee (“PEC”) executed a three-year agreement pertaining to employee health insurance. The agreement, he explained, calls for significant changes to employee co-pays, deductibles, and prescription payments, as well as the elimination of the Blue Cross/Blue Shield Master Medical plan. Mr. Stankiewicz indicated that the changes agreed upon by the Selectmen and the PEC will reduce the Town’s healthcare costs by \$1.5 million.

**Donation to Plymouth Animal Shelter** – Mr. Stankiewicz was pleased to announce that Helping Hands of the Plymouth Animal Shelter, Inc. has donated \$2,580 to the shelter for the repair of existing fencing and the purchase of nine doghouses. On behalf of the Town, Mr. Stankiewicz thanked the members of the Helping Hands organization for their generous contribution.

**Parting Ways Ceremony** – Mr. Stankiewicz informed the public that a ceremony will be held at 2:00 p.m. on January 16, 2012 for the dedication of interpretive signage at the historic Parting Ways site. The property, he explained, was donated in recognition of four African

American Revolutionary War Veterans who were buried at the site and, as such, was placed on the National Register for Historic Landmarks in 1975.

## **LICENSES**

### **COMPREHENSIVE ENTERTAINMENT (NEW)**

On a motion by Selectman Muratore, seconded by Selectman Harnais, the Board voted to grant a Comprehensive Entertainment License to the following applicant, as detailed. Voted 5-0-0, approved.

- ❖ **Fig, B & B LLC** d/b/a Lux Hookah Lounge, 18 Court Street, Bahaa Dalloul

Issuance of the above license is subject to approval from the Building and Health Departments.

### **NEW OFFICER/DIRECTOR**

On a motion by Selectman Brewster, seconded by Selectman Muratore, the Board voted to approve a request from the following Liquor License holder for a Change of Officers/Directors (Liquor License), as detailed in the application documents. Voted 5-0-0, approved.

- ❖ **Plymouth Yacht Club Company** (34 Union Street)

## **ADMINISTRATIVE NOTES**

**Disclosure of Financial Interest / ZBA / Main** – On a motion by Selectman Harnais, seconded by Selectman Muratore, the Board voted to acknowledge the *Disclosure of Financial Interest by Municipal Employee* forms submitted by Michael Main, member of the Zoning Board of Appeals, and determine that the interest is not so substantial as to be deemed likely to affect the integrity of services which the Town may expect from the employee/appointed official. Voted 5-0-0, approved.

**Disclosure of Financial Interest / ZBA / Hooker** – On a motion by Selectman Harnais, seconded by Selectman Muratore, the Board voted to acknowledge the *Disclosure of Financial Interest by Municipal Employee* forms submitted by Gervaise Hooker, member of the Conservation Commission, and determine that the interest is not so substantial as to be deemed likely to affect the integrity of services which the Town may expect from the employee/appointed official.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Barry Meltzer, chairman of the No Place for Hate Committee, invited the Selectmen and citizens of Plymouth to attend the annual Martin Luther King Breakfast, which will be held on

January 16, 2012 at 7:30 a.m. at Plymouth South High School. The annual breakfast, he explained, is sponsored by No Place for Hate, the Plymouth Area Interfaith Council, and the Plymouth Public School System.

Ron Stroup of the Plymouth Beach for All Coalition (“PBAC”) presented the Town with a donation of \$3,800 towards the purchase of the Laughlin property on Plymouth Long Beach. The proceeds, he said, were raised during an event that the PBAC held in October at Bert’s Landing Restaurant, to which many local citizens and businesses donated their time and resources.

The Board accepted the donation and thanked Mr. Stroup and his fellow PBAC members for their efforts to raise funds to offset the cost of purchasing the property.

## **JOINT MEETING ON FY2013 BUDGET PRESENTATION**

### **School Committee**

Dennis Begley, Chairman  
Robert Morgan, Vice Chairman  
Robert Bielan, Secretary  
Michelle Badger  
Deb Betz  
Margie Burgess  
Mary Waltuch  
  
Gary Maestas, School Superintendent  
Gary Costin, School Business Manager

### **Advisory & Finance Committee**

Robert Nassau, Chairman  
John Moody, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chairman  
Michael Hanlon, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chairman  
Cornelius Bakker  
Wayne Dickson  
Richard Reisig  
Frank Roberts  
Marc Sirrico  
Charles Stevens  
Jim Sweeney  
Patricia Whalen

Lynne Barrett, Finance Director

Mr. Stankiewicz introduced a presentation on the budget proposed for Fiscal Year 2013. When preparing this budget, he said, staff attempted to balance the needs of the community while being mindful of the burden placed on the taxpayers. Plymouth is in a unique position, he explained, because its budget and staff levels have remained relatively flat for a number of years, despite a steady increase in its population.

Mr. Stankiewicz displayed a number of tables and graphs comparing Plymouth’s tax rate, valuations, per capita income, debt, and excess levy capacity to that of a number of other communities in Plymouth County. Much has been said, he noted, about the change in the Town’s tax rate from 2007 (\$9.71 per every \$1,000 in value) to 2011 (\$13.04 per every \$1,000 in value), but it should be recognized that assessed values have concurrently decreased. For the most part, he noted, Plymouth appears to be in good financial condition, with an average tax rate, assessment range, and single-family property value.

Mr. Stankiewicz discussed the ways in which he and the Finance Director approached the development of the budget, noting some of the goals that were issued by the Selectmen and Advisory & Finance Committee (“FinComm”), i.e. shifting away from subsidizing operations with one-time revenues and identifying revenue enhancements. For the most part, he said, the Town and School budgets are level-funded, with additions to staff in some divisions and reductions/consolidation in others. Mr. Stankiewicz reported that the overall budget increase from FY2012 to FY2013 is tabulated at \$1,967,268, or 1.24%. Broken down between the Schools and the Town, the School budget has increased \$1,669,662 (2.2%), and the Town budget has increased \$297,606 (0.4%).

Mr. Stankiewicz described how the FY2013 budget was built, distinguishing between items that were—and were not—included in the budget. Those items that were included in the budget proposal were listed as:

- Level service for municipal functions and education
- Increased manpower for the Department of Public Works
- Consolidation and elimination of some positions
- Reductions to some reserve accounts
- \$1.5 million in savings from the adoption of changes to employee insurance plans

Those items not included in the budget:

- Labor costs for the Police Patrolmen collective bargaining agreement
- Labor costs for successor collective bargaining agreements for both the Town and Schools
- Revenue enhancement proposals from Town departments

Other items to note:

- No Free Cash was used toward the Operating Budget (last year: \$1 million)
- No Free Cash was used to subsidize the Sewer Enterprise Fund (last year: \$390,000)
- No Stabilization Funds were used for Debt Service (last year: \$700,000)
- No Overlay Surplus was used toward the Operating Budget (last year: \$511,000)

Mr. Stankiewicz discussed the ways in which \$5.6 million in certified Free Cash will be applied to reduce borrowing costs and enhance the Town’s long-term financial position:

- Excess levy capacity – 10%
- Stabilization Fund – 10%
- Reserve Fund Balance – 10%
- Other Post Employment Benefits (“OPEB”) – 10%
- Article 8 Capital Expenditures – 20%
- Article 9 Capital Expenditures – 40%

Finance Director Lynne Barrett resumed the presentation on the FY2013 budget with information on revenue sources and expenditure challenges. Before launching into the detailed portion of her presentation, Ms. Barrett briefly discussed the reasons behind the delay of the certification of Plymouth’s 2012 tax rate and values.

Ms. Barrett displayed a number of charts and graphs to illustrate trends and fluctuations in:

- The Town's General Fund (broken down by source)
- New Growth
- Excess Levy Capacity
- Debt Exclusion on Taxes
- Tax Rate Trends
- Property Tax Revenue History
- Assessed Value Trends
- Average Single Family Tax Bill
- State Aid (including separate charts for Municipal Aid and Chapter 70 School Aid)
- Local Receipts

Ms. Barrett discussed the way in which State Aid affects municipal budgets. Property taxes, she said, fund 75% of the General Fund, and the Town has been forced to rely more heavily on property taxes while State Aid has decreased in recent years. Based on projections pertaining to the State budget, she said, the Town can comfortably assume that State Aid will be level funded from the previous year.

Referencing the debt exclusions for the Plymouth North High School and Council on Aging projects, Ms. Barrett reported that the average homeowner will see an increase of approximately \$150 to his/her tax bill as a result of these projects. This, she said, is the reason why the tax rate increase from FY2011 to FY2012 appears to be so dramatic. Compared to the State's median average household tax bill, however, Plymouth still remains in the middle ground, she said.

Ms. Barrett explained her recommendations for the use of Free Cash, noting how the bolstering of the Stabilization Fund and other available reserves may help the Town to achieve an AA+/Aa1 bond rating (from a current rating of AA/Aa2). Ms. Barrett elaborated on her efforts to reduce existing debt and maintain a debt threshold of no more than 6.5% of the Town's budget.

Ms. Barrett displayed a pie chart illustrating the distribution of the budget amongst the various departments, which indicated that School operations comprise 46% of municipal expenses. She listed a number of revenue and expenditure challenges for FY2013, including the opening of the new school and senior center, the possible change to municipal curbside waste collection, the impending expiration of labor contracts, and the need to plan financially for the Town's unfunded liabilities (Other Post Employment Benefits).

Following the conclusion of the presentation, Mr. Stankiewicz and Ms. Barrett responded to questions from the Selectmen with regard to the use of the Stabilization Fund, the estimated costs of settling contracts with the Town's labor unions, the use of Free Cash, and the effect of the new High School and Senior Center on the tax rate.

Seeing no further questions from the Selectmen, Chairman Hallisey opened the discussion to questions from the members of the FinComm and School Committee.

FinComm chairman Robert Nassau complimented the work done by staff to formulate the budget. The FinComm, he said, is only in the beginning stages of breaking into subcommittees to review the budget in detail. From a personal standpoint, Mr. Nassau said, he is pleased to see the Town taking a very fiscally responsible position in the way that Free Cash will be used.

FinComm member Patricia Whalen and School Committee member Robert Bielan asked some brief questions regarding the figures provided in the budget report. School Superintendent Gary Maestas talked about the challenge of drafting a budget that would incorporate the expenses associated with the opening of a new—and larger—high school. As a result, Mr. Maestas said, he and his staff have worked diligently to reduce its energy costs and investigate all opportunities for savings.

Chairman Hallisey opened the budget presentation to public comment. No citizens came forth to speak, and, thus, Chairman Hallisey concluded the discussion with an offer of thanks to the Town Manager and Finance Director for their presentations.

On a motion by John Moody, seconded by Charles Stevens, the Advisory & Finance Committee unanimously voted to adjourn its meeting at approximately 8:30 p.m.

Seeing no objections from the School Committee, Mr. Begley adjourned the meeting of the School Committee at approximately 8:30 p.m.

Chairman Hallisey called for a brief recess to allow the members of the School Committee and Advisory & Finance Committee to exit the meeting.

## **BOARD LIAISON / DESIGNEE UPDATES**

Chairman Hallisey reconvened the meeting at 8:40 p.m.

**400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee** – Selectman Brewster was pleased to report that Plymouth 400, Inc. has received official status as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, thanks to the efforts of Plymouth 400 member Anthony Provenzano (who submitted the application). Now that Plymouth 400, Inc. can begin fundraising for the Anniversary Celebration, she said, it may be an appropriate time for the Town's 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee to enter into a Letter of Agreement with Plymouth 400, so that the relationship between both groups is clearly understood.

In response to an inquiry from Selectman Muratore, the Selectmen's Assistant, Tiffany Park, explained that, because of a number of changes that had been made to the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee since its inception in 2008, there was some confusion as to whether the appointed term lengths were intended to be indefinite or whether they were set for three years in length.

On a motion by Selectman Brewster, seconded by Selectman Muratore, the Board voted to (a) affirm that the terms on the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee should have been three years in length and (b) re-advertise the expired terms on the committee. Voted 5-0-0, approved.

## **OLD BUSINESS / LETTERS / NEW BUSINESS**

**Committee Activity** – Selectman Muratore noted that the Consolidation Committee recently discussed the notable number of Town committees, boards, and commissions. Concerns were raised during the discussion, he stated, that a number of committees are not meeting on a regular basis. As such, Selectman Muratore asked if staff could provide the Board with a report on the meeting schedule and minutes of each committee for the past two years, to determine which groups are convening regularly and which groups are languishing.

**Service on Town Committees** – Selectman Harnais noted some recent concerns that have been brought to the Board’s attention regarding personality conflicts on some of the Town’s committees. It is very important, he said, to remind the citizens who serve on the Town’s committees that they are expected to behave professionally and treat their fellow citizens with respect.

In response to Selectman Harnais’s comments, Selectman Muratore reported that the Charter Committee is investigating the possibility of adding language to the Town’s Charter that will provide the Town’s appointing authorities with the ability to remove committee members for misconduct or absence of duty.

**FY2013 Budget** – Vice Chairman Mahoney offered his belief that the budget presented for FY2013 represents a positive long-term vision that will gradually reduce the Town’s long-term debt and address the Town’s unfunded liabilities. He also thanked the Town’s employees for agreeing to changes in their health insurance benefits—changes that are, essentially, a pay cut—that that will save the taxpayers a good deal of money.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION AND ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING**

At approximately 8:50 p.m., the Board voted to enter Executive Session pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 30A, Section 21, Paragraph 2, to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel, or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with non-union personnel. By roll call: Harnais – yes, Muratore – yes, Mahoney – yes, Brewster – yes, and Hallisey – yes.

Chairman Hallisey noted that, following executive session, the Board would not reconvene in open session.

*Recorded by Tiffany Park, Clerk to the Board of Selectmen*

*A copy of the January 10, 2012 meeting packet is on file and available for public review in the Board of Selectmen’s office.*