**Minutes**

**Stow Board of Selectmen**

**July 30, 2015**

**Town Building**

Present at the meeting that was held at Town Building were Donald Hawkes, Brian Burke, Charles Kern, Thomas Ryan and James Salvie. Also present was School Committee Representative to Minuteman High School Alice DeLuca.

Absent were Brian Burke, Selectman, William Wrigley, Town Administrator and Maureen Trunfio, Administrative Assistant.

Mr. Hawkes called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Public Input: None

Chairman’s Comments: Mr. Hawkes expressed appreciation on behalf of the Town to the Stow Police Department for their operation of a free police camp for children of Stow residents that ran daily from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. during the week of July 13th. Middle school aged children were able to explore many aspects of police careers and departmental operations.

**Discussion whether or not to establish a position on Minuteman Technical High School building project proposal** The Stow Board of Selectmen received a letter, as did the **other 15** Minuteman High School District towns, sent by the Sudbury Board of Selectmen **and dated July 27, 2015,** convening a meeting that would occur on Monday, August 3, 2015 in order to gather district towns to discuss the pending Minuteman High School (MMHS) building project.

Sudbury and Belmont’s position is that they are opposed to building a school for an enrollment of 628 students and they oppose a district-wide election proposed by MMHS School Committee and MMHS School Building Committee.

The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) then sent out a comprehensive packet chronicling the history of, procedurally, how the District has arrived at this this point. That material is dated July 22, 2015.

Minuteman High School Committee Representative, Alice DeLuca was present and told the Board that the School Committee, to date, had not voted to decide whether to call for a district-wide vote. Ms. DeLuca also serves on the MMHS Building Committee and reminded the Board that the Building Committee has no role in district-wide votes, but the School Committee does.

Mr. Hawkes explained that letters from the member town Selectmen’s Boards gave the impression that individual member Towns give, is that they are trying to make appeals directly to the MSBA. They seem to be requesting that the MSBA *not* allow MMHS to build a high school for the number of students proposed (628), which those Towns consider, in their opinion, to be too large. Ms. DeLuca addressed these issues by stating that the first issue with this approach is that it is not permissible for individual Towns to make specific requests of the MSBA. Secondly, the MSBA does not and will not support a smaller enrollment number of 435, as, they feel, it is not operationally sustainable and would not meet the District’s goals. Members of the Board stated that they were not certain 628 was the best number of students to build for, but, at this point, they would support the building project.

The Board raised the concern that only an approximate number of 400 students make up the in-district student body and the additional approximate 200 students are out-of-district students. Mr. Salvie questioned the number of 628 students and asked why the District would assume that 400 of the students would most always continue to be district-wide students and 200 would almost always continue to be out-of-district students. Ms. Deluca answered by saying that the MSBA takes direction on such things from the Department of Education as well as looking at trending jobs and workforces where hiring is taking place. Ms. DeLuca stated that she was not certain where the number “628” originated.

Ms. DeLuca said that she seriously doubted that the MSBA would consider reducing their target

number, even if it meant more member towns might be on board with supporting it. Ms. DeLuca stated that the most likely reason MSBA wouldn’t consider a number such as 528 was due to economies of scale—the need to pay a Superintendent, a school nurse, etc. regardless if there are 528 students or 628 students.

Ms. DeLuca informed the Board that in January of 2010 she came before the Board of Selectmen and they agreed to add the MMHS School Building Project to their list of priorities.

She came back to the Board in 2011 to inquire whether it had not been removed from the priority list and was told that once an item is added to the Selectmen’s priority list, that item wont’ simply become “un-prioritized.” She said that she would appreciate seeing leadership from the current Board of Selectmen stating that it would like to see the current school rebuilt.

Ms. DeLuca told the board that she does not want to miss the opportunity to collect the 40% reimbursement on the project from the MSBA. This promise of funding from the MSBA will be dissolved if the member towns cannot agree to promote the rebuilding of the school before June 30, 2017. She added that the residents that attended the informational meeting in Stow felt that the opportunity and offer from the MSBA was a “no brainer” and were prepared to move forward with the building project. She explained how they understood that it would not be expensive for the residents of Stow, and reminded the Board that in essence it is almost the same cost to build a new building for 628 students as for 500 students when the cost difference is spread over 16 towns and over many years. She added that she is not pleased with the tactic Sudbury is taking to try to stop the project at this point, when it has been in the pipeline since 2009.

Mr. Hawkes said that the public must be reminded that the Town has a statutory obligation to provide vocational training and education for its students, and if MMHS is not an option, there are very few, if any other options. He added that failure to do something positive now would cost the Town more in the long run, if even simply from a building maintenance point of view.

To support his opinion that Sudbury and Belmont were misguided in their mission and do not have the authority to direct the MSBA, Mr. Hawkes quoted from the July 21, 2015 memo sent to John K. McCarthy, Executive Director and signed by Mary Pichetti, Director of Capital Planning for the MSBA:

from page 4:

“As with other districts participating in the MSBA’s School Construction Grant Program, the MSBA will follow policy and provide the District the same opportunities provided other districts in studying potential solutions, establishing a mutually agreeable project scope and budget at the conclusion of schematic design, and receiving a Project Scope and Budget Agreement. The District is responsible to secure the local authorization and approvals. The District is responsible throughout the MSBA grant process for addressing any concerns or questions raised by its local boards, member towns or from the community. Beyond the use of specific language for articles, motions, resolutions, orders, votes (available on the MSBA’s website) the MSBA does not govern or weigh-in on the specifics of how the District secures local approval and funding authorizations, that is the responsibility of the District.”

The Board agreed that if MMHS wanted to place an item on the Stow Fall Special Town Meeting Warrant, they would include it in the warrant. Mr. Ryan agreed with Mr. Hawkes and the fact that the Stow Board of Selectmen do not have the authority to tell the MSBA what they should do. He said that he, personally, would prefer the option to take the question to a Town Meeting vote before a district wide vote would be considered.

Mr. Kern suggested that at the upcoming Sudbury meeting, Mr. Hawkes convey the message that Stow can’t imagine any other stance than support for the project and cannot fathom any reason to give MSBA an opportunity to pass MMHS over for funding. He added that for approximately $50/year, this proposed building project is the best offer member towns will receive.. Mr. Kern suggested that Mr. Hawkes attempt to understand why the nay-sayers are against the project and what they would like to see happen with the school building.

The Board commended Ms. DeLuca on her diligence in representation and thanked her.

Ms. DeLuca suggested to the School Committee that they try a few town meetings in fall and if that doesn’t’ succeed, at that point, a district-wide vote will be required, The Board agreed with that approach.

Mr. Salvie mentioned that he has objections to building a school that relies on non-member town enrollment, and asked why not build a school scaled for member towns, especially taking into consideration that, in the past, non-member towns do not contribute to capital expenses.

Ms. DeLuca responded by saying that the cost for an out-of-district student is not a simple calculation, and added that under newly designed regulations regarding tuition, the District will be permitted to charge a capital fee. An attendee who did not identify himself questioned how much capital improvement had actually been done over the years at MMHS.

Mr. Ryan suggested that the MMHS consider holding a “town meeting like” meeting for representatives from all district towns (Finance Committee, Selectmen, etc.) run by a moderator and give everyone two minutes to speak and explain what they’d like to see and then take a non-binding vote. A night meeting would give everyone ample opportunity to attend.

The Board agreed to ask the Chair to attend the August 3, 2015 meeting and to offer support for continuation of the process with the MSBA, preserve district towns’ option to consider this issue at Town Meetings and agreed that the recommended number of 628 is not an unreasonable number.

Ms. DeLuca closed by emphasizing the fact that she and the school committee do not want to lose the offer from MSBA of 40% toward funding the building of the new school. She added it would be great if Stow showed leadership in the district. The Board assured her that Stow would be having a fall town meeting and would place an article regarding this on the agenda, if one is available.

*Mr. Salvie made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m. Mr. Ryan seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.*

Respectfully submitted,

Donald Hawkes, Chair