

**Town of Norwell  
Select Board  
3/15/23**

**Present:** Bruce Graham, Jason Brown, Ellen Allen, Andy Reardon, Darleen Sullivan

Mr. Graham called the meeting to order.

*Motion; made by Jason Brown, seconded by Andy Reardon, to approve the agenda as written. Unanimously voted*

*Motion; made by Jason Brown, seconded by Andy Reardon, to approve the 3/1/23 Open Meeting minutes. Unanimously voted*

**Select Board Reports – None**

**Town Administrator's Report - None**

**Citizens Comments**

Liz Bersell – 29 Knollwood Road, submitted a list of questions about the St. Helen's property on behalf of the abutting neighborhoods. General discussion ensued about the future of the property.

Zoning options will be discussed in more depth at the Select Board meeting on 3/29/23.

Ms. Bersell recapped her neighborhood's feedback on their No Vote for the new Town Hall purchase at the January STM. She has a list of questions regarding this potential acquisition, adding the neighborhood opinion that these were not answered in full (to the satisfaction of this group). She also submitted additional questions. Town Administrator Darleen Sullivan prepared and distributed a Town Hall Q and A sheet. Mr. Brown would like the board as a whole to spend more time discussing and answering these questions before talking about them in public. Ms. Bersell thanked the board for addressing the questions.

**Planning Board (PB) Vacancy**

**Community Housing Trust (CHT) Vacancies**

Ms. Sullivan noted that there are openings on both boards.

She explained the appointment and subsequent election process for the Planning Board vacancy. The SB and the PB will make a joint temporary appointment to fill the Planning Board vacancy until the Town election in May. The appointee may choose to run for this PB seat in May. Whoever is elected to the seat will serve a 2 year term. There are 2 additional PB seats up for re-election this year and both current members have pulled papers to run again. If elected, they will serve 3 year terms.

All discussed the openings on the CHT, which currently does not have a quorum to conduct business. Mr. Graham volunteered to be appointed as an interim member of the CHT until June 30<sup>th</sup>, which will allow the Trust to operate as usual. Mr. Reardon would like to invite all those residents who opine on AH to join the CHT and be part of the solution for this issue.

*Motion; made by Jason Brown, seconded by Andy Reardon, to appoint Bruce Graham as an interim member of the Community Housing Trust until 6/30/23. Allen, Brown and Reardon voting yes, Graham abstained. Motion carried.*

## **FY24 Operational and Capital Budget**

Ms. Sullivan stated that the budget is balanced, with kudos to Town Accountant Christine McCarthy. This year's budget is \$62M compared to the prior year budget of \$60M for an increase of 4%, including a 2 ½% levy increase. The pension plan assessment put pressure on this year's increase. She requested another actuarial valuation along with a proposed extension of the due date to fully fund the plan. Local Aid is not as much as hoped for, but Revenue is on target. Contract increases impact the budget. Increased costs are being monitored, and cuts were made in some areas. Ms. Sullivan is anticipating fewer turnbacks than in prior years. Free Cash will hover around \$1.9M to \$2.0M. Local receipts are trending well.

## **Capital Budget**

There are 15 departmental requests. Questions were asked and answered about the asks. Some capital items will be offset by the ARPA funds (there is a current balance of \$1.61M). Ms. Sullivan explained the ARPA spending regulations (operating expenses are not allowable). The Town can submit allowed expenses through 12/31/24. Any unspent ARPA funds revert to the federal government after that date. FYI, the federal government is monitoring towns' ARPA spending. Ms. McCarthy noted that it is wiser to spend the ARPA money soon so as not to invoke the clawback rule. Discussion ensued about spending options for these funds.

## **Warrant Articles**

Ms. Sullivan reviewed the list of Special and Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles with the board, discussing the cost and purpose of each Article. All discussed the importance of an updated GIS system, preferring ArcGIS vs. People GIS.

## **South Shore Vo-Tech: proposed amendments for district regional**

Dr. Tom Hickey and Bob Molla were present to propose Marshfield as the 9<sup>th</sup> member of this group. The timing of this community addition will help the building project scheduled for the 28-29 school year. The group has been invited to join the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), which could help fund the large, anticipated school building project, estimated at \$300M.

Dr. Hickey gave background information, including his due diligence, for this amendment and the whole regional agreement. A few amendments are worthy of mention:

1. Buy-In: Marshfield will contribute \$392,181 to the district over 10 years as their pay-in share to the existing stabilization fund. The school board has requested a shorter payback period, especially with their proposed building project.
2. Debt Sharing: the district currently has no debt. For any future debt, Marshfield will pay their proportional share, which is important to fund the new school building project. Marshfield's debt share will adjust annually for the first 5 years and be fixed in year 6. Marshfield's debt share contribution will be used to lower the debt shares of the current 8 towns (assuming that a MSBA project cost is

determined prior to Marshfield having 5 years in the district). Questions were asked about current and future space needs.

3. The default method for incurring debt was changed. Dr. Hickey explained the new debt method. If one member town votes no the project doesn't move forward.
4. Town withdrawal – the majority of the committee membership now must vote yes. There would be a buyout subject to negotiation. The withdrawing town would still carry their long term debt obligations.

This amendment will go to Town meeting for a vote, which is especially important with the very large building plan, of which 4% will be Norwell's share. Dr. Hickey will be present at Town Meeting. The amendment needs a majority vote at each of the member Town Meetings and then a 2/3 majority vote of the member towns.

Questions were asked and answered about what happens to any projections for cost savings – which would probably go to a capital stabilization fund.

Questions were asked about enrollment percentages. 4 of 8 communities are not using their apportioned seats. If Marshfield joins, the seats will be reapportioned. Dr. Hickey is still projecting that there will continue to be a waiting list.

Mr. Reardon thanked the Vo-Tech school for its junior firefighter training, which provides an excellent resource for neighboring towns' fire departments. This is part of a work force training program partially underwritten by state grants.

Reminder, the Town Meeting vote in May is only to amend the current agreement.

### **St. Helen's "Plan B"**

Liz Bersell - 29 Norwood Road took part in this discussion.

Mr. Graham was approached by Ms. Bersell with her questions about the future use of the St. Helen's property. He noted again for the record that these would only be conceptual topics. Ms. Bersell stated that the neighbors would like to get educated about both zoning and AH options. There are no Articles for any of these options on the upcoming Town Meeting Warrant. There is not enough time to coordinate a decisive Article as there has been no sales announcement from the Diocese. There won't be an adequate window of time for a developer to buy the property and immediately go to the ZBA for approval. There will be sufficient time to engage any developer in conversation when the buyer is identified. The board could spend the next several months discussing options. A good offer to such an entity could benefit any purchaser. Discussion ensued about next steps to get educated about the options.

### **Jacobs Farmhouse-vote certificate of authorization for the MHC contract**

Ted Nichols gave the background information for this certificate of authorization for the MHC grant contract. The board will vote to authorize the Chair to sign on behalf of the board. Any state grant funding to the Town for this project will reduce the Town's CPA fund spending.

*Motion; made by Jason Brown, seconded by Andy Reardon, to authorize Chair Bruce Graham to sign the MHC certificate on behalf of the board. Unanimously voted.*

**Adjournment**

*Motion; made by Jason Brown, seconded by Andy Reardon, to adjourn at 9:10pm.  
Unanimously voted.*

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Bruce W. Graham, Chair