

**ACUSHNET BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**Wednesday, June 1, 2022
4:00 P.M.**

CALL TO ORDER

Selectman Gaspar motioned to open the June 1, 2022, regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen. Selectman Hinckley seconded. Chairman Wojnar called the meeting to order. Those present were Chairman David Wojnar, Selectman Kevin Gaspar, Sr., and Selectman Robert Hinckley.

I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II. SOIL BOARD

1. RE-ORGANIZATION OF THE SOIL BOARD

Selectman Gaspar motioned to recess Selectmen's meeting to executive session. Selectman Hinckley seconded. All in favor.

Selectman Gaspar motioned to open the Soil Board meeting. Selectman Hinckley seconded. All in favor. Motion passes.

Chairman Wojnar proposes another member of the Board of Selectmen to take the position of Soil Board chair, considers having the Board of Selectmen Vice-chair so as to not give the Board of Selectmen chair too much power by being chairman of multiple boards. Chairman Wojnar leaves it up to the other members to decide. Selectman Gaspar agrees with the Chairman.

Selectman Hinckley motions to adopt a policy that proposes the Vice-chairman of the Selectboard to serve as the Chair of the Soil Board and to switch at the time of re-organization of the Board of Selectmen. Selectman Gaspar seconded. All in favor. Motion passes.

Chairman Wojnar proposes to Soil Board Chair, Mr. Gaspar, to table the discussions on the agenda as to not make premature decisions. Mr. Gaspar recommends to have an executive session with Town Counsel in regards to P. J. Keating at a future date.

Selectman Gaspar motions to approve both items discussed, tabling the items on the agenda and a future executive session, Selectman Hinckley seconded. All in favor. Motion passes.

Selectman Gaspar motions to adjourn Soil Board meeting and re-open the Board of Selectman meeting. Selectman Hinckley seconded and all were in favor. Motion passes.

III. MINUTES TO BE APPROVED

IV. APPOINTMENTS

1. HEATHER CHEW, COA DIRECTOR & REBEKAH TOMLINSON, ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER – TO REPORT ON PET FOOD DRIVE

Animal Control Officer, Rebekah Tomlinson, and Council on Aging Director, Heather Chew, thank the Board for the opportunity to have held the Pet Food Drive. They had a great turn out. Chairman Wojnar asks if there are any extras that can be utilized and if so, to let people know. Donations can be on an-going basis and doesn't have to be just for a certain event.

All Selectmen thank both Ms. Tomlinson and Ms. Chew, for their efforts. Ms. Chew thanks Town Administrator, Mr. James Kelley, for sponsoring the "Welcome Back Bbq." The Selectboard thanked Mr. Kelley as well.

V. DPW

1. DPW WRAP GRANT AWARD – WINTER RECOVERY

Ms. Kathy Silva discusses the \$198,000 WRAP grant that was given by the state, it's brand new for this year and is unknown whether or not it will continue in the years to come. Ms. Silva mentions that it is similar to the Chapter 90 funds but cannot rollover and has to be spent between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023. All work, invoices, and payments need to be completed by June 30, 2023.

Chairman Wojnar suggested for Ms. Silva along with DPW Director, Mr. Dan Menard, to work with Mr. Kelley to get a list of suggested projects to use the funds on and report it back to the Selectboard. Mr. Kelley informs the board that these funds allow them to do more work than just Chapter 90 alone and they are able to combine both the grant and Chapter 90 funds to accomplish projects. Selectman Hinckley motioned to have Mr. Gaspar work with Ms. Silva, Mr. Menard and Mr. Kelley and then report back to the Selectboard with the plan results. Selectman Gaspar seconded. All in favor. Motion passes.

2. ROAD PAVING SCHEDULE & STREET OPENIN PERMIT DISCUSSION

Mr. Menard states \$30k to be used by June 30, 2022 on Highland St. and Hindle St., which are Town accepted dirt roads off of Randall St. and Lussier St. Hamlin St. bridge work is going out for bid this week. Eversource funds are being utilized on Laura Keene Ave, Roche St., Dorothy St., New York Ave., Fairfield St. and

Willow St. DPW will be doing the work curb to curb versus Eversource only doing a portion of the street.

Selectman Gaspar suggests putting a hold on all Eversource work due to the poor conditions of the many roads they have worked on deteriorating quickly. Chairman Wojnar suggests to have the discussion with Eversource, if they choose to, added to a near future meeting. Mr. Kelly notes that Finance has segregated accounts on Eversource funds to be tracked and monitored with Mr. Menard and Ms. Silva. The Selectboard thanks Mr. Menard.

3. SEWER PRIVILEGE FEE (BRADFORD STREET)

Selectman Gaspar motions to approve the privilege fee for 3 Bradford St. and 5 Bradford St. as presented. Selectman Hinckley seconded. All in favor and motion passes.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

1. OUTDOOR SEATING DISCUSSION

Selectman Gaspar motions to approve outdoor seating for Captain's Place, Selectman Hinckley seconded. All in favor and motion passes.

Chairman Wojnar suggests to have Mr. Kelley reach out to the owners of Rochelle's to address safety issues that were brought to the Board's attention by Mr. James Marot, Building Commissioner. Selectman Gaspar motions to have Mr. Kelley reach out to the owners to discuss application. Selectman Hinckley seconded and all were in favor. Motion passes.

2. PUBLIC SAFETY OVERTIME DEFICIT & STAFFING

Mr. Kelley talked to both Police Chief, Christopher Richmond, and Fire Chief, Thomas Farland about the overtime deficit. This year there is over \$200k in public safety deficit and \$126k deficit in Town Counsel account which is far beyond what can be rectified with reserves, will discuss possible solution at the end unless the Board rectifies the situation by budgeting more in the overtime accounts or by addressing overtime issues with both Chiefs, this will be seen year after year.

2A. – POLICE DEPARTMENT DISCUSSION ON DEFICIT & SHIFTS AND ENFORCEMENT DATA

Police Chief Richmond states that traditionally the overtime budget has been underfunded. They have hired 2 additional full time dispatchers and 3 full time officers to try and avoid overtime. He mentioned that they have lost use of part timers due to hiring them full time. They currently have 1 part timer. Covid slowed down the academy recruits. The department has never budgeted for

military leave or long term injuries and leaves. In FY 22 they have had 1 officer injured on duty and has been out since October, 1 retired officer, 1 resignation that bought out contractual time, 2 military leaves until at least April of 2023, 1 National Guard that was gone for about 8 months, 3 on months long sick absences, 1 on light duty for 4-5 months and is now back to full time, multiple Covid cases and the police reform has impacted the department as well. Current staff stands at 24 full time officers that consist of 7 sergeants and 13 patrolmen. 1 is on medical leave, 2 left for state police and 2 left on extended military leave. Chief Richmond mentioned that he is going to be looking at the list of possible recruits and may have to send 1 to the academy which delays the help.

2B. FIRE DEPARTMENT DEFICIT & STAFFING – DATA ON RUNS, DISCUSSION ON AMBULANCE RECEIVABLES & RATES

Fire Chief Gallagher discusses his department's current deficit and staffing. He states that they currently have 8 full time staff members. They have had unknown expenses such as sick time, resignations and retirements which accounted for 1100 hours in FY 22 until there were replacements in place.

Chairman Wojnar suggests for Mr. Kelley to work with both Chiefs to examine and plan overtime and report back to the Board no later than September 1, 2022. Selectman Gaspar motions and Selectman Hinckley seconded. All in favor and motion passes.

Mr. Kelley states that the quick projected deficits for Police is \$151,784 and for Fire is \$43,379. The projected Legal deficit is at \$126,000. Mr. Kelley has been working with the Assistant Town Accountant, Nick Monticello, and the Fire department can be budgeted with transfers from other departments. He advises that they should save the Legal deficit for last because the auditors will less likely ding us for legal due to multiple court cases. As far as Police, they are looking at a solution that brings \$40k in inter-department and intra-department transfers. The legal deficit will have a transfer from the land court funds which brings it down to \$109,000 and if needed it can be brought to Fall Town Meeting and use excess revenue from this fiscal year which we believe will be around \$400k to cover it.

Selectman Hinckley motion to direct Mr. Kelley to work on a plan and report back no later than June 29, 2022 with a plan to close the deficit. Selectman Gaspar seconded, all were in favor and motion passes.

3. ERIC ARRUDA – DISCUSSION

Eric Arruda, a candidate for the Fire Chief position, had questions for the Board on his view of the process for the hiring of the Fire Chief. He asked Selectman

Hinckley if he was able to review all the candidates' materials for the Chief's position. Selectman Hinckley agrees that he did. Mr. Arruda submitted a formal appeal to the Board on the Fire Chief's candidates' appointment process on May 5, 2022.

Chairman Wojnar discusses with the Board members that his thought on best course of action is to take this under advisement and digest it and report back if at all and indicated to Mr. Arruda that they had previously discussed that this IS what would take place and that he made some compelling arguments and thanked Mr. Arruda.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. GOLF SUPPORT STAFF APPOINTMENTS – JAKE MOURAO, CHASE ALMEIDA, & JEREMIAH MATOS

Dana Przybyszewski spoke on the new hires for the bag boy and grill staff position replacements. He stated the Golf Committee had voted unanimously and submitted the vote to the Board of Selectmen for review and appointment.

Selectman Gaspar motions to approve Jake Mourao, Chase Almeida, and Jeremiah Matos to Golf course. Selectman Hinckley seconded, all in favor and motion passes.

2. DESIGNEE FOR SRTA REPRESENTATIVE

Selectman Gaspar motion to appoint Mr. Hinckley as the designee, Selectman Hinckley seconded, all in favor and motion passes.

3. DISCUSSION FOR FIRST READING POSSIBLE VOTE ON TOWN COUNSEL POLICY

Selectman Gaspar motioned to approve action to Town Counsel Policy, Selectman Hinckley seconded, all in favor and motion passes.

VIII. INFORMATION ONLY

IX. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

1. TA REPORT

Mr. Kelley is working with the Town Accountant to issue RFP for audits and RFP for legal counsel. Notified NFP to compile necessary data. Will be issuing an RFP for health insurance as well. Working on a list of potential warrant articles for Fall Town Meeting. FEMA fund approval for Covid testing is in and ARPA projects will

need addressing in the next 2-3 months. The Senior Work-Off program update, the COA Director has requested the Department Heads to give her a list for projects to be approved by the Board of Selectmen in the future. Mr. Kelley met with the New Bedford Mayor. He is looking into another unemployment compensation service company known as Unemployment Taxation Management which will represent the Town on all unemployment hearings with the State and take care of all the issues such as in-house and assist the Treasurer with it. The cost is \$585 per quarter.

Selectman Gaspar motioned to approve unemployment compensation service agreement. Selectman Hinckley seconded, all in favor and motion passes.

X. MEETING MAIL

XI. FUTURE BUSINESS

Selectmen's Meeting June 15, 2022 4:00 P.M.

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

"Executive Session under G.L.ch.30A§21(a)(2) to conduct strategy in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel or to conduct contract negotiations with non-union personnel (Fire Chief) if an open meeting will have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body as the chair so declares and the Board will not return to public session."

"Executive Session under G.L.ch.30A§21(a)(3) to conduct strategy in preparation for negotiations with union personnel or to conduct contract negotiations with union personnel (Police, Fire, AFSCME, DPW) if an open meeting will have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body as the chair so declares and the Board will not return to public session."

Adjournment



David Wojnar, Chairman



Kevin Gaspar, Sr.



Robert Hinckley
Board of Selectmen