

HARDWICK SELECTBOARD MEETING

307 Main Street
Gilbertville, MA 01031
November 13, 2023

Attendees: Eric Vollheim, Chair; Kelly Kemp (KK), Vice Chair; Nicole Parker (NP), Town Administrator; Jen Kolenda (JK), Assessor; Scott Potter (SP), WPCF Superintendent; Josh Pease (JP), Deputy Fire Chief; Ray Walker (RW), Fire Chief; Kathleen Riley (KR), Whistlestop Manager. H.R. Ruggles, Clerk absent.

Meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS

Tax Classification Hearing Date

EV read aloud details regarding hearing date and location – Monday, November 13, 2023 at 6:30, Municipal Office Building on the issue of tax allocation among property classes for FY 2024.

JK stated, “The Board of Assessors, pending final certification of the FY 24 tax rate by the Department of Revenue, hereby recommends that the Board of Selectmen retain one rate for all classes of property. The Board feels that the relatively small benefit to the residential taxpayer that could be achieved using two tax rates is not warranted considering the dramatic increase in taxes to be paid by the commercial industrial personal property taxpayer. Hardwick is a largely residential community that simply does not have enough commercial industrial or personal property base to make classification worthwhile. The pro tem tax rates are as follows:

“If we retain a single rate it will be \$12.62; if we shift the rate according to the Mass. General Laws the residential tax rates would drop down to \$12.02, and the commercial industrial personal property would go up to \$18.93 per \$1000 of valuation.”

JK stated the assessors are recommending it to the Board of Selectmen.

Hearing was closed at 6:33.

Motion

KK made a motion to accept the single tax rate as recommended by the Assessors for \$12.62 for the fiscal year 2024.

EV seconded.

Motion passed (2:0).

NEW BUSINESS

Contract Execution: EVIP Program for Charging Stations

NP stated she needed signatures.

Hardwick/New Braintree Cultural Council

NP noted By-Laws state the Selectboard accept any grant over \$5,000 awarded to the Town, but Board needs to accept the award of \$11,400.

Motion

KK made a motion to accept the grant that was given to the Hardwick/New Braintree Cultural Council in the amount of \$11,400 through the local cultural council program.

EV seconded.

Motion passed (2:0).

RFP: Sewer Oversight

EV stated seems there should be some form of schedule for whoever is hired. KK commented the schedule has been put together between DPC and USDA. EV suggested RFP be forwarded to Legal and have them review. Once their input is received items can be filled in pertaining to dates.

New Fire Truck

Discussion ensued with EV opening up the floor for comments. JP handed the Board a brief summary of some of the NFPA chapters on preventive maintenance on fire apparatus that are in-service currently. JP stated Engine One is a 1987 Pierce Arrow which is technically by NFPA out-of-service. Approximately \$30,000 in repairs have been made over approximately the last few years. There are outstanding repairs that need to be done which outweigh the cost of the vehicle.

JP said he's had conversations with Andrew Hillsman, Fire Rescue in Walpole, about transitioning to a Pierce Ascendant Quint (ladder truck with a pump) which would replace Engine One and take over as the first new piece of apparatus. KK asked if it would fit in the building and JP stated it will fit.

KK asked how it would be funded. JP said cost is \$1,643,364.00. That figure is good until January 1st which at that time another increase can be expected. KK asked what would be needed to lock in a price.

NP said the only way to afford the truck is to go to a debt exclusion. A Town Meeting would need to take place addressing debt exclusion. NP noted the amount is too high for a USDA loan.

KK noted a debt exclusion Town Meeting needs to occur before any money is paid to secure the truck.

Motion

KK made a motion to proceed with this with a meeting and whatever it needs to happen, and that Nicole is going to reach out to Ryan Wilkos to coordinate a date being mindful of the holidays – maybe the first week in December.

EV seconded.

Motion passed (2:0).

EV questioned if the tanker is still good and was told yes, it is a 2006. JP stated the other truck is a 1998 that's starting to show its age. RW noted there had been an issue with the truck and is having someone take a look at the truck.

KK asked with RW retiring December 25th, had there been any discussion regarding his replacement or will a committee be formed, etc. EV said he's had discussions with the Chief and the Deputy Chief and

he feels JP could step into the Chief's position for 6 months. KK said that would need to be a Board decision. JP voiced his willingness to step in as interim Chief until a replacement is found.

KK asked this be added to the next agenda for discussion.

Hardwick Public Hearing – Whistlestop Application for All Alcohol Restaurant License

EV noted the Hardwick Selectboard will hold a public hearing on November 13, 2023 at 6:45 p.m. at the Myron E. Richardson Municipal Building, 307 Main Street, Gilbertville on the application from Whistlestop, under MGL C 138 § 12 for a NEW All-Alcohol Restaurant Licensing located at 248 Main Street, Gilbertville 01031.

EV questioned KR as to what her intentions would be at the Whistlestop. KR responded she would like to serve drinks with dinner and other items inside with an adjoining train, and then eventually, there will be probably train rides with drinks and dinner on the train. She reiterated she would like to do liquor (mixed drinks and beer) in the building and then out to the train car next door. They are in the process of getting the extension started.

A neighbor of the Whistlestop stated they are definitely in favor and would be happy to see them open in the evenings. They are excited to see them moving forward with this.

Public hearing closed at 7:04 p.m.

KR noted they will start serving alcohol around Christmas pending receipt of the license.

Motion

KK made a motion that the Board approve the All-Alcohol restaurant license for the Whistlestop.

EV seconded.

Motion passed (2:0).

New Appointment: Planning Board/Zoning Board of Appeals Clerk

EV noted the ZBA has started up and they need someone to take minutes. Mr. Comerford asked Lucinda to do that. It makes sense that she be a Planning Board Clerk and ZBA Clerk because they're the same. The position is actually being created, therefore, they are not appointing anyone.

Motion

KK made a motion to create the Planning Board/Zoning Board of Appeals Clerk position.

EV seconded.

Motion passed (2:0).

Meeting Minutes Approvals

- Minutes – October 16, 2023
- Minutes – October 30, 2023

Motion

KK made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from October 16, 2023 and October 30, 2023.

EV seconded.

Motion passed (2:0).

Miscellaneous Correspondence

NP presented two letters dated November 12th from Edward Kelly regarding his resignation from the Board of Trustees on the Paige Memorial Library and from the Council on Aging effective immediately resulting in an opening on the Council of Aging. Board of Trustees is an elected position. EV stated he would bring this up at the next meeting.

Motion

KK made a motion to accept both letters from Edward Kelly – one resigning from the Board of Trustees with the Paige Memorial Library, and the other resigning from the Council on Aging both effective immediately.

EV seconded.

Motion passed (2:0).

December Selectboard Meetings

It was decided the Selectboard will meet on December 11th.

Adjournment

Motion

KK made a motion to adjourn.

EV seconded.

Motion passed (3:0).

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.