

Hanscom Area Towns Committee Meeting Minutes September 17, 2020

Attendees: Emily Mitchell, Bedford Select Board; Linda Escobedo, Concord Select Board; Suzie Barry, Lexington Select Board, Jonathan Dwyer, Lincoln Board of Selectmen; State Representative Thomas Stanley, Glen Kernusky, Hanscom Air Force Base; Jeffrey Cohen, Bedford Planning Board; Margaret Coppe, Lexington; Steven Gladstone and Gary Taylor from Lincoln Planning Board.

Ms. Mitchell called the meeting to order at 7:01pm and read the remote meeting participation statement regarding Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law. Ms. Mitchell recognized those attending the meeting, named above.

Ms. Mitchell asked the Select Board representatives from the four towns to identify any other official members of HATS, recognizing that the committee's memorandum of agreement calls for one select board member from each town, one planning board member, and up to two at-large members. Ms. Mitchell identified Steven Hagan (Planning Board and Conservation) and Jeffrey Cohen (Planning Board), Mr. Dwyer identified Margaret Olson (Planning Board) and Peter Braun (at-large), Ms. Escobedo identified Kate McEaney (Planning Board), Ms Barry identified Bob Peters (Planning Board) and Margaret Coppe (at-large)

Representative Thomas Stanley

Mr. Stanley noted that there are very few people in the state house these days given the pandemic. A proposed budget for the rest of the year is still being drafted. It is clear that there will be a budget deficit, but it is difficult to forecast how large the actual deficit will be. Earlier forecasts were in the \$2 billion to \$8 billion range, and the draft seems to be settling on a \$5 billion deficit, which represents a somewhat conservative number, about a 16% drop from last year, as opposed to the 2.9% increase for this year.

National unemployment rate is about 8%, but 16-17% here in Massachusetts, affecting revenue. We have \$3.5 billion in cash reserves, and don't want to use all of that right away but might dig deep into it. We hoped to hear about additional financial support from the federal government by now. The next year or two is going to be very difficult, but we will get through it.

Local aid will be level-funded, as voted on earlier this year, with cost of living increase. Chapter 70 funds were also level-funded, but not the educational reform part, and these are the only line items that were not reduced.

Ms. Escobedo asked if there is clarity on when the session ends. Mr. Stanley responded that the formal session ends at the end of the calendar year, but practically we expect the number of conference bills to wrap up in mid-November but there very well could be formal sessions in December. However, we have elections coming up, and often some may want to wait for new members to be sworn in.

Mr. Dwyer noted that there is some probability that the CARES Act will not be replenished, and asked if the legislature considered alternative sources of funds. Mr. Stanley said there hasn't been any formal discussion, but reductions of budget line items and raising taxes would be strongly considered, such as the gas tax and Transportation and Climate Initiative to bring in more revenue, but no open serious discussion of other areas.

Mr. Dwyer asked how Mr. Stanley sees the police reform bill moving ahead. Mr. Stanley said they are closer to a conference bill coming out, as discussion continues on clarifying qualified immunity changes and who would determine if a police officer was performing their duties in a manner in which they should, and how. The Senate version had outsiders evaluating behavior, and the House version had people who were more familiar with police practices and scenarios evaluating behavior.

Mr. Stanley answered another question regarding predictions on the Act to Promote Housing Choices by saying that the pandemic upset progress on all legislative agendas. He hopes the act comes back for discussion.

MassPort and Hanscom Air Force Base Updates — Ms. Mitchell noted that noise levels at the airport are lower than last year. Mr. Kernusky reported that the base is at Phase 2C of reopening, still with near maximum amount of telecommuting, but with some barber shops and auto repair shops opening up. We trail two weeks behind the state, preferring to go slowly. Ms. Mitchell asked about a proposed action to demolish some buildings on the base in the Mitre complex, and if the other board members received the notice. Mr. Dwyer had not received it, and Mr. Kernusky said he would forward it.

Municipal Highlights

Concord reported having their Annual Town Meeting last Sunday, with very good attendance and preparation of facilities and updated information content. The warrant was slimmed down, and the meeting lasted 3 hours, and included citizen comments. Highlights include an 83 unit assisted living project, which passed. The project included a Tax Increment Financing agreement, which was a new tactic for Concord. The town also voted an additional \$500k for affordable housing, the second year in a row for this level of commitment. The town also approved the bylaws for the affordable housing trust established at the prior year's Annual Town Meeting. Also, \$2 million was set aside for stabilization fund, in anticipation of the middle school project.

Lexington will have special town meetings, 3 nights in October and 4 nights in November, for articles that would have been part of Annual Town Meeting if the pandemic didn't compel substantial decreases in the number of articles considered. Nine are citizen petitions. The fire station is just about finished, and it's worth a drive to see it from the outside. Ms. Barry said she is ever grateful to the community for supporting it. Lexington has a new economic director, which will allow revisioning activities of Hartwell Ave business area to resume.

As part of the Lincoln update, Mr. Dwyer noted that he is in contact with MassDOT to hear an updated status on the Route 2A repaving project, since it has been roughly a year since the last news. Also, the town will restrict parking near some conservation land along Sandy Pond Rd because the number of cars parked on days with good weather exceed capacity. No parking will be permitted near the trail heads to allow easier access for all and for emergency personnel. Mr. Dwyer noted that the state Department of Public Health changed the risk level of West Nile Virus to Moderate, from Low, for Lincoln, Concord, and Lexington. Lincoln will have a series of three roundtables on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism, with a focus on policing in roundtable #1 that Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan.

Bedford had its Annual Town Meeting last July. Town staff and resident did a tremendous job with facilities and material. The meeting lasted two hours. It was an abbreviated warrant, with

\$16 million in capital projects postponed, including a new fire station and improved police station. There was also a special town meeting within the Annual Town Meeting to consider a Tax Increment Financing for a development on North Middlesex Turnpike, which passed. However, the property owner declined the TIF to be a good neighbor. Also, Black Lives Matter demonstrations of support continue in town, and the long-standing Bedford Embraces Diversity group continues its activities in town. The town has applied for a grant from Metropolitan Area Planning Council to improve diversity and equity.

Future meetings:

- Nov 19 with Secretary Mike Kennealy, MA Housing & Economic Development
- Jan 21 with State Representative Kenneth Gordon
- Feb 18 (school vacation), Apr 15, June 17

Mr Dwyer moved that the committee approve the February 2020 meeting minutes. Ms. Barry seconded. The vote was unanimous: Dwyer: Aye, Escobedo: Aye, Barry: Aye, Mitchell: Aye

Ms Escobedo made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Ms Barry. The vote was unanimous: Dwyer: Aye, Escobedo: Aye, Barry: Aye, Mitchell: Aye

Meeting adjourned at 8:52.

Minutes submitted by Jonathan Dwyer