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**LANCASTER SELECT BOARD
Regular Meeting Minutes
of Monday, March 20, 2023
6:00 P.M.
Nashaway Meeting Room, 2nd Floor,
Prescott Building,
701 Main Street, Lancaster MA**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Stephen J. Kerrigan called the meeting to order at 6:00PM in the Nashaway Meeting Room on the second floor in the Prescott Building, 701 Main Street, Lancaster, MA. He advised that the meeting was being recorded via ZOOM, and is being broadcast by Sterling Lancaster Community Television.

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86315854210>
Meeting ID: 863 1585 4210

Roll call vote taken, Jason A. Allison, present, Stephen J. Kerrigan, present. Also present, Kate Hodges, Town Administrator. Select Board member Alexandra W. Turner was not present.

II. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Allison moved to approve the minutes March 6, 2023. Mr. Kerrigan seconded the motion *Vote taken; Jason A. Allison, Aye; Stephen J. Kerrigan, Aye; Motion passed. [2-0-0]*

III. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Opportunity for the public to address their concerns, make comments, and offer suggestions on operations or programs, except personnel matters. Complaints or criticism directed at staff, volunteers, or other officials shall not be tolerated.

*** Taken out of order following Communications ***

Mr. Kerrigan recognized Ralph Gifford, 861 George Hill Road. Mr. Gifford asked how today's budget problems have happened, and how it can be avoided in the future. He would like to see a three to five year projection. Ms. Hodges explained that these projections have been created for the first time in several years.

Mr. Kerrigan recognized George Frantz, 13 Highfield Drive. Mr. Frantz recalls former Select Board member Stan Starr warning that the budget would be in bad shape if something wasn't done several years ago. As a Planning Board member, he thinks that it should be incumbent upon Planning to help address future issues. He suggests a larger room for the Budget Forum.

Mr. Kerrigan recognized Win Clark, 923 Main Street. Mr. Clark asked a procedural question regarding placement order of an article. Mr. Kerrigan explained that the Moderator can determine the order. He would like to see the CPA Articles come sooner so that younger families who might leave early would be able to hear the presentation. Ms. Hodges explained that she had put the articles in the order shown just to place all the budget-related articles together, but that alternative placement could be considered.

Mr. Kerrigan recognized Kendra Dickinson, 402 Oetman Way. Ms. Dickinson noted that she was speaking as a private citizen, not as a member of the Planning Board. Ms. Dickinson thanked the people who had worked on the budget for their hard work and transparency. She finds it disappointing that the Government Study Committee is not being used appropriately, and that the Citizens' Petition requesting a change to the number of members of the Select Board is attempting to circumvent the Government Study Committee.

Mr. Kerrigan recognized Jay Moody, 124 Seven Bridge Road. Mr. Moody said that while no one wants an override, hiring Ms. Hodges was a great step forward to seeing where we need to be.

IV. ADMINISTRATION, BUDGET, AND POLICY

1. FY24 Budget – Brief Presentation of Current Figures and Standings

- a. Public Forum – Thursday, March 23 at 6:00 PM
- b. Brief Overview of Override Process & Budget Failures
- c. Discuss Initial Mediation & Cost Cutting Initiatives (Allison)
- d. Discuss Board Process to Approve or Disapprove Override Question and Amount

Town Administrator Hodges presented a PowerPoint slideshow explaining the FY24 Budget (posted on Select Board website.) She explained the request for a Proposition 2-1/2 override that will be voted on during Town Elections on May 8. Police Chief Moody, Fire Chief Hanson, Thayer Memorial Library Director Joe Mule, Director of Health & Human Services Kelly Dolan, and Community Planning and Development Director Jasmin Farinacci explained the impact of radical budget cuts on their respective departments.

In addition, Ms. Hodges explained that some cost savings in the FY24 budget has been because the Fire Department Union has, as of March 9, been decertified, and is not longer part of the Teamsters Union. Also, development of the proposed 696 Fort Pond Road has been permitted, so some receipts will add to revenues.

A budget forum will be held on Thursday, March 23, at 6:00 PM. The Annual Town Meeting will be on May 3 at 7:00 PM. Town Elections are on May 8, 7:00 AM – 8:00 PM.

Mr. Allison asked Fire Chief Hanson for additional information on how Fire Department cuts could impact homeowner's insurance rates for residents. Mr. Kerrigan asked further questions of Mr. Mule and Chief Moody, and asked Finance Director Cheryl Gariepy for details on the following fiscal year would be impacted if the Proposition 2-1/2 vote should fail.

Mr. Allison asked questions about cost cutting measures, suggesting that the Select Board lead by example by cutting some paper, and having the Select Board materials, including the weekly packet, available digitally only rather than printed. He and Mr. Kerrigan decided to wait until the full Board is present before voting on this. This will be on the next agenda.

Mr. Kerrigan explained that the Select Board needs to determine the amount requested for override prior to March 27, at which point the Warrant will need to be closed. Mr. Kerrigan and Mr. Allison agreed that the whole Board should be present for this determination, so it will be the first agenda item on the March 27th meeting. Ms. Hodges noted that the Finance Committee is required to make a recommendation on the budget; they will be meeting tomorrow night. Ms. Hodges will email the Finance Committee members.

2. Annual Town Meeting – May 3, 2023, beginning at 7:00 PM

- a. Discuss Warrant Article Drafts and Citizen Petitions Received to Date
- b. Review Accommodation Requests & Meeting Logistics
- c. Set Date for Town Meeting Warrant Review Public Forum

Ms. Hodges reviewed the Warrant Articles currently ready for the Annual Town Meeting (ATM). She will prepare the Operating Budget to show a \$1.2 million deficit, both with and without an override. The second Article will be the Nashoba Regional School District Agreement.

Article 3 would create a Personnel Bylaw that would replace the outdated Personnel Code. Ms. Hodges has sent the Board a lengthy draft of a Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual. She explained that the current Personnel Code is missing things like a Progressive Discipline Policy.

Discussion was held as to whether articles sponsored by the Select Board should be endorsed/approved by the Board prior to Warrant Closure on the 27th. It was decided that votes could be taken tonight with the understanding that articles could be pulled on the 27th.

Mr. Allison moved to place Article 2, Nashoba Regional School District Agreement, on the ATM Warrant as a Select Board Article. Mr. Kerrigan seconded. Vote taken, Mr. Allison, Aye; Mr. Kerrigan, Aye. Vote passed. [2-0-0]

Mr. Allison moved to place creation of the Personnel Bylaw, on the ATM Warrant as a Select Board Article. Mr. Kerrigan seconded. Vote taken, Mr. Allison, Aye; Mr. Kerrigan, Aye. Vote passed. [2-0-0]

Ms. Hodges explained that Article 4 is about revolving funds; Article 5 is about the Water District Funds. Article 6 is a Planning Board article about Accessory Apartments. Article 7 is also a Planning Board article about Affordable Housing.

Article 8 is “Establishment of an Abutter Lot Sales Program” sponsored by the Select Board. Mr. Allison moved to place the “Establishment of an Abutter Lot Sales Program” on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant as a Select Board Article. Mr. Kerrigan seconded. Vote taken, Mr. Allison, Aye; Mr. Kerrigan, Aye. Vote passed. [2-0-0]

Article 9, sponsored by the Planning Board, is “Zoning Use Regulation Table Amendments.”

Article 10 is “Special Legislation – DCAMM Parcel Conveyance”; this was done at a prior Annual Town Meeting, but the Legislature took no action. Mr. Allison moved to place “Special Legislation – DCAMM Parcel Conveyance” on the ATM Warrant as a Select Board Article. Mr. Kerrigan seconded. Vote taken, Mr. Allison, Aye; Mr. Kerrigan, Aye. Vote passed. [2-0-0]

Article 11 is part of the “Senior Means-Tested Tax Exemption Program Proposal” that would create a Tax Fairness Committee. Ms. Hodges explained that this is the first step to tax relief for some Seniors in need. Mr. Allison moved to place “Establishment of a Tax Fairness Committee” on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant as a Select Board Article. Mr. Kerrigan seconded. *Vote taken, Mr. Allison, Aye; Mr. Kerrigan, Aye. Vote passed. [2-0-0]*

Article 12 would create Special Legislation for an Exemption to Firefighter Age for a specific member of the Department. Mr. Allison moved to place “Special Legislation for Exemption to Firefighter Age Requirement” on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant as a Select Board sponsored Article. Mr. Kerrigan seconded. *Vote taken, Mr. Allison, Aye; Mr. Kerrigan, Aye. Vote passed. [2-0-0]*

Ms. Hodges presented a Citizens’ Petition that was received today for inclusion as a Warrant Article. This would amend the Recall Procedure; it appears to change the Recall Procedure so that a Recall process could only apply to officials convicted of a felony or a misdemeanor. Ms. Hodges will reach out to the petitioner for further information. The Select Board needs to advise Ms. Hodges as to whether or not they will make a recommendation on this Article.

Ms. Hodges presented another Citizens’ Petition to be included as a Warrant Article relative to Lancaster-Specific Abutter Sales Lot Program, similar to the “Town of Littleton Plan.” Mr. Kerrigan noted that this petition seems to only deal with foreclosed properties.

Article 15 will be the Community Preservation Committee Budget, which is currently under review by Town Counsel. Article 16 is related and will be the projects to be taken on by the Community Preservation Committee.

Article 17 is another Citizens’ Petition, requesting Special Legislation to change the Select Board from three (3) members to five (5) members.

Article 18 is the Unclassified Wage Schedule. Mr. Allison moved to place the Unclassified Wage Schedule on the Warrant; Mr. Kerrigan seconded. Mr. Kerrigan stated that he thinks that as an elected official, he should, either as a member of the Board or as an individual, take a position on all articles. Ms. Hodges will provide additional information on this Article.

VIII. APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS - NONE

XI. COMMUNICATIONS

1. Select Board:

- Budget Forum this Thursday at 6:00 PM at the Dexter Room at the Thayer Memorial Library
- Special Meeting Monday, March 27, 2023, starting at 12:00PM, ZOOM ONLY
- Regular Meeting Wednesday, April 5, 2023, starting at 6:00PM, HYBRID.

2. Finance Committee:

- Regular Meeting Tuesday, March 21, 2023, starting at 6:15PM, ZOOM ONLY

3. Town Wide Business

- Warrant Review Meeting: TBD, Old Town Hall Auditorium
- Annual Town Meeting: May 3, 2023 starting at 7:00PM, Mary Rowlandson Elementary and Luther Burbank Schools
- Annual Town Election: May 8, 2023

4. Miscellaneous Correspondence and Memoranda

*** Public Comment taken out of order following Communications ***

XII. ONGOING PROJECTS & OLD BUSINESS

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Allison moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Kerrigan seconded the motion. *Vote taken; Jason A. Allison, Aye; Stephen J. Kerrigan, Aye; Motion passed. [2-0-0]*

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Rocco
Executive Assistant

APPROVED

Jason A. Allison, Member
Dated: April 18, 2023