



Town of Swampscott

Select Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, November 20, 2019

Room B-129 Swampscott High School, 200 Essex St. Swampscott, MA

MEMBERS PRESENT

Peter Spellios (Chair), Naomi Dreeben (Vice Chair), Polly Titcomb

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Donald Hause, Laura Spathanas

OTHER TOWN OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Sean Fitzgerald (Town Administrator), Ronald Mendes (Assistant Town Administrator), Allie Fiske (Assistant to the Town Administrator), Marzie Galazka (Director of Community Development), Kevin Breen (Fire Chief), Graham Archer (Incoming Fire Chief), Mary Ellen Fletcher (Finance Committee, Vice Chair), John Picariello (Earth Removal Advisory Committee, Chair) Tasia Vasiliou (Board of Assessors, Chair)

Mr. Spellios called the Select Board meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

UPDATE ON AGGREGATE BLASTING John Picariello, the Chair of the Earth Removal Advisory Committee conducted a presentation on short-term and long-term mitigation efforts addressing the increase in blasting from Aggregate Industries' (AI) Quarry. Mr. Spellios requested clarification on the peak particle velocity (PPV) proposed limits, and whether they will truly be impactful.

Ms. Dreeben asked for clarification on the timeline for notification of future blasts. Currently, the notice is given 2-hours in advance.

Mr. Spellios asked what percentage of blasts are maintenance versus production. Although they did state that there has been an increase in maintenance blasts due to constructing a new ramp, Aggregate Industries was unable to provide a firm percentage and Mr. Spellios said that this is something that should be considered when signing the 2020 ERAC permit.

Ms. Titcomb raised concerns about water testing and Mr. Picariello noted that water is tested as it is pumped. Ms. Titcomb also noted that there is no language in the Swampscott permit that states what actions will be taken if heavy metal testing of dust shows any concerns. Mr. Spellios stated that they can reconvene to discuss if this is the case. AI stated that there is no data suggesting that the quarry is contributing to dust settling in nearby neighborhoods.

There was extensive conversation about the distribution of letters providing neighbors with free pre-blast surveys within a 1,000 foot radius of blast area. Mr. Spellios expressed concern based on the visual radius map provided that this did not encompass a wide enough area and that the map should be revisited to clearly detail which streets will be notified. There was also a request that there be clarification on how requests for free-blast surveys be addressed from residents beyond the 1,000-foot radius.

A resident from Essex Street asked how they determined the radius. Her house is not on the list of streets with free pre-blast surveys yet she has a seismograph at her house.

Mr. Spellios reiterated from a previous discussion that two letters need to be sent, giving people within the 1,000-radius a free pre-blast survey, and a letter within the 1,000-2,000-foot radius the opportunity to request one.

A resident from Nichols Street asked if the dust was tested from the properties at Aggregate Industries or the dust that came from properties in surrounding neighborhoods. It was confirmed that the dust was tested from Aggregate Industries. She asked for specifics of particularly strong blast on November 14 and AI responded that it might have been intense for some neighborhoods due to the orientation of the blast. Additionally, she stated that when constituents called the Swampscott Fire Department to report a complaint about a blast, they are told that if the blast is on the Salem side of the quarry they should contact the Salem Fire Department as well. Chief Breen confirmed that the two Salem and Swampscott Fire Departments do not share complaint data with one another.

A resident from Fisher Ave. asked for clarification on the process of doing two 40-foot blasts as opposed to one 80-foot blasts. Mr. Spellios explained that the first blast clears out rock to make space for the second blast, spreading the blast effects out horizontally into the earth rather than vertically.

Ms. Breen asked if decibel levels are also measured and the Fire Department confirmed they are.

This item will be discussed at a future Select Board meeting again in February.

- Mr. Spellios requests a good-faith effort to do a 24-hour email notice prior to a blast
- Mr. Spellios requested that they see a final version of the package and letter going out to neighboring residents as well as an updated radius map color-coding the streets receiving this letter.
- Mr. Spellios requested that the consultant working with ERAC also work with the Town and Select Board to ensure they are part of the process.

FY2020 TAX RATE RECAP PRESENTATION – CLASSIFICATION HEARING

On **MOTION** (Dreeben) and **SECOND** (Titcomb) the Board conducted a roll call to open the public hearing on tax classification. (Titcomb) Yes (Dreeben) Yes (Spellios) Yes - and the board entered into public hearing.

Assistant Town Administrator for Admin. & Finance Ron Mendes walked through presentation for FY2020 Tax Classifications and a review of the Tax Rate Recap. Ms. Vasilou, Board of Assessors Chair, was also present for the presentation. The presentation included data on the recently certified values for FY2021 that were approved by the Board of Assessors. The board has three choices to make this evening: (1) to choose whether to adopt a shift of tax burden to the commercial, industrial and personal (CIP) property taxpayer and the amount of the shift; (2) whether to adopt a residential exemption; and (3) whether to adopt a small commercial exemption and if so adopted, the applicable exemption percentage.

The data that was presented included the \$1.0 million that was appropriated by town meeting on Monday Nov. 18th to be used to reduce the tax levy. If the board were to adopt the same policy as the last two fiscal years this would result in a reduction to the average single family tax bill of \$23. The presentation also revealed that there were six applications for the Small Commercial Exemption in 2018, and none in 2019. The Select Board questioned why this might be, but some stated that they see no harm in offering the program again and doing further business outreach for 2020. Mr. Fitzgerald commented that there are

additional strategies and programs that the Town can evaluate to determine if they would be helpful to sustain small businesses.

Mary Ellen Fletcher, the Vice Chair of the Finance Committee, spoke in favor of going further than the policy in recent years and adopt the maximum 175% CIP Shift. There were no further comments from the public.

Action Item:

- Mr. Spellios requested that the chart showing the CIP shift go below 1.7 so they can understand the implications.
- Mr. Spellios requested that Mr. Mendes revisit the tax relief businesses were entitled to under the Small Business Incentive in 2018.
- Mr. Spellios requested that moving forward, trends through 2019 be included.

Motion #1: I move that the board select a Residential Factor of 0.946766 (a CIP Shift of 170%) for the Fiscal Year 2020 Tax Levy; and in order to effect this policy, the Board hereby authorizes Sean Fitzgerald, Town administrator, to electronically sign on behalf of the Select Board on the Massachusetts Department of Revenues Gateway System. (or choose to adopt a Residential Factor of 0.942964 (a CIP Shift of 175%))

On **MOTION** (Dreeben) and **SECOND** (Titcomb) it was **VOTED** (unanimous) to recommend approval of this article.

Motion #2: I move that the board choose to not adopt a Residential Exemption for Fiscal Year 2020

On **MOTION** (Dreeben) and **SECOND** (Titcomb) it was **VOTED** (unanimous) to recommend approval of this article.

Motion #3: I move that the board adopt a Small Commercial Exemption of 10% of the value of qualifying parcels for FY2020 (or choose to not adopt a Small Commercial Exemption) Naomi motion, Titcomb second

On **MOTION** (Dreeben) and **SECOND** (Titcomb) it was **VOTED** (unanimous) to recommend approval of this article.

On **MOTION** (Dreeben) and **SECOND** (Titcomb) the Board conducted a roll call to close the public hearing on tax classification.

FY2019 YEAR-END FINANCIAL REVIEW AND FY2020 Q1 REPORT

Town Administrator Sean Fitzgerald presented a summary of FY19 Revenue. Highlights:

- FY19 General Fund Revenues exceeded expectations in FY19
- Expenditures came well within appropriation
- Free Cash is certified at \$4.4 million
- 97.35% of FY19 budget was expended
- Future budgeting will have to take into consideration increased costs in enterprise funds, solid waste removal, and end of employment.

Mr. Spellios requested that future forecasts and reviews flag areas of interest and track local receipts as a percentage of the prior year.

FY2021-2030 FINANCIAL FORECAST

Mr. Fitzgerald gave a presentation on the FY2021-2030 financial forecast. The financial forecast followed a model that was begun last year with the assistance of the UMass, Boston Collins Center through a Community Compact grant from the Commonwealth. The financial forecast is an annual report and analysis that looks at revenue trends and charts out expenditure trends over the next 5-10 years. Currently the forecast is showing deficits in each of the ensuing years. Since the Town is not allowed to deficit spend, we will need to make careful decisions about spending over the next several years.

A few areas that we will need to follow closely will be collective bargaining agreements, and salary spending. We also need to make decisions about the Town's Solid Waste program in order to address the deficit in FY2020, as well as the path the town is on with this program, which is not sustainable.

Mr. Mendes confirmed that letters to Department Heads regarding budget preparation will be going out soon and he is scheduled to meet with the School Department next Tuesday. Mr. Fitzgerald also confirmed that he and Mr. Mendes are working on Town Priorities and they will be ready to discuss these in January.

TOWN MEETING AFTER-ACTION

Ms. Dreeben commented that the presentations were very useful; it's important to continue to educate constituents about the realities of the Town's costs, and that came across clearly. She also commented on the technical difficulties. Ms. Titcomb agreed with technical concerns and recommended there be a dry-run for future Town Meetings.

There was brief discussion about the fact that 30-40% of members voted against the \$1,000,000 free-cash appropriation, which may have been a result of the informational presentations at the beginning of the meeting which gave the members a better sense of the Town's current and future financial situation.

Mr. Spellios commented that the Select Board has not seen a meaningful capital plan for Water and Sewer Enterprise and that conversation with Capital Improvement Committee must be extended to ensure this is in the capital plan. He praised the decision to have a consultant at Town Meetings.

CONSENT AGENDA:

- Approval of minutes of prior board meeting (November 6th) **Tabled** – pending clarification on correction recommended by Ms. Titcomb
- Approval of Common Victuallers License – Tropical Smoothie Café, 450 Paradise Rd.
 - o On **MOTION** (Titcomb) and **SECOND** (Dreeben) it was **VOTED** (unanimous) to recommend approval of this consent agenda item

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

Sean Fitzgerald offered a brief report including the upcoming Turkey Treasure Hunt (November 24), Breakfast with Santa (December 7), Hospice Tree Lighting (December 12), Holiday Festival/Parade and Tree Lighting (December 14). Information also included the Ta Rate Update, a non-Town sponsored Community Meeting on Terpene Journey, LLC Facility, SEA Bargaining, Town Union Contracts, Staffing, Town Hall Electric Vehicles, the Hadley Feasibility Study Project, and the Thanksgiving Eve Sunset Remembrance Ceremony for Max Carbone (November 27).

SELECTMENS' TIME

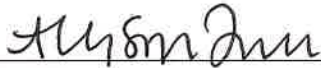
Ms. Dreeben announced the Indoor Thanksgiving Market on Sunday, November 24 at Swampscott High School.

Ms. Titcomb asked what the status is for the RFI for marijuana establishments. Mr. Spellios responded that Marzie Galazka, Director of Community Development has the final draft.

MOTION was made to adjourn (Naomi) and **SECONDED** (Polly) and it was **VOTED** (unanimous) to adjourn.

Meeting Adjourned 8:54pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Allie Fiske, Assistant to the Town Administrator

Minutes APPROVED by vote of the Select Board 12/4/19