



SELECT BOARD MEETING  
Meeting Minutes  
May 24, 2023  
6:30 P.M.

APPROVED: **June 12, 2023**

**PRESENT:** Kristin Hilberg, Chair; Wesley Fowlks, Member; Priya Sundaram, Member; David McKiernan, Member

**ALSO PRESENT:** Town Administrator Mike Johns; Rajon Hudson, Assistant Town Administrator; Kelley Price, Administrative Assistant; and Kirby Dolak, BXBT

*The documents discussed herein have been included with the file copy of the agenda packet for the above referenced date and are hereby incorporated by reference.*

**1. Call the Meeting to Order Noting the Time & Presence of the Quorum**

At 6:33 PM, Chair Hilberg called Select Board meeting to order, via ZOOM pursuant to the procedures noted.

**APPOINTMENTS**

- Public Celebrations and Ceremonies Committee (Ramya Suresh)

Chair Hilberg moved to appoint Ramya Suresh to the Public Celebrations & Ceremonies Committee (PCCC), starting today through June 30, 2025. Seconded by Member Sundaram.

**Approved: 4-0-0** by Roll Call Hilberg, "aye," Sundaram "aye," McKiernan "aye," Fowlks "aye."

**NEW BUSINESS**

- Action:** Regional Dispatch Vote

Town Administrator Johns explained that staff visited the Regional Dispatch Center at Nashoba Valley. The five communities involved with the Regional Dispatch Center are connected via fiberoptic network. If Boxborough were to join, it would also be connected to this network. Additional necessary connections would be funded via the State. The Town's current dispatch model is not working well, and the Dispatch Center cannot be fully staffed. On May 8<sup>th</sup>, the Select Board voted for the Town Administrator to move forward with joining this District. At this time, the Select Board has many new members, and he would like for this process to be confirmed. All indications are that joining the Regional Center would be beneficial for the Town. Current dispatchers for the Town that have been employed for more than a year would receive a small payout. The Regional Dispatch Center has also noted that current employees could also procure interviews at the Center. The Town will need to address how to deal with people who currently walk into the Town Dispatch Center. This would be addressed through the existing budget to staff the Center for those walk-ins. There will be short- and long-term savings in joining the Regional Dispatch Center through the State.

Member Fowlks stated that he would like to make sure existing employees are taken care of and offered interviews at the Regional Dispatch Center. He noted that Nashoba Valley has been handling the Town's 9-1-1 calls for the last number of days. He has not heard any complaints during this time.

Member McKiernan stated that he would like to make sure the Fire Captains, Lieutenant and Sargent directly involved with this process.

Chair Hilberg asked the Police and Fire Chiefs to comment on the last 30 days of this process. Chief Szewczyk stated that there have been some hiccups, as dispatch is currently being handled in a hybrid format. Once joining formally, this process should be ironed out. Chief Fillebrown agreed that there have been some growing pains during this time. While he is not against moving to a Regional Dispatch, Boxborough had a strong dispatch center that will be lost in this. The 9-1-1 calls were being handled well in the community. Dispatch is the most vital part of this job. There needs to be buy-in from the people who use the dispatch system the most. He would like to see the lieutenants and captains more involved in this process. Captain Malinowski stated that he is not opposed to the proposal but would like to be able to be involved in the process. Captain Gray stated that the Town has infrastructure that the Regional Dispatch Center does not currently have. There are more moving pieces on the Fire side that need to be considered. Lieutenant Pelley stated that there are many pros and some cons to the proposal. He would like for the process to slow down, to make sure it is done the right way.

Anne Camaro, Regional Dispatch, explained that this will be a slow process and she is currently going through an evaluation process with Boxborough. No one is trying to rush through the process.

Member Fowlks noted that Town Administrator Johns is looking for an okay to continue moving forward with the process, while not finalizing this change at this time. The Board should determine if it supports beginning the process for a potential union.

Town Administrator Johns stated that he previously met with the Council on Aging Director and will be meeting with other senior groups in Town regarding this process.

Member Fowlks moved to authorize the Town Administrator to start the process for more formally exploring joining the Nashoba Valley Regional Dispatch. Seconded by Member Sundaram.

**Approved: 4-0-0** by Roll Call Hilberg, “aye,” Sundaram “aye,” McKiernan “aye,” Fowlks “aye.”

Member Fowlks moved to adjourn to Executive Session and to reconvene in Open Session after the conclusion of Executive Session to address the remaining agenda items. Seconded by Member Sundaram.

**Approved: 4-0-0** by Roll Call Hilberg, “aye,” Sundaram “aye,” McKiernan “aye,” Fowlks “aye.”

Member Fowlks moved to adjourn to Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to litigation per Massachusetts General Law Chapter 30A Section 21.A.3.: Appeal of Site Plan and Special Permit decisions 244 Adams Place and to approve the release of Executive Session minutes 4/23/23, noting that discussion in Open Session would be detrimental to litigation position of the Town. Seconded by Member McKiernan.

**Approved: 4-0-0** by Roll Call Hilberg, “aye,” Sundaram “aye,” McKiernan “aye,” Fowlks “aye.”

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The Board moved into Executive Session at 7:10pm.

The Board reconvened in Open Session.

## **COMMUNITY CONCERNS**

Steve Ballard made the following statements to the Board that, while he did not vote for the three new Board members, he hopes that they are good people and will independently work for all the townspeople, and not just those who helped to get them elected. He suggested that the new Board members ask themselves about the biases of others in Town, especially of their supporters. There are a number of corrupt police officers in Town who were recently promoted. The job started by previous Boards needs to be completed in ridding the Town of this corruption. This misconduct has been swept under the rug for a number of years and continues to occur. Liability of the Town will continue to grow, and more people will sue the Town. This is a disgrace to the Town. The Board has plenty of evidence of criminal misconduct and numerous civil violations. He hoped that the new Board members will do the right thing, where previous Boards did not.

Chair Hilberg requested that Mr. Ballard continue this conversation with her offline.

## **BOARD & ADMINISTRATOR COMMENTS & REPORTS**

The Board discussed speakers for the Memorial Day celebrations.

The Board discussed making future appointments and liaisons to other boards/committees.

The Board agreed to a brief meeting on May 30<sup>th</sup> at 7pm via Zoom.

Member Fowlks stated that the Board typically has onboarding buddies for new members, especially in terms of Open Meeting Law rules. He suggested being the onboarding person for Member McKiernan, as he cannot do this for all of the new Board members simultaneously. Member McKiernan agreed.

Member Fowlks suggested having a meeting to get caught up on the number of open, current items the Board has in process.

Member Fowlks noted that the meeting had been ongoing for three hours at this point. Life events are missed out on by attending these meetings. He does not take his service on the Board lightly.

Member Fowlks moved to adjourn. Seconded by Member McKiernan.

**Approved: 4-0-0** by Roll Call Hilberg, “aye,” Sundaram “aye,” McKiernan “aye,” Fowlks “aye,”

Item#

**Exhibits**

Agenda May 24, 2023

Appointment Request Letter R. Suresh

Nashoba Valley Regional Dispatch District documents