



Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF)

Meeting Minutes

June 14, 2022

Place: Virtual Meeting - conducted via Remote Participation, pursuant to the Current Executive Order [Extended 6/16/21].

Attendance – *(Parties identified herein may not have been in attendance for the duration of this meeting)*

Select Board: Jennifer Campbell (Chair), John Markiewicz

Finance Committee: Becky Neville, Maria Neyland

ABR School Committee: Adam Klein

Library Board of Trustees: Mary Brolin (also member of the School Building Comm.)

Planning Board: None

Other Attendees: Dennis Reip, Town Moderator

1. Call to Order (Library Board of Trustees)

At 7:04 PM, Library Board of Trustees Chair Mary Brolin called the meeting to order.

2. Introductions (for any new members or staff who may be in attendance)

All parties knew each other so no introductions were needed.

3. Review and Accept Minutes of April 27, 2022

Jennifer Campbell moved to approve the minutes of April 27, 2022. Becky Neville seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved 6-0 by Roll Call Vote: Campbell – yes; Markiewicz – yes; Neville – yes; Neyland – yes; Klein – yes; Brolin – yes

4. Annual Town Meeting Review

During the review of Annual Town Meeting (ATM) it was noted that we did not use any Yes/No microphones but that it might have been helpful for some of the articles.

The group also discussed that board members spoke a lot at ATM, sometimes responding formally representing their respective boards and other times from the floor but still with a board perspective. Board members noted that sometimes this was to clarify misinformation. It was also noted that although it's good to get a wide range of voices and perspectives it is allowed for board members to speak as individuals at town meeting.



Attendees also noted that the Planning Board did a lot of work and education prior to ATM. Prior to ATM, Mark Barbadoro did a good job presenting the solar by-law to the Finance Committee.

One attendee noted that Acton puts their consent agenda at the beginning of the meeting, which sets the pace of the meeting. This is something Boxborough can think about for future meetings. It feels like Acton gets a lot done quickly. Although one big difference is Acton votes a bottom line budget. Adam noted that we had to ask District admin to stay a long time since the budget took a lot of time this year. The group also discussed Littleton and how they always get through their warrant in one night. Littleton gives time limits to speakers but they include any responses in the time. It was suggested that we increase our time limit but include the responses in the time.

Other suggestions included noting to town meeting speakers that if a previous speaker made your point you could either sit down or quickly say I agree. The Moderator could ask the room for a show of hands if they have made up their minds. Then, the Moderator can move the question if he/she/they are hearing similar ideas. Another idea is to allow town meeting voters to move the question from their chairs, rather than getting in line or having a third microphone to move the question.

The School Committee was challenged on budget at both town meetings. The School Committee and District Administration are taking a hard look at how come to ATM next year. They plan to do as much work ahead as they can and educate the community in advance.

Attendees noted the work of John Fallon and others in preparing the warrant and Town Meeting materials. Hopefully the warrant will be prepared ahead of time by town staff, as well as materials such as the script and consent agenda.

5. Purpose and Focus of BLF Meetings Going Forward

The Select Board raised the question about the purpose and focus of the Boxborough Leadership Forum meetings going forward. Jennifer Campbell noted that she is interested in attending future meetings. She sees the value of the shared information. She suggested that perhaps the meeting would be of more interest if each meeting was focused on a specific topic, e.g., school budget or capital budget.

Others noted that it's good to get together and share issues facing the town. This included representatives from the Finance Committee, School Committee and Library Board.

In the discussion, attendees noted that the focus of meetings should be on major issues facing the town. The group discussed getting a more long-term strategic view beyond the standard updates. Some meetings should focus on the long-term view, such as what are strategies from the Select Board and School Committee over the next few years so we can do more planning as a group. For example, what is the plan for new facilities in town since BLF members may not have time to go to all the Select Board meetings. For the District, what is the plan with Conant over next few years and how will this impact Boxborough. BLF also offers a good forum to review surveys and reports and to get feedback from the leadership of the town outside of committee meetings.

We also discussed bringing in other Boxborough groups to share plans at specific meetings, such as the Boxborough Building Committee, Economic Development Committee or the Water Resources Committee.

It was noted that it's often a challenge to get people to respond to the agenda request; only a few people respond. Jennifer said she will send an email to all BLF participants asking what they want to



focus on and what additional topics would add value. We could set a calendar ahead of time and then people can choose to attend if they are interested in the focused topics.

6. AB Regional School Committee and School Building Committee Updates

6.1. School Updates

6.2. FY23 Updates

6.3. School Building Update

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School District has officially accepted AB Revolution as the new mascot. This news was well received by most of the community, but not all. AB will make changes moving forward (e.g., changing uniforms at standard replacement times).

The District received a \$50K donation from ABSAF.

Liz Fowlks was voted as the new School Committee member, joining Adam Klein, Evelyn Abayaah-Issah and Tessa McKinley as the Boxborough members of the committee.

Adam announced that Beth Petr is retiring. She will continue to take minutes for the school committee meetings, but otherwise she will retire at the end of June.

The School Committee will reorganize at their June 16th meeting. They will also evaluate the Superintendent at that meeting.

7. Select Board Updates

7.1. Personnel Updates

7.1.1. New Hires/Outstanding Hires

7.1.2. Town Accountant Update

7.2. Compensation Survey Updates

7.3. Negotiations Updates

7.4. Town Administrator Hiring Update

The Select Board has posted two positions – one for Associate Planner and one for a Police Officer. One of the current police officers will be going out on medical leave and there are concerns about shift coverage, so the Select Board wants to augment the police staff what we currently have. This decision was made by the Interim Police Chief, who was appointed today. He has lots of experience and is the past President of MA Police Chiefs. He is from Portland, ME and his name is James [DiVittorioDiGianvittorio](#).

The Select Board has appointed Kelly Szocik as the Town Assessor. She has lots of experience and is expected to pick things up quickly.

Warren O'Brien will be retiring at the end of this month. On June 28th there will be a retirement lunch, the Select Board will send details.

The Town Administrator search is underway. A survey that was posted today and is available on the Town website. The Select Board wants to get community input into the qualities and characteristics the



town wants for the next Town Administrator. The Select Board will post the survey on social media. The survey will close July 15th. A Screening Committee has been established and they have their charge.

In terms of the Town Accountant. We are currently paying a lot of consultant time and over time for the position. We are using about \$83K for about 30 hours a week and the ATM vote was for \$90K. There is concern that the position is not posted and we are spending the resources quickly, so this may tie the hands of new Town Administrator. Finance Committee members noted that they would like to see the position posted. The Finance Committee needs the support of a Town Accountant to properly prepare for annual and special town meetings. They do not want to take on this responsibility fully like they did for June's ATM.

The Compensation Survey is done. There are no updates on negotiations.

Maria Neyland noted that at a Planning Board meeting she heard that the Select Board is planning for two fall Special Town Meetings (STM) – one for negotiations and another for by-laws. Jennifer noted that they are not planning two STMs for this fall. However, there was discussion that the Planning Board often does not get enough time at ATM to fully review by-law changes and it might be good to move warrant articles focused on by-law changes to fall STM in the future. Through the discussion it was noted that this is a good idea, but we would need enough articles on the agenda to justify the expense of a STM. Also, specifics for any particular year should be discussed before the budgets are set to ensure resources for any STM and to discuss staffing.

8. Library Updates

The Library Board of Trustees has a new Trustee – Reeves Briggs. Peishan expects to complete the strategic plan by the end of August, 2022.

Peishan presented the strategic planning results on June 8 to the planning committee. Meeting attendees noted that Peishan had a great process and did a wonderful job. She included some people in the process who have not been involved in town committees previously.

One attendee noted that we need to use activities such as this and the large group of people advocating for the property on Sargent Road to get new people involved in the town.

9. Planning Board Updates

9.1. Zoning Bylaws Update

Not in attendance.

10. Finance Committee Updates

10.1. Reserve Fund Update

10.2. Budget Updates

10.3. Capital Updates

10.4. Financial Problems

10.4.1. Past due bills



10.4.2. Employee benefits not being paid

10.4.3. Tax bills

The Finance Committee noted that there is \$65K remaining in the reserve fund. They have one more meeting on June 28th, so all input is needed by June 28th to plan for the end of the year spending.

The Finance Committee would like a final budget for FY 2023 that includes the positions voted at ATM.

The Finance Committee will reorganize in July.

Jennifer noted that the Select Board is creating a schedule for this year that includes Budget Saturday and Capital Saturday. When the calendar is ready, Jennifer will share it. Right now, budgets will be needed in December and Budget Saturday is being planned for the first Saturday in January (Jan 7th), with a snow date of the 3rd Saturday (Jan 21st).

The Finance Committee reported that Jared came to the last Finance Committee meeting with a memo of what he found. The Fin Comm thinks he is addressing all the issues. Jared is looking into employee benefits; the Select Board asked him to follow up on this. He is doing a great job.

The Finance Committee noted that some town board members who get paid have not yet been paid this year. If they are not paid by June 30th, a warrant article has to be voted at Special Town Meeting for past due bills. Adam contacted Kelly, she said he was on payroll, as well as other School Committee members and Board of Health members. The Select Board members and Library Trustees are not taking the payments. The town needs to make sure all those who are supposed to be paid are paid or encumbered by June 30th. Becky will share this information with Jared and Carter.

11. Other Business

None.

12. Next Meeting

Jennifer Campbell of the Select Board will chair the next meeting. We will schedule the meeting for September 7. At 7 PM. If in person, Mary check if a meeting room in the library is available.

13. Adjourn

At 7:57 PM, Maria Neyland moved to adjourn the meeting. Adam Klein seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved 6-0 by roll call vote: : Campbell – yes; Markiewicz – yes; Neville – yes; Neyland – yes; Klein – yes; Brolin – yes

EXHIBITS

- Agenda
- Minutes of 4/27/22 – Draft