

MINUTES OF SELECT BOARD MEETING

Hope Select Board

Tuesday, January 11, 2022

6:30 PM

Hope Town Office

View the meeting in its entirety at

https://townhallstreams.com/towns/hope_me

Board Members Present:

- Sarah Ann Smith, Dick Crabtree, Wendy Pelletier, and Mike Brown

Others Present:

- Samantha Mank Bill Pearse Jr., Danielle Fagonde, Kate Clark, Tim Lock, Matt Weaver (*Zoom*), and Paul Smith (*Zoom*)

Call to Order:

- The meeting was called to order by Sarah at 6:31 p.m.

Agenda Adjustments/Approval:

- Wendy made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. It was seconded by Dick.

Motion passed 4-0

Public Comment:

- None

Minutes:

- December 28, 2021: Dick made a motion to approve the 12/28/21 minutes as written. It was seconded by Mike.

Motion passed 4-0

Warrants 51, 52, & 53:

- The Select Board reviewed the warrants. Mike made a motion to approve, and sign warrants 51, 52, and 53. It was seconded by Dick.

Motion passed 4-0

New Business:

- Bond Discussion for Hope Elementary School: HES has received at least \$450,000 from the federal government in covid relief funds and other stimulus programs. However, there have been restrictions on how the money can be spent. Some funds were used on the school facilities but not enough to cover any of the “big ticket” items that were to be covered by a bond that was approved by the voters at the last town meeting. The current state of the economy including inflation and the higher prices for materials, the supply chain issue with getting the materials, and the labor shortage with the ability to even receive bids for the project let alone, having people available to do the work, has made the school committee reassess the bond.

The school committee is hiring an actual independent construction assessor to help determine what the actual costs for the repairs to the school will be. It is quite possible that the current

approved bond amount will not be enough to cover the costs. If the costs are higher, this will need to be voted on again at town meeting in June. The school committee will contact the Town Administrator once the construction assessment has been completed and a cost estimate has been received.

- Options for Town Investment Accounts – Matt Weaver: Matt was asked to advise the Town about what to do with its current investments. Matt explained that Town has put money into intermediate to long term investments. Generally, funds are not transferred to short term funds based on ever changing market conditions. The level of risk the Town has is appropriate. For example, last year was a very poor year for bonds. The benchmark that was used was down 1.5%. Even so, the Town’s portfolio was actually positive 3.3%. This shows that The First Wealth Management did a good job managing risks. Owning intermediate to long term bonds yield a higher percentage rate than short term bonds.

In addition, Wealth Management uses an inflation protected fund -TIPS fund, which is connected with the CPI. So when inflation goes up, the value of that bond goes up as well. Last year, that bond fund was up over 5%. It was the only bond asset class that had a positive return. That is how the Town’s money is hedged.

The cash position was kept around 7%-8% which is a little higher than usual. A market neutral fund was used on the equities portion of the investments, which is about 20% of the equities allocation. Arbitrage is used to help manage any volatility in the equities market. Last year, it went up 6% by using this fund.

The Town’s investments are 75% in bonds, so having a 3.3% return is pretty remarkable. The current rate for a 2-year CD is only .4%. There may be some short term pain in the equities, which is 25% of the Towns portfolio, if the Fed raises rates too quickly and the market doesn’t react favorably. This happened in 2008. But, since the Town’s investments are in intermediate to long term funds, Matt believes the Town can weather the fluctuations. His advice for now, is to do nothing.

Old Business:

- Solar Trench Easement on Blueberry Hill Rd: Wayne Breda said he and Sarah would like to pursue going forward with having this on the town meeting warrant with the Select Board’s support. They have agreed to all four requirements. The Town has already been added as additional insured to their homeowner’s insurance. They agree to any maintenance or repairs needed to the road that is caused by the trench. Wayne will look into getting exact GPS coordinates for the trench to add to the paperwork already supplied by Revision to be used as the survey. They are still waiting for the attestation from Revision stating the installation of all wires meet the National Electric Code.

Once all of the documentation has been delivered to the Town Office, it will be forwarded to the Town Attorney. The attorney will draft the easement and Mr. Breda and Ms. McBrian as well as the Select Board will review it and agree to any final language.

This matter will be placed on the town meeting warrant. If approved by the voters, then the document will be signed by all parties and filed at the Knox County Registry of Deeds.

Other Business:

- None

Town Administrator Report:

- The copier has lost some internal component connection. The staff have been unable to print or scan for a large portion of the day. The Dept. of Motor Vehicle in Augusta will not allow the staff to manually write any registrations. Harbor Digital sent over a printer and installed it onto the Town's server so that it could be used with TRIO. It is working for that only, but other features are still not working. A technician will be here tomorrow.
- One person has responded to the need for Budget Committee members. No applications have been received yet.
- One building permit was issued for two signs to Collins Custom Services on Maple drive. No plumbing permits were issued.
- Automatic foreclosure for the 2020 property taxes is 30 days away. The Clerk sent out certified notices as well as regular mail letters for those who won't pick up their certified mail. One of the eight accounts has requested paperwork for a hardship abatement. No applications have been returned yet. The Clerk and Deputy Clerk will make phone calls in two weeks as a follow-up.
- It has been 30-days since the last contact with attorney, Kristin Collins regarding Doug Kelly's consent agreement. I will send a follow-up email to find out her current status.
- Matt, our CEO/LPI, has begun testing for the code enforcement certification. I will be proctoring one of those exams later in the week.
- Rick Bresnahan has stepped down as the chair of the Roads Advisory committee. A new Chair has not yet been selected. The committee will meet again in one month. All of the meeting minutes are available on the town website. The meetings that have been recorded are available on Townhall Streams.
- The deadline for registering dogs without a \$25 late fee per dog is January 31, 2022.
- MCSW has hired a new vendor for the yellow trash bags. The new bags are better quality but also come with a fee increase. Town Office prices won't be affected until the current supply of bags has been sold.
- There are 8 RE accounts for 2020, totaling \$12,821.36. Unpaid 2020 real estate taxes will automatically foreclose on February 10, 2022, if the accounts are not paid in full.
- There are 20 RE accounts for 2021, totaling \$40,883.03. Unpaid 2021 real estate taxes will automatically foreclose on February 3, 2023, if the accounts are not paid in full.
- There are 975 RE accounts for 2022, totaling \$1,523,653.95. The second half of taxes is due on Tuesday, May 3, 2021.
- The cash has not been out of balance since the last Select Board meeting on December 28, 2021.

Adjournment:

- Dick made a motion to adjourn at 8:02 p.m. It was seconded by Mike.
Motion passed 4-0

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