

Approved 11/21/16

TOWN OF HAMPDEN, MASSACHUSETTS  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN/BOARD OF HEALTH  
MINUTES

November 7, 2016  
6:00 pm

625 Main Street  
Hampden MA

Board Members: John D. Flynn, Norman Charest, Vincent J. Villamaino

The meeting was called to order by John Flynn at 6:00 pm.

Guests: Mary Ellen Glover, Tyler Witkop, The Wilbraham-Hampden Times, Rita Vail, Lisa Sternberg, Lisa Morace, Lena Buteau, Al Ganem, Sandra Sheehan

Time was left open at the start of the meeting to allow discussion between board members regarding the school unification vote at STM and how to respond to visitors at last week's meeting. At that meeting, residents opposed to the school unification plan asked for help in getting the word out to the School Committee to emphasize the sentiment of the residents who voted against the merge.

Guests arrived at 6:00 and waited while the board conducted new business.

Workers Compensation Audit: The board reviewed the audit results from our insurance company for workers compensation after it had been reviewed by Town Treasurer, Dick Patullo. Dick confirmed that the audit appeared to be in order, as it ranks all town employees. As typically happens, there is a slight additional cost to our insurance as rates for workers are adjusted on an annual basis. The board will sign the invoice and submit for payment.

Minutes: October 11, October 17, October 24, October 31. Due to the schedule and additional guests, the minutes will be reviewed at a later date.

Appointments: The board reviewed and signed appointment slips for Andrew Netherwood to full time member of Conservation Commission, Elizabeth Howarth to the Historical Commission and Antoinetta Smith to the Board of Registrars. Notices will be sent to those appointees.

Buy back Notice: The board reviewed a buy back notice from Police Sgt. Mike Cooney, as allowed in the Police Contract. The paperwork will be forwarded to Advisory Board for their files.

Executive Session: A motion was made by John Flynn to go into Executive Session to discuss ongoing litigation at 6:10, with return to Open Session, seconded by Norm Charest. VOTE: John Flynn yes, Norman Charest yes, Vinnie Villamaino yes.

A motion was made by Norman Charest to leave Executive Session at 6:20 pm and return to Open Session, seconded by Vinnie Villamaino. VOTE: Norman Charest yes, Vinnie Villamaino yes, John Flynn yes.

Residents opposed to Unification: Mary Ellen Glover, Rita Vail and Lisa Sternberg came before the board to continue discussion about next steps in the process to make the education equitable for our middle school students. Mary Ellen again asked about a letter of support to be sent to the SC; emphasizing the residents' overwhelming opposition to unification as presented at the STM, and wants the board to reiterate that position to the SC. Mary Ellen also mentioned about keeping the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students at TWB, but the board will not include that in the letter as that was not part of the proposed amendments. The proposal presented read, in part, "Students in grades sixth through eight may be assigned to the unified middle school located in Wilbraham, irrespective of their residence, during school years beginning in 2017 and ending in 2022, subject to extension as may be allowed in this agreement or through further amendment of this Agreement."

Norman has no issue with sending a letter, but is not sure about the placement of the fifth grade students. As this was not part of the proposed amendment, he does not feel that the board can comment on that topic. He would defer to the SC regarding the school most appropriate for those students. It was very clear that the town does not want to close TWB or send their children to a middle school in Wilbraham.

Mary Ellen then asked how the board intends to move forward from here?

There was discussion about additional funding for Hampden schools, but that is not allowed in the regional agreement.

Mary Ellen continued in noting that there is a lack of trust of the School Committee and that rebuilding of that trust has to happen to move forward. The question needs to be "How do we make it work?", rather than close TWB.

Rita Vail asked again about the letter of support and the board agreed they would have something to share at next week's meeting.

Lena Buteau, School Committee member stated that she is all for equitable education, that she is on the School Committee because she has students in the system, that she has no "agenda" and feels as though this proposal is the best solution to the problem of inequality.

Al Ganem added that he wants to remind everyone that "it's all about the children" and all present agreed that that was precisely how they felt.

One last question was where the SC stood on transferring students from Hampden to Wilbraham. The answer is that the decision to transfer is supposed to be done on a case to case basis to address the needs of the student.

At this point, with the Fire Department waiting, the board thanked everyone for their time and invited the firefighters into the meeting.

Fire Department: Chief Gorski and Fire Department Officers were before the board to discuss staffing and recruitment for the department. Mike presented a draft proposal to convert from a volunteer department to a call department; to hire 2 or 3 career firefighters to ensure day coverage during the week from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. He estimated an annual cost of \$200,000. He will also work on specifications for a new truck purchase to replace the 1974 Maxim, at a cost of \$500,000.

John Flynn understands the need for a change, given that there are very few, if any, firefighters available during the day, as most work out of town now. There was the suggestion of training highway department members to respond during the day, as had been done in the past. The Chief noted that the days of volunteerism is over with increasingly busy schedules for everyone. John explained that nothing can be done immediately, as we just finished STM and will have to wait until our Annual Town Meeting to try and secure funding. The budgeting process will begin in December. John asked the board if they are willing to pursue these changes and they agreed that they are.

Mike also suggested the option of setting up separate groups to respond to specific emergencies; carbon monoxide calls, brush fires, etc.

Also mentioned was the availability of a grant for 2 full time firefighters who would then be funded by the town.

On another matter, Mike brought up health care coverage, specifically for a volunteer who will be turning 66 which is outside of the terms of the current heart and circulatory coverage. We have talked with MIIA and are awaiting costs to continue coverage until age 70.

The conversation will continue through the budgeting process.

Capital Planning Committee: The board would like to get a group of volunteers together to work on capital planning and John asked that Tyler Witkop put a piece in the paper requesting those interested to contact the Selectmen's office.

The group of people discussing the middle school unification issue were invited back into the meeting room.

Board of Health: A variance is requested for a one foot reduction at 47 Old Coach Circle for the distance between the SAS and high groundwater. With a recommendation to grant a variance by Board of Health Agent, Lorri McCool, a motion was made by Vinnie Villamaino to allow the variance as requested, seconded by John Flynn. VOTE: All in favor and so voted.

The group of residents working towards a solution for equity in education without closing the doors of TWB have a name; Citizens Supporting Educational Excellence. Mary Ellen, Rita and Lisa came in to finish up their concerns about what happens next in the process of preserving Hampden student's education. Mary Ellen asked about reviewing the school's original regional agreement, signed in 1993, which parties are still searching for. Mary Ellen asked if this group could contact the town's attorney directly and were told no, but the board would entertain certain questions or concerns brought forward by the group. The board would then manage the

communications with Town Counsel, Mike Callan. Mary Ellen thinks that the town can “withdraw” from an amendment and would like to find the answer to that question. There was discussion about the Massachusetts School Building Authority coming to town and the board was told that the MSBA was in fact, in town today and through tomorrow. The board had not been made aware of the visit.

With a plan to be present at the next board meeting with hopes to see a letter to the School Committee, the residents left.

With no further business, a motion was made by Vinnie Villamaino to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 pm, seconded by Norman Charest. VOTE: All in favor and so voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela B Courtney  
Administrative Assistant