



The following meeting was videotaped and audio recorded.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, January 11, 2023.

Old Town Hall, 1111 Somerset Avenue, Dighton, MA 02715

And via Zoom

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairman Hull

He gave Zoom information and instructions for providing public input.

Roll Call:

Chairman Hull, present.

Selectman Caron, present.

Selectman Pacheco, present.

Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Moment of Silence

A moment of silence was requested by Chairman Hull for Donna Butler, Michael Farrell, Bisher Hashem, Keith Hayden, Maynard Horton, Jr. and Thomas Kelley.

Scheduled Appointments

Public Hearing

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull stepped down to second and it was voted to open the public hearing

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.

Chairman Hull, aye.

Chairman Hull stated that the board would not be voting on this item tonight.

He asked that the comments be kept to no more than 5 minutes.

Mark Pacheco – Town Clerk

Mr. Pacheco said he wanted to reiterate the facts to the public.

Selectman Caron said the cost would be around \$3,000.00 but this was an educated guess.

Chairman Hull said on the agenda for the next meeting the question will be, "Do we opt out of vote by mail for the upcoming election?"

Donna Berdos, 2396 Pleasant, street asked if there would be early voting. Town Clerk Pacheco said the early voting is not offered for annual election.

Jonathan Gale, 22 Waterford Circle, asked if the Board of Selectmen vote to opt out, would there not be an option to vote by mail? Mr. Pacheco said If the board votes not to opt out, everything would remain the same and would allow for mail in ballots.

Andrew Horton – 428 School Lane, asked if someone could still apply for an absentee ballot. Town Clerk Pacheco said it would not affect the absentee voting at all.

Jenn Duczkowski, 2414 County Street, asked what we are trying to avoid. Town Clerk Pacheco said cost. Ms. Duczkowski asked if that was all. Town Clerk Pacheco said yes.

Public Input

Paul Reynolds, 725 Main Street, said he believed that the free exchange of ideas was the lifeblood of civic society. He said voter participation is a good thing and should be encouraged. He said if voting by mail is increasing participation, then the increased costs was money well spent. He said the facts should be allowed to speak for themselves. Mr. Reynolds gave some voter turnout information from past elections. He said if vote by mail is having a positive effect on turnout, then it is money well spent. If we are merely incurring additional expenses, with no benefits, he believed that vote by mail was not appropriate for this election.

Jennifer Duczkowski, 2414 County Steet, said we don't have hard data on what the cost will be. She felt that the town should go through the process to gain the data. It was her opinion that we want to have as many people participate as possible and get the data behind it.

Jonathan Gale, 22 Waterford Circle, said as the ADA coordinator, no one wants to inhibit people with disabilities, but also the residents of the town are getting older. Many seniors cannot get out to vote in person because of their disabilities. He said there are a lot of people in town who choose to keep their disabilities silent. He said that also applies to veterans. He did not think that any town would have planned for this in advance. Mr. Gale thought that wider population needed to be considered as well.

Nancy Goulart, 631 Gray Terrace, agreed with Jen Duczkowski and Jonathan Gale. She said her concern was that she thought that we could get data about the age range of those voting. She thought it was worth giving it a shot just once. She asked if we would have the option to rescind the vote. Town clerk said we have to vote on this for each election.

Town Clerk asked to comment on Mr. Gales comments.

He said we have something called a "permanent absentee voter status." He said you need a doctor's note, but that would not be made public.

Jennifer Duczkowski, 2414 County Street, asked about the application being sent to all households.

Jonathan Gale said he knew the rough cost to send to all households from past mailings. He said a flyer was sent to just under 3,000 households in town and the figure was right around \$1,000.00.

Donna Berdos, 2396 Pleasant Street, said she was against vote by mail. She thought that it was not necessary and that everyone should vote in person.

Jessie Beerman – 926 Dighton Woods Circle, shared a personal experience that she had with mail in voting. She said that she missed a town election and could not participate one year. She said she is relieved that mail in voting is being offered to people. She would like to think that everyone deserves to vote.

Tom Gallucci – 2086 Palmer Street, said he was not in favor of mail-in ballots. He said our town has existed for 311 years with no mail-in voting. He thought Town Clerk Pacheco was doing a phenomenal job. Mr. Gallucci thought the potential for voter fraud was high and he was in favor of doing away with mail-in ballots.

Jonathan Gale, 22 Waterford Circle said if a person in a group home wants to vote, they often require assistance to fill out the ballot. He said they have that right. He thought that part of the previous comment should not have been allowed.

Chairman Hull asked if the Town Clerk has a way to validate the signature on those ballots coming in by mail. Town Clerk Pacheco said he compares the signature on the application and the signature on the ballot and they should match.

Chairman Hull asked if there was a need for a notary. Town Clerk Pacheco said no, not to vote.

Mr. Doug White, 455 Forest Street, would like us to opt out. He said there is a lot of distrust that has caused division. He said he did not think opting in, just to see how it goes, was a good idea. He said you can get an absentee ballot, there was no need to mail a ballot to each house, or add expense.

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull stepped down to second and it was **VOTED** to close the hearing.

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.

Chairman Hull, aye.

Use of tuition reimbursement program

Mr. Mullen Town Clerk Pacheco was seeking \$2,000.00 for a certificate and he recommended approval.

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull stepped down to second and it was **VOTED** to approve the request.

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.

Chairman Hull, aye.

Dighton – Rehoboth School Superintendent - Mr. William Runey

Mr. Runey recognized the Dighton Police Department and all of the officers for keeping the students safe.

He said today Dighton-Rehoboth staff members and students wore blue in support.

Mr. Runey said he was committed to helping people understand the Dighton-Rehoboth schools are great options. He said on January 19th they will have their first annual green and gold open house. T He said the parents and students will see all things D-R. Mr. Runey said people will have the opportunity to talk with staff about all things. He invited community members as well. Mr. Runey said we have vocational programs that help make our students more marketable and the entire CTE department would be on hand that night.

Police Chief, Shawn Cronin

Proposed adjustment to Reserve Officer Compensation

Chairman Hull read a portion of the letter from Chief Shawn Cronin requesting an adjustment to part-time officers and dispatcher's rate of pay.

Chief Cronin said if you look at minimum wage rate, the current rate of pay is about 15% higher for our Reserve Police Officers that are trained, wear a gun and have great responsibilities. He wanted to keep the officers that we have invested in as a town.

Chairman Hull said the part-time officers and dispatchers have not had a raise in some years. He also said that other towns are out-bidding each other.

Chairman Hull said his concern was if the town could afford it. He asked to take this under advisement and hoped that the police negotiator could sit down with Chief Cronin, Sergeant Nichols and Town Administrator Mullen to work on the numbers.

Chairman Hull asked if this could be added to the next meeting.

Selectman Caron asked why this was just being presented and how long the chief had known that the minimum wage was going up.

Chief said he only wanted to begin the discussion.

Chairman Hull said because of the state requirements, there are not a lot of people out there to begin with and money will determine where they go.

Mr. Mullen said the chief, in the past, has mentioned this as a priority and this was the first opportunity that he had to make the recommendation.

Recommendation to Appoint Andrew Lapointe as Dispatcher

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull stepped down and it was **VOTED** to approve the hiring of Andrew Lapointe as a full time Communications Dispatcher.

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.

Chairman Hull, aye.

Appoint Three Special Police Officers

Chief Cronin said they are retired police officers who are looking to do detail work. It is a matter of getting them on our roster in order to get them on our jobs. He said this would be no cost to the town other than providing firearms training.

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull stepped down to second and it was **VOTED** to appoint Kevin Fredette, Gilbert Lima and Joseph Paulo as Special Police Officers for detail work only.

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.

Chairman Hull, aye.

Public Input

Chairman Hull gave rules for providing public input.

Mark Pacheco, 2530 Maple Swamp Road, wanted to inform the board that there are nomination papers available in the Town Clerks office. He said at a joint meeting a member was appointed to the school committee based on the advice of town counsel.

We are currently awaiting an answer from Town Counsel as to the length of the term.

Laura Medeiros, Office Manager, Council on Aging, monthly newsletter to residents over 60 has all of the new programming at Prime Time. She wanted to know if someone did not receive the newsletter and let them know that they could call 508 823 0095 to be added to the mailing list.

Announcements

Were read by Chairman Hull

Old Business

Ambulance Billing Policy

Mr. Mullen said this is the third meeting that this has been on the agenda. It was crafted by the Fire Chief, Administrative Assistant Rebecca Moss, Town Administrator Mullen, Paul Reynolds and Karin Brady.

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull stepped down to second and it was **VOTED** to approve the Ambulance Billing Policy as presented.

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.

Chairman Hull, aye.

Selectmen's Reports

Solid Waste Advisory Committee

Selectman Caron said that there was discussion Monday night about disposal of rejected mattresses. He said they will be talking about increased fees for that at a joint meeting between Board of Health and Board of Selectmen tomorrow night.

Selectman Caron said the Solid Waste Committee also talked about installation of cameras at the Transfer Station which was defeated.

Water District

Chairman Hull said the Main Street project continues and things seem to be going smoothly.

Town Administrator's Report

FY24 Budget Process

Mr. Mullen said last week we sent out a budget kick-off memo. He said we asked that, going into FY24, everyone use a zero-based budgeting model, where we build the budget from the ground up. We did include appropriate budget worksheets. He said the budget process just began. Mr. Mullen said we will have all proposed budgets by Thursday February 2, and on February 15 we will receive the budget from the school department.

Mr. Mullen said we propose to have a joint meeting with the Finance Committee to streamline the process so that when we begin the process in March, we will have a more streamlined and transparent process.

Chairman Hull asked if there has been any feedback for this process.

Mr. Mullen said there are a lot of contingencies within the Police and Fire Departments, based on call volume, but we haven't had concerns but things that have been brought up, that needed some thought.

Pleasant Street Bridge-Community Project Funding Award

Mr. Mullen said we received word that the town will be receiving 2.75 mil in funding to replace the Pleasant Street Bridge sponsored by Jake Auchincloss and his office. Mr. Mullen said back in 2018, we began planning for assessment and improvements on the bridge. Residents have supported design and engineering costs. The 2.75 mil will cover almost all of the funding of the total anticipated cost. The total cost is estimated at 3.3 mil. He said there will be another \$425,000.00 over the next few years that we will have to come up with.

Selectman Caron asked if there would be any chance of additional funding. Mr. Mullen said we will try to get funding at the state level.

Chairman Hull asked if Chapter 90 money could be used. Mr. Mullen said we would be looking to use Chapter 90 money for the Main Street Reconstruction Project.

Mr. Mullen said we will be looking at all sources to fill the gap.

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull stepped down to second and it was **VOTED** to place a letter of commendation in the file of Highway Superintendent for helping to secure the funding.

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.

Chairman Hull, aye.

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull stepped down to second and it was **VOTED** to place a letter of commendation in the file of Town Administrator Michael Mullen.

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.

Chairman Hull, aye.

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull stepped down to second and it was **VOTED** to send a letter of thanks and appreciation to Congressman Jake Auchincloss for his involvement.

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.
Chairman Hull, aye.

Library Building Project Update

Mr. Mullen said the project began last week to replace the shingles on the exterior and is expected to be done by the early part of next month. He said this is just the beginning of the project and we are projecting a late winter 2024 opening date.

Chairman Hull asked about the meeting with the Historical Commission.

Mr. Mullen said in order to qualify for CPC funding, it is required to be deemed by the local Historical Commission that the building is of historical value. He said we got that approval last night and this allows us to continue on in the CPC application process.

New Business

Composition of Fire Station Building Committee

Chairman Hull asked to increase the number of community members from two to three because of interest in this committee.

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull stepped down to second and it was **VOTED** to increase the composition of the Fire station Building Committee from two to three.

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.
Chairman Hull, aye.

Fire Station Building Committee

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull stepped down to second and it was **VOTED** to appoint Andrew Horton, William Mariano and Michael Thibodeau as members of the Fire station Building Committee.

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.
Chairman Hull, aye.

Appoint David Phillips to Conservation Commission

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull stepped down to second and it was **VOTED** to appoint David Phillips to the Conservation Commission.

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.
Chairman Hull, aye.

Appoint James Souza to the Conservation Commission

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull stepped down to second and it was **VOTED** to appoint James Souza as an Alternate member of the Conservation Commission.

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.

Chairman Hull, aye.

Appoint Jen Duczowski to Commission on Disability

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull stepped down to second and it was **VOTED** to appoint Jennifer Duczowski as a member of the Commission on Disability.

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.

Chairman Hull, aye.

Request to Declare Surplus by the Police Station

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull stepped down to second and it was **VOTED** to approve the request by the Police Station to declare surplus items as listed and to be auctioned off at a time to be determined.

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.

Chairman Hull, aye.

Public Input

None.

Warrants

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull stepped down to second and it was **VOTED** to approve Warrant #27A-23 in the amount of \$121,668.88 and Warrant #27B-23 in the amount of \$100,105.48 both dated January 4, 2023.

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.

Chairman Hull, aye.

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull stepped down to second and it was **VOTED** to approve Warrant #28A-23 in the amount of \$110,098.12 and Warrant #28B-23 in the amount of \$100,136.59 both dated January 11, 2023.

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.
Chairman Hull, aye.

Correspondence

Letter of Resignation from Andrew Lapointe

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull stepped down to second and it was **VOTED** to accept the letter of resignation of Andrew Lapointe from the Cable Commission.

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.
Chairman Hull, aye.

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull stepped down to second and it was **VOTED** to send a letter of thanks to Andrew Lapointe from the Board of Selectmen.

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.
Chairman Hull, aye.

Letter of Resignation from Tom Bourquin

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull stepped down to second and it was **VOTED** to accept the letter of resignation for Tom Bourquin from the Community Preservation Commission, Open Space Committee and the Development and Industrial Committee.

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.
Chairman Hull, aye.

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull stepped down to second and it was **VOTED** to send a letter of thanks to Tom Bourquin for his service to the town.

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.
Chairman Hull, aye.

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull stepped down to second and it was **VOTED** to post openings in the Cable Commission the Development and Industrial Commission and the Community Preservation Committee and leave open for two weeks.

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.
Chairman Hull, aye.

Minutes

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull seconded and it was **VOTED** to approve the minutes of the board of Selectmen’s regular meeting minutes of December 14 and December 28, 2022.

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.

Chairman Hull, aye.

Executive Session

Selectman Caron motioned, Chairman Hull stepped down to second and it was **VOTED** to enter into Executive Session under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 30a, Section 21 (a)(3)(7)

3. To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares.

a. Dighton Clerical Union

7. to comply with or act under the authority of any general or special law or federal grant in aid requirements.

Roll Call Vote:

Selectman Caron, aye.

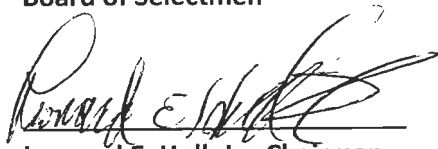
Chairman Hull, aye.

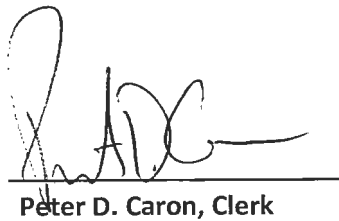
Regular meeting ended at 8: 03 p.m.

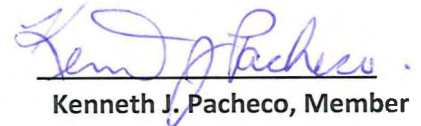
Respectfully submitted,

Karin L. Brady
Executive Assistant

Board of Selectmen


Leonard E. Hull, Jr., Chairman


Peter D. Caron, Clerk


Kenneth J. Pacheco, Member

Documents Reviewed:

Letter from Town Clerk

Email from William Rosenberry (SEC) regarding Local Election Update

Letter from Town Clerk requesting Use of Tuition Reimbursement

Email from Town Account verifying balance in Tuition Reimbursement

Email Regarding CEA Program to Town Clerk

Green & Gold Night Flyer

Letter from Chief Cronin Requesting increase in Wages for Reserve Officers

Letter from Chief Cronin Requesting to appoint Andrew Lapointe as a Dispatcher

Letter from Chief Cronin Recommending Appointment of three (3) Special Police Officers

Parking Ban Notice

Ambulance Billing Policy

FY24 Budget Memorandum from Town Accountant Sirena Amaral

Press Release Regarding Pleasant Street Bridge Funding Award

Press Release for Dighton Library Building Project

Letter from Fire Chief Chris Maguy Regarding Appointment of Fire Station Building Committee

Letter of Interest from Andrew Horton

Letter of Interest from William Mariano

Letter of Interest from Mike Thibodeau

Email Requesting change to James Souza's Membership on Conservation Commission

Letter of Recommendation to Appoint Jen Duczkowski to the Commission on Disability

Letter from Dighton Police Department to Declare Surplus Items

Letter of Resignation from Andrew LaPointe from the Cable Committee

Letter of Resignation from Tom Bourquin from the Open Space Committee, DDIC and CPC

Minutes of the Board of Selectmen's Regular Meeting of December 28, 2022.