

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES OF MEETING
JANUARY 28, 2020**

The meeting was held in the Selectmen's Meeting Room located in the upper level of Town Hall. In attendance were Chairman Carl F. Kowalski; Clerk Brian J. Bezanson; Member Justin R. Evans; Member Randolph G. LaMattina; and Town Administrator Francis J. Lynam. Vice Chairman Salvucci was absent. Chairman Kowalski opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Chairman Kowalski asked everyone in attendance to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. This was followed by a moment of silence dedicated to John "Jack" Buckley. Mr. Buckley served six terms in the Massachusetts House of Representatives, as well as Secretary of Administration & Finance and Executive Vice President and interim President of the Community College System. He also served as Town Treasurer and Town Moderator for the Town of Abington, and was a member of several other committees in the town. Chairman Kowalski asked everyone to keep in their thoughts and prayers the family of Jack Buckley, who was a great public servant.

Chairman Kowalski announced the meeting is being recorded and televised by WHCA.

Mr. Bezanson **MOVED** to approve bill and payroll warrants. **Second** Mr. LaMattina, **so voted 4-0.**

Mr. Bezanson **MOVED** to accept correspondence in the Read File. **Second** Mr. LaMattina, **so voted 4-0.**

Chairman Kowalski opened public forum and no one in attendance came forward to address the Board.

Mr. Bezanson **MOVED** to approve the Open Session minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, December 17, 2019. **Second** Mr. LaMattina, **so voted 3-0-1** (Chairman Kowalski abstained).

Mr. Bezanson **MOVED** to approve the Open Session minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, January 14, 2020. **Second** Mr. LaMattina, **so voted 4-0.**

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Revision to Flood Plain

Mr. Lynam advised the Board of notification he received on Friday regarding changes that need to be made to the flood plain; and he is seeking a vote of the Board to forward a by-law change to the Planning Board. Mr. Bezanson **MOVED** to refer by-law revision for the flood plain to the Planning Board. **Second** Mr. LaMattina, **so voted 4-0.**

BUDGET REVIEW

Mr. Lynam advised the Board he will be holding a meeting with all department heads tomorrow.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Network Password Policy

Mr. Lynam noted this policy is being recommended by Technology Director Joshua MacNeil. Mr. Bezanson **MOVED** to adopt the Password Construction Guidelines Policy. **Second Mr. LaMattina, so voted 4-0.**

Electioneering During Absentee and Early Voting Policy

Town Clerk Dawn Varley advised the Board that the Secretary of State's office is recommending adoption of this policy. Mr. Bezanson **MOVED** to adopt the Electioneering during Absentee and Early Voting Policy. **Second Mr. LaMattina, so voted 4-0.**

Early voting will take place February 24-28, 2020, with 11 additional days during the month of November.

NEW BUSINESS

March 3, 2020, Presidential Primary Election Warrant

Mr. Bezanson **MOVED** to sign the warrant for the March 3, 2020, Presidential Primary Election. **Second Mr. LaMattina, so voted 4-0.**

Application for Change of Address: Marylou's

Mr. Bezanson **MOVED** to approve the application of Marylou's for a change of address in connection with the Common Victualler's License currently held at 564 Washington Street for its new location at 180 South Avenue. **Second Mr. LaMattina, so voted 4-0.**

The Board set their February meeting schedule for Tuesday, February 11, 2020, at 7:00 p.m. and Tuesday, February 25, 2020, at 7:00 p.m.

OLD BUSINESS

Fire Chief Selection Process

Mr. Lynam advised that there were some issues with respect to the selection process for the position of fire chief which were addressed with town counsel in executive session. The Board must now vote its position for an exam. Mr. Lynam advised the Board that he has been in contact with Civil Service and has learned that there currently is no exam for a fire chief; and suggested the Board vote for a written exam and reserve the right to go for an assessment center if a written exam does not become available. Mr. Evans asked how long a list is valid once it's received. Mr. Lynam advised Mr. Evans that a list is valid for 2 years. Mr. LaMattina asked if a read list has been released and Mr. Lynam said no. Mr. Bezanson **MOVED** to seek a Civil Service written exam for an appointment list for fire chief, reserving the right to utilize other alternatives, including an assessment center if a written exam does not become available.

Second Mr. LaMattina, so voted 4-0.

WHRSD: Audit

Mr. Lynam opened discussion by saying the Board previously discussed an audit of the school district in order to try and establish where we can expect to go in the future. The audit would be similar to what the financial consultant did at the request of the Budget Override Evaluation Committee. He advised the Board that he then had some reservations due to a group that is seeking information on de-regionalizing. Mr. Lynam stated that he is opposed to de-

regionalizing. He went on to say that he spoke with the new Hanson town administrator on Friday and suggested that it might not be the time for an audit. His comment has caused some issues and he did not have that conversation at the suggestion of the Board.

Chairman Kowalski stated that he has spoken with Hanson Board of Selectmen Chairman Laura Fitzgerald-Kemmett, who is proposing establishing a de-regionalization committee. Chairman Kowalski made it clear to her that the statutory method should be used this year and that Whitman is not in favor of de-regionalizing. She understands all of the elements and is just trying to find a way to get through this. Chairman Kowalski went on to say that Whitman has shown its interest in the health of the school system; and also spoke of the effect that not using the statutory method has had on Whitman, specifically how Whitman has sacrificed \$3.3 million over the last 4 years and is not asking for the money to be returned. He also said it hurts to hear the comments made towards Whitman by some residents of Hanson; and rather than casting aspersions, we should be thanking Mr. LaMattina for getting on top of this 2 years ago.

Mr. Lamattina advised that he, Mr. Evans and Mr. Lynam have met with Hanson officials and there have been some misguided comments on social media regarding this issue. The decision was made that we would wait until after the February 5th School Committee meeting before we meet with them again.

Mr. Evans stated that the schools are the largest single department and a big piece of our analysis. There are many moving pieces that need to be put together.

Chairman Kowalski stated that he has a cordial relationship with Laura Kemmett, even though they do not always see eye to eye. He also noted that WHRSD Superintendent Jeff Szymaniak has been very cooperative, noting he has a tough road ahead.

Shawn Kain, 31 Forest Street stated that he attended the School Committee meeting where DESE recommended the two towns work things out instead of Hanson having to pay all at once, and asked why the Board is not willing to do that. He also asked if the Board has looked into other districts that have gone through the same issues and have come to an agreement. Mr. Lynam advised Mr. Kain that the recommendation of the DESE representative was to communicate. She did not recommend that we not fully assess on the statutory method, but keep the lines open and talk about it. Her advice was to work together and that is what we are doing. Mr. LaMattina reminded Mr. Kain that at the April 23, 2018, School Committee meeting, we advised that it would be necessary for us to take money from capital stabilization to fund the schools and the Hanson members wanted more money even knowing the financial situation we were in. With respect to Mr. Kain's comment about other districts going through the same issue, Mr. LaMattina believed he was referring to Ayer and in that case, both towns agreed to move to the statutory method. In our case, Whitman and Hanson are not in agreement. He also noted that the divisive posts on social media are not helping the situation.

Mr. Kain discussed the possibility of the state taking over the school budget if the two towns cannot come to an agreement and asked Chairman Kowalski if he is prepared to hold his ground on this issue if it comes to that. Chairman Kowalski said yes, he is prepared to do that.

At 7:30 p.m. Mr. Bezanson **MOVED** into **EXECUTIVE SESSION** in accordance with the M.G.L., Chapter 30A, Section 21a, (2) to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel; and (3) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares. **Second** Mr. LaMattina. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; and Chairman Kowalski –

yes. **So voted 4-0.** Chairman Kowalski declared that having this meeting in Open Session will have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body. The meeting will reconvene in Open Session for the purpose of adjourning the meeting.

At 7:40 p.m. Mr. Bezanson **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting. **Second** Mr. LaMattina, **so voted 4-0.**

Brian J. Bezanson, Clerk