

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
(JOINT MEETING WITH THE HANSON SELECT BOARD)
MINUTES OF MEETING
APRIL 4, 2023**

In attendance were Chairman Randolph G. LaMattina; Vice Chairman Daniel L. Salvucci; Clerk Justin R. Evans; and Member Shawn M. Kain. Present for the Hanson Select Board were Chair Laura Fitzgerald-Kemmett; Vice Chairman Joseph Weeks; Clerk Ann Rein; Members Edwin Heal and James Hickey; and Town Administrator Lisa Green.

The meeting opened at 5:00 p.m.

Chairperson Fitzgerald-Kemmett announced the meeting is being recorded and televised by WHCA.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

SCHEDULED EVENT

Joint Meeting with the Hansom Select Board to Discuss the WHRSD FY24 Budget

Chairperson Kemmett thanked the Whitman Board of Selectmen for their attendance; and stated the Town of Hanson can afford a 3.75 percent increase in the assessment, with \$600,000 in cuts still to be made to Hanson's FY24 budget. She clarified that this does not necessarily mean jobs will be cut.

Chairman LaMattina stated that the budget as presented would necessitate the Town of Whitman to have major cuts. He also thanked the Hanson Select Board for agreeing to a joint meeting and relayed that he is hopeful that holding a joint meeting will show a unified position on the budget topic.

Chairperson Kemmett agreed the budget being presented by the WHRSD is unsustainable. She further stated that the Board is all for education but there is no way the budget is reasonable. She will not consider an override.

Chairman LaMattina would like to reiterate that the School Committee is being reckless and that there is no other department who is looking for such an increase as the school district is.

Mr. Salvucci stated the Town of Whitman could go up to 5 percent on the assessment but with the risk of cuts and the Fire and Police departments are already running thin.

Mr. Kain reminded the Boards that public safety has been very lean and that revenue needs to be shared within departments and that the 5 percent must be firm. He further stated that the WHRSD should have come forward to alert all that they would be seeking such a large increase.

Mr. Evans clarified that Chairman LaMattina's statement that even at a 5 percent assessment, the Town of Whitman is still looking at using \$278,000 in free cash.

Chairperson Kemmett also agreed there is a lack of communication with the WHRSD, which does not happen with other departments.

Chairman LaMattina expressed concern that the School Committee will not be discussing the budget at its meeting tomorrow night.

Mr. Hickey wants to know what the schools did with the one-time COVID money. He suggested the School Committee should be at the meeting to clarify why they need this money.

Chairman LaMattina confirmed that everyone in attendance supports education and wants to see the children get the quality education they deserve but he also wants to see all Town departments get what they deserve.

Mr. Heal reiterated that the School Committee budget is going to take away from the Towns' other departments.

Mr. Hickey does not want to see the Town of Whitman make budget cuts because of agreeing to a 5 percent increase in the assessment. If Whitman has to cut members of its Fire Department, it would cause a strain on Hanson's Fire Department as well.

Mr. Salvucci does not want to sacrifice one Town department for another. He wants all departments to work together.

Chairman LaMattina **MOVED** to not support or endorse the FY24 WHRSD budget as presented to the two towns. **Second** Mr. Salvucci, **so voted 4-0.**

Mr. Weeks **MOVED** to not support or endorse the FY24 WHRSD budget as presented to the two towns. **Second** Mr. Hickey, **so voted 5-0.**

Chairman LaMattina would like to see the Superintendent and the Town Administrators meet to discuss a more reasonable budget. Chair Fitzgerald-Kemmett agreed.

Mr. Evans reiterated that the percentage allocated from The Town of Hanson will be a little lower than the percentage for the Town of Whitman.

Chairperson Kemmett closed the meeting by reminding the Town Administrators to send letters to the Superintendent regarding the budget.

At 5:47 p.m. Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to adjourn. **Second** Mr. Evans; **so voted 4-0.**

Chairperson Kemmett called for a brief recess in order to allow for the Whitman Board of Selectmen to depart from the meeting.

Justin R. Evans, Clerk