

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
MAY 19, 2020**

In accordance with Governor Baker's March 12, 2020, Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. c.30A, §20, the meeting was held remotely in an on-line conference mode hosted on Zoom.com and members of the public were not able to physically attend. The meeting was broadcast live on Comcast channel 12 and was able to be viewed via live stream at WHCA.tv. The meeting was subsequently broadcast on YouTube.com.

In attendance were Chairman Carl F. Kowalski; Vice Chairman Daniel L. Salvucci; Clerk Brian J. Bezanson; Member Randolph G. LaMattina; Member Justin R. Evans; and Town Administrator Francis J. Lynam. Chairman Kowalski opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Chairman Kowalski asked everyone to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. This was followed by a moment of silence.

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

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to approve bill and payroll warrants. **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. Lamattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to accept correspondence in the Read File. **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. Lamattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to approve the Open Session minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, April 7, 2020. **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to approve the Open Session minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, April 15, 2020. **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to approve the Open Session minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, April 21, 2020. **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to approve the Open Session minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, April 28, 2020. **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

**TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

**Update: COVID 19**

Mr. Lynam advised the Board of a meeting of the reopening group scheduled for tomorrow where discussion will take place regarding a phase-in related to reopening Town Hall. He is uncertain as to when to return to full staff, but will be following the recommendations of the Department of Public Health moving forward. He also advised the Board that there have been

some incidents reported to Chief Hanlon of people not following the restrictions issued by the Board of Health, such as people gathering in the park who are not practicing social distancing, wearing masks, etc. Mr. Lynam pointed out that people need to be practical and understand that by not following the guidelines they are putting themselves and others at risk. He went on to say that Chief Grenno is maintaining information on necessary purchases related to COVID-19 in order for us to seek reimbursement. Mr. Lynam has also asked the town accountant to prepare a one month budget for the month of July in the event Town Meeting is unable to be held prior to June 30<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Bezanson asked if there has been any resolution with the Plymouth County Commissioners and the funds they received. Mr. Lynam stated that the Commissioners are standing strong on maintaining the funds.

Chairman Kowalski discussed the need to be sure all guidelines are adhered to at Town Meeting and the Annual Town Election. Some people may not want to abide but they cannot be prevented from voting. Mr. Lynam noted that he plans to discuss this issue with the Town Clerk. Attorney Peter Sumners is also communicating with her on this issue. He is certain that some sort of isolation process will be put in place in order to protect those working the election. Mr. LaMattina asked if the reopening group will be discussing getting some services up and running. Mr. Lynam said it will be.

Mr. Lynam asked Mr. Lynam to discuss a video sent to the members of the Board of Selectmen by Shawn Kain. Mr. Lynam stated that Mr. Kain indicated a strong sense of the Town of Whitman having a responsibility to work with the Town of Hanson on the statutory method. Mr. Kain stated in his video that the statutory method is a system that does not allow a town to pay more than it should. That has not been the case as we have had to reach into other funds each year in order to fund the schools. If the statutory method had been used we would not have had to do that. Whitman and Hanson have a mutual interest to get past this in order to continue to operate the region in an effective way to educate our children. Mr. Lynam went on to say that we have to make sure each community receives its appropriate support and provides appropriate support to the region. He also stated that Mr. Kain noted the Madden Report and how we should be paying 5 percent to the schools each year; however, Whitman has been paying more than that each year. Mr. Salvucci noted that Mr. Kain mentioned South Shore Voc Tech in his video. South Shore Voc Tech uses the statutory method and Whitman pays \$12,000 per student. Hanson pays \$14,000 per student and Cohasset pays more than \$18,000 per student. None of the communities that have students attending the school have complained about their assessments. Mr. LaMattina noted the numbers for South Shore Voc Tech come from the state. The member towns pay to their capacity and that is what we are trying to get to with the region. Mr. Lynam stated that in order for it to work, we have to use the statutory formula.

## **BUDGET REVIEW**

Mr. Lynam stated that after this discussion this evening, he would like to suggest scheduling a meeting next week in order to review the entire budget and Article 2. Chairman Kowalski agreed and asked that review of the warrant and Article 2 be the only items on the agenda. Mr. Bezanson asked if the Finance Committee will be notified. Mr. Lynam stated that he will formally notify the Finance Committee; and noted the process for the Board of Selectmen is to present a Town Meeting warrant that includes a budget. The job of the Finance Committee is to make recommendations on those numbers as to how it would benefit the town to act.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Senior Work Program**

Mr. Lynam stated the Senior Work Program allows seniors to volunteer to assist in town offices, schools and the library in order to get a tax credit. The program is very successful and currently has 27 volunteers. Because we are in a state of flux, we are not sure we could send the seniors to work right now. Mrs. Green noted a number of the volunteers are placed in the schools. Mr. Lynam suggested suspending the program for this year in order to avoid scrambling to find places for the volunteers to be placed. Mr. Salvucci advised the Board that he has received 5 telephone calls from seniors who are part of the program expressing how upset they were to hear the program may be suspended. He noted the library and the Council on Aging take on a lot of the volunteers as well. He feels that even if the volunteers are not placed until after the summer, they will still have ample time to get the 100 hours in. Mr. Salvucci went on to say that the volunteers that are placed in the library are used for a lot of tasks and he does not feel the library employees will perform those tasks, at least not without receiving a 2 percent salary increase. He went on to say that he feels this is a bad idea. Mr. Lynam advised Mr. Salvucci that this is not an entitlement program and it will be a burden at this time for the Council on Aging director and department heads because town offices and departments are not fully staffed. Mr. Salvucci stated that the Senior Work Program costs approximately \$25,000 per year, and suggested Mr. Lynam tell the department heads to find some way to get the seniors involved. Mr. Lynam stated that it is difficult to bring someone in that they are not familiar with. He went on to say this is not being looked at from a position of money, but rather that we are not in a position to plan this right now. In addition, the volunteers would have difficulty putting in the 100 hours at this point. Mr. Salvucci suggested the possibility of allowing the volunteers to put in 50 hours and paying them accordingly. Mr. Lynam stated that a lot of training would have to take place in order for someone to put in 3 hours per week. Mr. Salvucci disagreed. He maintains that these volunteers have been doing the work for years and know what they are doing. Mr. Lynam stated that the intent is not to do away with the program but to simply suspend it. Mr. Bezanson stated that he feels we need to support our seniors now more than ever. With the pandemic and everyone being kept inside, it has been a lonely time for our seniors. He also feels if the program is suspended until January, the volunteers could still put in 100 hours. Chairman Kowalski suggested continuing this discussion next week. Mr. Evans agreed with Mr. Bezanson with respect to the past few months being a lonely time for seniors, noting it can lead to mental health issues. He also asked if an abatement program could be set up if the program were to be suspended. Mr. Lynam said yes, but there are enough programs in the abatement process based on need - this is a volunteer program. He also recognized that it is an important part of what some people do. Mr. LaMattina agreed with Mr. Salvucci, Mr. Bezanson and Mr. Evans and stated that a lot of the volunteers go above and beyond. This program provides a value to those who cannot work 40 hours per week. Chairman Kowalski stated this issue will be revisited next week.

### **Line Item Transfer: DPW**

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to approve the request of DPW Superintendent Dennis Smith for a line item transfer in the amount of \$30,000.00 from line item #420 (Sewer Disposal Costs) to line item #413 (Union Salaries) **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Mr. Lynam advised the Board that the DPW had a major problem with maintaining sewer operations at certain pumping stations. Items have gotten into the sewer system that required DPW employees to go out on nights and weekends to deal with backed up systems. Mr. Lynam recommended the Board of Selectmen approve this request for a line item transfer. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

### **Line Item Transfer: DPW**

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to approve the request of DPW Superintendent Bruce Martin for a line item transfer in the amount of \$345.00 from line item #186 (Union Labor Salaries) to line item #187 (Union Clerical Salaries) **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

### **Registrar Appointment: Yvonne Evans**

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to approve the request of Town Clerk Dawn Varley to reappoint Yvonne Evans to the position of Registrar of Voters for a three-year term, beginning on April 1, 2020, and expiring on March 31, 2023. **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

### **Request to Hold Senior Class Parade and Graduation Ceremony**

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to approve the request of Dr. Christopher Jones to hold a Senior Class Parade on May 29, 2020, and a Graduation Ceremony on July 31, 2020. **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

The Board set their June meeting schedule for Tuesday, June 9, 2020, at 7:00 p.m.; Monday, June 22, 2020, at 7:00 p.m. and Tuesday, June 30, 2020, at 7:00 p.m.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Proposed Regional Agreement Revision**

Mr. Lynam advised the Board that the superintendent has been working on a plan to get the School Committee to move on a budget. He organized a conference call with DESE to talk about how we move off the budget and the agreement. The amendment to the original agreement stipulates the increase in the assessment this year be split evenly between Whitman and Hanson. This would be a one-time split payment between the two towns and moving forward, the statutory method will be used. The amendment is to the 1981 agreement and we have been told it cannot be amended because it is out of compliance. The question has been asked if the towns could go by the amended agreement for one year. In addition, it has also been discovered that each town has the right to have a representative at school committee meetings when they meet to discuss strategy and bargaining in Executive Session. Mr. Lynam stated that going forward we will require the region to allow a representative from each town. The proposal has been given to counsel and the Board needs to decide if it will agree to split the assessment for one year. Mr. Salvucci stated that if we use the full statutory method, our increase is \$750,865. He then asked if we agree to a 50/50 split what our increase will be. Mr. LaMattina state \$211,000. Mr. Salvucci reminded the Board that last year we had to pay more than \$850,000. He then asked why the Town of Hanson cannot come up with \$211,000. Mr. LaMattina stated that we have to look at the method that was used. Mr. Salvucci said he feels Hanson should have to dig in and pay like Whitman had to do last year. Mr. LaMattina said we have seen on social media how Hanson residents view this. If we approve this and Hanson does not accept it, they will get hit with a big bill on July 1<sup>st</sup>. He then asked that the Board not vote on this issue this evening, but rather wait until town counsel agrees that this is legal and we can accept it. Chairman Kowalski agreed and gave credit to the superintendent for his efforts to get a budget passed. He also stated that he is leaning towards approving this in order to solve the issue

this year as long as we move to using the full statutory method beginning next year. He went on to say that we have free cash available to deal with this plus enough to back off of a wage freeze for our employees. Mr. Evans noted that this is very similar to the offer he presented at the Regional Agreement Amendment Committee meeting. This is better than expected and he thanked the superintendent for getting involved. This will allow for 4 new teachers and is approximately \$360,000 less than his originally proposed offer. It also allows us to provide COLA's to our employees. Chairman Kowalski noted that the next time bargaining takes place with the town unions we have to be more stern, as will the Town of Hanson and the schools. Mr. Salvucci stated that paying COLA's from free cash is not financially stable. He also said when Hanson and the schools are giving out COLA's it is wrong and we should not hold our employees in harm's way in order to help the Town of Hanson. He then reminded the other board members that they are Whitman selectmen. Mr. Bezanson reminded the other members that they voted to use the statutory method and that the town has already paid \$3 to 4 million more than it should have. The town was misled and the Board cannot be complacent now. He feels this is wrong and the Board has to hold its line in the sand. Mr. LaMattina agreed but feels we are dragging our children into the hole because we will lose 40 teachers. This is not a time for the school district to be shorthanded. Mr. Lynam noted that if the 2 towns do not come to an agreement by July 1<sup>st</sup>, the region will go to a 1/12 budget which means a \$2.4 million shortfall to the start of the year. He feels this is a moderate increase to settle this once and for all and it merits consideration. The Board agreed discussion will continue upon receiving counsel's opinion.

At 8:18 p.m. Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting and to enter 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 or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel. **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.** The meeting did not reconvene in Open Session.

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Brian J. Bezanson, Clerk