

**HOLDEN BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MEETING MINUTES  
March 28, 2022**

**6:30PM**

**Memorial Hall**

Present: Richard Bates (Participating Remotely), Chiara Barnes, Anthony Renzoni, Geri Herlihy, Robert Lavigne

Others Present: Peter Lukes, Town Manager  
Stephanie King, Assistant Town Manager  
Stephen Madaus, Town Counsel  
Liz Fotos, Town Recorder

Chairman Barnes called the meeting to order. The Board stood to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman Barnes announced that Sel. Bates was participating remotely and all votes would be taken by a roll call vote. Sel. Bates replied that he was present.

Pack 46 led in Pledge of Allegiance.

**1. Citizen Address**

Shannon Kirshenbaum, 41 Brittany Drive, was present at the meeting. She stated that she was there to speak about the Dawson bathroom renovation that was proposed and she was in favor of it. She stated that this has been an ongoing issue and with the school getting larger it ends up taking away from learning because they were spending so much time in the bathroom. She stated she had heard about kids having accidents and she wanted to speak in favor of this renovation.

**2. Appointments, Licenses, and Permits**

Motion by Sel. Renzoni, seconded by Sel. Lavigne, it was **VOTED TO APPROVE SARAH STEBULIS TO THE HISTORICAL DISTRICT COMMISSION FOR REAPPOINTMENT FOR A PERIOD OF 4/1/22-4/1/25 BY A UNANIMOUS ROLL CALL VOTE.** (Renzoni: yes; Lavigne: yes; Bates: yes; Herlihy: yes; Barnes: yes).

Motion by Sel. Lavigne, seconded by Sel. Renzoni, it was **VOTED TO APPORVE MICHAEL SMITH TO THE HISTORICAL DISTRICT COMMISSION FOR REAPPINTMENT FOR A PERIOD OF 4/1/22-4/1/25 BY A UNANIMOUS ROLL CALL VOTE.** (Renzoni: yes; Lavigne: yes; Bates: yes; Herlihy: yes; Barnes: yes).

Motion by Sel. Lavigne, seconded by Sel. Renzoni, it was **VOTED TO APPROVE THE PARADE PERMIT FOR DAWSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ON 4/9/22 AS PRESENTED BY A UNANIMOUS ROLL CALL VOTE.** (Renzoni: yes; Lavigne: yes; Bates: yes; Herlihy: yes; Barnes: yes).

Motion by Sel. Lavigne, seconded by Sel. Renzoni, it was **VOTED TO APPROVE THE ELECTION OFFICER APPOINTMENTS OF KAREN SPAZIANTE, AMY MILLER, DAVID LUNDERGAN, AND CHRISTINE TIVNAN FOR A PERIOD TO EXPIRE 8/31/22 AS PRESENTED BY A UNANIMOUS ROLL CALL VOTE.** (Renzoni: yes; Lavigne: yes; Bates: yes; Herlihy: yes; Barnes: yes).

### **3. Dog Licensing Fees**

Jeanne Hudson, Town Clerk, was present at the meeting.

The Board spoke about the fees assessed to dog owners along with the amount of time it took to license a dog in Town.

Sel. Renzoni asked if they were setting fees or just making a recommendation.

Mr. Madaus stated that an increase would require Town Meeting approval.

Sel. Renzoni stated that this was not a profit making department and he thought that these fees needed to be reviewed. He stated that he knows the Clerk's office does not want to overcharge; he suggested putting a place holder on for Town Meeting but that he would have some follow up questions.

### **4. FY 2023 Budget Discussion**

Skip over

### **5. Dawson School Capital Discussion**

Sel. Renzoni stated that he had taken some time with parents and PTA about the toilets at the Dawson school. He stated that parents indicated that there were door latches that were broken and toilets that were inoperable. He stated that they had a good conversation but there was a process that needed to be followed starting with a study and then a recommendation to decide how to implement a plan.

Sel. Renzoni stated that once a study is completed they are looking at about 90% certainty of cost. Then they go to Town Meeting to get it approved and a project like this generally is completed after the last day of school so as not to disrupt learning. He stated there is a Facilities Infrastructure Subcommittee and he did have some questions for that committee. Sel. Renzoni stated that the Board had still not been notified by the School District or Superintendent that there was an issue and that was not how business in town was conducted. He stated the Board needed more information then what has been provided to turn into a project.

Linda Woodland, School Committee, Sterling; Chair of the Facilities Subcommittee, was present at the meeting. She stated that in 2019 she first heard about this and that some of the bathrooms were filled in. She stated that she was not sure why this occurred but it

was bought up then and remained an issue. She stated the next time they spoke about it they reported it to School Administration and the Town Manager and DPW. She stated this meeting happened virtually during the pandemic on April 6, 2021. She stated at this time they were told the Facilities Sub Committee was getting a 10 year capital improvement plan that she does not know the history of. She stated that since she began they have worked on 10 year capital improvement plans for the five towns and district buildings. She stated that they worked on this in the summer and fall and that after this point it should go to the five towns as it is a working document that should reflect the reality of the buildings.

Ms. Woodland stated that they then discussed the bathrooms again in a Subcommittee meeting a few months ago and they did not add it to the list of recommended projects in part because they were unsure of how a study or plan would go forward. She stated the scope of how that worked was beyond her role. She stated that from that point all 5 towns had recommended projects to go forward in March in order to have something to go on the Town Warrants for the spring. She stated that they had been discussing this matter since 2019 and they wanted it on record because it is impacting the kids and now that it is they can have a better partnership to get this resolved. She stated that this is out of her hands and now public record.

Sel. Renzoni asked how the number of \$400,000 was arrived at.

Ms. Woodland stated that the district administration gave the number from an initial draft that was split over 2 years with some other work. She stated that anything that is paid for is taken out of education for the kids but that her understanding was that the school district gave a good faith estimate.

Chairman Barnes asked if there was a study completed.

Ms. Woodland replied that it was an internal estimate like all projects; similar to carpet replacement.

Sel. Renzoni stated that they can not use a best guess of \$400,000 at Town Meeting. He stated that in town for a project like this they need an architectural firm to give an estimate.

Ms. Woodland stated that was a problem.

Sel. Renzoni asked if there was an agreement that items under \$35,000 are paid for by the district. He asked if it would be on the district to say there is a problem and suggest a study be completed if it was then over that amount the town could reimburse the district.

Mr. Madaus stated he does not know the answer to that and would have to look at the lease agreement.

Sel. Renzoni stated that Dave White, Fin Com, was present at the meeting. He stated that Mr. White was involved in many different building committees and worked on Dawson, Davis Hill, and Mayo.

Mr. White stated that Holden did an assessment of all of it's Town Buildings and it is interesting to him that the two groups did not mesh and share information. He stated that the Towns did enter the school buildings and for the district to not share a concern is surprising. He stated that additionally according to MGL you cannot fund a study with debt exclusion until there is a project. He stated that you can not say \$400,000 for a potential project; you need an actual project in order to debt exclude it. He stated the other thing to mention is that MGL is controlled construction so it has to be overseen by an architect; so the building district can not be the person to go in and inspect work.

Ms. King left the meeting at 7:07pm.

Mr. White stated that the other thing he heard was the when building Dawson they removed bathrooms. He stated that Dawson school was a complete renovation and there was a clean slate. He stated that the architect designed the elementary schools using the same method using the same rules so it is interesting to him that only Dawson was having the issue; not the other two elementary schools. He stated that possibly there is an issue with enrollment, care and maintenance of the bathrooms, or bathroom usage.

Mr. White stated that he spoke to the architect and that the current metric in elementary school is female: 1 toilet to every 30 students male; 1 toilet to every 60 students and 1 urinal to every 60 students. He stated there is a different metric for kindergarten. He stated the information they need is how many students are in Dawson and the breakdown and that is why a study is necessary. He stated that they need professionals to go in and get answers and develop a plan rather than throw a number of \$400,000 out there.

Ms. King returned to the meeting at 7:11 PM.

Mr. White stated that once they work with professionals they (professionals) would come back with a plan and cost estimate which is the right way to do a project. The way that they came at this project was to put the money before actually understanding the need.

Sel. Renzoni asked if Fin Com got a briefing on this number.

Mr. White stated that he would bring it up at the meeting but from historical basis he knows Fin Com would say that they can't put this on the BOS. He stated that if there is a need, fund the study and come up with an actual plan and handle it in the proper way.

Sel. Renzoni stated that the district was also present at the meeting.

Mr. White stated that they needed to get it out of their heads that they took a bathroom out as that conversation is a non starter. He stated that factually they may have removed one set of bathrooms but it was not globally accurate as more were added.

Mr. Deedy from WRSD was present. He stated that he wanted to first talk about how the districts do capital projects. He stated that to begin the capital planning process he asks Mark Wilde, Facility Manager, to visit all of the buildings and then he sits with the principals and assistant principals to talk about challenges they may have. He stated after that he meets with Mr. Wilde and reviews recommended projects and brings them to a subcommittee, brings them to the Superintendent and then propose capital projects by October. He stated that by November 30<sup>th</sup> these projects are shared with all five towns in various budget hearings. He stated that they spoke about one project for each town knowing full well that the project needs to be voted and supported. He stated ultimately the Dawson project had been out there for years

Mr. Deedy stated in his notes he saw that they started to have discussion at a facility subcommittee meeting where he stood and said in good faith that they were happy to their part. He stated that what they wanted to do tonight was to put this project in front of the Board of Selectmen.

Sel. Renzoni stated that they did not receive this report in November.

The district stated that in November it was scheduled to be sent to town but it did not happen.

Mr. Wilde stated that one thing that has changed is the addition of kindergarten kids. He stated that there were 5 kindergarten classrooms in the last 2 years. He stated that is 110 students out of 497 so about 20% of the school is kindergarten. He stated that as Mr. White mentioned there is a different ratio needed for the kindergarten kids; they take longer to use the bathroom and have different needs. He stated that this may bring some light on why the issue magnified over the last 2 years.

Mr. White stated that the kindergarten classrooms have a rest room in their classrooms.

Mr. Wilde stated that the population of the school was not what it was. He stated that he agrees with Mr. White that they should go through with a study. He stated that this had been worked on since 2019. He stated that COVID and working on grants all impacted the timeframe but he did not want the Board to think they were trying to sneak this in. He stated that they may have not been working inside protocol but it was being worked on and there is an ongoing concern for this issue.

Sel. Renzoni asked if they should just count the toilets to see if there is an actual issue. He stated that they may have the necessary amount of toilets; they don't know because they need the study. He stated additionally this is going to lead to a bigger question about what they were going to do about the schools and their population.

Sel. Renzoni stated that for the benefit of the school committee, the town begins to budget from September/October. He stated by December the town is just about certain on budgets so for the School Committee to come in mid March looking for \$400,000 with no certainty of the number it makes it seem like politics. He stated this is a problem they

should have known about before, if it was something over the \$35,000 threshold that the district is responsible for. He stated the way it was dropped spins a lot of people.

Sel. Lavigne stated that the frustrating part was that they still don't know what is needed. He stated that different people are saying different things so it is difficult to figure out what exactly the issue is so they can address it. He stated that the second issue is the total lack of communication between the town and school. He stated that he agrees with Sel. Renzoni, there should be some initial feedback for the schools facility plan so they town is kept informed about what is coming up. He stated that while the intent is to educate the children, other things go into that so it is not taking money out of classrooms. He stated the town also does not want to take officers off the street so the district needs to do more communication with the town as it goes a long way.

Ms. Woodland stated that she thinks they need to fix communication and it has been something that she has been trying to address. She stated that she can't speak for what happens in Holden but that in Sterling she speaks with her Board on a regular basis and she wants to help build the bridge from towns to school. She stated that they have a Board member that joins the school committee meetings and negotiations so things like that can feed into the collaborative spirit. She stated that to follow their policy they have the Subcommittee meeting and then full Committee member at the end of November. She stated after that there is the budget roundtable. Ms. Woodland stated that it sounds as though there is framework for this and they also have a 10 year plan which was voted on and given to the District and the towns. She stated that part of the policy is to vote in March and then send this along to towns with the assessment; that is School Committee policy. She stated that there are timelines and dates to follow.

Sel. Renzoni replied that her timeline will not work. The Town can not accept a capital project in March, the budget is completed and the Town Meeting is two weeks away. He stated that to drop a project in March it will not be able to be put on a ballot.

Sel. Lavigne stated the way that she is speaking, it is an item for next year.

Ms. Woodland stated that this was discussed in November.

Sel. Lavigne replied that the Board did not get that

Mr. Lukes replied that the town has a ten year plan that is a wish list.

Sel. Renzoni stated the way the School Committee dropped the project was political and unfair to parents. He stated that it put pressure on the Board.

Ms. Woodland stated she did not feel this conversation was productive and that she can see the work they have done as a Committee and instead of being collaborative the Board is accusing her of being political.

Sel. Renzoni asked if there were enough toilets. He stated that the Director of Facilities doesn't know that answer so before the town is asked to spend \$400,000 they need to know that answer for certain.

Mrs. Woodland stated that she doesn't want to be part of the spectacle. She stated that they have known this was an issue since 2019 even if it wasn't shared with this Board.

Sel. Lavigne stated that this problem is confusing as there were no classrooms added. He stated that the communication channels need to work better because if this had been a conversation last year it would have been put on for a warrant article this year.

Mr. White stated that for a study like this it would be about 15% of the construction cost; so in this case the architect would charge about \$60,000 for a study. He suggested the Board doing a study and then working with the Town Manager and School District if they want this to go into this years Town Meeting. He stated that the realty is that this was not a meaningful conversation until a study is conducted. Mr. White suggested reaching out to the architect that did the local schools as they had all the documentation and could possibly make some suggestions.

Sel. Renzoni stated that Mayo and Davis Hill built with the same criteria; he asked why they don't have any issues. He stated 2/3 of the elementary schools built with the same architect are functioning fine.

Sel. Lavigne stated that it was possibly the student population.

Sel. Bates left the meeting at 7:42PM.

Mr. White stated that they needed to figure out how to get a study done.

Sel. Renzoni suggested reaching out to the district and get an actual number of pupils. He stated that if it came up that they were short on toilets to put a placeholder on the warrant and then they would have two weeks to come up with a number that they all understand. He stated that as it is now they are short on the budget.

Sel. Lavigne stated that if there was even a possibility of a new school on the table should they be discussing spending half a million dollars on bathrooms.

The district stated that they had preliminary conversations in January and looked at different possibilities with MSBA and the Superintendent. He stated at the time they were looking at the expansion of Mayo. He stated that there has been a lot of things happening in the district and he thanked the Board for their time and that the regular check in had not happened with Covid. He stated the CIP should have been sent out and as a senior administrator he would assume responsibility for that. He stated that the take away was that there was a challenge and now they can acknowledge that the first step is to do the study.

Sel. Renzoni stated they should reach out to the district, get a head count and a toilet count and find out what is industry standard.

Mr. Lukes stated that there are regulations that need to be followed. He stated that any way you look at it they need to crunch some numbers.

Sel. Renzoni stated that they also need to have a meeting about where Holden is going and if there is a new school in the future.

Sel. Herlihy asked who was responsible for the cost of the RFP.

Sel. Renzoni stated that if Mr. White's numbers were correct it would be the responsibility of the town.

Mr. Lukes stated that the number was arbitrary at this point.

Ms. Gustafson, School Committee, was present at the meeting. She stated that she made the amendment for recommendation after hearing Fin Com share information. She stated that she had been on the School Committee for 4 years and has heard complaints about the bathrooms from parents and teachers. She stated that she has shared public documents in order to keep the community informed.

Ms. Gustafson stated that the reason she made the amendment was not so that the matter would be placed on the warrant but to make sure it was highlighted to the public and document the matter so they can at least move the conversation forward. She stated again she wanted to clarify her intentions because she was the one that made the amendment to the motion. She stated she was happy to hear the conversation and open the dialogue and she is hopeful that this is something that will be addressed.

Sel. Lavigne stated that while the conversation was about communication; Holden has only four that answer emails. He stated that years ago there used to be a liaison from the Holden delegation that would come into the meetings as needed and to give the Board an update. He stated that while he is not going to tell the School Committee how to do their job it is very frustrating to find out more information through social media then through the School Committee.

Sel. Renzoni stated that he would echo Sel. Lavigne's comments. He stated that when the School Committee takes the vote on something it removes it from the Superintendents conversation and it elevates it. He stated they were in much better shape when professionals were involved in the conversations. Sel. Renzoni asked to add this matter as a future agenda item so they could continue the conversation.

## **6. Town Manager Update**

See attached



## **7. BOS Fee Discussion**

Sel. Renzoni stated that he thinks they should discuss fees and increasing rates. He stated that he knows that they raised the recreation rates and that they need to take action with water and sewer. He stated that they were not saving for the future they were paying a bill so any increase should be modest. He stated that they should be looking at the rate stabilization if it was needed.

Sel. Lavigne asked if there was a list of all their fees. He stated that he wanted to see what they were so they could see what the impact of freezing them would be.

Sel. Renzoni stated that he understands that they were speaking about real money but that they should acknowledge any fee increase is necessary and that as a Board they were hunkering down and when times were better they could go back to saving.

Sel. Herlihy asked about garbage and recycling.

Mr. Lukes replied that he could check and that they have not yet settled waste disposal contracts. He stated that fuel costs may be an issue.

## **8. Response To Citizen Address**

None

## **9. Selectmen Minutes**

None

## **10. Selectmen Miscellaneous**

Sel. Herlihy stated that the DPW Building Committee was doing well and looking for a move in date in July.

Sel. Renzoni state that the Veterans Advisory Committee was looking at a tank for the parade.

Sel. Renzoni stated that he is the liaison for Fin Com and he had spoken with the Chair a few times already as they worked through the budget.

Sel. Renzoni thanked Mr. White as a member of Fin Com and told him that he appreciates his years of service.

Motion by Sel. Lavigne, seconded by Sel. Renzoni, it was **VOTED TO ADJOURN THE MARCH 28, 2022 BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING AT 8:20PM BY A**

**UNANIMOUS ROLL CALL VOTE.** (Lavigne: yes; Herlihy: yes; Bates: yes; Barnes: yes; Renzoni: yes).

APPROVED: 8/29/22