Town of Dunstable Selectboard
Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: March 16, 2023
Minutes Approved March 30, 2023

Dunstable Town Hall, 511 Main Street, Dunstable, MA 01827
Convened: 6:00 PM

Present were: Ron Mikol, Kieran Meehan, Jason Silva, Sue Fayne, Chief Hoar, Superintendent Chesson, Rafael Glod, Lacey McCabe, Jacob Lewon, Harold Simmons, Leo Tometich, Jim Frey, Matt Naughton, Clinton Keeney

Meeting called to order by Kieran Meehan for the Board of Selectmen at 6:00pm. Jacob Lewon called the Advisory Meeting to order at 6:41pm.

Public Forum

There were no comments from the public.

Approval of Minutes from March 9, 2023*

Meeting minutes from March 9, 2022 were reviewed and there were no requested changes. On a motion by Selectwoman Basbanes and seconded by Selectman Mikol, it was **VOTED**: for the Board of Selectmen to approve Meeting Minutes dated March 9, 2023. **The vote was unanimous.**

Financial Services Consultant Contract*

The BOS and TA Silva reviewed the 2 Financial Services Consultant proposals from Mass MuniFin. One proposal was to assist the Town in reconciling cash and the other was focused on general support for Treasurer/Collector. After a brief discussion where consideration was given to authorize the work to reconcile cash first and then re-assess, it was decided to allow both, at the discretion of TA Silva. It was also noted by Selectman Mikol that there were no dates on the letters from Mass MuniFin and requested they be added.

On a motion by Selectman Mikol and seconded by Selectwoman Basbanes, it was **VOTED**: to authorize the Town to enter into a contract with Mass MuniFin based on the proposals the Town has received. **The vote was unanimous.**

Town Meeting Warrant Review and Discussion

The Town Meeting is currently scheduled for Monday, May 8th at 7pm at Swallow Union Elementary School in the Gym. The Town Election will be held the following Tuesday, May 16th at the Library.

Chairman Meehan walked through the each of the items currently on the Warrant. The Board will be reviewing the Warrant in detail in the meeting scheduled for Thursday, March 23rd, which will include a vote to accept the articles.

Town Administrator Report

The Town entered a contract with Warner Bodies to supply a Fire Rescue Truck for approximately $205k. Since that time the contract price has increased and, most recently, Warner required an upfront payment of $30k to outfit the truck with a compressor. We're working with Warner to reimburse the town the $54k payment made and once we finalize the reimbursement process, we will pursue our options to secure a rescue truck that meets the needs of the department and community.

The town secured an earmark in the State's ARPA bill for $50,000 for "public safety improvements." TA Silva is working with state officials to access these funds and better understand the purpose of the earmark.

The town was recently notified that it secured an MVP program grant in the amount of $37,000 to complete a community resiliency and hazard mitigation planning process and expanded scope that will examine the community's vulnerabilities and strengths and identify priority actions to build resilience as the climate changes.

We've put out a bid for the work required to get power back to the bandstand. Bids are due back next week and we will review to keep the work moving forward.

PFAS – Selectman Mikol & TA Silva have been working with the Towns of Groton and Pepperell. They are meeting with both Towns once again on March 29th. The School district will not be participating in this project, nor will they incur any costs, as the anticipated outcome is the three towns will be working together to pay for this. The hope is to reduce the cost to the Town of Dunstable while resolving the PFAS issue at the high school as expediently as possible.. Following the meeting, Groton is compiling a cost and schedule outline for the alternative to extend the water main from Groton to the high school, and Pepperell is working on the same for the project to connect Dunstable to Pepperell and, ultimately, the high school. Once complete, the plan is to regroup to compare the two alternatives and make a decision on the solution. Chairman Meehan asked how the decision is being made? There is going to need to be an IMA, (intermunicipal agreement), as it is anticipated that there are 15 homes on Kemp St. that will be serviced through Pepperell Water, the Water Commissioners will make recommendations to the Select Boards for the three towns. Work is anticipated to start no earlier than next Spring.

FY24 Budget Review

- Reviewed cuts already made and discussed, totaling $320,000
- Reviewed Town increases in spending YOY and briefly touched on
    - TA Salary & TA Training (per contract)

    - Accounting
    - Treasurer/Collector Support
    - Police: 2% increase, equity adjustment and some retro wages from 2 fiscal years ago, driving cost increases. Discussion surrounding police increases, need to stay competitive to retain officers and ensure that we're paying in an equitable manner for similar experience. Also dispatch contract increase is driving spending.
    - Highway – additional person
    - Transfer Station – will this cost ever go away was asked? The answer, no.
    - Parks looking to engage in a new irrigation maintenance contract.
- Remaining Free Cash of $161,180 – this sparked a discussion regarding using Free Cash and not depending on Free Cash to fund our budget gaps year over year. There was also additional discussion regarding using Free Cash vs. asking the residents to fund the budget shortfall.
- Very little Capital items in the budget, the plan is to fund those items through ARPA funds for FY2024. This will not be an option moving forward.
- Stabilization fund is at 300k on an approximate $15m budget (not a great number). We haven't put any money into stabilization for years.
- ARPA funds need to be committed by 2024 and spent by 2026. Jason would not recommend using ARPA funds to close the budget gap, not a good practice, doesn't address future gaps - it's just a one-time band aid.
- As of now, Groton is not asking for a prop 2.5% override, but they are not finished with the budget process.
- The BOS and Advisory discussed the highway expenses, history of budget asks.
- TA Silva will work on pulling together a first pass at a 5-year financial forecast.
- Extensive discussion regarding the School District expenses. Technology costs, etc.
- BOS and Advisory will reconvene next week to go back through the budget to discuss strategy, next steps, etc. Recommendation that the Advisory Board invite the School Committee members to their meeting to discuss in detail concerns and questions.
- Reviewed Town Budget FY24 presentation. (attach)

Local Initiative Program (LIP) Development Proposal: 41 Lowell Street*

After the meeting on March 11, 2023, questions and concerns regarding the proposal were gathered by TA Silva and the Select Board and provided to the Brattle Development group. They will be reviewing them and work on responses.

A couple of questions that were mentioned at the meeting: does this proposal pose a budget risk for the Town? Will we be doing a financial risk assessment?

Once we receive responses from Brattle, the Select Board will discuss questions and answers in a future meeting.

On a motion by Selectwoman Basbanes and seconded by Selectman Mikol, it was **VOTED**: to adjourn the meeting at 8:22pm. **The vote was unanimous.**