Town of Dunstable Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, September 10, 2024

In attendance: Chair Leah Basbanes, Vice Chair Kieran Meehan, Select Board Member Ron Mikol, Town Administrator Jason Silva, Executive Assistant Sue Fayne

The meeting was called to order at 5 PM by Chair Basbanes.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Tax Aid Committee

Chair Basbanes briefly reviewed the charge for the committee, taken from section 3D:

"In any city or town establishing an aid to the elderly and disabled taxation fund, there shall be a taxation aid committee to consist of the chairman of the board of assessors, the city or town treasurer and three residents of the city or town to be appointed by the mayor or board of selectmen as the case may be. Said board shall adopt rules and regulations to carry out the provisions of this section and to identify the recipients of such aid."

Chair Basbanes and the Board were very encouraged and excited for the eagerness and new resident interest expressed for this important Committee. As stated in Section 3D, in addition to the Chairman of the Board of Assessors and Treasurer, the committee also consists of 3 resident appointments. We had 5 residents' express interest, one did withdraw from consideration due to schedule, and the remaining 4 residents were present.

TA Silva clarified that this would be an ongoing commitment to initially put together the rules and regulations defining how they would distribute the funds. They would be responsible, moving forward, on the decisions of distributing funds.

The Board then asked the 4 residents to introduce themselves and their interest in the committee.

Nikole Roth introduced herself. She's a retired critical care nurse and an animal behaviorist. She works with the ASPCA and enjoys volunteer work for both animals and people. She states she's an advocate for Senior Citizens, who after 40 years of working with veterans and the elderly who can't afford their medications, she has a strong interest in programs to help people.

Erica Flynn then greeted the Board and expressed her interest in the Committee because it was one of the items she brought up previously as a suggestion to the Board. She has been a financial analyst for 20 years and was in accounting before that. She's been very active in town boards/committees. Erica also inquired how she (and others) could donate to the Elderly & Disabled Tax Aid fund if a mortgage company or leasing company pays the Real Estate & Excise taxes directly. Any resident can donate via a check payable to the Town of Dunstable and drop it off at Town Hall or mail it.

Lori Brooks introduced herself. She said she's a lifelong resident of Dunstable and is interested in helping others. When she saw this committee, she thought it would be a good fit. She's worked for the government for 38 years.

Anne Farina wrapped things up. She has been active for many years in Town Government, serving as the Dunstable Town Moderator for 10 years, and multiple terms on the Planning Board. Anne has been an attorney since 1989, and she currently works for a financial services company. She thinks she can bring value to the committee because developing rules & regulations is what she does today full time, and she stated that she is suited well for the committee work.

Vice Chair Meehan suggested choosing 3 and having an alternate member. He thought this would be beneficial in case someone's schedule gets busy. He also suggested this person wouldn't have voting power but be a part of the committee.

TA Silva clarified that the law doesn't allow for an alternate member.

Chairman Basbanes, with appreciation for the genuine interest from everyone, would like to see 3 people that aren't currently on other Boards to serve on this committee. She values Erica's contributions to the community and would make her an alternate if the Board could.

Vice Chair Meehan and Selectman Mikol both agreed with Chair Basbanes, with gratitude to Erica for all she does for the town, they also support Nikole Roth, Lori Brooks & Anne Farina as the 3 members of the committee.

Joan Simmons asked how much money was in the account and TA Silva stated approximately $250.

On a motion from Selectman Mikol and seconded by Vice Chair Meehan, it was voted to appoint the following three residents to the Taxation Aid Committee for a term that expires on June 30, 2025: Anne Farina, Nikole Roth, and Lori Brooks. The vote was unanimous.

Approval of Meeting Minutes from August 13, 2024*

The meeting minutes from August 13, 2024 were presented to the Selectboard for review. There were no changes or updates requested.

On a **motion** from Selectman Mikol and **seconded** by Vice Chair Meehan it was **VOTED** to approve the meeting minutes from August 13th, 2024. **The vote was unanimous.**

Call Special Town Meeting – November 18, 2024*

TA Silva requests to Open the Warrant for a Special Town Meeting on Monday, November 18, 2024 at 7pm. The date is suggested to keep the Town Meeting on a Monday, which is regular practice, and with November 11th being a Holiday, and the week after the 25th being the week of Thanksgiving, it seemed to be the best option. After a brief discussion on the timing of the date, a **motion** was made by Selectman Mikol and **seconded** by Vice Chair Meehan, and it was **VOTED** to open the warrant for the Special Town Meeting scheduled for Monday, November 13, 2024 at 7 PM on Wednesday, September 11, 2024 and to close the Special Town Meeting Warrant on Monday, October 21, 2024 at 4 PM. **The vote was unanimous.**

TA Silva pointed out that the very rough draft of the warrant is included in the meeting packet with some substantive articles included. Town Counsel has not reviewed the warrant yet, but the subject matter is expected to largely remain the same.

Appointments: MPIC Designee from Economic Development Committee*

The Master Plan Implementation Committee recently lost an Economic Development representative due to the resignation of Kate McNutt a few months ago. Kathy Sniezek volunteered to represent the Economic Development Committee.

On a **motion** from Selectman Mikol and **seconded** by Vice Chair Meehan, it was **VOTED** to appoint Kathy Sniezek to the Master Plan Implementation Committee as the representative of the Economic Development Committee for a term to expire June 30, 2025. **The vote was unanimous.**

Tax Abatement for David Simmons on the property located at 100 Simmons Way*

In 2018, a land donation was accepted by the town, which became known as 100 Simmons Way, and the town also entered into a Life Estate agreement with Mr. David Simmons for the property at 114 Pleasant St. The Town took possession of the property in the last 2 months of FY2019, however the town never stopped assessing the Real Estate taxes to the former owner of the property. The former owner, Mr. Simmons, has been paying real estate taxes on the property since 2019. Based on the assessor's calculations and recommendation, over that period of time Mr. Simmons paid $19,926.72 in taxes which should be abated. Assessing sought guidance from the state on how to handle this and,based on their recommendation, the next step is for the Selectboard to request the Board of Assessors to abate the taxes paid and, following this vote, the Board of Assessors must vote to issue the refund in this amount.

Mr. Simmons will be reimbursed in a lump sum payment. These funds will be paid for from the Town's overlay which is funded annually and is funded for this purpose. This is an unfortunate situation that occurred resulting in an overpayment of taxes by Mr. Simmons for land he did not own.

Resident Sue Psaledakis suggested to the Board that a letter be sent to Mr. Simmons to apologize for the error. The Board agreed to that idea once the issue is resolved.

On a **motion** from Selectman Mikol and **seconded** by Vice Chair Meehan, it was **VOTED** to request the Board of Assessors grant real estate abatements in the amount of $19,926.72 on the property located at 100 Simmons Street (17-53-2), due to an inadvertent clerical error caused by the land use code not being changed to exempt and, therefore, erroneously generating real estate tax bills in David Simmon's name after the Town had taken ownership of the property. **The vote was unanimous.**

ARPA Reallocation Proposal*

TA Silva explained that the proposal is to reallocate $19,966.18, currently allocated for a variety of projects that have mostly been completed and cost less than estimated, to other necessary projects. He then reviewed the projects proposed to be completed with the available funds.

On a **motion** from Selectman Mikol and **seconded** by Vice Chair Meehan, it was **VOTED** to reallocate a total of $19,966.18 of previously approved ARPA allocations as listed below.

Current Allocation:

Purpose	Balance
Select Board Newsletter	$25.54
ARPA Reporting and Compliance	$9,520.00
IT Upgrades	$620.92
Election Ballot Drop Box	$355.88
Town Hall Electrical	$68.73
Fire Electrical	$4,877.87
Fire HVAC	$350.00
Gov Services Remote, Laptops	$2,236.92
Police Vests	$1,062.23
Police Cruiser	$713.09
Salt Shed Roof	$135.00
Total	**$19,966.18**

Proposed Reallocation:

Purpose	Balance
General IT	$2,000.00
Vital Records	$1,000.00
Newsletter	$2,100.00
Fire Reporting System Upgrade	$5,000.00
Town Hall Air Handling Unit	$9,866.18
Total	**$19,966.18**

The vote was unanimous.

Designation of the Union Building Designer Services Evaluation and Selection Committee*

As part of the procedures adopted by the board in July, which is a State requirement, the approving body (Select Board) is to appoint a body to perform the designer services search and evaluation for the exterior of the Union Building, and make recommendations to the Select Board. The recommendation before the Select Board tonight is for the Union Building Committee to be that body. The evaluation & selection committee will make a recommendation to the Select Board for the top 3 proposals, and the Select Board can then review the top 3 proposals and based on the recommendations of the committee, make a selection.

On a **motion** from Selectman Mikol and **seconded** by Vice Chair Meehan, it was **VOTED** to designate the members of the Union Building Rehabilitation Committee as the Designer Services Evaluation and Selection Committee to conduct the designer selection process for the restoration of the Union School Building. **The vote was unanimous.**

Joan Simmons asked if the RFP is out yet - yes and proposals are due on September 25, 2024. TA Silva is very encouraged with the interest so far.

Alan Chaney had questions regarding the recently approved Sign policy. TA Silva explained that the policy was drafted by staff and reviewed by Town Counsel. In summary, it states that private signs are not allowed on Town Property under the purview of the Select Board. Property under the control of the Cemetery Commission, Conservation Commission, Town Forest are not included. Vice Chair Meehan stated that it's important to take a commonsense approach to how we are enforcing the policy. It would be fiscally irresponsible to have someone monitoring town-owned land.

Mr. Chaney inquired that boards that are not covered by the policy would need to also adopt a policy of their own. It was stated that they could use the language in the current policy, which is already approved. The Select Boards office will send a copy of the policy to Cemetery, Conservation, Town Forrest, and Roads for their information and consideration.

The meeting was adjourned at 6: 15PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sue Fayne
Executive Assistant