

Hybrid- Select Board Regular Meeting
Monday, March 7, 2022 - 7:00 p.m.
Longmeadow High School, Meeting Room A15
535 Bliss Road, Longmeadow, MA
Remote participation available

Select Board Members Present: Chair Marc Strange, Joshua Levine, Mark Gold. Absent – Steve Marantz, Thomas Lachiusa

Staff Present: Lyn Simmons, Michael Barbieri, Jennifer Leydon.

Also Present: Stephen Metz, Capital Planning Committee Chair.

Chair Strange called this meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance. Due to COVID-19 concerns and the Governor’s executive order, and changes to Open Meeting Law remote participation, this meeting was a hybrid meeting at Longmeadow high school, with a remote option available for residents and participants to call in or send in their comments. LCTV was also utilized to broadcast and record the meeting.

Chair Strange confirmed that all members and persons anticipated on the agenda were present and could hear and be heard throughout the meeting. Ensuring public access does not ensure public participation unless law requires such participation. This meeting allowed for public comment.

Announcements

Covid-19 Self Reporting Tool: The Eastern Hampden Shared Public Health Services, along with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, has seen a shift in the way residents of the Commonwealth are utilizing at-home antigen testing to diagnose active Covid-19 infections. In an effort to obtain the most accurate number of positive Covid-19 cases, they are asking residents to utilize the new Covid-19 Self Reporting Tool. Once you receive a positive result using a home antigen test, you can visit the Health Department’s [Covid-19 information page](#) on longmeadow.org, to enter your test results and answer questions regarding symptoms. Please click “self-reporting tool” at the top of the page. Each household in the U.S. can also sign up to receive four free at-home Covid-19 antigen test kits by visiting www.covidtests.gov.

Deadline to Submit Nomination Papers: The deadline to submit nomination papers for certification for the Annual Town Election is tomorrow, Tuesday, March 8, 2022. The Town Clerk’s office is open from 8:15 am - 4:30 pm.

Longmeadow Community Earth Day Clean-Up: Community Earth Day is a resident sponsored volunteer cleanup that will take place on Sunday, April 10, 2022 at noon with a rain date of April 24. Last year, volunteers were able to collect over 3,000 pounds of trash, recyclables, and hazardous waste! For more information on how to register, please visit the [Earth Day page](#) on longmeadow.org where there is a link to sign up to volunteer.

Capital Planning Recommendation for FY2023

Dr. Stephen Metz, Chair of the Capital Planning Committee, attended via zoom to present the recommendations from the Capital Planning Committee for the FY2023 capital plan. Supporting documents including the memo and proposed capital plan can be found in the Select Board agenda packet linked under “documents” at the end of these minutes. Mr. Gold questioned why the funding of the fire truck fund was deferred. Mr. Gold also noted that the pavement preservation funding was stiff and could take a bit of reduction with the possibility Chapter 90 funding increasing. Dr. Metz stated that if the Chapter 90 funds increase, it would be the committee’s

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recommendation to devote this to the sidewalks. Dr. Metz described the dilemma that was faced in trying to find ways to accommodate the total decrease in the capital budget and stated it was not an easy decision to conclude the recommendation. The Fire Truck fund is an important item, Dr. Metz agreed, but the committee felt there were other projects that deserved higher priority. Mr. Levine questioned how much money is saved in the fire truck fund and what the total cost is. The last fire truck was several hundred thousand dollars according to Dr. Metz. Ms. Leydon stated that there is currently \$442,584 in the fund currently. Mr. Strange questioned why there is a \$230,000 difference between the Capital Planning Committee's recommendations and the Town Manager's request. Ms. Leydon commented that we updated our revenue projections the 3% was lowered. Mr. Strange also asked if any of these projects were being funded through ARPA. Ms. Simmons noted that the bulk of the Center School window project is through ARPA, as well as cardiac equipment and light towers. Dr. Metz also noted that \$300,000 of funding for the windows at Center School was being funded through community preservation. Mr. Gold also questioned if the flat roof replacement at Center School was eligible for community preservation funding. Ms. Simmons also noted that the Town received notice of \$470,000 in Chapter 90 funding. Mr. Gold questioned if it was reasonable to expect a vendor to be able to do \$700,000 worth of streets that the pavement plan refers to. Ms. Simmons stated that we are going to be delayed, but we will be able to go out to the bid in the winter to get the spring 2023 paving done.

Resident Comments

Kenneth Klopfer, of 140 Deepwoods Drive was present to speak during the resident comment portion of the meeting. Mr. Klopfer stated his opposition of the gas pipeline project and metering facility proposed by Eversource. Mr. Klopfer also expressed his appreciation of other efforts made to oppose the pipeline and uphold safety and other items that are of concern to Longmeadow residents. Mr. Klopfer went on to say that, Massachusetts has chosen a leadership role in the fight against climate change with the commonwealth's 2050-climate roadmap. Mr. Klopfer stated that Eversource's proposal for new fossil fuel infrastructure flies in the face of this legislation designed to reduce carbon emissions. Mr. Klopfer believes that the project will become even less necessary with the climate roadmap legislation coming in the future. Mr. Klopfer also opposes this proposal because the town should not be subjected to any risk for something that is simply not necessary, and for utility bills increasing due to the cost of unneeded construction. Mr. Klopfer applauded the people of Longmeadow who have fought for both for the environment and against the pipeline project in numerous ways, including passing multiple bylaws at previous Town Meetings. Mr. Klopfer thanked the Longmeadow Select Board for their leadership in assessing the true nature of the Eversource proposal.

Kurt Freedman, of 24 Ridge Road, was present to speak during the resident comment portion of the meeting. Mr. Freedman stated that as a registered professional engineer in 18 states and certified energy manager, he gave a presentation at the August 2019 Special Town Meeting expressing his concerns for the subject metering station and emphasized the need for natural gas pipeline safety. Mr. Freedman noted that such safety concerns were based on the Lawrence, MA tragedies in September 2018 as well as other experiences in our Country. Mr. Freedman stated that since that meeting, the pipeline awareness group has raised other concerns for the use of natural gas, which are misleading in his belief. Mr. Freedman explained that the use of a working exhaust hood is a well-established best practice to effectively remove fumes. Mr. Freedman stated that we need natural gas to serve our community. Although Mr. Freedman supports the use of heat pumps, the use of electric ranges and electric heat will lead to greater system power demands and higher power costs for everyone, he stated. Mr. Freedman described that since nearly eighty percent of the commonwealth's electricity is generated cleanly by natural gas, we need natural gas and natural gas pipelines. Mr. Freedman stated that as a community we should consider our earlier action steps on natural gas to provide for the best interests of Longmeadow and our region.

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Tom Shea, of 81 Greenmeadow Drive, was present via zoom to speak during the resident comment portion of the meeting. Mr. Shea spoke about Article 12 on the draft annual Town Meeting warrant concerning the Center School window replacements. Mr. Shea stated that the warrant article should be changed to be transparent in what source this project will be funded from between ARPA, Capital Planning, historic preservation, or the restricted fund balance. Mr. Shea explained that people need to know what the money is being spent on and the total cost to the project. Mr. Shea suggested being fully transparent in Article 12 and to look to revise it. Mr. Shea also questioned if a study has been done to estimate the cost to repair, buy new poles to push up the windows, or to buy new windows, and if so that this should be included into the warrant for the public to see. Mr. Shea stated that if you repair the windows, maybe the first phase of the roof replacement could be funded through ARPA. Mr. Shea also suggested looking into grants to fund some of these projects.

Select Board Comments

Mr. Strange commented that tonight would be his last meeting on the Select Board. Mr. Strange accepted a job to become the Town Administrator in Ludlow, and will be resigning from the Select Board effective this Friday, March 11. Mr. Strange stated that he has enjoyed the past three years he has served on the Select Board, and that the team has been great and expects more of the same in the future.

Town Manager's Report

COVID-19 Update: As of Thursday, March 3, 2022, there are 24 reported cases. However, there were only 32 PCR tests performed within the last 2 weeks for Longmeadow. At home tests that were not reported to the Board of Health are not reflected in these numbers.

DEP Air Sensor Grant: Ms. Simmons was pleased to report that the Town has received a grant for air sensors at seven locations in Town. DPW Facilities Director Nick Georgantas applied for a grant to install air sensors at all school buildings and the DPW. Mass DEP administers the grant program and PurpleAir makes the sensors. The air quality sensors measure fine particle pollution (PM2.5) and produce data that will be displayed on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's AirNow Fire and Smoke Map online, along with data from PM2.5 monitoring stations operated by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP). Also, as recipients of the DEP Purple Air Sensors, we have the opportunity to join with a network of other communities to input our data into the Pioneer Valley Healthy Air Network to gain a greater understanding on when and where air quality impacts health and what steps can be taken to avoid and address air pollution across the Pioneer Valley.

Adult Center: The Longmeadow Adult Center has won a Bronze Medal for its logo from My Senior Center in the 2022 Logo Contest. My Senior Center is a software company that specializes in software for Adult Centers, Councils on Aging or Senior Centers and is used by more than 1,500 centers across the nation. There were 50 other centers competing. There were gold, silver and bronze levels and four centers were selected for each category.

Parks & Recreation Summer Positions: Positions are available to work in the summer camps and lifeguard at both pools. The postings can be found on longmeadow.org. Hourly rates were increased 15% based on the market to attract more candidates to the positions. However, we are off to a very slow start and need more applicants, especially lifeguards, to run the programs that the Longmeadow residents rely on. In an effort to try to train more lifeguards, Longmeadow Parks & Rec has teamed up with East Longmeadow Parks & Rec to offer a lifeguard certification course in April or May.

Bliss Road Cell Tower: Power to the site was completed. AT&T has installed its equipment. They are now waiting on the fiber connection, which could take a few months. Verizon is waiting for equipment and they should be installing soon. The driveway has been paved and once the weather improves, shrubbery will be installed.

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MSBA Statement of Interest Williams and Glenbrook Middle Schools: The Mass School Building Authority Board of Directors voted to invite Longmeadow into the MSBA's Eligibility Period. During the 270-day Eligibility Period, the District will work with the MSBA to fulfill several requirements including forming a building committee, completing a district enrollment study, and executing an agreement to complete a feasibility study. Upon completion of these requirements, the District would be considered for an invitation into the Feasibility Study phase of the MSBA capital pipeline.

Mr. Gold stated that late last year we were discussing the lack of lifeguards. Mr. Gold questioned as part of the joint program with East Longmeadow, if the Town has considered subsidizing the cost of the lifeguard program in return for people who agreed to come to work as lifeguards. Ms. Simmons stated that she, and Parks and Rec Director, Bari Jarvis, have discussed creative ways to try to attract people to these positions. Mr. Gold also made the comment that he misses the year-end reports on water and sewer usage and trash/recycling volume. Mr. Gold volunteered to be a resource and to help staff generate these reports, similarly, to how they were done in the past. Mr. Gold explained that it is important to receive these reports quarterly to understand the overall usage and volume.

Mr. Levine questioned when the Town would need to have a certain amount of lifeguards by, to know if both pools will be able to open. Ms. Simmons commented that the ideal timeframe would be the middle of May. Mr. Levine questioned if the same problem with staffing lifeguards is occurring again. Ms. Simmons stated that some competitors have raised their rates that has drawn lifeguards elsewhere, but also there is a lack of applicants for many of these positions. Mr. Levine is glad to see the program with East Longmeadow taking place. Mr. Levine also questioned if any resident has reported at-home tests to this point. Ms. Simmons stated that she would ask the Health Dept. and would follow up on this question.

Mr. Gold commented that recruiting lifeguards from the swim teams is generally a great idea and suggested taking this route to be aggressive in recruiting, rather than reactive.

Old Business

A. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Mr. Gold made the motion to approve the Select Board Regular Meeting Minutes from the February 22, 2022 meeting. Mr. Levine seconded the motion. Approved by a vote of 3-0.

New Business

A. Town Manager FY2023 Budget Presentation

Please visit www.longmeadow.org/budget for relevant documents and presentation slides. To watch the budget presentation and full discussion, please click [here](#) for the recording (00:40 – 1:28).

Town Manager Simmons presented the proposed Fiscal Year 2023 to the Select Board and public. Town Finance Director, Jennifer Leydon, was also present to discuss the proposed budget. Ms. Simmons stated that some of the highlights of the FY2023 budget were that the budget recommendation is balanced, without the use of reserves. The FY2023 budget uses 1.75% of the allowable 2.5% property tax increase under Proposition 2 1/2, and held to the same percentage used in FY2022. Ms. Simmons also highlighted that the FY2023 budget funds the FY2023 Capital Plan recommendations. The FY2023 budget also funds the recommended changes in the DPW organizational structure as outlined in the Collins Center report, according to Ms. Simmons. Ms. Simmons went on to present the recommended FY2023 budget. Ms. Simmons commented that the Finance Committee would be meeting on March 14, 2022 @ 7 pm via zoom to discuss the budget. The Select Board and Finance Committee will also hold a public hearing on the budget on a date to be determined. The presentation slides and full recording of the presentation are linked above. After the presentation concluded, the Select Board were able to ask questions concerning the proposed FY2023 budget. Mr. Gold thanked Ms. Simmons for this presentation. Mr. Gold

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commented about the reserves. Mr. Gold stated that the write-up pointed out that the Select Board's policy is for the reserves to be in the five to ten percent range of the general fund, and our current reserves are \$8.54 million or 10.75% of the general fund operating revenue. Since this is above the target range, Mr. Gold questioned if there might be an opportunity to use some free cash in the coming year, instead of pouring it back into the general fund. Mr. Gold also stated that he could not find in the budget how we were accounting for revenue from other communities that reimburse their share of regional health care costs. Ms. Simmons stated that there would be a line item for this revenue in the future. Ms. Simmons went on to say that, the state grant right now is covering this next fiscal year. Ms. Leydon stated that we do not have a line item currently for state grant revenue. Mr. Gold stated that seeing this in the line item would help us identify the benefits of the Eastern Hampden Shared Health Services to some degree. Mr. Gold also commented that it was noted in general government, that we are again going to be using a consultant in lieu of the Assessor's Office. Mr. Gold stated that in the past, we have found that having a local Assessor or an Assistant Assessor working for the Town is beneficial to the residents. Mr. Gold commented on the legal budget, and suggested splitting the legal budget into two or three legal components that the Town uses. For example, general government support, personnel, etc. Mr. Gold stated that if we split this up, people in Town will have a better chance to see it, and we could see where we are exceeding the budget. Mr. Gold also spoke about Community Services. Mr. Gold commented that he was not convinced that our daycare budget was revenue neutral, as we do not see occupancy, rent, and electricity costs associated. Mr. Gold stated that providing daycare is a nice service that we give to our residents, but it is not a core function of the community government in his opinion. To the extent that we can offer the service and break even on it, that is great, but if we are not making money on it and we are subsidizing it, we need to know about it and act accordingly, Mr. Gold stated. Mr. Gold also commented on the item of pension and benefits and wanted to keep in mind that our retirement costs are going up, partially due to having more employees, but also the net return after expenses for the retirement system is high. Mr. Gold also questioned if the Library Board of Trustees looked at the Library budget and approved it. Mr. Gold suggested a adding a footnote to the budget stating that the Library board approved this budget to stay consistent with the MOU agreement. Mr. Gold also commented that our sewer retained earnings fund is very high. Last year, the Town tried to use it to adjust sewer funds, Mr. Gold noted, and the Finance Committee opposed at Town Meeting using one-time funds for ongoing costs. Mr. Gold explained that sewer and sewer enterprise funds is not the same as tax revenue. Mr. Gold commented that we need to work with the Finance Committee to use this money to give back to the ratepayers. Going by line items, Mr. Gold questioned if this year was a two or three vehicle year for the Police Dept. Ms. Leydon responded by stating it was two vehicle year. Mr. Gold stated that in the past we have looked at what our Police vehicle fleet has looked like. Ms. Simmons commented that the Town also has a green communities grant for \$5,000 if we choose to buy a hybrid vehicle. Mr. Gold also commented that in the Forestry line item, tree planting is lower than it should be in his opinion. Mr. Gold questioned if this is a number that the acting tree warden is comfortable with or if they have reviewed it. Ms. Simmons commented that we do not currently have a tree warden; we now have a deputy tree warden who is a staff person in the grounds department, and our tree crew is very small currently. Mr. Gold asked where and how we are looking at the increase in building maintenance. Ms. Simmons stated that this number is what we could afford to absorb this year, and that it is taking into account the additional maintenance that we are going to need to take on at the DPW and Adult Center once the contracts and warranties expire after the first year of operation. Ms. Leydon also commented that we reduced this number by \$25,000 from previous year. Mr. Gold also commented on vehicle maintenance at the new DPW. Mr. Gold suggested breaking down how much we have spent on repairs previously, to show the new savings from doing repairs in house. Mr. Levine questioned why we do not pass on the advertising costs for the ZBA appeals to the applicant. Ms. Leydon stated that we are doing so and our revenue has increased slightly as well. Mr. Strange questioned if the 24 million in OPEB liability is active or potential. Mr. Gold commented that this number varies from year to year based on interest rates, life

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expectancies, and retirement dates. Mr. Gold stated that the sooner it is fully funded, the sooner we could start cutting back on our annual payment. A discussion then ensued about putting additionally money into the OPEB fund, possibly with an article at the upcoming Town Meeting Ms. Simmons also pointed out that to meet the 1.75% in the budget, the FY2023 budget is underfunding the School Committee's adopted budget by \$200,000. Mr. Gold also discussed the next steps with the capital recommendations. Ms. Simmons stated that the board is scheduled to vote on the capital plan and the budget on March 21. Mr. Gold suggested putting money in the capital plan towards the fire truck fund. Ms. Leydon also recommended doing so.

B. Annual Town Meeting Draft Warrant Review

The Select Board reviewed a draft warrant for the Annual Town Meeting. A final copy will be voted on at the March 21 meeting. Ms. Simmons stated that a bulk of the articles currently are from Community Preservation, and the last one is the water conservation bylaw that was reviewed at the last Select Board meeting. Mr. Gold spoke on the water conservation article. Mr. Gold suggested putting out information to the public explaining this article. Mr. Gold stated that he was surprised by a few of the Community Preservation Articles. One was the article funding the skate park project at Bliss Park. Mr. Gold also mentioned the article funding the Center School Window replacements. The skatepark article also surprised Mr. Levine. Mr. Levine questioned if there would be supplemental information showing the plan in terms of the skate park article, and if the language in these preservation articles could be revised. Ms. Simmons stated that if the Community Preservation Committee adopted it, it does in fact have to go through on the warrant. Ms. Simmons will check on whether or not the actual language of the article could be amended. Ms. Simmons also noted that there is a possibility additional articles will be added to the warrant by the next meeting. Ms. Simmons also mentioned the plan for the general code e-code project to come forward at the fall town meeting later in the year.

C. Recovery of HCRRB losses

Mr. Gold stated that it was discovered that the Hampden County Retirement Board holds directors and officers insurance. The question is does the Town of Longmeadow want to consult through a town attorney who represents multiple towns to prepare a letter to the insurance company, identifying the losses due to malfeasances and or illegal actions. The amount of money potentially eligible for recovery is \$750,000 for the 2014-2017 period. If this were done in violation with state policies and laws, it would be subject for recovery through the directors and officers insurance. Mr. Gold mentioned that our cost at the retirement board has gone up eleven percent. After their expenses, the net return of the HCRRB is somewhere in the 4-5 percent range, because their expenses are high, according to Mr. Gold. Mr. Gold noted that we now have an understanding after the audit as to why their expenses are so high. Mr. Gold believes that it is appropriate to pursue legal relief coming back to the cities and Towns. Mr. Gold discussed the possibility of 30-40 thousand dollars coming back to the Town of Longmeadow. Mr. Gold stated that last week PERAC came out with their assessment of the percentage funding of retirement plans of the 105 pension plans throughout the commonwealth. Mr. Gold stated that the Hampden County Retirement Board is 96 on this list. Mr. Levine questioned if we are the policyholder. Mr. Gold stated that the HCRRB is the policyholder and the Town of Longmeadow would be the aggrieved. Mr. Gold also discussed that this week legislation was filed in the state for reorganization of the Hampden County Regional Retirement Board. Mr. Gold went on to say that, the legislation sets the board at seven people with overlapping terms, and that representation is based on the members communities. Mr. Gold believes that this would set up a HCRRB that is consistent with best practices for boards, and will the communities more of a say in who runs the agency. Mr. Gold is hopeful that this legislation will pass and that it was done with the support of State Rep Brian Ashe and his legislative assistant, Robin Frechette. Mr. Gold also mentioned that Senator Lessor is on board and we are looking to get co-sponsors from other state legislatures representing other communities' part of the HCRRB.

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Mr. Gold made the motion to request that the Town Attorney look into and pursue recovery of losses through the insurance policy of the Hampden County Regional Retirement Board's Directors and Officers insurance. Mr. Levine seconded the motion. Approved by a vote of 3-0.

D. 2021 Citizen of the Year / Commendation Award Process

A memo was submitted to the Select Board outlining the process for both the Citizen of the Year and Commendation Award process. A discussion ensued about asking for nominations from residents. The next step after receiving nominations would be for the Town Manager to form the committee consisting of one official from each elected board and the Town Moderator.

E. Select Board Commendation Letter – Investiture of Bay Path University President, Sandra Doran

Mr. Gold made the motion to sign and approve the commendation letter for Sandra Doran on her inauguration as President of Bay Path University. Mr. Levine seconded the motion. Approved by a vote of 3-0.

Mr. Gold thanked Marc Strange for his three years of service on the Select Board. Mr. Gold stated that we have appreciated all that Marc has done in a difficult three years particularly in a remote environment. Mr. Gold wished Mr. Strange the best of luck in his new position with the Town of Ludlow, and they will get great benefit out of having him.

Mr. Levine also wished Mr. Strange the best of luck.

Correspondence

Adjourn

Mr. Levine made the motion to adjourn the Select Board Regular Meeting at 8:52 p.m. Mr. Gold seconded the motion. Approved by a vote of 3-0.

Documents:



03 07 22 SB Agenda
Packet.pdf

[Select Board March 7, 2022 Agenda Packet](#)

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Barbieri