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ACUSHNET BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING
TOWN HALL MEETING ROOM
JANUARY 9, 2024 at 4:30 PM

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I. CALL TO ORDER
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Present: Chairman Kevin Gaspar, Sr., Selectman David Wojnar, Selectman Robert Hinckley, and Town Administrator James Kelley

Chairman Gaspar welcomed all to the January 9, 2024 regular Board of Selectmen meeting at 4:30 PM. Chairman Gaspar asked if there was a motion to open the meeting. Selectman Hinckley motioned to open the January 9, 2024 Board of Selectmen meeting. Selectman Wojnar seconded the vote. Chairman Gaspar asked for those in favor, and all were in favor. Motion passed. All rose for the Pledge for Allegiance.

II. NEW BUSINESS

Citations – Heather Chew and Donna Lake

Chairman Gaspar announced that the citations for Heather Chew and Donna Lake have been postponed to the next Board of Selectmen's agenda due to COVID-19 illness.

Conservation Agent/PT Health Agent's, Patrick Hannon, Resignation Letter

Chairman Gaspar stated that Patrick Hannon, part-time Conservation/Storm Water Agent and part-time Board of Health Agent, resigned from his roles from the Town of Acushnet on December 23, 2023. He read the resignation letter from Mr. Hannon. Chairman Gaspar wished him nothing but the best and thanked Mr. Hannon for his expertise that was brought to the Town. Selectman Hinckley motioned to accept the resignation of part-time Assistant Health Agent, part-time Conservation Agent, part-time Storm Water Agent, and any other position or offices with the Town of Acushnet dated December 29, 2023 to memorialize for the record the acknowledgement and acceptance on behalf of the Town of Acushnet of those resignations by Town Council on that date December 29, 2023. Selectman Wojnar seconded the motion. Chairman Gaspar asked for those in favor, and all were in favor. Motion passed.

COA Management

Mr. Kelley stated that the Town advertised the COA Director position on the MMA bulletin and on Indeed. He stated that as of December 5th, he received eight resumes and two more recently arrived at the Office. The Interview Panel composed of Mr. Kelley, Selectman Hinckley, and COA Chairwoman Linda Guilbeault. They decided to interview three candidates and hold two as secondaries. All interviews were conducted on January 11, 2024. The Council on Aging Board met with Mr. Kelley regarding recommendations and concerns. Chairman Gaspar thanked Selectman Hinckley for volunteering to interview and Mrs. Guilbeault for assisting, as well. Mr. Kelley stated that finalists will likely be known by the next meeting. Chairman Gaspar asked if there was a motion to place on file. Selectman Hinckley motioned to place on file. Selectman Wojnar seconded the motion. Chairman Gaspar asked for those in favor, and all were in favor. Motion passed.

Russell Memorial Library Disposition Briefing

Chairman Gaspar stated that the next topic is a Russell Memorial Library disposition briefing. Chairman Gaspar asked Mr. Kelley for clarification of \$25,000 ear-mark grant. Mr. Kelley said that the

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Board should best dispose of Russell Memorial Library in an RFP process. Legislative Delegation gave an ear-mark grant of \$25,000 to assist towns in RFP sales. D.R.E.A.M. Development is the consultant. Mr. Kelley stated that \$25,000 of this ear-mark directly goes to D.R.E.A.M. Development, so the Town will never touch that money. He stated that the agreement requires the Town to provide a \$10,000 match to cover surveying and accurate building plans. Mr. Kelley suggested taking the match from ARPA funding, since he met with Jen Thompson and Ben Murphy from Mass Development to formulate this plan. He stated that an RFP can allow citizens to present proposals for the building's use to the Board, while preserving the facade of the old library. Selectman Hinckley asked for clarification on the \$10,000 match, and Mr. Kelley stated that the funds would not go to us, but to D.R.E.A.M. Selectman Hinckley said he is not comfortable spending ARPA money until more progress has been made on Slocum Street. Selectman Wojnar stated that external expertise will be needed for proper marketing of the property, and Chairman Gaspar agreed to have an appraisal done and conduct an auction with a minimum bid. Chairman Gaspar stated that since it is located in a residential zone, a variance may be needed, depending on its future use. He asked Mr. Kelley if ARPA funds can be reimbursed back into ARPA funds after its sale if \$10,000 is borrowed now; Mr. Kelley stated he will find out if this is possible. Selectman Wojnar suggested letting legislation know that there is not an available match, and Mr. Kelley asked if the Board would rather use the state's funds or use KP Law be responsible for their own legal fees. No action nor motions were taken.

Police Detail Billing

Mr. Kelley stated there have been delays in billing vendors for police details. Mr. Kelley suggested to establish a policy that requires the police department to bill the vendor within two weeks of the detail. Chairman Gaspar read that billing is occurring six months after the detail occurred. Mr. Kelley stated that he, the Town Accountant, Treasurer/Collector, and Assistant Treasurer/Collector are formulating policy, and that he wants the Board to be aware of the upcoming policy. Chairman Gaspar asked if there was a motion to allow a 30-day period to send invoices to vendors. Selectman Hinckley motioned to allow a 30-day period to send invoices to vendors. Selectman Wojnar seconded the motion. Chairman Gaspar asked for those in favor, and all were in favor. Motion passed. Chairman Gaspar suggested to draft the future financial policies as they are produced to allow for thorough review. He added that the more pertinent policies must be addressed first to avoid copious policies to review at once.

FY25 Revenue

Mr. Kelley stated that the financial staff was conservative in their revenue estimates because the Governor issued 9C cuts summing to approximately \$400,000,000. He stated that these cuts do not affect state aid; however, he will check to see if the COA funding has been affected. Mr. Kelley estimated new growth of \$100,000, which is half of the estimate of last year and a fraction from years prior. He stated that very few permits have been issued to come online; this is mainly driven by the economy. Mr. Kelley reviewed each line of the FY 25 Revenue Spreadsheet. Chairman Gaspar elaborated on the \$700,000 taken out of State A (millionaires' tax), and he disagreed on this model type. He mentioned that Chapter 70 grows around \$80,000 annually, and Mr. Kelley mentioned that administration sighted a 3% increase after the 9C cuts. Mr. Kelley mentioned that the governor's number will be locked in at a lower number by January 20th. Chairman Gaspar's concerns were about this being an ambition number compared to previous years. Mr. Kelley decreased estimates in motor vehicles by \$50,000 and was questioned on this by Chairman Gaspar; Chairman Gaspar alluded to the economy shifts resulting in uncertainty if estimates are set too high. He stated that ARPA funds have affected this value.

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FY25 Budget

Mr. Kelley reviewed the FY 25 Budget. He stated that the Bristol County budget was \$107,000, Health and General Insurance have an input of \$50,000 in reserve to decrease costs, Old Colony Regional Vocational Technical High School has an allocation of \$200,000. He stated that school salary increases equivocate to \$300,000 and the total COLA from the Town is approximately \$350,000 with an addition for overtime costs. Mr. Kelley stated that the school bus contract will cost \$400,000. Chairman Gaspar had comments and confirmations for each of the budgets. Chairman Gaspar stated that an increase in energy costs due to inflated rates, rather than more energy used. Mr. Kelley noted that there is an increase for elections from the Town Clerk's office due to 2024 being an election year. Overall, there is a structural deficit with no increases and cuts. This value is \$825,000-\$830,000. Chairman Gaspar stated that the sum could reach in the millions. Chairman Gaspar stated that the Finance Committee will be busy at work this year. Selectman Hinckley had no comments on the Revenue and Budget. Selectman Wojnar stated that the solar farm revenue should go into capital expenditures. Chairman Gaspar alluded to using solar farm revenue to assist with the school roof ban. He suggested pilot fixed tax payments over the course of its project, and suggested eventually implementing a meals tax to help recoup revenue. Chairman Gaspar agreed to entertain a meals tax. Mr. Kelley stated that this is a tough year financially due to the many expenses coming at once, and hopefully the state will provide more support for next year. A resident in the audience mentioned that pensions are cumbersome and new contracts should offer 401K's. Chairman Gaspar stated that 401K's are popular in the private industry, and those in the pension system should stay in that system.

III. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. Kelley stated that he provided a brief memo regarding potential dates for Town Meeting. He met with the Town Clerk and Town Moderator, as well as the schools. He stated that the proposed dates are untraditional due to extensive voting at that time of year. Mr. Kelley proposed the dates of April 22nd, April 29th, and June 3rd. He stated that Ms. Labonte and Mr. Dakin prefer June 3rd, but the Board will decide and does not need to establish this date immediately. He stated that the Finance Committee will need to account for this date, as well. Mr. Kelley emphasized that public hearings and meetings cannot be held on election days and tax days. Mr. Kelley stated that preliminary interviews were conducted for the Assistant Town Accountant position, but most applicants did not show serious interest. Chairman Gaspar stated the use MMA employment page and suggested renewal tactics.

IV. SELECTMAN ANNOUNCEMENTS

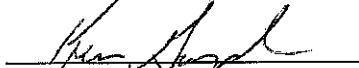
Selectman Hinckley thanked the DPW for their great work during the most recent snow storm. Chairman Gaspar continued to recognize the DPW and their great work, especially with the newer contractors. He clarified why some streets may have been missed, and encouraged patience and calling into the DPW if one's street had been missed. He also recognized Dave Sansoucy, the Town's maintenance worker, for learning how to plow and helping the community. Chairman Gaspar stated that he helped Mr. Sansoucy at the library and said he did a great job. Selectman Wojnar recognized the Town's police officers for National Police Recognition Day, and he mentioned that he is very thankful for what they do, especially when considering the incident that happened over the holidays. Selectman Wojnar stated that there was an inaccurate article published in the New Bedford Light regarding nitrogen in relation to clean-up and septic tanks. He stated that a letter was received from Senator Montigny and the Buzzard's Bay Coalition to inform the public of the inaccuracies and corrections made in this article. He read that the erroneous adoption of the TMDL plan would result in homeowners

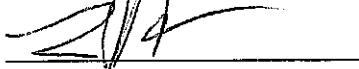
to upgrade their septic systems to expensive, nitrogen-reducing systems. He read that this is not and was never true. Selectman Wojnar stated that Senator Montigney made it clear that his efforts are to support the homeowners in Acushnet and not force them to do something per regulation. Selectman Hinckley congratulated and thanked Chief Farland for obtaining two grants: one for \$1,000 to add an AED system to the Town Hall, and the other for roughly \$2,300 to replace the iPads in the ambulances for reporting and informational tracking.

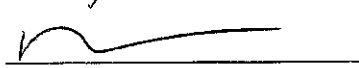
V. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chairman Gaspar stated that the Board will enter Executive Session under G.L.ch.30A§21(a)(3) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation (Development Inspectional Services) if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares and the Board will not return to Public Session at the conclusion of the Executive Session and Executive Session under G.L.ch.30A§21(a)(3) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation (MOA – Mattapoisett) if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares and the Board will not return to Public Session at the conclusion of the Executive Session. Chairman Gaspar asked if there was a motion to enter Executive Session. Selectman Hinckley motioned to enter Executive Session, and Selectman Wojnar seconded the motion. Chairman Gaspar asked for those in favor, and all were in favor. Motion passed. Chairman Gaspar asked for a roll call vote. Selectman Hinckley said yes, Selectman Wojnar said yes, and Chairman Gaspar said yes. The Board of Selectmen entered Executive Session.

Approved by:


Kevin A. Gaspar, Chairman


Robert Hinckley, Member


David Wojnar, Member

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Inventory of Meeting Documents

Acushnet Board of Selectmen

January 9, 2024 Regular Meeting

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New Business

1. Citation – Heather Chew
2. Citation – Donna Lake
3. Email RE: Town of Acushnet – Acceptance of Resignation
4. Letter of Resignation – Patrick Hannon
5. PAF – Patrick Hannon
6. Final Payroll – Patrick Hannon
7. Memorandum RE: Council on Aging Director
8. COA Director job ad
9. Memorandum RE: Russell Memorial Library
10. D/R/E/A/M Collaborative RE: Proposal for Acushnet Technical Assistance Project
11. Police Detail Billing Schedule
12. FY25 Revenue Sources Spreadsheet
13. FY25 Budget Spreadsheet

Selectmen's Announcements

1. Buzzard's Bay/Office of the Senate Letter RE: Corrections to New Bedford Light article regarding septic systems

Executive Session

1. Development Inspectional Services – *not yet authorized for disclosure*
2. MOA Mattapoisett – *discussion only*