Town of Needham
Select Board
Minutes for Tuesday, November 28, 2023
Select Board's Chamber
and
Via ZOOM
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89068374046

6:03 p.m. Call to Order:
A meeting of the Select Board was convened by Chair Marianne Cooley. Those present were Vice Chair Kevin Keane, Cathy Dowd, Heidi Frail, and Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick. Marcus Nelson was not present. David Davison, ATM/Finance, Katie King, ATM/Operations, and Susan Metropol, Recording Secretary, were also in attendance.

6:03 p.m. Public Comment Period:

Ross Donald, 25H Chambers Street, Precinct D, a Town Meeting Member for two terms expressed his disappointment that a resident was excluded outside of the community room when a public meeting of the Needham Housing Authority was taking place. He expressed his displeasure that residents are not being represented in redevelopment, maintenance, and administrative processes of the Housing Authority. He described his own experience being excluded from a public meeting. He requested that the Select Board make an appointment of a resident of public housing to the appropriate board.

6:07 p.m. Needham Girls' Swim and Dive Team:
Ms. Cooley welcomed members of the Needham High School Girls' Swim and Dive Team to congratulate them on their accomplishment of becoming State Champions for the first time in the history of the Girls' Swim and Dive Team. Ms. Cooley thanked all team members, especially co-captains Ori Fuchs, Sophie Guerrera, and Lucy Mackey. Ms. Cooley also thanked coaches Kate Curtin and Zibing Zang.

6:14 p.m. Commemoration of Philip Garrity:
Ms. Cooley announced that Philip Garrity passed away over the Thanksgiving holiday. She noted Mr. Garrity's commitment and service to the Town, including his service on the Select Board for twenty-two years.

6:17 p.m. Public Hearing: Eversource Grant of Location – 173 Stratford Road:
Presenter: Joanne Callender, Eversource Representative

Joanne Callender presented that Eversource is seeking a permit to provide service to the new home at 173 Stratford Road. Ms. Fitzpatrick confirmed that all information is in order. No public comment and no questions heard from the Select Board.

Motion by Mr. Keane that the Select Board approve and sign a petition from Eversource Energy to install approximately 6 feet of conduit in Stratford Road.
Second: Ms. Frail. Unanimously approved 4-0.

6:18 p.m. Public Hearing: Eversource Grant of Location – 47 Saint Mary Street:
Presenter: Joanne Callender, Eversource Representative

Joanne Callender presented that Eversource is seeking a permit to provide service to the new home at 47 Saint Mary Street. Ms. Fitzpatrick confirmed that all information is in order. No public comment. Ms. Frail asked whether the riser that is part of this request is allowed to go in before the grant of location. Ms. Callender confirmed that because the pole is set, Eversource has the right to add a riser without the grant.

Motion by Ms. Dowd that the Select Board approve and sign a petition from Eversource Energy to install approximately 8 feet of conduit in Saint Mary Street.
Second: Ms. Frail. Unanimously approved 4-0.

6:20 p.m. Public Hearing: Select Board Goal – Indigenous People's Day:

The Select Board held a public hearing to solicit input to determine if the Town will change Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day. Ms. Cooley introduced this topic and the setting in which this discussion is taking place. Given the complex history of Christopher Columbus, discrimination against Italians during waves of immigration throughout past centuries, we must decide how to move forward as a community.

Daniel Socci, 33 Pennsylvania Ave, a lifelong resident of Needham and a first-generation Italian immigrant, urged the Select Board to maintain Columbus Day while also potentially adding a second holiday commemorating Indigenous People's Day. Mr. Socci emphasized the role of Italian Americans in American society and the contributions they have made.

Kerry Hurwitch, Needham resident and representative of the Needham Human Rights Committee, proposed replacement of Columbus Day with Indigenous People's Day given the atrocities that occurred as a result of Christopher Columbus' colonization of this land, enslavement of its people and theft of resources. Ms. Hurwitch urged the Select Board to take this symbolic opportunity by renaming this holiday.

Jeff Heller expressed his thoughts that history must be honored but not changed. There were many Americans and foreigners who contributed to history although we in contemporary times may not agree with their actions. Mr. Heller advocated for keeping Columbus Day and adding an additional holiday celebrating indigenous people.

Mike Gallagher, 37 Barrett Street, advocated for the second Monday in October to remain as Columbus Day or another name related to the commemoration of Italian heritage. Both Italian Americans and Indigenous People are deserving of commemoration. Mr. Gallagher proposed August 9, currently World Indigenous People's Day or the Friday after Thanksgiving, currently Native American Heritage Day, as potential additional holidays to Columbus Day.

Doug Fox, 43 Marked Tree Road, expressed his views that using Columbus' name represents genocide of indigenous people and that the name of Columbus must be replaced. He advocated for changing Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day and potentially adding another day to celebrate Italian heritage.

Maria Socci, 33 Pennsylvania Ave, was born and raised in Italy and expressed that being taught about Christopher Columbus and America in school inspired her and many other Italians to come to this country. She advocated that we cannot erase history and agrees with adding another day for Indigenous People's Day.

Amber Autumn Sun Orlando, daughter of the late Chief of the Massachusett Praying Indians, disagrees with keeping the name "Columbus," although she did posit that there should be an appreciation day celebrating Italian Americans.

Mr. Socci made an additional comment about cancel culture and expressed concern that discrimination will continue if we eliminate recognition of historical events.

The Select Board will continue to review public comments until the Board Discussion, which will take place at the next meeting on December 5.

6:46 p.m. Set Recycling and Transfer Station User Fees and Charges:
Presenters: David Davison, Assistant Town Manager/Director of Finance, Carys Lustig, Director of Public Works, Cecilia Simchak, Assistant Director of Finance

Ms. Cooley announced the recommendation to set up a tiered structure. No public comments were received since the last meeting. Ms. Frail expressed her appreciation that the Committee will review these rates with some regularity. Mr. Keane thanked Jeffrey Heller for the Solid Waste & Recycling Advisory Committee's work. Ms. Dowd praised the flexibility and creativity of the Committee. Ms. Cooley advocated for reviewing rates with regularity as well.

Motion by Ms. Frail that the Select Board approve the scale rates to $160 per ton for Tier One (Needham Pick Up haulers) and $180 per ton for Tier Two (all others) and that the rates are effective January 1, 2024, and that the Select Board approve the scale rates to $180 per ton for Tier One and $220 per ton for Tier Two, to be effective July 1, 2024.

Second: Mr. Keane. Unanimously approved 4-0.

6:51 p.m. Consent Agenda:
Motion by Ms. Frail that the Select Board vote to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.
Second: Mr. Keane. Unanimously approved 4-0.

CONSENT AGENDA

1.	Approve Open Session Minutes of October 30, 2023.
2.	Accept the following donation to the Needham Health Division: $250 from MaryClare Siegel to Needham's Gift of Warmth (GOW) program.
3.	Accept the following donation to the Needham Aging Services Division: $1,000 from Pauline and Paul Attridge.

6:52 p.m. 2023-2024 Snow and Ice Update:
Presenters: Carys Lustig, Director of Public Works and Shane Mark, Assistant Director of Public Works

Carys Lustig and Shane Mark presented an overview of the Town's preparations for this year's snow and ice season. It included an update of the weather forecast as provided by the Town's weather reporting services, Town staffing and equipment, the Town's contracted services, and additional training and technology changes.

Shane Mark highlighted the most notable predictions for the upcoming winter in the East Coast, including more snow, a late season cold spell in late January and February, and an estimate of 1-3 larger storms. Needham specifically falls within the Enhanced Mixed Precipitation Zone, which could incur freezing rain, sleet, and ice. Mr. Mark also highlighted the various training and technologies in progress to prepare for the winter. These include indoor/outdoor training programs, anti-icing technologies, and updates to GPS technology that will enable DPW staff to overlay snow maps onto plow maps and the use of Road Weather Information Systems.

Ms. Lustig noted that staffing levels are significantly better than last year, however engaging contracted staff for heavy equipment is still a challenge. She emphasized that the priority of the DPW during snow events is public safety and making roads safe and drivable. She noted that the DPW will continue with the Sidewalk Pilot Program for its fourth year and will be inviting feedback from local businesses.

Ms. Cooley expressed her appreciation and highlighted the work of DPW with schools as well. Ms. Dowd asked if any of the new technologies could contribute to labor savings. Mr. Mark responded that allocation and resources could potentially result in savings.

7:27 p.m. Town Manager:

Preliminary FY2025 – FY2029 Capital Improvement Plan
Presenters: Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager, David Davison, Assistant Town Manager/Finance, Katie King, Assistant Town Manager/Operations

Ms. Fitzpatrick outlined the phases of review of the Capital Improvement Plan:
- Phase 1: submission of all project requests (November 28 SB Meeting)
- Phase 2: recommendations for FY2025 Capital Plan (December 5 SB Meeting)
- Phase 3: full five-year Capital Plan

Presenters then highlighted the following items:
- AV/IT improvements in Powers Hall
- Library Strategic Plan: operational improvements and renovation of the main floor, including Young Adult Room
- Theatrical lighting and sound
- Claxton Project: significantly more expensive than prior iterations
- EV Charging Stations: $800K item that was previously not in the Plan
- High School Tennis Court Improvements: significantly more expensive than expected
- Quiet Zone: original estimate from 2015, which will likely change
- Pollard School: MSBA decision in mid-December, high priority item
- Cogswell Building: design for Phase 1; expansion of the Cogswell Building
- Sewer Main Replacement from Cheney Street to Great Plain Avenue: some work done with ARPA funding, but some pipe has to be replaced

Mr. Davison noted that the capital requests totaling $27 million for general funds whereas at the time last year it was approximated to be $7.3 million for cash capital. Ms. King also noted the project at the Center at the Heights also has projects in the queue. Mr. Keane thanked the presenters for their work. Ms. Frail asked about alternative fundings for these projects, such as grant funding. Ms. Fitzpatrick explained that the Town's socioeconomic status and location are factors in receiving grant funding.

Town Manager Report
The Massachusetts Historic Commission voted to acknowledge and support the Preliminary Study Report for the Jonathan Kingsbury House Local Historic District and will proceed to Town Meeting.

Ms. Fitzpatrick noted the implementation of a new billing system for Water and Sewer bills. Due to technical challenges, Water and Sewer bills were not issued for the months of October and November. Information will be distributed about the timing of bills and when they are due.

The Blue Tree Lighting will be held on Saturday, December 2 at 5 p.m.

7:45 p.m. Board Discussion:
Flag Policy Discussion:

The Select Board adopted a goal to evaluate the need for a Flag Policy (Initiative #38). Myles Tucker presented a draft Flag Policy, which would formally solidify the Town's current flag practice and prevent any ambiguity regarding flag practices on Select Board-managed properties. Discussion ensued in support of this policy in order to codify the Town's current flag practice.

Motion by Ms. Frail that the Select Board vote to adopt SBDIS-006.
Second: Mr. Keane. Unanimously approved 4-0.

Committee Reports:
Mr. Keane reported that the Climate Action Committee met for a presentation and discussion on Passive House Certification. Additionally, a letter has been submitted by Stephen Frail on behalf of the Committee with particular environmental goals for the Town. Ms. Cooley added that the Sustainability Manager position has been filled and will be starting in mid-December.

Mr. Keane also reported that he attended further flood meetings.

Ms. Cooley noted that the Housing Authority and Planning Board will be meeting on December 6.

7:51 p.m. Adjourn:
Motion by Ms. Frail that the Select Board vote to adjourn the Select Board meeting of Tuesday, November 28, 2023.
Second: Ms. Dowd. Unanimously approved 4-0.

A list of all documents used at this Select Board meeting is available at:
http://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx?AMID=99&Type=&ADID

The next Select Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 5, 2023, at 6:30 p.m.