

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

* MINUTES *

November 7, 2014

3:00 p.m. A special meeting of the Board of Selectmen was convened by Chairman John Bulian at the Needham Town Hall. Present were Mr. Maurice Handel, Mr. Matt Borrelli, Mr. Daniel Matthews, Assistant Town Manager Christopher Coleman, Assistant Town Manager David Davison, and Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick. Ms. Marianne Cooley joined the meeting at 3:45 p.m.

The Board had a general discussion about the draft Facility Master Plan. Mr. Davison explained that he is in the process of developing the facility financing plan, and discussed the Town's debt management policy. The Board discussed the policy and the question as to whether the policy should be revised. One option would be to remove excluded debt from the calculation, and then lowering the total debt to total revenue ratio. Mr. Matthews noted that the 10% standard may not be the right model, since projects funded through excluded debt are not competing with other projects financed within the tax levy or through fees. Mr. Davison noted that without excluded debt, the Town's total debt ratio would be in the 5 - 6% range. The Board discussed the upper level limit for total debt to appear on the facility financing plan under the current policy, recognizing that the highest ratio shown on a prior plan was in the high 13% range and that the Town has never reached that level. Mr. Davison noted that the highest ratio reached has been in the 11% range.

Ms. Fitzpatrick discussed the proposed plan for the Department of Public Works, the impact of locating a school at DeFazio Park on DPW operations, and the timing of both projects and potential debt exclusion votes. The Board asked Ms. Fitzpatrick to provide additional information on the Department of Public Works project, including the need for complete renovation of maintenance and storage programs, the aspects of the DPW that could remain on Dedham Avenue if a school is or is not built (if any), and what the concerns are relative to co-existing on the lot. Mr. Borelli asked whether a 6th grade center could be built on the existing Pollard footprint, and whether there were any economies of scale to be achieved by bidding more than one project at once.

Board members discussed the fact that Hillside School is the first priority, that a new school is the likely (but not definitive) outcome, that DeFazio is a likely location, that a 6th grade center is possible at the DeFazio location, and that based upon the foregoing, at least a portion of DPW operations must be relocated, at some point. Ms. Fitzpatrick said that in order to place both a school and a DPW relocation on the same ballot, assuming that would be desirable, a vote could occur no earlier than November,

2016 unless the Board has an interest in pursuing design funding for the DPW in May, 2015. In that case, a debt exclusion vote on both projects could occur in April, 2015. Board members agreed that the subject was not ready for vote at the 2015 Annual Town Meeting. The Board discussed the minimum amount of repurposing of the 470 Dedham Avenue site necessary to locate a school. Mr. Borrelli suggested that the Board seek an appropriation at the 2015 Annual Town Meeting for additional feasibility analysis for relocating the DPW in part or in phases or both in a more affordable way.

The Board agreed that the facility financing plan should include a new school, net of MSBA funding, retrofitting the High Rock School, and \$25 million for the DPW as the basis for discussion. Ms. Cooley noted that the various options impact the number of students that must be redistricted, and also impact transportation costs.

Ms. Fitzpatrick noted that the 3% debt budget cannot support both an annual appropriation for roads and the significant investment in facilities that will be required if the financing plan delays construction for many years. Ms. Fitzpatrick proposed that the roads program be transitioned over several years to a cash appropriation based on revenue increases, such as new growth. The Board agreed with this approach.

Mr. Borrelli raised the question of the YMCA and Community Center which have asked the Board whether the Town will consider use of public land in the future for their programs. He suggested that the Town respond. Mr. Bulian said that he would be willing to consider some property, but that the YMCA should continue to seek property on its own. Mr. Handel suggested that a letter from the Board could be both responsive and sufficiently broad.

Mr. Matthews said that in his view, swapping land with the Conservation Commission for Nike could create a “human use area” at Ridge Hill. He said it would be ideal to have 21 acres available for the future, including eight acres for a school. Locating a YMCA or community center could fit in that model. He said it is not in the Town’s interest to allow building at the Nike site. He noted that many stakeholders would have to agree to any public/private arrangement.

The Board agreed that Mr. Borelli would draft a letter stating that the Board is open to discussions, recognizing that the timeframe is unclear, and that many stakeholders will need to be involved.

4:50 p.m.

Motion: Mr. Matthews made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Borrelli seconded the motion. Unanimous: 5-0.

