



SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES

DECEMBER 17, 2024

5:00 PM

VIRTUAL MEETING

Present: Fran Arsenault, Dean Charter, Alissa Nicol, David Martin, Jim Snyder-Grant

Additional Attendees: Town Manager John Mangiaratti, Assistant Town Manager Thom Begin

I. New/Special Business

1. Discuss Urgent Matter Not Anticipated by the Chair Regarding December 17, 2024 Letter Received from Finance Committee Chair and Prepare Response to Present to the Acton Leadership Group on December 18, 2024

Ms. Arsenault called the meeting to order at 5:01 PM, and noted the purpose of the meeting is to discuss a response to a letter received by the board from the Finance Committee Chair regarding the ALG consensus process and the debt exclusion override for the DPW building project, pointing out that the letter was received after the Select Board's regularly scheduled meeting, preventing the board from discussing the matter ahead of the Acton Leadership Group meeting scheduled for the following morning.

Mr. Mangiaratti noted that the letter from the Finance Committee Chair and a draft response letter was included in the meeting packet.

Ms. Arsenault noted the response was appropriate and accurately described the role of the ALG.

Ms. Nicol voiced concern that the letter focused on misunderstandings of comments and discussions, and felt the response letter should instead focus on the ALG process, charter and model.

Mr. Snyder-Grant noted the importance of the Finance Committee involvement in discussions.

Mr. Martin felt it important to clarify facts regarding the inclusion of debt exclusion information in the model and the consensus process, and wanted the board's take on the specific mention of him in the letter.

Ms. Arsenault commented on the importance of pointing out that the Board is not trying to change the ALG process.

Mr. Snyder-Grant wondered whether the response should be provided in person at the ALG meeting rather than written.

Mr. Charter noted the Finance Committee Chair has not been a supporter of the DPW Facilities project, and may be using this to prevent moving ahead and suggests a possibility that there may not be support for this project from the Finance Committee under any conditions. He clarified that the Select Board will continue public outreach for the project as the elected officials charged with operations of the town, noting respect for the expertise of the Finance Committee members, and encouraged a written response that the Board intends on pursuing the project.

Ms. Nicol summarized her review of this year's amended ALG charge, its goals and commitments to work in good faith to reach agreement and bring its recommendation back to their respective boards. She voiced concern that the current session is not reflective of that and seems to be flowing in the wrong direction, with attempted outsized influence of one committee on the ALG process. She suggested a response to the letter encouraging more openness and flexibility.

Mr. Martin suggested including a note about a misunderstanding of a comment made. Ms. Nicol suggested editing the second sentence to state the board is committed to ALG discussing debt exclusions, asking what scope the Finance Committee would be in support of, and highlighting what steps have been made to reduce the overall cost of the project. She also suggested adding language about what a delay on the project would mean for taxpayers, and noting the Select Board is the executive body and responsible for the financial well-being of the town.

Mr. Mangiaratti presented a draft response based on the suggestions of Board members. Mr. Snyder-Grant suggested making the points in the letter in person at ALG meeting. Ms. Arsenault and Mr. Martin added to the letter that the Select Board is committed to working with the Finance Committee to move the DPW project forward and to meet the needs of residents while being mindful of financial impacts. It was agreed to send the letter to the ALG and the Finance Committee.

Mr. Charter moved, seconded by Ms. Nicol, to approve the response as drafted and publicly post it and approved by roll call vote 4-0-1 (Snyder-Grant).

Mr. Martin moved, seconded by Ms. Nicol, to adjourn and approved unanimously by roll call vote 5-0-0. Meeting adjourned at 6:06 PM