



Town of Swampscott Select Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 16th, 2022 | Swampscott High School

SELECT BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Polly Titcomb (Chair), Neal Duffy (Vice Chair), Peter Spellios, Don Hause, David Grishman

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

OTHER TOWN OFFICIALS PRESENT

Sean Fitzgerald, Town Administrator; David Kurz, Interim Police Chief

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jeffrey Blonder of 15 Shackle Way spoke for public comment. Blonder is currently the Commander of the 350 member E.F. Gilmore Disabled American Veterans Chapter in Swampscott. He expressed disappointment that veterans were not invited for the Veteran's Agent recruitment process. He also stated that he does not think the support and services for veterans in town are adequate. Chairperson Titcomb stated she would like to schedule a meeting to discuss these matters.

Patrick Burke of 215 Windsor Ave spoke for public comment. He is a veteran of the Marine Corps and the Air Force as well as a member of the DAV, the VFW, the Marine Corps League, and the American Legion. He stated that he believes the veterans and the Town will collaborate more now that we are hopefully past the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Resident Bill DiMento thanked Blonder and Burke for speaking. DiMento stated that he agrees that the veterans should have been a part of the process of selecting a Regional Veteran's Agent, though he does find Veteran's Agent Mike Sweeney to be very capable.

Reggie Pagan of Foster Road spoke for public comment. She suggested that the Town do something for the Ukraine.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

- Covid-19 Update. Cases have dropped. 88% of Swampscott is fully vaccinated and 57% have received their booster shot.
- The Town Administrator has been meeting with Department Heads to discuss contract renewals.
- The Town has contracted Mike Sullivan to serve in the Town Clerk's office through the upcoming municipal election. Sullivan is the former Director of the MA Office of Campaign and Political Finance and previously worked as the City Clerk in the City of Newburyport.
- The Town Administrator attended last week's North Shore Coalitions meeting with many other North Shore Mayors and Town Managers. They discussed affordable housing, strategic use of ARPA funds, environment initiatives, commitment to our climate, clean energy, and transpiration.
- The Town Administrator met with the Chair of the Retirement Board, Kevin Reen, to discuss strategies to find room in the Town operating budget to meet fiduciary responsibilities.
- The Town Administrator attended a meeting with Senator Crighton, representatives from Senator Moulton's office, State Rep. Capano, and the Mayor of Lynn to discuss water and sewer infrastructure and impairments at Kings Beach. More discussions with staff from Swampscott and Lynn will follow.
- The Senior Center has returned to holding meetings in person.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPOINTMENT

Police Chief—Dr. Ruben Quesada

Town Administrator Sean Fitzgerald recommended Dr. Ruben Quesada to serve as the Police Chief for the Town of Swampscott. Fitzgerald provided an overview of the selection process, which included support from MRI, Interim Police Chief David Kurz, and the public. The Select Board also thanked Kurz for all of the work he has done as the Interim Chief.

Dr. Quesada is an Arizona native who moved to the New England area a year and a half ago. His police career started in 1993 as a Reserve Officer for the Glendale, AZ Police Department before moving to the Mesa, Arizona Police department where his public service career spanned over twenty-five years to the role of Police Commander. As a Police Commander in Mesa, Quesada oversaw 135 officers who served a district of 13 square miles/75,000 residents. He also holds a Doctorate of Education and has taught Criminal Justice for the past four years.

On MOTION (Duffy) and SECONDED (Grishman) it was VOTED by roll call to accept the Town Administrator's recommendation to appoint Dr. Ruben Quesada as the Police Chief for the Town of Swampscott. (All in favor)

Building Commissioner—Stephen Cummings

Town Administrator Sean Fitzgerald recommended Stephen Cummings to serve as the Building Commissioner for the Town of Swampscott. Fitzgerald stated that he interviewed Cummings with Facilities Director Max Kasper and two inspectors in the Building Department who have unanimously endorsed Cummings for the role.

Cummings owned a construction business for over fifteen years before moving into the municipal world. He has spent the past five years as an Inspector for the City of Salem.

On MOTION (Grishman) and SECONDED (Hause) it was VOTED by roll call to accept the Town Administrator's recommendation to appoint Stephen Cummings as the Building Commissioner for the Town of Swampscott. (All in favor)

APPROVAL OF MOA FOR REGIONAL VETERAN'S AGENT WITH LYNN, MA

Town Administrator Sean Fitzgerald recommended a one-year extension to the current inter-municipal agreement between Swampscott and Lynn with Regional Veteran's Agent Mike Sweeney.

Sweeney discussed challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. He provided an overview of what his office has been working on, including re-imagining outreach, \$180k worth of VA claims in Swampscott, running the Chapter 115 program, holding community involvement events, working with other organizations to provide meals to Veterans, and etc.

On MOTION (Spellios) and SECONDED (Grishman) it was VOTED by roll call to authorize the Town Administrator to affix the Select Board's electronic signatures on the inter-municipal agreement with the City of Lynn for Veteran's services. (All in favor)

DISCUSSION/REVIEW OF THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S RECOMMENDED FY23 OPERATING BUDGET

Town Administrator Fitzgerald announced that health insurance projections are back and were on target.

Select Board Member Grishman asked what is impacting the cost projections: utilization or other factors.

Select Board Member Hause asked if high inflation and increase in gas and oil prices have been factored into the budget.

Select Board Member Spellios asked if the budget currently anticipates contracts that the Town Administrator is negotiating. Town Administrator Fitzgerald stated that is does.

Select Board Member Spellios asked if discussions with the School department regarding differences in the Superintendent's budget, the School Committee's budget, and the Town

Administrator's budget are ongoing. TA Fitzgerald stated that he is in the process of scheduling a meeting to discuss.

Chairperson Titcomb asked when the Town Meeting Warrant would be opened. TA Fitzgerald stated that it could be opened at the next meeting.

FIRST READING OF:

The Select Board Handbook
Code of Conduct Handbook
Board and Committee Handbook.

Tabled until next meeting.

DISCUSSION AND POTENTIAL VOTE TO ACQUIRE TEMPORARY AND PERMANENT EASEMENTS OVER PORTIONS OF LAND LOCATED AT 101 FOREST AVENUE, SWAMPSCOTT

Select Board member Spellios stated that on the critical path to the construction of the new elementary school is finalizing certain temporary and permanent easements on property adjacent to the Stanley School site. He presented an order for vote of the Board to acquire easements over portions of land located at 101 Forest Avenue, Swampscott.

On MOTION (Spellios) and SECONDED (Hause) it was VOTED by roll call to approve pursuant to Article 2 of the September 13, 2021 Special Town Meeting to take by eminent domain permanent access easements and three-year temporary construction easements on property located at 101 Forest Avenue, Swampscott, MA owned by the Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lynn and to award damages in the amount of \$500,000 and further to execute the order of taking to acquire said easements. (All in favor)

DISCUSSION AND POTENTIAL VOTE TO ENTER IN AN INDEMNIFICATION AGREEMENT RELATING TO PROPERTY LOCATED AS 101 FOREST AVENUE, SWAMPSCOTT.

Removed from agenda.

TOWN PERSONNEL UPDATE

- Three conditional offers have been issued to Fire Department candidates. This would fill all vacancies within the department.
- A conditional offer has been presented to a candidate for the Executive Assistant to the Town Administrator and Select Board position.
- The Town has hired a new Assistant Engineer.

Select Board member Duffy stated that he was pleased with the progress on filing vacancies and wanted to continue to discuss strategies for retention. He agreed with the aforementioned ideas of a four-day work week and review of the pay structure but also wanted to identify any other issues. He agreed that a review by an outside consultant would be beneficial.

On **MOTION** (Duffy) and **SECONDED** (Titcomb) it was **VOTED** by roll call to direct the Town Administrator to identify \$20,000 in either the current or next fiscal year budget and to develop a scope of work to be approved by the Select Board at their next meeting or first April meeting.

Roll call: Duffy (yes), Titcomb (yes), Spellios (no), Hause (no), Grishman (no). The motion did not pass.

VOTES OF THE BOARD

Approval of the Consent Agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA

N/A

SELECT BOARD TIME

Select Board member Grishman stated that he attended a lunch at the Senior Center and encouraged all members to visit as well.

On **MOTION** (Grishman) and **SECONDED** (Hause) it was **VOTED** to adjourn the meeting.

True Attest,

Brittney Jones
Administrative Assistant

Minutes APPROVED by vote of the Select Board