



Town of Swampscott
Select Board Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, August 3, 2021
Swampscott High School

SELECT BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

OTHER TOWN OFFICIALS PRESENT

Sean Fitzgerald, Town Administrator; Allie Fiske, Director of Communications & Strategic Initiatives; Patrick Luddy, Town Accountant

The meeting was called to order at 6:12 PM

PUBLIC COMMENT

Three residents from Norfolk Ave. spoke in regards to an Air B&B operating in the neighborhood. They inquired if the Town can do anything to curb the operations of the Air B&B. Chairperson Spellios stated that the Board has not addressed this topic before and asked Town Administrator Sean Fitzgerald to meet with the residents to discuss the issue further. This issue will appear on a future Select Board agenda.

MASSPORT LETTER

The Select Board discussed a letter addressed to Lisa Wieland in regards to the recent MIT report *Block 2 Procedure Recommendations for Boston Logan Airport Community Noise Reduction*. Several board members indicated they would like the letter to be more direct and firmer, and include important concepts such as “quality of life” and “nuisance to humans.” They want to review the final letter and see who is cc’d on it. Town Administrator Fitzgerald will also reach out to local delegation to set up a meeting to speak further about this issue.

BOARD OF HEALTH APPOINTMENT DISCUSSION

Chairperson Peter Spellios described the vacancy on the Board of Health, which is up for appointment. Though this is an elected position, it is vacant mid-term so the Select Board and Board of Health can jointly appoint someone.

Board of Health Chair Marianne Hartmann spoke briefly regarding the vacancy on the board and the type of expertise and interest an ideal candidate could bring to the table. She described environmental health as an expertise-area. Vice Chair Polly Titcomb will work with Marianne,

Sean, and Allie Fiske to finalize a posting to be posted within the next week. Both boards will need to vote. This position will be vacant until the next election, April 2022.

WATER & SEWER RATE

Town Administrator Sean Fitzgerald described the annual process of setting water and sewer rates. Neal Duffy led a Water & Sewer Rate Committee to address the rising cost of sewer and water in order to have a better understanding of the tools that could be used to address these costs – rather than just raise rates. The committee is made up of Charlie Patsios, Neal Duffy, Ralph Souppa, Gino Cresta, Natalie Swanstrom, Amy Sarro, and Patrick Luddy. The Committee has met monthly since June.

Town Administrator Fitzgerald reviewed the Sewer and Water infrastructure. When we look at rates, the committee looked at generating enough money to simply cover the cost of these systems. Some of the fixed costs in water and sewer fund are debt service, and pension contribution.

Fitzgerald provided a look at the budget trends. The water budget has grown by \$475k over 10 years. Just this last year, there has been an increase of \$285k. The sewer budget has increased over \$1 million over 10 years. Just this last year, almost a \$600,000 increase which is attributable to the Lynn Water & Sewer Commission service agreement. The Town percentage increase occurred due to the fact that the single-largest user of water – Garelick – closed and shifted the cost to Swampscott and there is a new O&M contract to deal with deferred maintenance and capital improvement investment. We are paying for MWRA overhead as well as usage.

Currently the base fee for water is \$13.25 per qtr. The rate is \$7.11 per hundred cubic feet. For sewer, the base fee is \$20 per quarter and 5.58 per hundred cubic feet. Combined, the cost is \$33.25 per quarter and \$12.69 per hundred cubic feet. This year, there is a 13.2% increase in water and sewer budget.

Select Board member Neal Duffy walked through the base fee inequity. What they concluded is that no matter the consumption, all accounts pay the same base fee. For example, an 80 unit condominium or apartment building with 1 meter is paying the same base fee as a single-family home. Because that accounts usage is much higher, the base fee is proportionally a much smaller part of the bill. This means that effectively the more you use, the less you pay per gallon. This was the issue that needed to be solved.

The new model tiers both consumption and base to address this inequity. Under this new proposal, no matter the consumption of the account, it will effectively be paying the same price per gallon. Retained earnings are reserves the Town has specifically for water and sewer enterprise accounts that help us stabilize rates.

Water & Sewer Rate committee member Ralph Souppa commented that these new tiers may be confusing in bill and must be explained to users.

Public Comment:

- Resident Bill Dimento from Summit Estate expressed concern over the model citing that a Single Family Equivalency is false.

The Board clarified that this new structure ensures that every user is charged the same amount per gallon. There was significant discussion to clarify the origin of the tiered base rate. Also clarified that multi-unit buildings only pays one base rate.

- Cheryl Albo from a Swampscott condo commented that condos are getting the hit – and that condos already double pay for trash without getting Town services. She commented that if you’re going to make it fair for water, make it fair for trash pickup.

Chairperson Spellios stated that condos are often governed under private developer contracts that exclude trash.

- Michael Stosky from Summit Estate states that fairness needs to be applied across the board.

The Board will discuss retained earnings at the next meeting. Chairperson Spellios wants Treasurer/Collector Patrick Luddy to use the most recent consumption history to extrapolate what their bill would look like compared to what it has looked like. Tiered structure vs. not doing the tiered structure for one year.

SEPTEMBER 13, 2021 TOWN MEETING

Town Counsel is preparing the warrant article for the debt exclusion for the School. Bond Counsel and Town Counsel have both reviewed, and the MSBA now has to approve it. Town Counsel is working on a draft for potential easement over Unitarian Universalist property on Forest Ave. There may be a warrant article for the Hadley School re-use as well.

There will also be a regular Special Town Meeting – potentially in early December.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Vote to approve meeting minutes from July 15, 2021 and July 21, 2021 meeting
2. Vote to execute Orders of Taking for Atlantic Crossing and Gracie Lane, which were accepted at the May 2021 Annual Town Meeting
3. Vote to approve application for a Change of Officers, Stock or Ownership Interest for UR of Swampscott MA LLC dba Uno Pizzeria & Grill located at 970 Paradise Rd. Swampscott, MA 01907

Chairperson Spellios clarified that in May, the Town Meeting accepted 3 streets, Atlantic Crossing, Morton Ave., and Gracie Ln. Only Atlantic Crossing and Gracie Lane are being taken. Morton Hill needs additional work.

On **MOTION** (Duffy) and **SECONDED** (Titcomb) it was **VOTED** to approve the consent agenda with changes to minutes. All in favor.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

- COVID-19 Update
- Water & Sewer Rate Setting
- Library Director retirement
- Staffing update for Senior Center
- Pedestrian Safety Enforcement
- Senior Cookout
- New HR Director
- Capital Planning

SELECT BOARD UPDATE

- David Grishman thanked those who attended *Bentwater at the Beach* and also thanked Bentwater Brewing for their work

NEXT MEETING

- Tuesday, August 24, 2021

On **MOTION** (Duffy) and **SECONDED** (Hause) it was **VOTED** to adjourn the meeting. All in favor.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:54 PM

True Attest,



Allie Fiske, Director of Communications & Strategic Initiatives

Minutes APPROVED by vote of the Select Board 8/24/21