

**SELECTBOARD MEETING  
TUESDAY, MARCH 19, 2019  
MEETING MINUTES  
SELECTBOARD MEETING ROOM – 7 P.M.**

*Present were Chair Ira Brezinsky, Vice Chair Andrea Miles, Clerk Jeff Cyr, member Sarah Etelman, member Bruce Forcier, and Town Administrator Michael J. Sullivan.*

**CALL TO ORDER**

Brezinsky called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

**MINUTES**

Forcier motioned to approve the minutes of the March 5, 2019 meeting. Cyr seconded. All in favor.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Forcier noted the Bike Walk Committee's Maple Syrup Trek has been rescheduled to March 24; the Friends of South Hadley Elderly will receive proceeds from a dinner at Johnny's March 26; the Dan Kane singers will perform May 19 at South Hadley High School.

Etelman noted Know Your Town will have its annual evening with the state representative and state senator at the Rosner Family home on March 29.

Brezinsky encouraged the public to view a show of the Michael E. Smith Middle School Drama Club's performance of The Music Man March 21-24. He also noted two upcoming Music and Arts South Hadley meetings and MASH's interest in new members.

Sullivan highlighted the office hours State Representative Dan Carey and State Senator Jo Comerford will jointly hold on March 27 in town hall.

**RULES FOR FRIENDS OF SOUTH HADLEY DOG PARK**

Friends of South Hadley Dog Park President Bob Berwick said one addition to the rules the Friends will implement is hours of operation – from 7 a.m. until dusk every day.

Etelman said the rules are well done. She doesn't see anything suspect or missing.

Miles asked Berwick about dogs that might be constant issues within the park. Berwick said as a committee, the Friends of South Hadley Dog Park have no enforcement authority. If there was an issue with a dog, the police department or dog officer would need to be called.

Cyr agreed with Etelman about the rules. He asked about preventing dog owners from tossing waste anywhere but designated trash barrels. Berwick said the dog park will likely have two trash barrels inside the park in which dog owners can dispose of waste. He said it is rare for dog owners to walk out of the park with waste when there's an opportunity to dispose of it within the park.

Sullivan said these rules will be part of a larger agreement into which the town enters with the Friends of South Hadley Dog Park, which will address maintenance rules, sustainability, upkeep, etc. It is the intent to take as much responsibility away from the town as possible. He added the park will now be located on the right side of the road one travels to reach Ledges, rather than the left, due to previously unidentified perennial streams located on the left side. A good buffer still exists between the park and abutters.

Berwick said he is applying for as many grants as he can find. One, from Pet Safe, requires a letter from the town authority saying the town supports the dog park. The Selectboard had no objection to Sullivan writing such a letter of support.

Berwick suggested the Friends of South Hadley Dog Park become a town committee that has its own Friends group. Doing so, he alleged, would lower operating costs for the Friends and allow funds raised for the park to be stretched further. He said many communities operate in this way, as an umbrella of the city/town and not an independent group.

Sullivan said the difference in operating costs would be put back on the town. He said during last year's annual town meeting, the town promised town meeting members the Friends of South Hadley Dog Park was going to be an initiative of a private group and not the town. Town Meeting voted to approve \$25,000 to put toward the Friends of South Hadley Dog Park – something they may have reconsidered if the Friends was a town committee and not separate from the town. He said it is unfair of Berwick to suggest becoming a town committee after promising town meeting members the Friends would not become one.

Cyr said allowing the Friends of South Hadley Dog Park to become a town committee goes against everything Berwick and the Friends of South Hadley Dog Park promised. He applauded Berwick for researching how other communities handle dog parks. However, he said South Hadley doesn't know the financial status of those communities that can relieve their Friends groups of financial costs related to the park. South Hadley does not have the capacity to do that. He loves the idea of a dog park in South Hadley but is personally not in favor of any more town funds being used to support the park beyond \$25,000.

Berwick said he is concerned about the ability of the Friends of South Hadley Dog Park to sustain themselves long term. He said the Friends told Town Meeting they would do their best to be self-sustainable, however, to him it is looking like their best efforts might not be enough. He suggested a future conversation to revisit a discussion about sustainability.

Brezinsky said the information Berwick shared is coming to everyone as a surprise, and it would be appropriate to do a bit of problem solving to see exactly what issues with which the Friends are dealing. He said he is not coming to the same conclusion as Berwick is about a concern for sustainability.

Forcier moved to accept the rules as a draft subject to review by town counsel. Etelman seconded. All in favor.

## **FY2020 BUDGET**

Sullivan offered a closer look at the FY2020 budget. He met with the School Committee before this Selectboard meeting to discuss the budget with its members. Sullivan explained he has made every effort to put as much money as the town can toward the school department. While the school department can make a salient argument they need a \$1.2 million increase, the simple fact is the town does not have that funding to give.

The town is giving an increase of \$274,000 to the school department in FY2020. The town is paying a little more than \$100,00 in tuition out payments. For any students attending school in other districts, the town pays the tuition going out; the school department receives any tuition for students coming into the districts, and that funding is spent on education.

Over the last 10 years, 35 percent of all new money (new growth and proposition 2 ½) has gone toward the school budget. Just 23 percent of new money has gone to the general fund. There are several town departments that have had decreases this year.

New gender equity laws in the state, which Sullivan called progressive and necessary, have impacted the FY2020 budget. These equity laws also stretch to similar/companion positions. As a result, there are increases in the offices of Human Resources, Assessors, Treasure/Collector, Clerk, Planning Board, and the Health Department mostly related to personnel services.

Sullivan said there is room to consider sharing services between the town and school department, such as in Human Resources. The long-term practices of consolidating and modernizing Human Resources is a smart way to go, he said, but we haven't been able to get there.

The IT budget continues to rise. The police department budget is up 3.2 percent - one of the largest increases - but this could change due to potential future retirements which then would not be filled.

For Ledges, the town went exactly by the contract based on what IGM committed to for revenues and expenses. If everything holds true, the town would have \$28,000 in positive revenue. Sullivan said there are some indirect costs savings here, such as unemployment insurance. The town has paid an average of \$38,000 a year in expenses after the season in unemployment insurance, which it will no longer have to pay.

## **ANNUAL/SPECIAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLES**

Sullivan reviewed the draft warrants of the annual and special town meetings. The articles are still under construction. Sullivan will soon start working on the motions.

## **REPORT FROM SUB COMMITTEE RE: TOWN COUNSEL**

Brezinsky said he, Sullivan and Miles interviewed four firms last week to consider as future town counsel. All four were qualified, but the trio felt two didn't exactly meet the RFR terms in terms of being able to provide consolidated legal services for general municipal government, as well as labor. They narrowed the firms down to two - KP Law and Mead, Talerman & Costa - and asked the two to present at the next Selectboard meeting on April 2.

Sullivan said all groups were impressive but these two provided what the town asked for in the RFR. He requested both to send electronically an overview of their firm and a narrative of how they see their role in South Hadley.

**TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

Cyr said he is glad to read work continues on the crosswalk issue near Mount Holyoke College. Sullivan noted Eastampton's low-tech crosswalk flag system because the flags aim to increase pedestrian awareness.

For the full town administrator's report, see the March 5, 2019 Selectboard meeting packet.

**ADJOURN**

Forcier motioned to adjourn. Etelman seconded. All in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED**  
**Kristin Maher**  
**Executive Assistant to Administration**