

Memorial Town Hall, 1 Library Street, Georgetown, MA 01833

**Meeting Minutes February 27, 2023**

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BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Memorial Town Hall

7:00PM-General Meeting

Verizon Channel 42/Comcast channel 9

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**Selectmen Present:** *D. Dawes, Chair, Vice Chair P. Kershaw, G. Fowler, A. Smith. And D. Lamonica.*

**Others Present:** *Orlando Pacheco, Town Administrator.  
Administrative Assistant, Maureen Shultz participating  
on Zoom, Kerri McManus, Town Clerk*

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**7:00PM CALL TO ORDER**

*Invocation-Douglas W. Dawes*

*Pledge of Allegiance-Douglas W. Dawes*

**PUBLIC HEARING:**

*D. Dawes read aloud: Public Hearing will be held during the Board of Selectman Meeting on 2/27/2023-for the purpose of discussion on Vote by Mail and In Person Early Voting for the May 8, 2023 Annual Town Election. The Town Clerk will present the recommendations of the Board of Registrars and request a vote by the Select Board on vote by mail and or in person early Voting.*

*Kerri McManus, Town Clerk was present and informed the Board of the process of early voting and vote by mail and informed the Board the recommendations of the Board of Registrars Are mandated to happen unless recommended by the Board of Registrars –out of vote by mail was voted to opt out of this due to the cost, budget slim, had meeting minutes from the Board of Registrars meeting*

*Three acceptable reasons for a request for an absentee ballot are*

- 1. Away from the City/ Town*
- 2. Religious beliefs*
- 3.Disability*

*P. Kershaw asked how that is requested*

*A. Smith asked Kerri McManus, Town Clerk if she takes the word of the voter who is requesting an absentee ballot request referring to the three criteria to do this.*

*Board of Registrars also voted to have a one day of vote in person with a vote 4-0 to approve -this will be held on April 21, 2023 from 9-2PM -concerns were addressed and it was voted on that a police detail would be scheduled for this day at the Town Hall.*

*Both options will need a vote from the BOS.*

- Absentee ballot –vote by mail*
- A scale had been used prior to show the cost on elections that would require a ballot to be mailed out.*
- Vote by mail is mandated*

*D. Dawes stated that there seems to be some sort of confusion from the state on Elections in communities.*

*Kerri McManus, Town Clerk stated that she thinks it might be a test year to see what city and towns are doing before they decided for them, a scale had been used to show the cost was not sure a post card for all elections were still being used, very expensive, prior to having to mail a ballot out to every person, estimate cost between \$7-8K to run an election including postage which is expensive.*

*A. Smith mentioned it looks like a significant amount of people requested vote by mail ballots and a considerable number of returns on those.*

*G. Fowler commented he needs clarification on a request to vote by mail ballot or do you have to send it out, asked how is it available (on line only) out to residents -currently is available on line if requested only.*

*A. Smith asked for clarification regarding if we opt out of vote by mail out of today what happens next year. Kerri McManus, Town Clerk answered that vote by mail has to be voted on each year.*

*P. Kershaw asked about cost not covered - Kerri McManus, Town Clerk stated that recounts are not covered and are not in the budget, and issues with vote by mail, really convoluted sort of process a lot of balances checks and balances.*

*D. LaMonica asked about the Board of Registrars voted to opt out of vote by mail and why did they come to that decision. Kerri McManus, Town Clerk answered it was due to the cost it would cost the Town-Cost would be between \$7-8K including postage which is expensive.*

*Resident Pam Lundquist, 10 Hawk Way ensue, spoke to the Secretary of States office and stated that the Board of Registrar's have no say in order if town wants to vote for early voting , Kerri McManus , Town Clerk clarified that the Board of Registrars has made a recommendation to the Board of Selectman in support of in person voting that's all only a recommendation , a call was place to the State to clarify the role of the Registrars by Pam Lundquist and she had read out loud a letter to the Board on her support for early voting, spoke on the right to vote and the right to be heard, vote by mail is very popular , suggested the Town make it easier for voters, state will not be sending out ballot's residents would be able to get their own / please do not suppress the vote here in Georgetown ,no one said democracy had a cost ,please uphold the democratic process, ask to opt in to vote in Georgetown.*

*Resident Mr. Rob Hoover -16 Chestnut Street, spoke on the cost of a Town Election which is approx. \$1600.00 and refers this figure to the Town Budget which is \$35 Million, mentioned he would never be convinced him that \$1600.00 can't be found in a \$35 Million dollar budget , strongly urges you to stay with the mail in voting and opting into early person voting on behalf of our republic, remain true to a republic , spoke on behalf of the elders in Town that might have some troubles getting out to vote.*

*P. Kershaw asked if voters can call the Town Clerk office to get an absentee ballot, asked about transportation if a resident could not get to the polls to vote, asked for clarification if someone can't get to the polls.*

*G. Fowler motioned the Board to close the Public Hearing seconded by Peter. all in favor no further discussion role call taken all in favor.*

*A. Smith motioned the Board to vote to opt in for early voting and to Maintain the status quo, second by D. Lamonica -No further discussion. Roll Call vote was taken- A. Smith, D. Lamonica and P, Kershaw voted in favor of motion G Fowler and D. Dawes voted no on motion -Motion passed 3-2.*

*D. LaMonica motioned the Board to designate the Town Hall basement as the in person early voting with a police detail from 9-2PM for the Town Election on May 8, 2023 annual Town Election to be held on April 21, 2023 from 9-2PM with a Police detail, seconded by P. Kershaw. The board took a roll call, passed with a vote 4-1 in favor. G. Fowler voted nay on the motion.*

**WARRANT AND MINUTES:**

*G. Fowler motioned the Board to approve the meeting minutes of January 9, 2023, seconded by P. Kershaw. Roll Call vote was taken all in favor.*

**NEW BUSINESS:**

*Anala Guertin has resigned from the Parks and Recreation Committee and the Board of Selectman thanked her for her years of service. Resigned from the Parks and Recreation Committee.*

*G. Fowler stated that Anala Guertin has brought a lot to the Parks and Recreation and thanked her.*

*The Board sent condolences to Kitchin Family on the passing of Mr. Al Kitchin who served on the Parks and Recreation for many years.*

*Motorcycle Safety Awareness period March 25, 2023 to April 30, 2023-Town will be doing a proclamation at a date to be determined, waiting in the Towns motorcycle out of storage.*

**VOTES BY THE BOARD:**

*Essex Regional Retirement System Base COLA –Pacheco, Town Administrator spoke to the Board on Chapter 269 of the acts of 2022- provides that retirement Boards may increase the COLA Cost of Living Adjustment-19 Municipal*

*O. Pacheco, Town Administrator answered a question from G. Fowler at a previous meeting on the COLA increase --base cola is \$16K only 5% on the \$16k not 5% on the pension –only asking the Board to authorize the 2% increase.*

*D. LaMonica asked if the retirement board already voted on two increases and clarified that we are only voting on the 2% addition increase.*

*G. Fowler motioned the Board to approve and accept the 2% addition on the base COLA increase / Essex Retirement System seconded by D. LaMonica. Roll call vote was taken all in favor.*

**Selectman's Time:**

*Meeting dates for the Board of Selectman Meetings were discussed and confirmed as to be held on March 13, 2023, March 27, 2023, April 10, 2023 and April 24, 2023.*

**Future Agenda Item Placeholders**

- *Howland Developers--0 National Avenue.*
- *Deputy Chief Hatch -Police Chief Position*
- *Close Town Meeting Warrant / Citizens Petition Possible / Policy on opening & closing of Warrant*
- *Approval FEMA Flood Map*
- *Rail Trail -Boxford & Georgetown -two parcels.*

**Xfinity Senior Discount:**

*A. Smith spoke on a letter received from Comcast that will be offering to Georgetown resident subscribers upon the effective date of the 2023 renewal license a discount for Senior Citizens- discount off the monthly extra service level, certain criteria and information will be needed to be eligible.*

**Town Administrators Report:** *O. Pacheco, Town Administrator spoke on the following: MIIA Grant—Healthy grant –MIIA –we used the awarded grant to get a new Elliptical Machine at the Senior Center / and a healthy vending machine at the Town Hall- Recognized for this grant was Maureen Shultz, Administrative Assistant and Director of the Senior Center Colleen Ranshaw Fiorello.*

**Complete Street Bids-***The town received five (5) bids for the complete Street project -low bid was rejected because it did not have a MassDOT pre-qualification-The next Bidder that was accepted was JJ Phelan & Sons, \$398,385.10. The Town as of tonight has not issued a notice to proceed until we complete some additional due diligence and determine the additional funding needed. Pacheco, Town Administrator working with Peter Durkee, Highway Supervisor to amend the scope and re-evaluate this in future bids/ spoke about crosswalk upgrades.*

*D. Lamonica asked what is the scope of work to be done, ADA Compliance, spoke on a recent visit in Nashville and how their sidewalks are crisscrossed so that you don't have to just go one way.*

*G. Fowler spoke on puddles in low spots and when they freeze not helping / crosswalks.*

*D. Dawes stated it would be a good thing if these sidewalks could get completed because people are walking in the streets which is not good.*

**Library Hours** -New hours will be opening on Thursday from 10-5PM starting on April 6, 2023- Budget will need to increase in hours for staff members for FY23, salary expenses need to be increased and certain operating lines. Big win for the trustees and the Town.

**ADA Self Evaluation and Transition Plan**-The ADA Self Evaluation & Transition plans have officially kicked off. Departments have worked directly with the institute of Human Centered Design to update the 1993 plan. This evaluation had been done during school vacation, will present their finding to the Board of Selectman and will be shared with some Boards. Grant has covered 100% of the cost

**Town Hall Window Grant** -A second grant increase of \$15K from the MPPF Grant - will continue to look for more funding, there is \$85K currently to keep work going, not sure it was articulated on how bad the windows were -functionality was the problem.

*D. Lamonica asked what the shortfall is now on the windows.*

*GF, Fowler asked if there is anything with the new storm windows that could be applied to energy saving.*

*D. Dawes asked about the heating and cooling system and if we have an agreement*

*O. Pacheco, Town Administrator informed the Board that he has just secured a three-year contract for the Heating & Cooling System for about \$10K yearly.*

**MEVA Solar Powered Ferries**-The Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority (MEVA) has secured \$4.2 Million to build two solar powered ferries to add to the transportation options provided. The Initiative is 2 years from being able to go live. Solar powered ferries from federal funds to transport residents in the area of Merrimac.

*G. Fowler asked about any increase or decrease as of yet from MIIA Insurance Company.*

*O. Pacheco, Town Administrator mentioned if we could get 10 people on Medicare that will help offset a potential increase in health care cost.*

*D. LaMonica asked if there are changes in the budget up or down.*

**Discussion on the following items:**

*Local aid number just came in,*

*D. Dawes mentioned that the preliminary figures from the Cherry Street just came out.*

*Increase the money for State owned land -big drive / Pilot Program*

*Legislation has been filed for building of a safety public building.*

**Appointments and Approvals:**

*P. Kershaw motioned the Board to appoint Susan Stead, 48 Searle Street, Georgetown, Mass to the Affordable Housing trust term to expire on June 30, 2023 with a recommendation for re-appointment for another three years ending on June 30, 2026, seconded by G. Fowler. Roll call vote was taken all in favor.*

**Selectman's Time Continued:**

*D. Dawes read aloud a letter from a student named Madeline Amadone and publicly thanked her for contacting the Board -the Letter asked the Board of Selectman / Town to extend the sidewalk from Elm Street to the Boxford Line, Madeline would like to be able to ride her bike and catch up to her friends who also are riding.*

*G. Fowler suggested the letter from Madeline Amadone be forwarded to Merrimack Valley Planning which could be of some help.*

**Adjournment:**

*G. Fowler moved to adjourn at 9:15 P.M. with P. Kershaw seconded. A roll call vote was taken all in favor.*

*All Board of Selectman Meetings can be viewed on our Town Website at <https://www.georgetownma.gov> - Under the Community TV tab on the left side.*

**Documents used in the meeting:**

*Meeting minutes from January 9, 2023*

*Town Administrator's Report*

*Motorcycle Awareness Proclamation*

*Letter from resident Madeline Amadone.*