

**Board of Selectmen Agenda
Municipal Center Resource Room
Tuesday, February 6, 2024**

7:00 PM

- Call to Order
 - Pledge of Allegiance
 - Chairman Announcements ~ Acknowledgement of 7 Employees for Exceptional Service
 - Citizen's Forum
-
1. Common Victualler License Application for Extreme Nutrition – Possible Votes
 2. Discussion with the Tax Assessor Regarding Property Assessments – Possible Votes
 3. Ratify Contract for Assistant Fire Chief Kelly Manning – Possible Votes
 4. Moratorium for Roads 2nd Reading
 5. Open Warrant for Spring ATM & STM – Possible Votes
 6. FY25 Budget Discussion – Possible Votes
 7. Meeting Minutes – Possible Votes
 8. Monthly Review of 2024 Goals – Possible Votes
 9. Town Administrator's Report
 10. Open Session for Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting
 11. Executive Session
 - a. Pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(1), To discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual. **Douglas PD**
 - b. Pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(3), To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares. **Potential Litigation – MSHG**
 12. Adjournment

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BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2024
MEETING MINUTES

Attendance: Chair Kevin Morse, Vice Chair Mike Fitzpatrick, Tim Bonin, Ross Smith, Max Postma, Matt Wojcik Town Administrator, and Lisa Freeman Executive Assistant

Kevin Morse called the meeting to order at 7 PM

(0:10 TS) Pledge of Allegiance

(0:30 TS) Chairman Announcements – Acknowledgement of 7 Employees for Exceptional Service, and they are: Patrice Rousseau and Sharon Began who assisted with the police to help someone in need of the COA van. Dispatcher Delany Laflamme and Danielle Bloem significantly enhanced the response efforts for a serious accident and managed both police and fire radios while coordinating mutual aid support with 7 ambulances, 2 heavy duty rescue trucks and 2 life flight helicopters. Patrice Rousseau and Officer Jackie Brimmer helped a woman dropped off in Webster at the senior center which was closed, that had nowhere to go and found her place to stay. Fire Chief John Furno was acknowledged for a power outage that affected many senior residents and he went door to door to check on them and the residents were so thankful for his dedication. Jen Larson went above and beyond her responsibility to find the answers needed by the Town Administrator for a time sensitive issue.

Chairman Kevin Morse announced his resignation from the Board of Selectmen effective the last meeting in February.

(11:10 TS) Citizen's Forum: NONE

1. (11:20 TS) Common Victualler License Application for Extreme Nutrition – Possible votes
Jamie Fowler is acquiring the business and the only thing changing is the name.
(13:30 TS) Motion to approve the common vic license for Extreme Nutrition, made by Tim Bonin, seconded by Mike Fitzpatrick. The vote passed unanimously.
2. (14:00 TS) Discussion with the Tax Assessor Regarding Property Assessments – Possible votes
Chris Pupka the Principal Assessor to discuss the Davis Street valuations. He stated that he had previously given a warning at the classification hearing that area had seen a significant increase in value based to sales. He went over how properties are valued and what the process is for fair market value. He went over 120 and 183 Davis Street property values and sales analysis. He stated that residents should expect their tax bill to go up a little bit every year and if it goes up more, they should call him because something either went wrong or something drastic changed in the models. The properties on Davis Street certainly fell into the category of a change in the models and with the initial information he has received he stated there may be room for adjustment. The next steps would be re-evaluating and gathering more information about the properties that might have significant impact. Once all the parcel information is correct then look to see if the models have to be refined. For those who did apply for an abatement, they will be presented to the Board of Assessors and bills will be adjusted accordingly provided the board agrees. For those who have not filed for an abatement you are not out of luck, your changes just will not be reflected on the 2024 bill, any changes applied will be reflected on the 2025 bill going forward. During the process of figuring out if they will be eligible for an abatement, Mr. Pupka always will suggest to pay the tax bill in the meantime. If you disagree with the Board of Assessors decision whether they grant or deny an abatement, you can incur interest and you may not be able to appeal that decision to the Appellate Tax Board in Boston. Mr. Fitzpatrick stated that after the last meeting when the concerned residents from Davis Street came to the

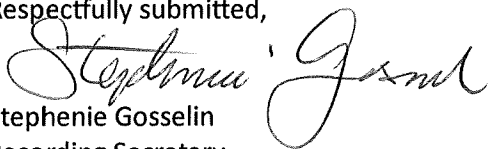
meeting he looked into some property cards for the surrounding areas and thought there were some inconsistencies. Mr. Pupka stated that he did the valuations based on the information he had at the time and there is more information now. Mr. Pupka stated that excess land parcels went from about \$7,500 an acre to \$100k an acre, which was drastic. Mr. Pupka stated that he will do a re-evaluation of the whole area, not just the property owners that come in. The owner of 179 Davis Street stated what his parcels were valued at and what he thinks they should be valued at, and he brought the brick building in the area. There was discussion back and forth about certain properties in the area. Jim Tusino owner of Riddle Brook Development Corp. stated that 118 Davis Street was assessed for \$234k last year and now it is assessed as \$1.6 million. He spoke about multiple other properties in the area and the valuations, and feels the evaluation is skewed. Mr. Tusino also argued that there are some properties that did not go up at all, and stated that there is no way that could be accurate and thinks the process needs an overhaul to evaluate properties in Douglas. Holly Tetreault of 100 Davis St asked if a new building would come into play like the cannabis store on Davis Street, and if land sales would be included. Mr. Pupka stated that a new building would start with a depreciation value of zero and as it ages it would depreciate in value and then there is a condition factor applied. As far as the land sales, Mr. Pupka stated they would have been part of the analysis. Chris Garnell of 174 Davis St asked about the older brick building that was completely gutted inside on Davis St. He was under impression that it was unoccupied and therefore there was no value to it, because this is the valuation that is affecting the rest of the properties surrounding it. He is upset about the valuation of his property and feels that there is something incorrect about it. Derek DeShane of 175 Davis St. questioned the information gathered for the commercial area on Davis St. and if there was other information from surrounding towns gathered. Mr. Fitzpatrick stated that what the Assessor is trying to do, looking at other towns to try and help the building owners' valuation. The owner of 124 Davis St. asked what the mandate is that puts them in the special category of the Blackstone Valley Corridor. Mr. Fitzpatrick stated that it isn't a mandate, but an area that goes beyond this small commercial area in Douglas that was identified by the state as the Blackstone Valley Corridor back in 1986. He also asked why this small area was only targeted and not the whole town. Mr. Pupka responded that there were no other industrial sales in other areas of the town other than the Davis St. area.

3. (1:57:20 TS) Ratify Contract for Assistant Fire Chief Kelly Manning – Possible votes
The Board will skip over this because it is still being reviewed by labor counsel.
4. (1:57:30 TS) Moratorium for Roads 2nd Reading
There have been some changes since the last reading and Mr. Morse asked the Board to review the changes and have comments ready for the next reading. Mr. Fitzpatrick suggested that the Board send off all their questions to Lisa Freeman and she can forward them to Bob Sullivan and Bob Minarik so they can have the answers for the next meeting.
5. (2:03:30 TS) Open Warrant for Spring ATM & STM – Possible votes
(2:03:35 TS) Motion to open the warrant for Spring Annual Town Meeting and Special Town Meeting made by Tim Bonin, seconded by Mike Fitzpatrick. The vote passed unanimously.
6. (2:03:55 TS) FY25 Budget Discussion – Possible votes
TA Wojcik talked about the new revenues anticipated for the town including the new warehouse construction and that the building is being valued as an empty shell, normal residential new construction, and an annual 2 ½ % year over year increase in the levy. TA Wojcik talked about forecasting for the future for the town and the inflation everyone is experiencing and this year they have negotiated contracts with the police and fire unions. The total increase for the general government departments is \$49,339. For public safety the wages are slated to go up \$180k because of the contract renewals. There will be a new school resource officer, and the total for the police department alone which includes two new cruisers is \$319,918. The Fire and Ambulance departments with budgeting 70 hours a week for paramedics at per diem rate is about \$170k increase. The highway department would include an additional employee. TA

Wojcik suggests that the BOS decide whether they want to look at the second in command position at highway, and morph that position into a facilities manager that crosses over with the schools who will be on the town's payroll and looking out for the town's best interest with all of its buildings. The next major change in the budget is with the library and he is requesting of the BOS and FinCom a total increase of about \$106k. The Library Director has requested more hours in order to be open longer each day. The largest increase of the budget is the Douglas Public Schools which is \$590k, and with BVT added to that the total education budget increase is \$677k. TA Wojcik discussed the rest of the increases and talked about the retirement, property and casualty, and the health insurance budgets. Due to some large claims with health insurance he may change the budget from zero increase to 2 ½ - 3%.

7. (2:26:05 TS) Meeting Minutes – Possible votes
(2:27:25 TS) Motion to approve the meeting minutes of December 19, 2023, as written made by Mike Fitzpatrick, seconded by Max Postma. The vote passed unanimously.
8. (2:27:45 TS) Monthly Review of 2024 Goals – Possible votes
The walking club program for the Adult Social Center has been started and patrons use the municipal center gym. The Highway Department and Community Development Department they have begun a thorough review for a stormwater bylaw and associated rules and regulations. TA Wojcik is hopeful the bylaw will be ready for either Fall town meeting or the Spring town meeting next year. TA Wojcik has completed most of the police and fire union contract negotiations. The municipal staff recognition program policy is finalized, and the Treasurer's investment policy has been brought up to date and is in compliance with state rules.
9. (2:34:00 TS) Town Administrator's Report
TA Wojcik does not have a report for this meeting.
10. (2:35:10 TS) Open Session for Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting
The Town Clerk is requesting that the BOS approve in person / early voting for the presidential primary that will be on Tuesday March 5, 2024, held in the Clerk's office for the following dates:
 - Saturday February 24 from 9am to 4pm
 - Monday February 26 from 8:30am to 4pm
 - Tuesday February 27 from 8:30am to 6pm
 - Wednesday February 28 from 8:30am to 6pm
 - Thursday February 29 from 8:30am to 4pm(2:36:25 TS) Motion to approve the request from the Town Clerk for early voting made by Mike Fitzpatrick, seconded by Max Postma. The vote passed unanimously.
11. (2:36:50 TS) Executive Session
Motion to move into executive session for the sole purpose of discussing the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual from the Douglas PD and then to leave executive session for the sole purpose of adjournment made by Tim Bonin, seconded by Mike Fitzpatrick. Roll call vote – Max Postma, Mike Fitzpatrick, Kevin Morse, Tim Bonin and Ross Smith all in favor.
12. Adjournment: Mr. Fitzpatrick made a motion at 9:53pm to leave executive session and return to regular session for the sole purpose of adjournment, Mr. Postma seconded the motion, all in favor. Roll call vote: Postma – aye, Bonin – aye, Fitzpatrick – aye, Morse – aye, Bonin, Smith – aye.

Respectfully submitted,


Stephenie Gosselin
Recording Secretary