

TOWN OF IPSWICH
Select Board Meeting as Electric Light Commissioners
Tuesday, January 2, 2024 at 6:00 PM
Meeting Room A – Town Hall, 25 Green Street

Pursuant to Open Meeting Law M.G.L. Chapter 30A, §§ 18-25, a written notice posted by the Town Clerk and delivered to all Board members, a meeting of the Select Board was held on Tuesday, January 2, 2024 at Town Hall, 25 Green Street

Select Board members present: Sarah Player (Chair), Linda Alexson (Vice Chair), Michael Dougherty, Charles Surpitski, Carl Nysten

Also Present: Stephen Crane (Town Manager), Steve Bohn (Veterans Services Officer), Melinda Vining (Director of the Council on Aging), Chief Nikas (Police Chief), Nora Blake (Director at the Library), Mary Gallivan (Human Resources Director and Assistant Town Manager)

1. Executive Session:

VOTE: Linda Alexson moved to convene in executive session to return to open session at 7:00 PM, Carl Nysten seconded. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote. The Board entered into executive session pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws chapter 30A section 21(a) for the following purposes:

To consider the purchase, exchange, taking, lease, or value of real property if such discussion may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the governmental body related to 18 Hammatt Street.

2. Pledge of Allegiance – S. Player

3. Welcome/ Announcements – S. Player

- The ELD Subcommittee will meet on January 10 at 7 PM in the Utility Conference Room.
- Whittier is hosting a building tour on-site on January 13 from 9-11AM.
- The Waste Reduction Advisory Committee is meeting on Wednesday, January 10 at 6:30 in Room C
- The Zoning Board has a special meeting Thursday, January 4, at 7:30 PM on Zoom regarding Essex Pastures. The agenda and the zoom link are posted.
- The Whittier school improvement ballot vote is Tuesday, January 23, from 11 AM to 7 PM at the Ipswich Y.

4. Citizen Queries and Responses – S. Player

- None

5. Introduction Veteran Service Director, Steven Bohn – S. Player

Steve Bohn, Veterans Services Officer, introduced himself and gave his background. He was previously the Veteran's Liaison for Congressman Moulton. He is looking forward to collaborating with other districts on events and sharing information. Linda said the Eastern Essex Veterans District is very excited to have Stephen onboard. He was chosen from a group of 13 applicants.

6. PUBLIC HEARING: Amendment of Mooring Fees in Harbormaster Rules & Regulations and Town Wharf Launch Fees – Chief Nikas

Sarah read the legal notice.

VOTE: Michael moved to open the Public Hearing, seconded by Linda. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote, 5-0.

Chief Nikas said this is to raise the mooring fees from \$6 to \$8 per foot and to raise the dingy dock and dockage fees for owning your own dock from \$35 to \$100. Also, to raise the wharf launching fees with the approval from the State from \$5 to \$10 per day and \$35 to \$75 for an annual pass.

The mooring fees were approved by the Waterways Advisory Committee. We average anywhere from 1,000 to 1,100 moorings per year and the average boat is 20-24 feet in length. This would mean an increase of about \$40,000 to \$53,000. There are 28 dingy dock permits at the Town Wharf, the yacht club has 25 and Little Neck has 32. Across the waterways, there are also 29 private docks. In total, that's 114 docks or dingys, that will bring in an additional \$11k. Total, we are looking at an increase of \$60k. Michael asked if they see these increases offsetting possible future budget increase requests, Chief Nikas said yes. The intent would be to put money aside for long-term capital purchases such as equipment. Linda asked if any of the increases would be used to increase patrols. Chief Nikas said personnel costs have gone up through collective bargaining so it would help with that. Linda asked if there is a difference in price for commercial use, Chief Nikas said no but he also hasn't seen them being used for commercial purposes.

Ken Purington, Linebrook Road, said he thinks they do a great job on the water but on land the dock master is never there and he asked if the increases will help with that. Chief Nikas said they are having a hard time finding someone to do the job. Ken said when he goes down there he sees 20-25 cars with no stickers showing they paid. Chief Nikas said they are going to do an app payment system and if you don't register on the app or get the seasonal permit you will be fined. Linda said 1,000 moorings vs 1,100 moorings is a big difference and asked what the specific number is. Chief said this past year it was 1,072. Michael asked if the US Army Corps of Engineers decides to do a full dredge of the river, would we be able to add moorings? Chief Nikas said no because that would be the mouth of the river and the channel, and you don't put boats there.

Sarah said we also have information about launching fees. Chief Nikas said this is a change because of the agreement with the Water Access Board. Because Federal funds are being used, we can no longer charge differently or resident vs. non-resident passes. Linda said this wasn't always the case and asked if the Town was aware of this change when they used the Federal funds. Chief Nikas said he doesn't know. Charlie asked about gates and how it works when we're full. Chief Nikas said he doesn't think we would want to do a gate because someone would have to be there to open the gate when people leave. If the lot is full, you aren't supposed to park there. Linda said she would like to discuss overflow parking for town residents at Town Hall. She said she thinks it would just be one Public Hearing.

Chris Cerino, Broadway Ave, asked if the launching fees are for kayakers as well. Chief Nikas said yes. Linda said she doesn't recall if there is a bike rack at the wharf. Chief said there was one by Agawam but he's not sure. Linda said it would be great to have one.

VOTE: Charlie moved to close the Public Hearing, seconded by Michael. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote, 5-0.

VOTE: Charlie moved to approve the mooring fees and Town Wharf launch fees as recommended and presented in the packet seconded by Michael. The motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

7. PUBLIC HEARING: Amendment of Beach Stickers Policy and Fee – S. Player

Sarah read the legal notice.

VOTE: Linda moved to open the Public Hearing, seconded by Charlie. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote, 5-0.

Michael thanked Linda for bringing this to their attention and said he is hoping they can have a discussion on what the Crane's Beach sticker along with beach and parking in the town looks like in town moving forward. The Crane family owned Crane's Beach and the castle. They decided to gift it to the Trustees because they wanted to preserve the land and also wanted to make sure that the residents in town had the ability to use it. Even though the Town has the ability

to charge for beach stickers, the way the Crane's put this proposal together speaks volumes and it was overlooked in the 80's when the bylaw was created. The fees the Town has collected should have been put toward maintenance and they weren't. Michael said he thinks we should be tracking the money that comes into the Trustees to see what it pays for, and we should not be charging additional money for the sticker. Michael also suggested they look at the work that needs to be done, see how much it would cost, and make sure that we allocate the Trustees money for that. Sarah said that the beach stickers bring in up to \$150k per year and that money goes into the General Fund, and any repairs we have made for the beach also come out of the General Fund. They can look at earmarking money and communicating it more effectively, but the money to make improvements at the beach has come out of the funding source where the sticker money goes into. Michael said he would assume that the money we get from the Trustees is probably enough to make the improvements, but we don't know that so we should look into it further.

Carl said his challenge with this is that we are spending time on an issue that does not seem consequential. A \$20 fee doesn't seem worth spending time on. On the issue of what the original intent was, he is not sure. But they did look into this in 2012 and it was deemed that the intent was that the Trustees did not charge money for this. The larger issue Carl sees is the accounting of it and he agrees we could change some accounting practices so we can see the costs that come in and the maintenance that goes into it. However, that's not really how Town accounting works, it is challenging to segregate out everything that we do. If we change the sticker fees, that money is already baked into the budget, so it is going to end up getting put on the levy. Stephen said he thinks this falls more along the lines of this being symbolic rather than economic. Charlie said perhaps we could take that money and put it elsewhere to do something positive for the Town.

Ken Purington, Linebrook Rd, referred to the 2001 agreement and said the Trustees came to the Town to increase their plans for membership. In 2012 they changed what the membership includes. Ken said he thinks it would be interesting for someone to look back at 2012 and look at the revenue for the previous few years and subsequent few years. Ken said he thinks they're taking a big cut and we aren't making as much money as we could be. Ken suggested we have a committee look into this to see if we are getting what we are supposed to be getting from the Trustees. Ken said he agrees with Michael that the Crane family specifically said that money was supposed to go toward maintaining Argilla Road and that the people of Ipswich should get in for free. It was very generous of them to give that land to the people of Ipswich and we should honor their request.

Sarah said there will be a second hearing on this at the next meeting on the 8th. Charlie said that agreement also specially states that the Select Board and the Town Manager shall meet with the treasurer of the Trustees every May to go over finances. He agrees it is a good point Ken made.

VOTE: Michael moved to close the Public Hearing, seconded by Linda. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote, 5-0.

8. Department Updates COA, ReCreation, HR, Library – M. Vining, K. Bates, M. Gallivan, N. Blake – S. Player

Melinda Vining, Director of the Council on Aging, said this year the COA provided services to over 1,400 active patrons, they had an average of 62 patrons attend the center daily. Programs include fitness classes, language lessons, health and wellness programs, cards and games, luncheons, social events, technology events, travel, and a mobile food pantry. They had day trips to Block Island, went to see shows, and took extended overnight trips. They had over 150 volunteers who provided thousands of hours of service to the community. Melinda went over the COA team which is made up of Melinda, a full-time outreach coordinator, a part-time outreach worker, a transportation coordinator, 2 part-time receptionists, and 3 part-time drivers. The Outreach Department provided over 1,600 appointments to over 450 residents which include in-home and out-of-home visits. The Outreach Department also does the financial assistance programs and pet wellness program. The transportation program provided over 3,600 rides. Community partnerships include the YMCA which is a program that provides 8 free YMCA passes daily. They have worked closely with the Rotary on the Lend-A-Hand program and a new program called Coffee with a Rotarian. They have ongoing collaboration with Senior Care, Ipswich Housing, Open Door, and Action Inc. They also receive grants from various businesses in Town. Residents in Ipswich over 60 represent 37% of the Town's population.

Linda said she had the opportunity to attend the volunteer reception and she was amazed at the number of

volunteers and the caliber. It was great to see so much interest. She asked what kind of offerings Melinda feels they aren't able to provide that they would like to. Melinda said recruiting, managing, and training volunteers has been at the forefront. They have reached the limitations of their staffing level for programs so they are really relying on their volunteers for programs. A lot of times programming is based on what volunteers are interested in helping with. Linda asked if there are opportunities to combine with other local Councils on Aging. Melinda said they have done that a little and there is a MA Council on Aging Group, so they have made some connections that way. They are having a chair volleyball game with Beverly in a few weeks and a lunch afterwards.

Michael thanked Melinda for jumping in and continuing the great work. Their department is so critical. Charlie also thanked Melinda and her staff. Carl asked about the parking and space constraint that Melinda mentioned. Melinda said as they have grown programs, they need more and more rooms to do that and a lot of them require private rooms. For parking, the days they have luncheons are difficult. Carl asked for the space, is it not enough space or not the right space? Melinda said both, but they have a lot more space than a lot of COA's and they're very grateful for what they have. They just have to plan for it and be mindful of the spaces. Carl asked what issues she hears about a lot, Melinda said housing and transportation. For transportation, the COA is able to help with where people need to go but not always where they want to go. Stephen said one of the biggest issues is the seniors they don't know, the ones they don't see at the center and who don't take advantage of the programs they offer.

Nora Blake, Director at the Library, said 2023 was a good year for the library. They restored night hours Monday through Wednesday because they were cut back during the pandemic. They have added Hoopla, an online digital borrowing service, had several authors speak, and have begun offering a monthly craft program for adults. They had a birds of prey program, and they offer a variety of book clubs for both adults and kids. Circulation has rebounded to pre-pandemic levels and is even exceeding the high mark of 2019.

Michael said the operations are great at the children's section and it has been a great experience with kids. He asked how staffing levels are with the hours being back to normal. Nora said they are seeing activity picking up in the reference room as well as in archives and genealogy. They could use help in those areas but other than that they are doing okay. Michael asked if you have to have specific qualifications for those areas that they need help in, Nora said yes. Sarah asked if they have volunteers, Nora said they have 7 volunteers that work upstairs and 1 or 2 people that help in the children's department. Linda asked if there are programs or services that they don't offer that they would like to offer. Nora said she would like to improve the non-English collection, especially Portuguese. Charlie asked if they collaborate with other local libraries. Nora said they are part of the Merrimack Valley Library Consortium and they meet regularly. Nora also said she tracks how much we loan to other libraries and how much we borrow, it is about equal. Charlie asked if there is any way to deliver books to someone who can't get out. Nora said there is someone for the COA who comes to pick up books to get to people, but she would like to expand that to people who aren't served by the COA. That is something she could coordinate with community service. Michael said HS seniors need to get their community service hours done so that could be an option.

Mary Gallivan, Human Resources Director and Assistant Town Manager, gave a recap on what she does. She does half of payroll including onboarding, terminations, and changes in the payroll system. She also does benefits administration, manages the vendors, and pays the bills. A lot of the initiatives Mary is working on carry over from year to year. Hiring and recruiting has taken a lot of time this past year especially in municipal. It will be important to stay competitive when looking at union negotiations and pay increases due to the competitiveness in the market. They recently contracted with Gov HR to do a classification and compensation study. Mary has been more involved with economic development and community events and has helped with the budget process this year as well. Mary went over the grants received, including the Wellness Grant and the Safety Grant from MIAA. They have started to transition back to in-person classes with MIAA but some are still online. Mary got into the Suffolk University Certificate Program in Local Government and Leadership which is a step toward getting her Master's Degree. Going forward, they are prepping for union negotiations. Mary said she is looking to continue the goal of electronic timekeeping so they can go paperless.

Linda asked how it's going managing duties with HR and Assistant Town Manager. Mary said it has been going well, it has been a year now. Carl asked what would be the differentiator for us being competitive for jobs. Mary said it is mostly salary and flexible scheduling. Really it comes down to compensation. Carl asked who the Gov HR study involved, Mary said it's not schools but it's the 5 contracted positions and mostly exempt positions and salaried positions, not union positions.

9. Open 2024 Annual Town Meeting Warrant – S. Player

The 2024 Annual Town Meeting Warrant will be open today until February 9, 2024. Annual Town Meeting is on Tuesday, May 14, 2024. Sarah read the following memo from the packet:

All articles from town/school departments, boards or committees are due in FINAL FORM to the office of the Select Board no later than Noon on Monday, January 29, 2024, for review by the Town Manager and Town Counsel. The Select Board will hold a public hearing on the warrant on March 4, 2024 and sign the warrant at that time. After signing, the warrant will be posted and sent to the Finance Committee, School Committee, Town Counsel and Town Moderator.

Citizen Petitions – Certified petition articles are due by 11:00 am on February 9, 2024. In order for a petition to be guaranteed placement on the Annual Town Meeting warrant, ten (10) names/signatures/addresses of registered Town voters are required and must be certified by the Town Clerk. Forms and instructions to be used for petition articles are available in the Select Board’s office and online on the Town Meeting documents page at www.ipswichma.gov/townmeeting. Petition articles will be printed in the warrant verbatim, so citizens are asked to review the forms and instructions carefully.

VOTE: Linda moved to open the Warrant for the Annual Town Meeting, seconded by Michael. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

Charlie asked about the process, Stephen said from his experience, the Town’s warrant process is very similar to those of other towns. There will be a skeleton of a warrant by January 29 but it will continue to change and won’t be finalized until May.

10. Consideration of 2024 Special Town Meeting Dates, October 15 & 16, 2024 or October 22 & 23, 2024 – S. Player

Sarah asked for everyone’s thoughts on the dates and availability. Michael said he would say later is better just to make sure everyone ducks are in a row. Sarah suggested October 22 and 23.

VOTE: Linda moved to hold Annual Town Meeting on October 22 with an overflow date on October 23 if needed, seconded by Michael. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

11. Board and Committee Updates – S. Player

None

12. Annual Renewal Weekday Entertainment and Auto Amusement License Applications Carrollton Building Association (Carrollton Club 498), 9 Topsfield Road – S. Player

VOTE: Charlie moved to renew the Annual Weekday Entertainment and Auto Amusement License for the Carlton Club 498, seconded by Michael. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

13. Annual Renewal Common Victualler License, Little Wolf Coffee, 125 High Street – S. Player

VOTE: Charlie moved to renew the Common Victualler License for Little Wolf Coffee seconded by Linda. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

14. Town Manager Report – S. Crane

- We are tracking the outcome of the Whittier votes and will continue discussions with delegation and other communities. We are collecting information and ready to present what we know to the community after the vote.
- The Select Board will be hearing the Town Manager’s budget on January 22 and 23.

- The library was closed last week because of a carbon monoxide alarm. There was a problem with one of the boilers and they reopened 2 days later.
- Carl asked if we can make sure the Whittier vote is displayed prominently on the website.
- There is an agenda item for board and subcommittee updates which was a part of the Select Board's goals. Some boards were set up for specific advisory purposes. The Board discussed if there is a way to consolidate boards, Stephen and Leah started to put together a list of boards that they think the Select Board should talk to and look at for possible consolidation. They would recommend 1-2 per meeting.

15. Select Board Subcommittee Updates – S. Player

- There was a Water Wastewater Subcommittee meeting and the focus was the budget. There has been some employee shuffling but no new employees. Vicki is going to present options for rates and they talked about possibly coming in a little under with the increase this year to offset the mid-year increase. Vicki is going to focus her time on the metering project and then will look into the rate structure.
- There was a Climate Resiliency Committee meeting. There was a draft of recommendations for the ESCO Study.

16. New Business*/Future Business – S. Player

- None

17. Miscellaneous and Correspondence – S. Player

VOTE: Motion to adjourn, made by Linda, seconded by Charlie. The motion passed unanimously, 5-0

Respectfully Submitted By
Alyson von der Esch
January 10, 2024

Meeting Packet Link: <https://www.ipswichma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/16408/01-02-2024-Select-Board-w-Executive-Session-Meeting-Packet>

List of Documents:

Mooring Fees Amendments legal (11-22-2023)
Launch Fee Change 2023
Fee Change 2023
Public Access Agreement – Wharf
Mooring & Wharf Fees 2023
2023 Fee Approval
2024 ATM Article Submission Memo
Crane Beach sticker fee change legal (12-13-2023)
Beach Stickers 11 21 23
Crane Beach parking sticker fees (A0164984)
Carrollton Club 498 - License Renewals 2024
Citizen's Petition Form - August 2019
Little Wolf Coffee
Memo-STM dates
SB Memo Opening the Warrant ATM 2024
Town Manager Memo Board and Comm Updates