

TOWN OF IPSWICH  
Select Board Meeting  
Monday, August 28, 2023 at 6:00 PM  
Meeting Room A – Town Gall, 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 Monday, August 28, 2023 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

### 1. Executive Session

*VOTE: Linda Alexson moved to convene in executive session, Charles Surpitski 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 discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the government's bargaining or litigating position. Also, to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel; to actually conduct collective bargaining and contract negotiations with non-union personnel related to interim electric light manager.

### 2. Pledge of Allegiance

### 3. Welcome/ Announcements – S. Player

- The Shellfish Advisory Board will hold a special meeting on Wednesday, September 6 at 7pm to discuss shellfish-related concerns regarding the Ipswich Mills Dam Removal project.
- The first ever Love Your Neighbor 5K will take place on October 1 at 11AM. This is a town partnership with the Ipswich Human Rights Commission to support diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Ipswich Illumination will be on October 6, 7, and 8.
- There will be a water and wastewater meeting on Wednesday, September 6, at the utilities plant.
- The Audit Committee will be meeting September 27 at 7PM in Meeting Room A.

### 4. Citizen Queries – S. Player

- None

### 5. Goal Setting– S. Player

Sarah went over the big goals that were taken from the Select Board goal setting meeting with the facilitator. Big areas were the Select Board role as Electric Light Commissioners, the Select Board to exert leadership, board and committee roles and responsibilities, the funding and financing of water supply and infrastructure, and implementation of the housing production plan.

### Leadership:

Sarah said she received a flyer in the mail about the Public Safety Building. She said perhaps they need to exert leadership regarding that project, and perhaps be more vocal advocates of that project. Charlie said this project has been

on the town's agenda for 10 years. This site really is the last site of a large enough size downtown that could house the Public Safety Building. The Committee has worked hard in unprecedented times of supply chain difficulties and inflation. It has been a difficult task to create a building that is functional and meets all of the needs. Sarah asked how the Board feels about having that as one of our leadership goals. Carl said he likes picking a few specific goals to demonstrate leadership. He said he agrees that this project is a good example of something the board should lean heavily into. Carl said he usually likes to think of goals being around things that might not happen if we didn't have a goal. This feels like a project that is going to happen whether it is on our list of goals or not. Sarah said it seems like there is now a more organized group of people against it. Sarah said the language she drafted touched on formally supporting the Public Safety Building, and letting people hear from the Select Board in a formal way. Michael said he would caution the group against making it look like they privately deliberated about the Public Safety Building in the goal setting session. Linda said maybe a goal could be to identify major town projects and discuss our position. Stephen said he thinks Sarah's wording on publicly supporting the building is important. The Select Board supports the community's decision and supports the committee that was appointed by the Select Board. Carl said he thinks they should also weigh in on the dam project. Sarah asked what the language would be, Michael suggested "support ongoing town projects and formulate a position about future town projects". Linda suggested to also put "short term" and "long term" in the language. Sarah said one of the leadership goals could be Stephen's evaluation. Carl said we have to do that anyway so perhaps it wouldn't be a goal. Sarah suggested the language, "to formally support and advocate for the Public Safety Building project process". The leadership aspect of this is correcting misinformation and letting people know that this process has and will continue to be thoughtful and done correctly. Carl said he would also encourage the Board to advocate for updates to site plans to take citizen input into account where we possibly can. Stephen said the current Public Safety project is well underway so it makes sense to support the process. But for future projects, we don't know the processes yet. Sarah suggested changing it to "ensuring a thorough public or participatory process to determine outcomes for 3A taskforce and Ipswich Mills Dam projects".

Sarah said she thinks they need to have some budget goals that are not just water and infrastructure driven. The draft goal Sarah had was "lead development of budget guidelines for next year's town budget at the tri-board meeting". Linda asked if it should just be a bi-board meeting. Sarah said it could also include capital budget guidelines which the schools would be included in. Stephen said he has worked in communities that have had budget guidelines. The Town Manager can go over it and explain why. Stephen agreed that it should be a tri-board meeting. Michael said he thinks we have a lot of very seasoned talent on the Finance Committee so he wants them to be involved in the process. Instead of the Select Board drafting the goals and the FinCom and Town Manager following the guidelines, the Select Board would get their input first. Sarah said on the chairs call they talked about developing budget guidelines.

Goals are as follows:

- Support for Public Safety Building Process
- Ensure thorough a transparent process to determine outcomes for Ipswich Mills Dam and MBTA/3A Projects.
- Lead process to develop budget guidelines for FY25.

## **ELD**

Charlie said he divided the goal into three categories: immediate, 3-4 months out, and long term. Immediately, he would like to establish confidence and stabilize the department. The Select Board would empower the Town Manager and department to recognize and authorize the position of an Operations Manager. They would also meet with the line personnel to listen to their viewpoints and concerns, and they would talk to other ELDs to see how they handle many of the situations that are happening here. The Operations Manager is a critical function that we should also pursue immediately. Stephen proposed the wording "build confidence by supporting the interim Operations Manager". Charlie said he wants to establish confidence in the commission itself. For the intermediate time period, we have to define general supervision with the Town Manager. We need to familiarize ourselves with the law relative to running a municipal light department, and we have to identify a resolution process if conflicts come up between the Town Government and the ELD Manager. We have to identify the areas of cooperation that we expect to occur between the ELD and the other town departments. We have to establish a protocol with the ELD Manager relative to being updated on a regular basis with projects. We also need to establish what we expect on a project and how much information were looking for. It would also

be important to visit and seek out other ELDs. Lastly, we need to figure out what the process will be to appoint a longer-term position ELD Manager. Longer term goals are to review and establish a general supervisor, or eliminate that from the charter as a whole. Also, to evaluate ourselves as Electric Light Commissioners. Establish confidence in the Light Commission, support the interim ELD manager, clarify roles responsibilities and processes between ELD and other town departments, and appoint a permanent light manager.

Goals are as follows:

- Establish confidence in the Light Commission
- Support the interim ELD manager
- Clarify roles responsibilities and processes between ELD and other town departments
- Appoint a permanent light manager.

### **Boards and Committees**

Linda said she split this into three categories: Select Board and Finance Committee, Select Board Subcommittees, and Overall Town Boards and Committees. Under Select Board and Finance Committee, the goal would be to identify each board's specific responsibilities. This can be done through the Town Charter and past practice. Along with identifying those responsibilities, look at our commons goals and how we can achieve those together. Linda also suggested they meet quarterly with the Finance Committee outside of the budget season, particularly after elections. Sarah said they could do a workshop with the Finance Committee reviewing the charter and the roles and the responsibilities. Charlie asked if the school should participate in this discussion too. Sarah said they could, perhaps we want to have a workshop that is roles and responsibilities for all three of the major boards. Stephen said we can divide it by charter committees and advisory committees that advise the Select Board, and also regulatory boards. Linda also suggested to continue the tri-chair communication. Michael said it's important for the chairs to continue to keep on the same page on a frequent basis. Linda said we have 50 or 60 boards and committees on the books. We should determine which are active and which are inactive. If they are inactive, should they be decommissioned or reactivated. Linda also suggested meeting with the chairs of each active committee to get an update on those. Sarah said perhaps we should be evaluating structure and function. Stephen said he thinks that will start to materialize as we are learning more about each board and committee. We may also find some boards can be consolidated. Stephen also said he would suggest adding a goal of attracting new volunteers to boards and committees.

Goals are as follows:

- Clarify roles and responsibilities of the Select Board, Finance Committee, and School Committee
- Clarify roles and responsibilities for all other advisory boards to the Select Board or subcommittees
- Evaluate structure and purpose of current boards and committees.

### **Funding Financing Plan for Water Supply and Infrastructure**

Michael said there are two sections, water supply and infrastructure. Sometimes those can go hand in hand but sometimes they are separate. One goal would be to promote town incentives for water reduction. One of the goals should be to focus on the water supply which would be to work on reduction of water use since we can't create more water. Michael said we do a good job of reducing water use in town but we don't always do a good job of showing off how well we do. One goal could be to put together incentives. Perhaps a program where we allow borrowing at a very reduced or low interest rate where we can help people acquire low flow fixtures. Another way is we could apply discounts for appliances, or give away rain barrels. We could also do a rate incentive. Michael said the next idea is financially focused for infrastructure and the only way to really tackle that is to review the rate structure. Stephen asked when the last time was that they had a formal rate study done. Sarah said the Subcommittee researched other rate structures but she doesn't

know if it has been done with a consulting firm. Perhaps we could request and update from them. Stephen said we also want to focus on stability of rates. Third, Michael said perhaps we should meet with other towns about water conservation. Linda said we could increase communication with the state legislators as well.

Goals are as follows:

- Investigate incentives for water use reduction.
- Evaluate the rate structure.
- Increase communication and advocacy for the protection of Ipswich's water supply.

## **Housing Production Plan**

Carl said there is a lot of information right now about housing pressure and housing needs. What we need to focus on is prioritization and implementation. Sarah said at the Affordable Housing Trust/ Ipswich Housing Partnership meeting they came up with some ideas about what the Select Board could do. One idea was to draft a policy that states when a tax title property becomes available, we should consider building housing there first and foremost. Other ideas were to collaborate with the Planning Board to increase the payment-in-lieu-of fee because right now builders are not incentivized to create an affordable unit since the fee is so low. Linda said she thinks there is plenty of market rate development going on, we need more affordable housing. Carl said he agrees but there are multiple dimensions. The type and composition of housing is important, too. We don't have enough variation in kinds of housing. We have been creating housing but have not been creating a variety of housing. Linda said she would like to see the Select Board mostly focus on creating more affordable housing. Carl also said perhaps they should revisit their goal. The Board focuses on 10%, but in actuality they need much more than that. Sarah said they could also mandate that builders meet with the Affordable Housing Trust before they build, just to encourage conversation. It could be added as part of the Planning Board application. Charlie said he thinks they should also generate public support for increased housing. People don't like the character of the town changing with new builds but they need to understand why it is important. Carl said he thinks it would be good to review these goals with the two housing groups that meet. Stephen suggested scheduling a summit to discuss the Housing Production Plan. Linda asked if we could get an update on the subsidized housing inventory list.

Goals are as follows:

- Work to increase the payment-in-lieu-of fee to incentivize creation of affordable units.
- Explore bylaw changes to codify the role of the affordable housing trust.
- Schedule a summit to discuss the Housing Production Plan and regional approaches

Carl suggested whoever introduced each goal can also be the one to follow up on each goal. Stephen said we should also make sure to put some of these on agendas. Sarah asked if we should add timelines for each goal. Stephen said he's not a big believer in timelines for things like this because so much is out of our control. Sarah suggested we have each person be responsible for their goal area, the action items underneath those goals, and to set timelines for those action items and goals. Carl suggested quarterly updates, the Board agreed. Carl suggested we write these up and vote on them at the next meeting. Carl said there were two other topics that aren't directly in our goals but are really important for the Select Board act on. One is the implementation of the Community Development Pan, and the other is the zero-carbon initiative. Sarah said that came up as a protentional agenda item for the tri-board.

## **6. Adjourn – S. Player**

*VOTE: Motion to adjourn made by Michael, seconded by Carl. The motion passed unanimously, 5-0*

Respectfully Submitted By  
Alyson von der Esch  
September 4, 2023