

The Select Board met on Tuesday November 15, 2022 beginning at 7:00pm in the Main Meeting Room of Town Hall. The following members were present:

James O'Neil, Chair
Glenn Maffei, Vice Chair
Allyson Hamilton, Clerk
Mark Gallivan
Benjamin Barrett - joined the meeting at 7:08pm

Also participating
James Johnson, Town Administrator
Aoife Kelly, Executive Assistant

Appointments

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chair O'Neil called the meeting to order at 7pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Hearing for Tax Classification for Determination of Residential Factor for tax rate for Fiscal Year 2023. (Vote expected)

On motion of Clerk Hamilton, seconded by Vice Chair Maffei, voted to open the Tax Classification Public Hearing. Motion Passed (4-0-0). Chair O'Neil announced the discussion would be put on hold until the arrival of Board member Barrett.

Parker Elmore, Odyssey Advisors, Providing the OPEB Actuarial Audit Review

Parker Elmore of Odyssey Advisors was present over Zoom to present his team's OPEB Actuarial Audit Review. 99% of the town's Other Post-Employment Benefits consists of retiree medical insurance. The Town's OPEB liability increased significantly from \$53 million in 2021 to \$69 million in 2022. Fluctuation in this number is typically attributed to inflation, changes in age demographics, and the percentage of employees who make it to retirement. Walpole's OPEB funding is actually ahead of most of its peers, and while there is more to do, we are in a good spot. Walpole is on track to have OPEB fully funded by around 2030. Finance Director Jodi Cuneo stated that there were originally some issues with the data regarding the difference between hire date and service date, but they have since corrected themselves and the current figures should be accurate. The Board thanked Parker for his presentation and noted that it is important to ensure the data we are working with is accurate and that testing different scenarios is important for future conversations and planning.

Public Hearing for Tax Classification for Determination of Residential Factor for tax rate for Fiscal Year 2023 (Cont.)

Jack Fisher, Chair of the Board of Assessors was present to make a residential tax rate recommendation to the Board. He began by giving some background on historic residential tax rates and explaining how this number is calculated. Because there are many more residential properties in Walpole than commercial properties, any change in taxes for a single household is made up for by a much larger inverse change for local businesses. The Board of Assessors is recommending a residential factor of 1.3 for Fiscal Year 2023, resulting in an average household tax increase of \$643, a commercial tax increase of \$836, and an industrial tax increase of \$1,020. In recent years, the tax rate has been 1.275. Changing this to 1.3 would lower the increase in homeowners' tax burdens, while conversely raising the increase on the commercial and industrial side. Board of Assessors member Richard Zaccaro urged the Board to consider implementing a tax break on senior citizens. Marc Romeo, Chair of the Economic Development Commission, stated that staying with a rate of 1.275 would be a much more manageable tax increase for small business owners, especially coming off a few years of pandemic-related hardships. Public comment was provided by Walpole resident Linda Coletti

in regards to the financial hardship of those living on a fixed income and urged the Select Board to do all they can to assist. Public comment was also provided by business owner and resident Henry Baker who agreed that property taxes are becoming a financial burden on many senior citizens and blue-collar workers. A lengthy discussion occurred amongst the Select Board members; weighing up all the information provided to them. On motion of Clerk Hamilton, seconded by Vice Chair Maffei, voted to close the public hearing. Motion Passed (5-0-0).

On motion of Vice Chair Maffei, seconded by Board Member Gallivan, voted to adopt a shift of 1.275 with a residential factor of 0.9615 for Fiscal Year 2023. Motion Passed (4-1-0). Clerk Hamilton opposed. On motion of Chair O'Neil, seconded by Vice Chair Maffei, voted to authorize the Town Administrator to submit the results of this hearing on behalf of the Select Board to the Massachusetts Division of Local Services Gateway System. Motion Passed (5-0-0).

On motion of Chair O'Neil, seconded by Vice Chair Maffei, voted to expand the amount a qualified volunteer can earn from \$1,000 to \$1,500 in property tax relief. Motion Passed (5-0-0).

Vote to promote Firefighter/Paramedic Albert King to the rank of Lieutenant

Fire Chief Bailey and Firefighter/Paramedic Albert King were present. The Chief introduced Firefighter King to the Board and provided some information on his background and career with the department to this date. Albert King updated the Board on his career within the Department. The Board thanked Albert for his service within the Department. The Board congratulated Albert King on his promotion and wished him all the best. On motion of Clerk Hamilton, seconded by Vice Chair Maffei, voted to promote Firefighter/Paramedic Albert King to the rank of Lieutenant. Motion Passed (5-0-0).

Open Forum – No one present.

New Business

Discussion & Vote on Pulte/Pennington Crossing Offsite Security Release

Town Engineer Carl Balduf was present to share his approval and recommended the release of the Pulte/Pennington Crossing security. On motion of Clerk Hamilton, seconded by Vice Chair Maffei, voted to release the retained securities in the amount of \$95,540 and \$275,000 held by the Select Board. Motion Passed (5-0-0).

Vote award of Pool Replacement Study Contract to The Vertex Companies

On motion of Clerk Hamilton, seconded by Vice Chair Maffei, voted to award Pool Replacement Study Contract to The Vertex Companies and authorize the Town Administrator to sign all contract documents. Motion Passed (5-0-0).

Vote request of Boylston Schul Verein for Change of Officers

On motion of Clerk Hamilton, seconded by Vice Chair Maffei, voted to approve the request of Boylston Schul Verein for Change of Officers. Motion Passed (5-0-0).

Vote request of Walpole Chamber of Commerce to hold the annual Santa Parade and Tree Lighting on Saturday, November 26, 2022

On motion of Clerk Hamilton, seconded by Vice Chair Maffei, voted to approve request of Walpole Chamber of Commerce to hold the annual Santa Parade and Tree Lighting on Saturday, November 26, 2022. Motion Passed (5-0-0).

CONSENT AGENDA

On motion of Clerk Hamilton, seconded by Vice Chair Maffei, voted to accept with gratitude the following donations:

Walpole Women's Club to Hometown Hero Banner Program	\$200
Friends of Walpole Recreation to Recreation Donation Account	\$192,478

Motion Passed (5-0-0).

Minutes

On motion of Clerk Hamilton, seconded by Vice Chair Maffei, voted to approve the Minutes of October 25, 2022 as presented in our packet. Motion Passed (5-0-0).

Town Administrator's Update

Middle School Project

Tonight was the groundbreaking for the Middle School project, and the School Building Committee is doing an excellent job so far.

Route 1A Project

The bridge is likely to be completed by Christmas. The area from the Aggie School to the bridge will be milled and paved soon to improve driving conditions as we head into winter.

Finance Committee Meetings

On Monday the Select Board met with the Finance Committee to discuss operations and budgets with the DPW, Police Department, and Fire Department. On November 28 another meeting will be held with the School Committee to talk about their department needs and discuss the Town's long-term needs and OPEB.

Downtown Traffic Update

McMahon Associates will be coming before the Select Board on December 6 to present the findings of the Downtown Traffic Study and provide recommendations as to how Walpole can get the best value for the remaining \$250,000 attributed to the downtown traffic situation.

Route 1A Complex

We have received a very generous donation of \$300,000 from S. M. Lorusso & Sons Inc. for the Route 1A Complex. This will help pay for workout equipment to be placed along the complex for people to use. A grand opening will take place in the Spring 2023.

On motion of Clerk Hamilton, seconded by Vice Chair Maffei, voted to adjourn and the meeting was adjourned accordingly at 8:50pm. Motion Passed (5-0-0).