



**TOWN OF BILLERICA
SELECT BOARD MINUTES
AUGUST 8, 2023**

Members Present: Chair Michael Riley, Secretary Andrew Deslaurier, Michael Rosa, and John Burrows

Members Absent: Vice Chair Kimberly Conway (Remote)

Staff Present: Town Manager John Curran (Late Arrival), Assistant Town Manager Clancy Main and Director of Administrative Services Robert Maynard

Chair Riley stated that the meeting is a hybrid meeting with a Zoom option. Since Vice Chair Conway is remote, all votes will be taken by roll call.

Chair Riley called for an attendance roll call: Member Rosa present, Secretary Deslaurier present, Member Burrows present, Vice Chair Conway present, and Chair Riley present.

Call to Order 5:45 PM

Chair Riley called the meeting to order.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Mr. Main stated that the Town Manager is out inspecting the areas flooded by the rain event today. There was unprecedented rain with 7.1” of rain falling over a few hours. An emergency meeting was held at 11:00 AM and the employees jumped into action including the Fire, Police, DPW and Building Department as well as facilities. By 2:00 PM, most of the water had subsided. The employees handled the crisis in a quick and efficient manner.

Member Rosa thanked all the employees who stepped up and it shows our great our employees are including those in the Town Manager’s office.

Mr. Curran joined the meeting at 5:55 PM.

1. Select Board – Discussion and Vote on Financial Policy

Member Rosa stated that he wanted to voice opposition to this meeting. There are 9 projects referenced in the material that will cost millions of dollars and to have this meeting on a Tuesday at 5:45 PM with no open mic, on the same day as National Night Out is wrong. The residents should have an opportunity to speak and this meeting should be adjourned and this should be taken up at a regular scheduled meeting.

Mr. Curran stated that the warrant will be addressed on Monday so this policy affects warrant articles that will be proposed. This policy is to address debt in the future. We don’t know exactly what is going to be on the debt schedule because Town Meeting approves all the spending. The Town has committed to a comprehensive waster water management plan which is the sewer for all residents. This is a significant piece of debt. The High School and Parker School are included in this policy. The Capital Facilities Committee has recommended separate COA and Rec facilities that will cost \$20 million each. The DPW is estimated at \$50 million and the Town Center will also add a piece to the debt. The policy has been the same since 2012. The levy was set to \$9.066 million or 8% of the budget with \$1.8 million to free cash. The proposal is to increase the levy commitment for debt by \$1 million for 10 years. This will result in an increase in taxes of \$43/year. The cumulative impact over 10 years to the median single family is \$254. In 2030, it will level at \$15 million. This policy should be approved for planning purposes if the proposed projects are going on the warrant for Town Meeting.



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Member Rosa stated that the COA and Rec Center are \$20 million each, the DPW is \$50 million plus interest so that's actually \$71 million, the Town Center is \$20 million, water infrastructure is \$30 million and the sewer is \$42 million. We need to include a 10% contingency and we need to account for interest. Mr. Curran stated that the interest and cost escalation is included in the debt schedule. Member Rosa asked if the two schools are included in the debt schedule. Mr. Curran replied no. Member Rosa stated that \$254 does not include the schools and the debt exclusion is going to be more than \$254 per median household. Member Rosa asked what the recommendation for the priority of these projects is. Chair Riley interjected and said that these are projects that were dictated by the Select Board, not the Town Manager.

Member Rosa stated that there is a financial impact for bonding and we need to be on the same page. Mr. Curran stated that the priority of these projects is up to the Select Board. The cost is outlined in the timeline provided. Mr. Curran stated that the DPW is further along as is the Town Center so those are likely to go first. The DPW would be scheduled for its first payment in 2027 if approved at the Fall Town Meeting. The Town Center would carry a 15 year note and payments would start in 2026. The COA would have its first payment in 2028 and the Rec Center in 2027 if approved in the spring. The sewer would have payments in 2029 then 2032. If the two schools were added right away, it would add an additional \$500 per median household. If the Town waited for five years, it could be as much as \$1000.00 per median household. Member Rosa stated that we just came off an increase of over \$500 for the average median household and this is a lot to swallow. Member Rosa stated that there is a lot to digest. We need to know if the schools are included. We have had limited discussion on the policy and we have never prioritized the projects.

Mr. Curran stated that we need to do real cost estimates for the COA and Rec Center. We may not want to go before MSAB for the schools and taxes are impacted by other things such as retirement pensions and general costs. The Board needs to determine if \$245 is a responsible cost for assets that will be constructed over the next 10 years.

Vice Chair Conway stated that we have had several meetings on off nights when there is an issue we need to discuss. Our secretary had sent out several emails to send a list of priority of projects to the Town Manager awhile ago, so if you didn't that was your decision. We asked for this and he delivered. When the High School and Parker was being proposed, Mr. Curran stated that it would increase taxes by \$200 and he was spot on. He has strong financial skills and has earned credibility. Town Meeting may vote against these projects and if they do, then we'll have to change the policy. This vote does not mean we are voting for the projects that are done at Town Meeting.

Member Burrows stated that we have a lot of seniors on fixed incomes and we have raised water/sewer fees and taxes. He doesn't buy something if he can't afford it and we are pricing seniors out of their homes. He would agree that the DPW needs a new building and if we build a new middle school then we can move the COA and Rec Center into the Marshall with very little remodeling needed. He can't support this due to adding additional costs to the seniors.

Secretary Deslaurier stated that if we choose not to adjust, then the levy will be increased. Mr. Curran replied that was correct. Secretary Deslaurier stated that this provides some protection for the investment in the town.

Chair Riley stated that we have talked about this in a previous meeting and this is providing fiscal responsibility. He will vote to support this policy.

Member Rosa stated that the money that is going into the debt stabilization is still coming from the residents. We can always set policy when projects come online. Chair Riley stated that we will go to Town Meeting with a plan.

Mr. Johnson, a resident – Mr. Johnson stated that the debt stabilization fund should be used but it should be structured so it does not threaten the health, wealth, or safety of the resident. An increase of \$200 is painful for seniors. There are 6,245 seniors aged 70 to 90. The Town just reassessed the average home prices and they went very high. It should be done over a longer period.



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MOTION - Secretary Deslaurier made a motion to approve the Debt Stabilization Policy as presented in a memo from Mr. Curran dated August 2, 2023. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Conway. Point of Order – Member Rosa stated that this is the first reading and our policy and procedures require at least two readings. Chair Riley stated that we reviewed this back in April, so this is the second reading. The motion was voted 3-2 in favor. Secretary Deslaurier voted Aye, Vice Chair Conway voted Aye, Chair Riley voted Aye, Member Rosa voted No and Member Burrows voted No.

MOTION - Secretary Deslaurier made a motion to adjourn the Select Board meeting of August 8, 2023 at 6:50 PM. The motion was seconded by Member Rosa and unanimously voted 4-1-0. On a roll call vote: Member Rosa voted Aye, Secretary Deslaurier voted Aye, Vice Chair Conway voted Aye, Member Burrows voted No and Chair Riley voted Aye.

*Respectfully Submitted by Dawn McDowell,
Recording Secretary*

Exhibits for the Select Board Meeting – August 8, 2023

Call to order 7:00 PM

1. **Select Board – Discussion and Vote on Financial Policy – Memo from J. Curran dated August 2, 2023**

Approved On: September 11, 2023