

Meeting Minutes of the Hanover Select Board Regular Meeting held in a Hybrid Format with both in person attendees in the First Floor Hearing Room of Hanover Town Hall as well as remote attendees via Zoom videoconference, on Monday, November 20, 2023 at 7:00pm.

Call meeting to order and Pledge of Allegiance

At 7:00pm the Chair called the meeting to order.

Present at Town Hall were Chair Vanessa O'Connor, Vice Chair Rhonda Nyman, Selectman David Delaney, Selectman John Tuzik and Selectman Steve Louko.

Present at Town Hall were Town Manager Joe Colangelo (TM), Assistant Town Manager, HR Director, CDMI Director Ann Lee (ATM), and Director of Public Affairs, Licensing and Insurances Janet Tierney (DPA).

All rose and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comments

In accordance with [Select Board Policy 2-6](#), the Chair requested any public comments, seeing none.

Meeting Minutes

The Chair requested any questions or comments on the Meeting Minutes of November, 6, 2023, seeing none. The Board voted to approve the Meeting Minutes of [November 6, 2023](#)

Public Hearing

Joint Hearing of the Hanover Select Board and the Hanover Board of Assessors.

The Chair opened the joint Tax Classification Hearing.

Finance Director Chelsea Stevens (FD) and Director of Assessing Elaine Boidi (DA), appeared before the Board. DA introduced the new Assessing Assistant Al Ferrara to the Board. All welcomed Al. The FD and DA then presented the Tax Classification Hearing to set the 2024 Property Tax Rate presentation, [attached](#).

The Chair opened it up for the Board to ask any questions.

Vice Chair Nyman confirmed with the DA that the recommendation from the Board of Assessors was for a 1.04 split.

FD informed all that once the split is set everything will be sent to DOR for approval and some of the numbers may change slightly. The split will remain the same however the numbers might be slightly different.

The Chair inquired as to how many businesses could benefit from the Small Business Exemption.

DA agreed to speak with DOR about it. The Chair asked the Town Clerk who appeared before the Board via Zoom, as to what information we have on file regarding small businesses registered in Town.

The Clerk spoke with the Board regarding DBA Certificates, noting that it is difficult to discern from DBAs which businesses are small businesses.

When asked DA informed all that the Town would determine who the Small Business Exemption

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would apply to and apply it across the Board as opposed to an application process. DA agreed to look into what the process would be to determine who would qualify.

The Chair asked, for the future, for information on what the impact would be on the shift of burden on small businesses and other bigger business owners.

Selectman Louko asked if DA could look into whether qualification for the Small Commercial Exemption could be an application process so that businesses would need to prove that they are eligible every year.

Selectman Louko also commented on the split tax rate. Noting that even a small amount may make more revenues for the Town, and further noting that 1.04 is comparatively modest.

The Chair clarified that the Tax Classification won't increase the revenue but will only shift or reallocate who is bearing the burden of it. TM noted that that is an important distinction to make that the levy will remain the same but it will be a shift in who is paying more or less between residential and commercial.

Hearing no further questions from the Board, the Chair opened it up for public comment.

Resident Kristen Daly joined via Zoom and asked for clarification on the numbers for the tax split. DA clarified for all that with the 1.0 shift everything would remain the same, no shift everyone pays the same, and with a 1.01 you are shifting a percentage over more onto the commercial and taking that from the residential.

Resident Libby Corbo joined via Zoom and asked the Board of Assessors what they based their 1.04 recommendation on, given that it is a comparatively conservative amount.

DA informed all that she believes they based their recommendation on the fact that the commercial pay the real estate tax and also the personal property tax, they don't get the benefit of the \$100,000 CPA Exemption and they pay other types of taxes for the different businesses. Selectman Louko noted that residents pay personal property taxes as well.

Ms. Corbo followed up on her previous question asking that if it is true that businesses have to pay these other taxes in other towns as well, why would our shift be on the lower rate of the other communities with a split rate and what would make the Town of Hanover unique.

DA informed all that towns businesses are paying the personal property tax some towns have a greater amount of commercial some towns have less, but every business is paying a portion depending on their business.

Selectman Delaney asked to look back at page 7 of the presentation pointing out that Residential properties make up 84.31% and Commercial are at 11.13%, so to have a larger split on the commercial side would be putting a larger burden on a very small percentage of properties in Town, therefore in fairness, if you are going to compare 111 communities, in order to have a fair comparison, we will need to know the percentage of residential to commercial properties of the other 110 communities.

Vice Chair Nyman asked if there are any other targeted approaches the Town could use to help folks that need it the most with paying their property taxes.

DA mentioned that there are less people applying for the 41C which is the largest exemption.

There is a plan to send out another email and Facebook blast, it has been sent over the COA and it has been posted to get the word out there. DA informed all that DA and FD have discussed raising the maximum income allowed which is currently \$25,000 possibly up to \$30,000 to see the impact it would have and the number of applications the Town receives, however that wouldn't go into effect until next year as it needs to be voted on at Town Meeting. DA and FD discussed using Affordable Housing funds to bridge the difference for this year. The State currently has us at \$25,000, we could raise it to \$30,000 and the Town could catch the people who fall into that category and possibly reduce their property taxes by \$500 or so. DA confirmed for Vice Chair Nyman that there is an age restriction for all the exemptions, the age for 41C is 70 but in Hanover it is 65. FD informed all that the Affordable Housing Trust has already given some money a couple of years ago to the Taxation Aid fund so the Town could use some of that money for this purpose this year.

Ken Greene appeared before the Board and discussed a "Greene Paper" he wrote on taxation in Hanover and asked that with it being evident that the Town will have to lead up to a Prop 2 ½ Override, the Town look into its processes and try to reduce the taxes in any manner so that the impact of the override is justifiable and as minimal as possible.

Selectman Louko stated that he would feel comfortable with a higher split and doesn't think it would deter investment in any way.

The Chair stated that she feels that a higher split tax rate is the way to go and probably should be more in line with other communities with similar percent of tax valued on the commercial industrial side, such as Weymouth, Quincy or Wrentham which is probably the closest to us. The Chair stated that a significant jump would have to be implemented over a period of years.

The Board voted on adopting a split tax rate of 1.1. Chair O'Connor, aye, Selectman Louko aye, Vice Chair Nyman, nay, Selectman Delaney, nay, Selectman Tuzik, nay. The motion failed.

The Board voted to go with the recommendation of the Board of Assessors and set the residential factor at 1.04. Vice Chair Nyman, aye, Selectman Delaney, aye, Selectman Tuzik, aye, Chair O'Connor, nay, Selectman Louko, nay. The motion passed with a 3-2 vote.

The Board voted to adopt a residential factor of .9926 to be adopted for Fiscal Year 2024, to vote no on the open space discount, to vote no on the small commercial exemption and to vote no on the residential exemption. Chair O'Connor, aye, Vice Chair Nyman, aye, Selectman Delaney, aye, Selectman Tuzik, aye, Selectman Louko, nay.

The Board voted to continue the Hearing until such time as the Town is notified by the Department of Revenue that our tax rate has been Certified, and once the tax rate has been Certified we will close the Hearing. Chair O'Connor, aye, Vice Chair Nyman, aye, Selectman Delaney, aye, Selectman Tuzik, aye, Selectman Louko, aye.

Budgeting and Finance

Continued Discussion of the Fiscal Year 2025 Operating Budget

TM and FD discussed the Fiscal Year 2025 Operating Budget with the Board.

TM requested feedback from the Board. Selectman Tuzik requested that School Superintendent Ferron come and make a presentation to the Board. TM informed all that Superintendent Ferron will be at the Select Board Meeting on December 4th to discuss the School Budget in more detail. Vice Chair Nyman confirmed with TM that the ballot question will be given at the same time as

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the regular elections.

Libby Corbo appeared before the Board via Zoom and commented that it is nice to see leadership on this issue and the decision to have data from experts paid by the Town, further noting that as qualified people have been hired to share information with us, when they do she listens to it.

When asked TM informed all that he can provide ambulance rates and that the Fire Chief prepares that for us yearly.

Continued Discussion of the Fiscal Year 2025 +5 Year Capital Plan

TM discussed the Fiscal Year 2025 +5 Year Capital Plan with the Board noting that there is not much more to add but there are still some edits for TM and FD to make. TM encouraged the Board to look through it.

Review Updated DRAFT Annual Town Meeting Warrant

TM informed the Board that there are no updates, but drew the Board's attention to the Animal Control Bylaw Article noting that he assumes the Board is still amenable to putting it on the Warrant. TM also informed the Board that there will need to be an MBTA Zoning Warrant Article as a requirement of being in compliance with MBTA Zoning. TM informed the Board that the Town has received a grant to hire a consultant to put a proposed Zoning Bylaw together for this purpose. TM also encouraged the Board to think about splitting the meals tax 50/50 between OPEB and the Operating Budget.

Department Update

Finance Department

Finance Director Chelsea Stevens (FD), appeared before the Board and presented the Finance Department Update to the Board, [attached](#). The Board discussed the presentation and procedures of the Finance Department with FD. TM commented that it is very rare to have a Finance Director that is also the Town Accountant and Chief Procurement Officer, further noting that Chelsea is an All-Star and she does a great job and we are lucky to have her. All thanked Chelsea for the work she does.

Town Manager Report

TM informed the Board that last week TM met with a great bunch of middle school students and helped move 40 – 50 boxes of food and other items from the Middle School to the Sylvester School for the Food pantry, further noting that it was a great job by everyone at the Middle School for making that happen. TM also informed the Board of the following recent events:

The parapet atop Sylvester School has been repainted and it turned out great.

The Cemetery fence was power washed last week and it looks excellent. The Rail Trail Fence was installed. TM further commented that Selectman Delaney's comment regarding hiring a Town Planner has been well taken and ATM and TM are doing the best they can to get that position filled.

Select Board Forum

Vice Chair Nyman informed all that two long time Hanover residents, Judy Murray and Barbara Wilson who had recently passed away and asked that everyone to keep their families in our

thoughts and prayers especially heading into the holidays.

Selectman Tuzik inquired if there is an interest in starting the meeting ½ hour earlier.

The Board agreed that from now until January 29th the Board will have the meetings start at 6:30pm instead of 7:00pm.

The Chair informed all that the budget materials are available online at Hanover-ma.gov/budget.

The Chair also mentioned that she spoke with a great Girl Scout Group who had a lot of great questions and hopes they are encouraged to continue their community engagement.

The Chair in light of the bomb threat was called in to threaten the safety and security of the Jewish Community over in Hingham at the congregation Sha'aray Shalom, read the Town of Hanover's Statement on Community Inclusiveness to all, attached.

The Chair wished all a Happy Thanksgiving.

Adjourn

The meeting ended and adjourned at 9:16pm.