



SELECT BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 17, 2025, 2024
7:00 PM
ACTON TOWN HALL, ROOM 204
472 MAIN STREET

Present: Fran Arsenault, Dean Charter, Alissa Nicol, David Martin, Jim Snyder-Grant
Additional Attendees: Town Manager John Mangiaratti, Assistant Town Manager Thom Begin, Executive Assistant Lisa Tomyl

I. Regular Business

1. Resident Concerns

None

2. Chair Update/Town Manager Update/Members Minute

Ms. Arsenault commended the Economic Development Committee and Maura Haberman, Event Program Coordinator for doing a great job with the ribbon cutting ceremonies for new businesses in town. Mr. Begin noted the Recreation Department is rethinking summer camps to enable higher participation for kids K-6, and transitioning older kids in grades 7-8 to leadership roles such as CIT. Ms. Nicol provided an update from HIT, which contracts with outside treasurer who is retiring at the end of June who recommended a reimbursement of approximately \$500-800K, split between the school district and the town, leaving a balance just under \$250K which will be insured; the trust will vote on a specific amount at the end of the month. She also noted the Acton Water District is hosting their annual meeting in the Acton Memorial Library meeting room on March 19th at 6:00 PM; the AWD is suspending or truncating the flushing program due to other work being done, and noted several recent water main breaks. Mr. Charter noted that during the budget workshop he had requested a summary of bias incident report investigations from the DEI Director and would like an update on the report. Mr. Martin noted incidents are discussed at DEIC meetings and will follow up. He also announced that the assessment requests from the 2 school districts are on the small side, the ABRSD budget report is from budget cuts recently made, but the district announced that level services for next year would require a ~6% increase.

II. New/Special Business

3. Approve Traffic Calming Policy

Town Engineer QinRui Pang presented the proposed traffic calming policy. Ms. Pang shared examples of traffic calming measures, and explained that it does not involve installing regulatory signs. The process of requests for traffic calming measures is illustrated in a flow chart for the public. Ms. Pang introduced a pace car program that is a citizen-based traffic calming system.

Ms. Arsenault asked about Attachment B. Ms. Pang replied that it is the Neighborhood Petition.

Mr. Snyder-Grant asked how best to involve the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) in the process and suggested the TMG (traffic management group established by the proposed policy) might cc TAC. He also suggested to keep TAC involved and notified during the scoring of applications, pointing out that people who have traffic safety concerns contact the TAC first. Mr. Snyder-Grant also asked how sidewalk requests will relate to the sidewalk priority list, and what the cost of, and how the FY26 budget supports, traffic studies – Engineering is able to place traffic counters to collect the data, retrieving traffic accident reports, staff is able to handle in house, but if more data and study is needed they contract an outside agency.

Mr. Martin asked how the informal bike lanes will interact with the traffic study – Ms. Pang noted that it depends on the location and what the goals are.

Mr. Charter asked whether there is an effort to engage the Planning Board or Division to incorporate the illustrated traffic calming measures into zoning requirements for new construction – Ms. Pang noted most subdivisions are 4-10 houses and PCRCs don't meet threshold and the traffic calming policy would not apply. Mr. Charter noted newer subdivisions designs could encourage speeding – Ms. Pang would reach out to the Planning Division if any new larger developments are submitted to connect.

Ms. Nicol appreciates the creation of the policy and believes it will be helpful for residents. She suggested replacing "citizens" with "residents" in the document, and suggested noting that speed monitoring, responsive to resident concerns, will continue outside of the traffic calming policy. She also suggested some changes to the scoring table, and the addition of markets, convenience stores, and farm stands to the pedestrian generators.

Ms. Pang will adjust the language in the draft policy with the suggestions from Board members and will bring it back to a future meeting as a consent item.

4. Review Warrant and Vote on Recommendations for the Articles for the May 2025 Annual Town Meeting

Ms. Nicol moved, seconded by Mr. Martin, to recommend article 2 and approved 5-0-0

Mr. Martin moved, seconded by Mr. Charter, to recommend articles 4,5,13,17, and 24-29 and approved 5-0-0

Mr. Martin moved, seconded by Ms. Nicol, to recommend articles 6 and 19-23 inclusive and approved 5-0-0

Mr. Snyder-Grant moved, seconded by Mr. Martin, to recommend article 7 and approved 5-0-0

Mr. Martin moved, seconded by Mr. Snyder-Grant, to recommend article 8 and approved 4-0-0 (Nicol recused)

Ms. Nicol moved, seconded by Mr. Martin, to recommend article 9 and approved 5-0-0

Mr. Martin moved, seconded by Ms. Arsenault, to recommend article 32 and approved 4-1-0 (Charter)

Mr. Martin moved, seconded by Mr. Snyder-Grant, to recommend articles 34 and 35 and approved 5-0-0

5. Approve Plan to Mail Only a Postcard Notice of the Warrant for May 2025 Annual Town Meeting Instead of the Full Warrant Booklet

Mr. Mangiaratti presented to the Board a double-sided folded postcard option with the warrant articles listed and a QR code that will direct to the full warrant online instead of mailing the full warrant to every household, and explained the cost savings associated with this plan, noting that copies of the warrant will still be available in various locations. Mr. Charter voiced opposition to moving to a postcard version. Ms. Arsenault supported the postcard version as a more sustainable option. Mr. Charter noted the senior population relies on the full printed version. Mr. Snyder-Grant suggested adding a phone number or email so residents may request a warrant be mailed to them, technology minded residents may enjoy a QR code for access, and suggested having a PDF of warrants translated into 2 top other languages. Mr. Martin suggested having stacks of warrants available at all town buildings, and a link to the warrant 2 weeks before Town Meeting on the town website. Ms. Nicol doesn't feel the cost savings is substantial, and while having an option for a number or email to request a warrant be mailed and copies available in town buildings, the timing is too short. She suggested considering a change to a postcard mailing next year to allow for public input. Mr. Martin suggested adding a message to this year's warrant that the Select Board is considering this changing, and provide a way for voters to communicate their preferred option.

6. Approve Ballot Questions for the April 29, 2025 Annual Town Election

Mr. Mangiaratti noted there are 2 ballot questions to consider, and the ballots must go to print by March 26th. One is a charter change from a previous town meeting and the debt exclusion vote for the Public Works building.

Mr. Charter and Ms. Nicol suggested placing the debt exclusion question first. Mr. Snyder-Grant and Ms. Arsenault preferred to leave the questions in order as listed.

Ms. Nicol moved, Mr. Charter seconded, to place the following questions on the ballot for Acton voters at a duly-called annual election to take place on April 29, 2025

Question 1 – Shall the Town vote to amend Section 8-3 of the Charter of the Town of Acton and Chapter 43B of the Massachusetts General Laws, to amend Section 4-2 of the Town Charter by changing the Number of Members column for the Historic District Commission from six (6) to seven (7), as voted under Article 19 of the Annual Town Meeting held May 6, 2024?

Question 2 – Shall the Town of Acton be allowed to exempt from the provisions of proposition two and one-half, so called, the amounts required to pay for the bonds issued in order to pay for the designing, constructing, equipping and furnishing a new public works facility to be located at 14 Forest Road, including all other costs incidental and related thereto?

**subject to Town Counsel review (amendment), and rescinded (amendment)
4-0-1 (Snyder-Grant)**

Select Board to meet in emergency meeting as needed if further discussion and vote is required.

7. Approve Letter of Support for Safe Communities Act Letter of Support for Safe Communities Act

Mr. Charter voiced his concern and non-support for the letter. Mr. Martin noted that the federal government cannot deport without due process and that the federal government has not been following by detaining and deporting people. Mr. Snyder-Grant supports the act state-wide. Ms. Nicol noted the Safe Communities Act has been filed for many years and local law enforcement are not authorized to enforce federal civil immigration laws. This letter does not impact Acton's policies and practices, it simply notes Acton's support for keeping communities safe.

Melissa Brown 399 Great Road Unit 1 – supports the Safe Communities Act
Stella Ko – appreciates the Select Board's support for the Safe Communities Act
Terra, West Acton – supports sending the letter

Ms. Nicol proposed to remove Dean's name from the letter. **Ms. Nicol moved, seconded by Mr. Snyder-Grant to approve a letter of support for the Safe Communities Act as edited and approved 4-1-0 (Charter)**

8. Discuss and Approve Letter of Support for Proposed Legislation Related to Permanently Allowing Remote and Hybrid Meetings

Mr. Begin noted the house approved the bill to extend the current regulations to March 31, 2027. The letter is to support state legislators' approval of a permanent remote and hybrid meeting option. Ms. Nicol suggested changing all instances of "I" to "we". Mr. Charter voiced concern about some boards and committees not having the electronic capability to participate remotely. Mr. Martin suggests making edits to the document and placing it on consent at a future meeting.

9. Update on DPW Building Project

Mr. Charter noted the return of reconciled estimates is expected shortly, a draft study for geothermal wells and bringing in additional utilities, good bedrock can be drilled into, and is continuing to make presentations at various Boards and Committees. Ms. Nicol asked what review is being done, or should be done, on potential impact of drilling wells near the capped unlined landfill and the relationship to the groundwater. Mr. Charter doesn't anticipate any impact on groundwater as the wells are only transferring energy. Mr. Martin noted the wells will need Board or Health approval, are not extracting anything but energy, and there is no interaction of fluid in the well and groundwater.

10. Discuss Recommendations to Reach Consensus on Acton Leadership Group Plan

Mr. Martin reported the FinCom voted at their most recent meeting to support the town budget and the plan consensus is supported. He noted that remaining issues are in FY27 and beyond, and the ALG charge is to recommend the budgets for the next fiscal year and plan for subsequent years. There was some talk at the meeting about the 6.33% increase request from the school district in all out years, but the school district has not confirmed, so he recommends not changing any out years. In the past couple of years, the out years were equal for both entities. The board could request an increase for the town be placed on the plan for the next FY.

Mr. Charter noted the percentage presented was a statement, and not backed by data, and that this increase would translate to a \$1200 tax impact per household. He suggested adding a comparable figure for the town.

Mr. Mangiaratti clarified that the figure estimated the revenue needed and not a tax increase; raising revenue over 3% is a decision that requires a lot of process. He requested direction from the board about calculating expected service cost increases for future years.

Ms. Nicol is opposed to increasing the numbers for the out years; for now they are conceptual and when printed in the warrant as part of the ALG plan, there is an impact on voter confidence. She suggested changing the numbers will undermine the effort to restructure district operations, and doesn't want to ask town staff to spend time on the work when so much will change between now and then; it won't provide accurate information. The schools are starting a process to consider changing the way that services will be provided.

Mr. Charter recommended waiting for the school to complete the assessment study before changing the out years.

Mr. Snyder-Grant noted that more data is needed before making adjustments, and information should be presented to ALG, but doesn't belong in the spreadsheet.

Mr. Martin suggested not coming up with a percentage for the out years beyond FY27, and should document the town's major budget drivers as the school district has done.

Mr. Mangiaratti noted the cost drivers have been present for several years, and they are healthcare and pensions, could represent a potential 5% increase, and that the consensus reaching is an important process.

Members directed the Town Manager to determine a realistic estimate for FY27.

11. Discuss FY2026 Budget Recommendation

Mr. Mangiaratti noted the Board approved the recommended budget which was transmitted to the FinCom last week, who have shown support for the proposed budget.

12. Approve Proposed Title VI Program that is Required for Federal Transportation Funding

Mr. Mangiaratti noted it as a complex document required for federal funding, after an audit the Town needs to adopt this program, and it must be renewed every 3 years. Mr. Charter noted the importance of providing equitable transportation and not neglecting other populations.

Ms. Nicol moved, seconded by Mr. Charter, that the Select Board approve the attached Title VI Program. This approval will allow the Town of Acton to continue receiving federal transportation funding and remain in compliance with federal civil rights requirements and approved 5-0-0

13. Discuss Town Manager Review Process

Mr. Mangiaratti pointed out a document in the packet outlining the process. Mr. Snyder-Grant noted that a decision needs to be made about who collects each review and combines it into a single document with identifying factors redacted from each submission. Mr. Snyder-Grant explained the review document created by Human Resources Director that allows each member to write their reviews, removes each member's name on the documents before releasing to the public, and appreciated the Town Manager adding his self review has made the process much easier. Mr. Charter noted a past suggestion to allow comments from the public and town staff, and those should be emailed to the Select Board directly. Mr. Martin suggested contacting a single member rather than the whole board. Ms. Nicol requested the review period dates - March 1 2024 - February 28 2025.

14. Discuss Use of Town Seal

Mr. Mangiaratti noted the use of an original town seal at the last meeting and is seeking feedback on continued use, noting the updated town seal was not officially approved. The seal should more accurately depict the town center monument, and the 1890s town seal is a more historic representation. Members expressed support for continued use on documents, but noted a process will have to be put in place should there be consideration for future expanded use on town vehicles or street signs. Mr. Charter suggested using the monochromatic original for any historic markers.

IV. Consent Items

Mr. Snyder-Grant held consent item 16. Mr. Martin held consent item 21. Mr. Martin moved, seconded by Ms. Nicol, to approve consent items 15, 17-20 inclusive and approved 5-0-0. Mr. Martin moved, seconded by Mr. Snyder-Grant, to accept a donation of \$50,000, and approve the Memorandum of Understanding substantially as written in the packet and approved 5-0-0. Mr. Martin moved, seconded by Ms. Nicol, to approve the Adopt-a-Visibility Site application from Iron Work Farm as conditioned from the DPW Director as listed in the packet and approved 5-0-0.

Ms. Nicol moved, seconded by Mr. Martin, to adjourn and approved unanimously 5-0-0. Meeting adjourned at 11:20 PM.

Documents Used

- March 17, 2025 Agenda
- Draft Traffic Calming Policy
- Draft Town Meeting Warrant

- MAPC Letter of Support Template
- Title VI Program
- Town Manager Review Documents
- Acton Town Seal
- Meeting Minutes, February 28, 2025
- MOU with Sudbury Valley Trustees
- Memorandum of Agreement with Acton-Boxborough Regional School District
- Donation Memos from Recreation Department
 - P Sutherland Realty/Keller Williams Realty Boston
 - Revolution Community Yoga & Fitness
 - Oak Hill Mulch Company
 - Emerson Health
 - Roche Bros
- One Day Malt and Wine License, St. Elizabeth of Hungary
- One Day Malt and Wine License, Acton 250 Committee
- Adopt-A-Visibility Site Application, Iron Work Farm