

**Town of Needham
Select Board
Minutes for Tuesday, November 14, 2023
Select Board's Chamber
and
Via ZOOM
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89068374046>**

6:01 p.m. Call to Order:

A meeting of the Select Board was convened by Chair Marianne Cooley. Those present were Vice Chair Kevin Keane, Cathy Dowd, Heidi Frail, and Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick. Marcus Nelson was present beginning at approximately 7:30 p.m. David Davison, DTM/Finance, Katie King, DTM/Operations, and Susan Metropol, Recording Secretary, were also in attendance.

6:01 p.m. Public Comment Period:

Joe Matthews, 31 Rosemary Street, addressed the Select Board regarding the by-laws for new construction in Single Residence B-Zoning. Mr. Matthews expressed that the current by-laws are not effective at meeting their stated objectives. Since July, he has conducted further research into the by-laws. At the time the by-laws were adopted, the proponents of the changes said that the zoning by-laws amendments addressed concerns regarding the loss of existing smaller homes and neighborhood character as a result of this conversion process. Mr. Matthews added that the Planning Board responded that they would aim to discuss this at their October 2025 Town Meeting. Mr. Matthew emphasized the need to address this more urgently than this current timeline. He also noted that other concerned residents also support this effort.

6:03 p.m. Public Hearing: Eversource Grant of Location – 920 South Street:
Presenter: Joanne Callender, Eversource Representative

Joanne Callender presented that Eversource is seeking a permit to provide service to two new homes in this location. Ms. Fitzpatrick confirmed that all information is in order. No public comment. Mr. Keane asked a clarifying question to confirm whether the minimum clearance will be 18 inches or 18 feet. Ms. Lustig confirmed 18 inches. Ms. Frail asked if this is two separate single-family dwellings on one lot. Ms. Callender responded that this permit is for two separate dwellings with a new private way known as River Run Road. Ms. Cooley added that there will be another process for the creation of that road. Ms. Lustig confirmed this conduit is underground, which also clarified the question of 18 inches as opposed to 18 feet.

Motion by Ms. Frail that the Select Board approve and sign a petition from Eversource Energy to install approximately 45 feet of conduit in South Street. Second: Ms. Dowd. Unanimously approved 4-0.

6:08 p.m. Public Hearing: Eversource Grant of Location – 52 La Salle Road:
Presenter: Joanne Callender, Eversource Representative

Joanne Callender presented that Eversource is seeking a permit to provide service to the new home at 52 La Salle Road. Ms. Fitzpatrick confirmed that all information is in order. No public comment.

Motion by Ms. Dowd that the Select Board approve and sign a petition from Eversource Energy to install approximately 8 feet of conduit in La Salle Road. Second: Ms. Frail. Unanimously approved 4-0.

6:10 p.m. Public Hearing: RTS Rate Setting:
Presenters: Solid Waste Disposal & Recycling Advisory Committee, David Davison, Deputy Town Manager/Director of Operations, Carys Lustig, Director of Public Works, Cecilia Simchak, Assistant Director of Finance, Matthew DeMarrais, Superintendent of the Recycling & Solid Waste Division

Ms. Cooley reminded the Board that the last presentation was earlier this year in August. DPW Director Carys Lustig reviewed the process for the current RTS fees. Ms. Lustig reported that it has been over ten years since there has been a fee increase for the commercial tipping rate. In 2014, the Town renegotiated the 20-year contract spanning from 2008-2028 with other consortium partners, which lowered the Town's tipping fee by about 15%. The current tipping fee is \$77.78, the first time it has exceeded the 2015 rate. In 2019, Ms. Lustig reported that DPW started seeing increases in trash processing fees. In 2021, there was a significant increase in commercial use following a private facility in Dedham closing and the RTS became a regional center for commercial operations.

Following a question from Ms. Cooley about where commercial operators are coming from, discussion ensued about how it is difficult to track where material is coming from. Trash companies come from multiple towns with a range of waste including residential municipal solid waste (MSW), commercial trash, construction waste, and waste from junk haulers.

Ms. Lustig said there is pressure on the facility that must be alleviated either by increasing fees for services or discouraging people from using the facility, taking into consideration that companies factor in both tipping fee and gas. Ms. Lustig added that DPW anticipates a significant increase in the cost of hauling MSW in the near future due to the Town's climate goals and due to the fact that no new incinerators or landfills are being opened in the area.

Ms. Lustig outlined the primary mission of the RTS, which is serving the community and providing other services to commercial entities at a fair market rate. Following cost structure analysis, this means that the DPW is seeking to have more of a differential between the commercial and residential rates. Three options have been provided for consideration to the Solid Waste Recycling Advisory Committee:

- Option 1: raising all rates to \$200
- Option 2: phase in approach with 10% increase over 6 months
- Option 3: tiered rate starting at \$160 for Needham pickup and \$180 for all others and then increasing to \$180 and \$220 respectively

Rate structures will be reevaluated each spring. After reviewing revenue estimates with options update, the Committee unanimously endorsed Option 3.

Ms. Frail praised the analysis and asked about what characterized a hauler as a Needham hauler. Ms. Lustig responded that the haulers are required to register with the Board of Health and list the clients that they have. Discussion ensued about the type of waste pick up that occurs across Needham residentially and whether this waste is brought to the RTS. Mr. Keane asked if commercial is revenue-making. Ms. Lustig said a more intensive study is necessary.

Ms. Cooley asked what other communities are involved in the renegotiation of the contract. Ms. Lustig responded the consortium includes Walpole, Dedham, Newton, Worcester, Shrewsbury, Millbury, and others, totaling 27 communities. Ms. Frail asked if this will be policed in some way. Mr. DeMarrais responded that it is possible to examine what is in each truck. Companies do not want to jeopardize their relationship with the RTS. Ms. Dowd asked a clarifying question regarding the timeline for the cost increase. Ms. Lustig responded that cost assessments will occur on July 1 annually.

Ms. Cooley opened for public comment. No comments were heard. The vote is scheduled for the Select Board Meeting on November 28. The Select Board will review public comments until then.

6:42 p.m. Appointments and Consent Agenda:
Motion by Mr. Keane that the Select Board vote to approve the Appointments and Consent Agenda as presented.
Second: Ms. Frail. Unanimously approved 4-0.

APPOINTMENT CALENDAR

1.	Peter Kuck	Water and Sewer Rate Structure Committee Term Exp: 6/30/2025
2.	Theodora Eaton	Needham Branding and Town Seal Committee Term Exp: 6/30/2024

CONSENT AGENDA

1.	Approve a request from Brad Fernandes, Needham Running Club, to hold the road event “New Year’s Day 5k” in Needham. The event is scheduled for Monday, January 1, 2024, at 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. The event and route have been approved by the following departments: Fire, Police, and Public Works.
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2.	Approve the following donation to the Town of Needham from the Needham Community Theatre: approximately \$600 of lumber for the express purpose of installing a floor on a portion of the first level of the Ridge Hill Reservation barn.
3.	Accept the following donation to the Needham Health Division: \$25 from Claire Blum to the Needham Domestic Violence Action Committee (DVAC)
4.	Approve open session minutes of October 10, 2023 and October 24, 2023.
5.	Approve and sign the integrated collective bargaining agreement for the Needham Fire Union Local 1706 Units A & C, approved by the May 2023 Special Town Meeting.
6.	Approve two one-day license suspensions penalty for an alcohol compliance check failure and a violation of the Town of Needham Regulations for the Sale of Alcoholic Beverages (failure to use ID scanner) on September 20, 2023 by Innovative Distributing Concepts, LLCd/b/a Bin Ends to be served on January 1 & 2, 2024.
7.	Ratify and approve, pursuant to M.G.L. c.143, §7, the determination that the residential structure located at 126 Prince Street was rendered unsafe by gas explosion on November 4, 2023, and that it was necessary for said structure to be taken down immediately and a fence put up for the protection of passers-by.
8.	Approve a Common Victualler's License and an Entertainment License for Metrowest Dining LLC d/b/a The Common Room.
9.	Authorize free 2-hour meter parking during the dates of November 24, 2023 - January 1, 2024.

NOTICE OF APPROVED ONE-DAY SPECIAL ALCOHOL LICENSES

Hosting Organization	Event Title	Location	Event Date
Volante Farms	Wine Tasting	Volante Farms Greenhouse, 292 Forest Street	11/4/23
Temple Beth Shalom	Community Dinner	Temple Beth Shalom, 670 Highland Avenue	11/17/23

6:43 p.m. Application for a Change of Manager for an All-Alcohol License – Needham Lending Company, LLC d/b/a Sheraton Boston Needham Hotel
Presenter: Brian McGrath, Proposed Manager of Record

Ms. Cooley introduced Brian McGrath, Proposed Manager of Record at the Sheraton Boston Needham Hotel. Mr. McGrath noted that he has worked in the hospitality business since he was 13 years old, most recently with Stepstone Hospitality, which manages the Sheraton Needham Hotel. He served most recently as the Regional VP of Operations overseeing 10 hotels across the country and has recently taken over as Managing Director. He also noted that he has held multiple General Manager positions over the past 30 years.

Ms. Cooley emphasized the importance of granting an alcohol license in the Town and noted that several changes have been made to alcohol license requirements. Mr. McGrath noted that all servers, catering team members, and sales team members are TIPS certified.

Ms. Frail raised the issue of how he will handle situations where alcohol is involved with guests at the hotel. Mr. McGrath acknowledged the different types of spaces in a hotel and that while some spaces in the hotel are public, they are still under the alcohol license. He noted that he would escort an individual with alcohol back to their guest room.

Motion by Ms. Dowd that the Select Board, as Liquor Licensing Authority, approve and sign an application for a Change of Manager to Brian McGrath for Sheraton Boston Needham Hotel, 100 Cabot Street, Needham and to forward this application to the ABCC for approval.

Second: Mr. Keane. Unanimously approved 4-0.

6:50 p.m. Healthy Aging Assessment and Community Health Assessment Presentation:
Presenters: Julie McCarthy, Epidemiologist/Data Analyst, Tiffany Benoit, Assistant Director of Public Health, Timothy McDonald, Director of Health and Human Services

Tiffany Benoit, Assistant Director of Public Health, introduced Julie McCarthy, Epidemiologist and Data Analyst, to report on the Healthy Aging Assessment and Community Health Assessment.

Healthy Aging Assessment

The Healthy Aging Assessment was conducted in 2022 (previously conducted in 2016) and collected both qualitative and quantitative data via a survey, focus groups, and key informant interviews covering various domains including demographics, living situations, health care, and food access, among others. This survey included residents age 60+ years. There were 738 respondents. Important takeaways from the data included:

- Strengths of aging in Needham: Library, Center at the Heights; meal delivery; transportation services; vaccination services; collaboration and commitment
- Challenges to aging in Needham: housing, cost of living, food security, transportation and driving, community and isolation, communication technology

Community Health Assessment

The Community Health Assessment (CHA) was compiled using the Healthy Aging Assessment and health-related data from other sources including the United States Census Bureau, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and the Metrowest Health Foundation. The CHA uses the following priority areas to analyze health data: Social Determinants of Health, Equitable Access to Care, Mental Health and Substance Use, and Complex and Chronic Conditions. Income,

housing, transportation, food access and food security, mental health, disability, and chronic diseases were common themes of concern. Ms. McCarthy presented that priority areas for the Department of Public Health are access to transportation resources, cost of living, mental health and substance use, and physical health status. The next step is the development of a Community Health Improvement Plan, which the Department hopes to link to the Division's 5-year strategic plan in alignment with the Board of Health's goals as well.

Ms. Fitzpatrick asked about youth behavior, specifically cigarette smoking. Ms. Benoit responded that decreasing rates of vaping may be increasing other risky behaviors.

Ms. Frail asked about how transportation is listed as both a strength and challenge in the feedback. Ms. McCarthy explained that those who use transportation had positive feedback, however not enough people may use it. The issue of transportation into Boston for doctor's appointments was a particular concern. Further discussion ensued about potential transportation options that Ms. Benoit explained will be further explored in the Community Health Improvement Plan.

Ms. Cooley expressed her appreciation for this work. She asked the presenters what the priority items are. Tim McDonald noted that the priority is to make several public health positions permanent.

7:27 p.m.

Needham Arts and Cultural Action Plan:

Presenters: Abbey Judd, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), Archana Menon, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), Charly Nanda, Needham Council for Arts and Culture, Amy Haelsen, Director of Communications and Community Engagement

Amy Haelsen introduced the presenters to discuss the Needham Arts and Cultural Action Plan. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council has been working with the Needham Council for Arts and Culture to develop an action plan.

Abbey Judd outlined the cultural planning process occurring over the last year, with the purpose being to deliver policy and programmatic recommendations the Town and partners can pursue to strengthen and grow arts and cultural opportunities in Needham, leading to a thriving arts and cultural life for all. Efforts from November 2022 to November 2023 included interviews, a cultural asset inventory, drafting of a vision statement, surveys, focus groups, and drafting goals, strategies, and actions. Key values of arts and culture include equity, accessibility, connection, and collaboration.

Archana Menon reported on the data collected, noting that important cultural assets include performance spaces, arts and cultural events, cinema or live theater spaces, public art, and youth and family programming/classes. Ms. Menon reported that Needham residents cited entertainment, well-being, supporting local artists, and

connection to the community as the top reasons why they participate in arts and culture.

Ms. Judd outlined the goals for the Needham Arts and Cultural Action Plan to centralize Needham's arts and cultural resources, to strengthen Needham's arts and cultural capacity and infrastructure, to support Needham's cultural equity initiatives, and to improve Needham's quality of life through art and culture. Ms. Judd emphasized that these goals must also include a focus on administration and coordination, staff to implement action plans, increases in funding, improving accessibility to arts and cultural facilities, and curating programming that reflects the diversity of Needham. Further discussion ensued about the top actions, including collaborating with schools, facilitating conversations around new performing arts facilities, drafting a job description for an arts and culture administration, and collaborating with the Needham Historical Center & Museum.

Ms. Dowd expressed her enthusiasm for this and asked what other communities have done that has had the most impact. Ms. Judd responded that a helpful resource is to create an ongoing inventory of arts and cultural assets. Mr. Keane asked about whether staff members would be grant-funded. Ms. Judd responded that she will follow-up on this.

Discussion ensued on community support of arts and cultural appreciation through art. All Select Board Members praised the action plan and emphasized the importance of empowering the cultures of all those who constitute the Town.

8:07 p.m. Town Manager:

ARPA Update

Ms. Fitzpatrick presented the regular update on ARPA spending, commitments, grants, and projects. The American Rescue Plan Act provided Needham with \$9.199 million from both the State and County. All funds are now available to the Town.

- Ventilation: allocated \$369,000 to the library chiller to be delivered and installed in March/April 2024
- Technology: continued work on upgrades to the Town's wireless network to allow for participation in hybrid meetings
- Economic Development: mural on West Street completed; funds remain, and ideas are circulating
- Water Sewer Drain: \$396,000 allocated for replacement of the sluice gate at Rosemary Pond, currently out to bid and any savings will be reported back to the Select Board and potentially be put towards the planned Hydrology Report
- Reservoir: completed funding of the best management practice related to McLeod Field stormwater management, currently completing design of reservoir project, construction likely to begin summer 2024

- Sewer Main: \$3.4 million is a portion of the 128 Sewer Interceptor from Cheney Street to Great Plain Avenue, which is a relining project and not a pipe replacement
- Walker Pond Phase 2: chemical treatment of the pond anticipated to occur in summer 2024

Ms. Fitzpatrick noted that the State money has to be used by December 31, 2024. The County money can be used until 2026 for construction if there is a contract in place.

Town Manager Report

Ms. Fitzpatrick reported that the Eversource team has responded to Prince Street. Eversource has been in every home on Prince Street and the neighborhood has been accommodating and helpful. Eversource is assisting the homeowner and renter who were involved. There are three services Eversource is still trying to convert on Prince Street; this work will begin on November 15.

8:19 p.m.

Board Discussion:

Indigenous People's Day:

Ms. Fitzpatrick introduced the item of Indigenous People's Day. She reported that the Select Board adopted a goal to hold a public hearing and determine if the Town will change Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day. Staff have researched recent decisions on other local communities and options for the Board's consideration.

Myles Tucker, Support Services Manager, reported findings from an assessment of 20 peer communities. Some communities have changed Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day (such as Wellesley and Newton), and others have chosen to keep Columbus Day (such as Dedham). The State currently recognizes Columbus Day; however, this is an active debate in the General Court. Some communities have chosen to celebrate both on the same day (such as Westwood); some have chosen to recognize Indigenous People's Day as well as Italian American Heritage Month (such as Salem). Ms. Fitzpatrick noted the groups to be notified of the upcoming hearing. Mr. Tucker also noted that this change would only apply to the Select Board and the Town Government areas that fall under the Select Board's jurisdiction and that the schools have already made the change to Indigenous People's Day. Ms. Cooley asked if the Board would like to open this for public hearing. Support from Mr. Keane, Ms. Dowd, Ms. Frail, and Mr. Nelson.

A public hearing will be noticed for November 28, 2023.

Climate Action Plan:

Ms. Cooley introduced a draft letter from the Select Board to be included in the Climate Action Plan. It is important that all Board members review the draft and offer any edits at the moment. Ms. Frail raised the resolution regarding a climate emergency. Ms. Cooley responded that this is a larger issue to be discussed at a

future meeting. Ms. Cooley noted language to be edited in paragraph 4. Ms. Fitzpatrick made this note. Ms. Cooley concluded that this letter, given edits, will be included in the Climate Action Plan.

Motion by Mr. Keane that the Select Board vote to approve the draft introductory letter for inclusion in the Climate Action Plan.

Second: Ms. Frail. Unanimously 5-0.

Committee Reports:

Ms. Frail reported on the recent HONE meeting that included an impressive turnout with 200 attendees online and about 150 attendees in person. Consultants did a great job facilitating the presentation. Ms. Frail thanked community members for their great questions. HONE has a public meeting (without public comment) on November 15, at which Committee members will discuss feedback. A recording of the event is available on The Needham Channel website, and other materials from the meeting will be available on the Town website. Ms. Frail noted that comments are still welcome at planning@needhamma.gov. The next event will be held on January 18, 2024, with an opportunity for public comment.

Ms. Dowd reported on the inaugural meeting of Town Financed Community Housing Oversight Committee. This committee will oversee the use of funds to rebuild the Needham Housing Authority. Ms. Cooley added that the Housing Authority is planning a public hearing for December 6 on the Housing Authority Plan.

Ms. Dowd also reported on her attendance at the Broadmeadow Brownies meeting to earn their democracy badge on Sunday. Ms. Dowd reported their ideas back to the Select Board including the addition of more trash cans, recycling bins, and composting options to outside areas as well as more bathrooms at sports fields and parks; and the installation of a crosswalk and traffic light to cross to Broadmeadow School.

Ms. Cooley reported on the fall meeting of the Minuteman Study Committee. The new school has been open for four years. The current senior class has eight students from Needham, and the freshman class has seventeen students from Needham. Needham will be allocated sixteen or seventeen places next year if we have a similar number of interested students. The school is almost close to capacity.

Mr. Keane reported on additional flood meetings on Chestnut Street. He noted the topography of Chestnut Street and how this plays a role in the result of heavy stormwater. There is potential for a Stormwater Working Group.

Mr. Keane also reported on a meeting of the Branding and Town Seal Committee. The committee will meet again in December.

Ms. Fitzpatrick highlighted the work of the Needham Community Theatre in the Ridge Hill Reservation Barn following the installation of lumber to stabilize the first floor. Ms. Fitzpatrick highlighted this as a way that the Town supports the arts across Needham.

8:44 p.m.

Adjourn:

Motion by Mr. Nelson that the Select Board vote to adjourn the Select Board meeting of Tuesday, November 14, 2023.

Second: Ms. Frail. Unanimously approved 5-0.

A list of all documents used at this Select Board meeting is available at:

<http://www.needhamma.gov/Archive.aspx?AMID=99&Type=&ADID>

The next Select Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 28, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.