Town of Needham
Select Board
Regular Meeting
Minutes for Tuesday, March 25, 2025
Select Board Chambers and
Via Zoom
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82601013229

6:00 p.m. Call to Order:

A Regular Meeting of the Select Board was convened by Chair Kevin Keane. Those present were Vice Chair Heidi Frail, Marianne Cooley, Cathy Dowd, Joshua Levy, and Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick. Katie King, Deputy Town Manager, and David Davison, Deputy Town Manager/Director of Finance, were also in attendance.

6:01 p.m. Public Comment Period: None at this time

6:01 p.m. Babson College Scholarships
Presenter: Cathy Dowd, Select Board Clerk

Ms. Frail recused herself from this item.

Ms. Dowd explained that the Select Board awards scholarships to Needham residents and alumni of Needham High School from a fund made available to the Town by Babson College. There are currently seven students proposed to receive scholarships.

Motion by Ms. Dowd that the Select Board votes to award the Town of Needham Babson Scholarships to the following applicants:

1. **Alberto Colon* – Rising Senior, Renewal Recipient**
2. **Isabella Farese – Admitted Freshman**
3. **Danielle Friedline* – Rising Senior, Renewal Recipient**
4. **Rebecca Hwang – Admitted Freshman**
5. **Mark Khudisman – Rising Sophomore, Renewal Recipient**
6. **Henry London – Part-Time Graduate Student, Babson Alumnus**
7. **Isabella Reidy – Admitted Freshman**

***Conditional Pending Application Receipt by Babson**

Second: Ms. Cooley. Unanimously approved 4-0.

Ms. Frail rejoined the meeting seat.

6:03 p.m. Town Manager:

- Non-Essential Outdoor Water Use Restriction

Ms. Fitzpatrick explained that the recommendation is still to delegate the authority to declare or rescind an emergency non-essential water use restriction as set forth in the General Bylaws 2.2.5.5.2 to the Town Manager in accordance with the Town's Water Management Act registration.

Motion by Ms. Dowd that the Select Board delegate the authority to declare or rescind an emergency non-essential water use restriction as set forth in the General Bylaws 2.2.5.5.2 to the Town Manager in accordance with the Town's Water Management Act registration. The Town's compliance with the conditions of the registration will include all exemptions as allowed under the regulation including:

- **irrigation of public parks and recreation fields outside the hours of 9 AM to 5 PM;**
- **irrigation to establish replanted or resodded lawn or plantings during the months of May and September;**
- **irrigation of newly planted lawns (seeded or sodded) in the current calendar year for homes or businesses newly constructed in the previous twelve months; and**
- **filling of privately owned outdoor pools.**

Discussion:
In response to a question from Ms. Cooley, Ms. Fitzpatrick explained that this information would be released to the public using the Town website's active notification feature, the Town newsletter, posting on the website and social media, and alerting media.

Mr. Levy stated that he does not see a reason to change the process that is currently in place and has been working for some time.

Mr. Keane stated that he would have liked the Board to be able to hold a Zoom meeting in order to make these calls during times of drought, but that does not seem to be an option. He is torn on this item.

Second: Ms. Frail. Approved 4-1, with Mr. Levy voting no.

- Close May 12, 2025 Special Town Meeting Warrant

The Board reviewed the items on the Special Town Meeting Warrant. Ms. Dowd asked to keep the black plastic ban item on the Warrant. There is broad public support for this Article. The weight of evidence is in favor of this ban. Mr. Levy agreed that it is important to bring items that the Board supports to Town Meeting but if the Board is split on a measure, it is better to wait and have further discussion. The FDA regulates recycled plastics. He expressed concern with making more stringent rules than these. He further noted his discomfort with enforcement of some of the items within the Skip the Stuff Article. Ms. Cooley stated that there are items with microplastics, but it is not the Board's issue to overregulate those. She stated that black plastic is not currently recyclable, but there is likely technology coming along to allow this. She further opined that Skip the Stuff is a commonsense issue that the Board should not regulate. Ms. Frail suggested a compromise that the Board include the black plastic ban as a goal and ask that the Commonwealth should take it on. The Board agreed that this should be placed on its goal list.

Motion by Ms. Frail to vote to include the article entitled Amend General By-Laws – Plastic Food And Beverage Serviceware And Single-Use Items in the Special Town Meeting Warrant.
Second: Ms. Dowd. Approved 3-2, with Mr. Levy and Ms. Cooley against.

Motion by Mr. Levy to vote to not include the article entitled Amend General By-Laws – Black Plastic Kitchenware in the Special Town Meeting Warrant.
Second: Ms. Cooley. Failed 2-3, with Ms. Dowd, Mr. Keane, and Ms. Frail against.

Motion by Mr. Levy to close the Warrant for the May 12, 2025 Special Town Meeting, subject to minor technical corrections to be made by the Town Manager, Town Counsel and Bond Counsel.
Second: Ms. Frail. Unanimously approved 5-0.

- 2025 Annual Town Meeting Warrant Update

The Board reviewed updates to the 2025 Annual Town Meeting Warrant. Ms. Cooley stated that the Quiet Zone Committee will meet tomorrow, and it seems that the Quiet Zone item will cost more than what is currently within the budget. The Committee will discuss how to proceed. She suggested removing Article 35 on this topic at this time, with the intention to possibly bring it back in the fall.

Motion by Ms. Cooley to authorize the Town Manager to remove Article 35: Appropriate for Quiet Zone Construction from the 2025 Annual Town Meeting Warrant, if the Quiet Zone Committee so votes.
Second: Ms. Dowd. Unanimously approved 5-0.

Motion by Ms. Dowd to vote to approve the final 2025 Annual Town Meeting Warrant, subject to technical corrections to be made by the Town Manager, Town Counsel, and/or Bond Counsel.
Second: Ms. Frail. Unanimously approved 5-0.

6:37 p.m. Consent Agenda:

Motion by Ms. Cooley that the Board vote to approve the Appointment Calendar and Consent Agenda.
Second: Ms. Dowd. Unanimously approved 5-0.

CONSENT AGENDA

1.	Approve Open Session Minutes of February 25, 2025, and Executive Session Minutes of March 11, 2025
2.	Approve the revised Contributory Insurance Rules & Regulations Policy (SB-PERS-003).
3.	Approve a request from Ryan Marshall, Pastor of Highrock Church, to hold the road event "The Jog for Joy 5K" in Needham. The event is scheduled for Saturday, May 10th, 2025, starting at 8:00 a.m. The event and route have been approved by the following departments: Fire, Police, and Public Works.
4.	Accept the following donation made to the Needham Free Public Library: • $200 from Robert J. Onofrey
5.	Sign the Warrant for the 2025 Annual Town Election to be held on Tuesday, April 8, 2025

NOTICE OF APPROVED BLOCK PARTIES

Name	Address	Party Location	Date	Time	Rain Date
Evan Judd	30 Washburn Avenue	Washburn Ave between Great Plain Avenue and Nehoiden	5/10/2025	3pm-7pm	5/11/25
Jennifer Bannon	61 Jarvis Circle	Corner of Nardone & Jarvis Circle	9/6/2025	3pm-9pm	9/7/25

6:38 p.m. Town Manager Search Process Introduction:
Presenter: Bernie Lynch, Community Paradigm Associates

Bernie Lynch, Community Paradigm Associates, explained that the Screening Committee appointed by the Board reviewed each resume received and identified three finalists to bring before the Board.

6:42 p.m. Town Manager Interviews:
Presenter: Bernie Lynch, Community Paradigm Associates

The Board first interviewed candidate Benjamin Branyan. There was discussion regarding Mr. Branyan's leadership style. He stated that his style is servant and partnership leadership, in that his position is to serve the Town and staff. He stated that he would build relationships with those in Town through conversations. There was discussion regarding Needham being a smaller community with a smaller budget than Greenwich, where Mr. Branyan is coming from. Mr. Branyan stated that he will pivot accordingly, as he has worked in communities of a variety of sizes. Mr. Branyan reviewed his financial philosophy. He stated that he loves the financial aspect of this job. The budget needs to have an anchor point, and Needham's seems to be the Select Board's goals. Budgets start from the department level and he seeks to touch base with all decision makers involved. Regarding debt burden, Mr. Branyan stated that there is always flexibility in this, but it depends upon how much of this the community wants to tolerate. There was discussion regarding affordable housing. Mr. Branyan stated that he believes Connecticut is a few years behind Massachusetts. Greenwich has tried to set up a trust fund for economic incentives for affordable housing. To motivate employees and encourage morale, Mr. Branyan stated that he sits and speaks directly with staff. He has been exposed to many different types of unions and has experience with collective bargaining. Greenwich uses a professional negotiator to work through the process, but he sits at the table for the contract process. In terms of staff conflicts, they should be handled accordingly, as they arise, and with a level of empathy. Regarding a relationship with the Select Board, Mr. Branyan stated that this involves constant communication. The Board sets the policy and direction, and it is then his job to implement it. If he was chosen for the position, Mr. Branyan stated that he would use the first few months as a listening tour and would continue to read up on the State's statutes. He is interested in community engagement and would work to talk with the various civic organizations.

Mr. Branyan asked how the Board measures success for the Town Manager position. Mr. Keane stated that success is when projects get done and initiatives move forward. Ms. Frail stated that there are a number of changes potentially coming forward, and she asked Mr. Branyan's philosophy for dealing with change. Mr. Branyan stated that his philosophy is to trust and work within the process. Change is a constant. Ms. Frail asked how the community can be reassured during the process of change. Mr. Branyan stated that the Town Manager's position can be as a therapist at times. He coaches people on how to weather the storm.

The Board next interviewed candidate Katie King. Regarding her leadership style, Ms. King stated that she is a team builder. She asks questions and for help from her team. She has high expectations for herself and others. She likes to set clear goals, let others determine how to get to them, and then hold them accountable. Regarding how she will maintain her existing professional relationships, Ms. King stated that she will reintroduce herself and interact with the community. She would treat this as a major change and act accordingly. She understands the systems in place for the State government and legislature. She would work on the associated relationships in that process. The priorities of the Town, set by the Select Board, need to be made clear and she will then move them forward. Regarding the budget process, Ms. King stated that she helped to create Needham's Townwide expense budget for FY2026. She has sat at the table during budget discussions and decisions for the Town over the last five years. Regarding capital project planning for the Town, Ms. King stated that she vets incoming submissions from departments. She has helped to create recommendations to the Select Board for this process. Ms. King stated that she likes to work to be a content expert when it comes to land use in the Town. She focuses on the process, in terms of who is in charge of making decisions, and the people through community engagement. There was discussion regarding affordable housing, with Ms. King stated that she has adjusted committee work to align with the Select Board's goals on this topic. In terms of collective bargaining, Ms. King stated that she believes in hiring talented, dedicated staff with strong skillsets. She has been at the table for collective bargaining for all six groups in Needham. Staff attempts to manage the contract throughout the year, in order to build a foundation of respect for negotiations. She likes to determine what can be done creatively within the financial constraints of the Town. Regarding potential challenges of the position, Ms. King stated that Needham has only ever had one Town Manager, and the change may be difficult for whoever is chosen, including maintaining trust in government, knowing how best to disseminate information, and transparency.

Ms. King asked the Board's thoughts on the next Town Manager's biggest challenges. Mr. Keane stated that managing change in the position and community anxiety over changes at the federal level will be important.

The Board then interviewed the final candidate, Carys Lustig. Regarding her leadership style, Ms. Lustig stated that she believes in investing in those who work for you and working collaboratively with them. It is important to have difficult conversations on disagreements in the workplace and in the community head-on and as they arise. She listens in order to hear potential common ground. It will be important for her to establish relationships with key stakeholders in Town. One of her strengths is developing interpersonal relationships and she would work to develop communication strategies in this vein. Regarding her financial philosophy, Ms. Lustig stated that she believes Needham's philosophy tends to be a bit more constrained than what is available for resources. This can lead to a positive outcome, allowing Needham to be more secure than other surrounding towns. She stated that she would seek clear direction on the budget in order to communicate what financial changes would mean to the Town. She has previously worked in the role of Director of Finance Administration for the Needham DPW. Many of the formats seen in the Town's budget was developed by herself and the DPW. Creating a financially responsible and transparent budget is one of her highest skillsets. Providing strategy and guidance on how to navigate the budget process successfully through the departments is important. Regarding debt management, Ms. Lustig stated that the Town is governed by strong debt management practices and a strong Finance Department. The Town has dealt with some self-imposed rules regarding debt and this requires flexibility. The vast majority of the capital budget is something that she has either seen or worked with. The first priority should be safety for the Town, followed by infrastructure preservation. The speed at which projects are addressed seems to be a bit off kilter. Projects should begin within 12 months of funds being allocated. There could be value in discussing when to allocate capital with the Board. The Town needs to make sure it takes on the correct volume of projects and close out existing projects before beginning new ones. The sustainability of each project is important. The plan should be seen as a plan and not a promise. There was discussion regarding affordable housing. Ms. Lustig stated that she was previously a CPC liaison. She noted that she is aware that some of the DPW staff have had trouble finding affordable housing in Town. She is concerned regarding how the Town obtains and keeps its workforce due to the cost of living. Ms. Lustig stated that she has a succession planning program for the DPW which has successfully been implemented. She has been at the table for negotiations with the unions. As Town Manager, she would execute the direction of the Select Board. The role would also be to make sure everyone is knowledgeable of regulatory and safety requirements.

Ms. Lustig asked each Board member what they would like to see from the next Town Manager. Mr. Keane stated that he would like to see someone who keeps organization and honesty between the departments and community. This process should be growth positive. Ms. Frail stated that she would like to see someone who fosters trust in municipal government. Ms. Dowd stated that she would like to see someone who continues to build the team internally. Ms. Cooley stated that she would like to see the employees celebrated.

The Board stated that they will vote on the candidates on April 1, 2025.

9:25p.m. Adjourn:

Motion by Ms. Frail to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 p.m.
Second: Ms. Dowd. 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 Special Select Board meeting is scheduled for Friday, March 28, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.

A video recording of the March 25, 2025 Select Board Special Meeting can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Df1grtyU-KI&ab_channel=TownofNeedhamMA or at https://www.needhamchannel.org/2025/03/needham-select-board-3-25-25/.