Town of Needham
Select Board
Regular Meeting
Minutes for Tuesday, April 22, 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 Heidi Frail. Those present were Vice Chair Cathy Dowd, Kevin Keane, Joshua Levy, Marianne Cooley, 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

Eileen Baker, owner of Proud Mary, stated that many property and business owners have been working together regarding the proposed Envision Needham Center project. She expressed concerns and opposition to the potential reduction of vehicles traffic lanes, reduction of parking, and addition of bike lanes and medians on both sides of Great Plain Avenue. She asked that the Board take additional feedback from local businesses and residents. She asked for a pause on this project and for representation from the small business community to be included in the planning process.

6:05 p.m. Arbor Day Proclamation

- Ed Olsen, Department of Public Works – Parks and Forestry Division Superintendent

Mr. Olsen reviewed the proposed Arbor Day events.

Ms. Dowd read the Proclamation into the record.

Motion by Ms. Dowd that the Board vote to approve and sign the 2025 Arbor Day Proclamation.
Second: Ms. Cooley. Unanimously approved 5-0.

6:10 p.m. Town Manager

- Envision Needham Center Working Group

Ms. King explained that the original composition of the Envision Needham Center Working Group included one designated seat for each of the following in Needham Center: a small business owner, a restaurant owner, and a property owner. The restaurant owner and property owner seats are vacant. This recommended amendment to the composition replaces each of these seats with a "Needham Center

Business Representative" in order to allow flexibility while ensuring the voices of key stakeholders are represented.

Mr. Levy asked about the role of the Committee, especially with a timeline for a pilot in July. Ms. Fitzpatrick stated that she sees the role as to provide advice to the DPW and its consultants on iterations of the Center design and to make recommendations to the Select Board moving forward. The Committee may also explore funding opportunities. Ms. Frail noted that the original timeline for the project can change.

Ms. Dowd stated that she is in favor of the proposal, as the intention is to find people that represent a variety of views, including those who are skeptical regarding the project.

Motion by Mr. Keane that the Board vote to approve the updated composition for the Envision Needham Center Working Group.
Second: Ms. Dowd. Unanimously approved 5-0.

- Debt Financing Outlook

Mr. Davison presented the debt financing outlook report. The report included numerous potential scenarios with a wide array of possibilities and various assumptions across the presented outlook. The capital projects in each scenario included:
- Completion of the Pollard School with an assumed approved debt exclusion vote
- Ongoing public work facilities improvements, with phased completion
- Sewer inflow and infiltration work detailed in the 2025 Annual Town Meeting warrant
- Completion of work to establish a quiet zone
- Projects included in the FY2026-2030 Capital Improvement plan
- The proposed replacement of the Mitchell School, with an assumed approved debt exclusion and Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) partnership

The report provided a summary of the impact of financing all the identified projects under three different interest rate assumptions and three different revenue growth rate assumptions. Mr. Davison highlighted that the report is for planning purposes only and that actual projects and sequencing will differ from this analysis.

In reviewing the five-year capital plan outlook, all the projects that are currently being recommended as Tier 1, or high priority funding, could be recommended to be funded by debt. Staff created nine scenarios which apply debt service to the various projects. At other points in the past that the 10% threshold was exceeded, there have been conversations with various stakeholders, and this always involved an exclusion override.

Mr. Levy asked if there could be impacts to the operating budget based on the projected increase in debt. Mr. Davison stated that this could impact the ability to fund certain operations, depending on the specifics of the fiscal year and the ability in said potential year to cover operating needs from other sources.

Ms. Frail asked what the impact might be on the Town's ability to obtain lower interest rates. Mr. Davison stated that rating agencies like that the Town completes forecasting and proactively looks into the future. The agencies will look to see how the Town follows its policies.

Mr. Levy expressed concern regarding increasing the burden of taking on debt onto taxpayers. Mr. Davison stated that approval of these projects would be contingent on taxpayers voting to accept this higher burden
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7:05 p.m. Appointment Calendar and Consent Agenda

Motion by Ms. Dowd to approve the Consent Agenda.
Second: Mr. Levy. Unanimously approved 5-0.

CONSENT AGENDA *Supporting Documents in Agenda Packet

1.	Approve Open Session Minutes of April 7, 2025
2.	Approve the calendar year 2025 Spring Licenses as follows. This approval is predicated on the receipt of all required paperwork. (administrative correction) • BCars LLC – Taxi/Livery • GoGreenAirportExpress LLC – Taxi/Liver (added) • Needham Coin & Jewelry Buyers – Sale of Secondhand Articles • Crosby Jewelers – Sale of Secondhand Articles • Closet Exchange/Consignment Drop-Off – Sale of Secondhand Articles • Closet Exchange/Boutique – Sale of Secondhand Articles • 2nd Hand Rose of Needham – Sale of Secondhand Articles (added) • VFW Lt. Mason H. Carter Post 2498 – Pool Table • Needham Bowlaway LLC – Bowling (added)

7:06 p.m. Town Manager

- Positions on Warrant Articles

Annual Town Meeting

	Motion to withdraw	Second	Passed	Vote Breakdown
Article 4	Levy	Cooley	5-0	Unanimous
Article 5				Unanimous
	Motion to recommend adoption	**Second**	**Passed**	**Vote Breakdown**

Article 22	Dowd	Levy	5-0	Unanimous
Article 33	Cooley	Keane	5-0	Unanimous
Article 45	Withdrawn by Petitioners			
	Motion to take no position	**Second**	**Passed**	**Vote Breakdown**
Article 46	Dowd	Cooley	3-2	Levy, Keane Opposed

Special Town Meeting

	Motion to recommend adoption	**Second**	**Passed**
Article 10	Defer action to next meeting		

- Town Manager Report

Ms. Fitzpatrick stated that the Town Dance Party will take place on May 3rd from 4pm-8pm at Greene's Field.

- Committee Reports

Ms. Frail noted that she attended Lexington's 250th Event to rededicate its Battle Green.

7:40 p.m. Executive Session

- Exception 6: To Discuss the Purchase of Real Property

Motion by Mr. Keane that the Select Board enter into Executive Session pursuant to: Exception 6: To consider the purchase, exchange, lease, or value of real property if the Chair declares that an open meeting would be detrimental to the negotiating position of the Town;

[and the Chair so declared];

and not to return to Open Session prior to adjournment.

Second: Ms. Dowd. Unanimously approved by roll call: Keane – aye; Dowd – aye; Cooley – aye; Levy – aye; and Frail – aye; 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, May 13, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

A video recording of the April 22, 2025 Select Board Special Meeting can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7pj0XYZUnQQ or at https://www.needhamchannel.org/2025/04/needham-select-board-4-22-25/.