

**Town of Needham
Select Board
Minutes for February 11, 2020
Needham Town Hall
Powers Hall**

5:40 p.m. Executive Session: Exception 3 - Potential Litigation and Exception 6 - Purchase, Exchange, Lease or Value of Real Property

A meeting of the Select Board was convened by Chair John A. Bulian. Those present were Maurice P. Handel, Matthew D. Borrelli, Marianne B. Cooley, Daniel P. Matthews, and Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick. Recording Secretary Mary Hunt joined the meeting at 6:45 p.m.

Motion by Ms. Cooley that the Select Board vote to enter into Executive Session.

Exception 3 - To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares.

Exception 6 - To consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real estate, if the chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body.

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0.

6:45 p.m. Informal Meeting with Citizens:
Residents of Walker Lane spoke with the Board concerning their desire for sewer installation in the neighborhood.

7:00 p.m. The public portion of the Select Board meeting of February 11, 2020, was convened by Chair John Bulian.

7:00 p.m. Public Hearings - Eversource Energy Grant of Locations:
Karen Johnson, Eversource Energy representative appeared before the Board with 2 Grant of Locations to discuss:

1. Chestnut Street and School Street
Ms. Fitzpatrick said all paperwork is in order.

Mr. Bulian invited public comment. No comments were heard.

Motion by Mr. Handel that the Select Board approve and sign a petition from Eversource Energy to install approximately 105 feet of conduit in Chestnut

Street and School Street. This work is necessary to provide electric service to Needham Public Safety Headquarters.

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0.

2. School Street

Ms. Fitzpatrick said all paperwork is in order.

Mr. Bulian invited public comment. No comments were heard.

Motion by Mr. Handel that the Select Board approve and sign a petition from Eversource Energy to install one (1) pole #55/10B in School Street. This work is necessary to provide electric service to Needham Public Safety Headquarters.

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0.

7:03 p.m.

Needham Housing Authority Report:

Tim McDonald, Director of Health and Human Services spoke with the Board about information in the recently released report on services to the Needham Housing Authority residents. The report focused on the well-being and quality of life for Needham Housing Authority residents, and recommendations for moving forward.

Mr. McDonald discussed “An Assessment of Needham Housing Authority Residents: Assets and Opportunities.” He commented he found it surprising that some residents are unaware of some of the major services and support that are available from the Town. He cited that 22% of residents who took part in the survey were unfamiliar with the food pantry at the Needham Community Council, 37% were unaware of the community dining program for seniors at the Center at the Heights, and 32% of residents who took part in the survey are unaware that the Travelling Meals Program is available for those residents who are unable to cook for themselves. He commented on available transportation to/from the Center at the Heights. He said there are a number of services offered by the Health and Human Services department, as well as other departments and community partners that are available to help residents of the Housing Authority that should be better publicized. Mr. McDonald said many needs can be addressed with some changes in how the Town operates to bring services to residents of the Housing Authority.

Mr. Borrelli thanked Mr. McDonald for the report saying it is a great baseline and shows there are some things that can be done to improve services to residents. He commented on snow plowing, substance use and enforcement.

Ms. Cooley said she appreciates the study. She said she was surprised some residents were unaware of many resources, suggesting there are ways to make connections about available services.

Mr. Matthews suggested meeting with the Housing Authority Commission. He commented that the Housing Authority is not part of town government, yet a separate legal state entity. He cautioned on the challenges, noting most residential units were built with state and federal funding, which is no longer available for capital maintenance, and remain the responsibility of the Housing Authority. He noted many residents have a lot of needs and challenges, saying it is right to try and help our constituents. He reiterated it would be good to attend Housing Authority Commission meetings to maintain clear and open lines of communication.

Mr. Handel and Mr. Bulian concurred and said the report is very helpful.

7:14 p.m. Appointments and Consent Agenda:

Motion by Mr. Handel that the Select Board vote to approve approve the Appointments and Consent Agenda as presented.

APPOINTMENTS: No Appointments were made at this meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA

- 1. Upon the recommendation of the Assistant Town Manager/Director of Finance, change the mileage reimbursement rate from 58 cents to 57.5 cents per mile consistent with the rate determined by the IRS.**
- 2. Accept a donation in the amount of \$10,000 for the Police Department and \$10,000 to the Fire Department from Middlesex Bank.**
- 3. Approve a Special One Day Wines and Malt Beverages license for Steve Volante, of Volante Farms, to host a Cooking Class event on February 29, 2020 from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. The event will be held at Volante Farms, 292 Forest Street, Needham.**
- 4. Approve three Special One Day Wines and Malt Beverages licenses for Steve Volante, of Volante Farms, to host “Dinner in the Field” events on July 9, 2020, July 23, 2020, and August 6, 2020 from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The events will be held at Volante Farms, 292 Forest Street, Needham.**
- 5. Approve a Special One Day Wines and Malt Beverages license for Steve Volante, of Volante Farms, to host a Wine & Cheese Class event on November 7, 2020 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. The event will be held at Volante Farms, 292 Forest Street, Needham.**
- 6. Approve a request from Jennifer Whitman, of Saphier Events to hold its “Geared Up for Kids 2020” bike ride on May 31, 2020. This bike ride benefits the Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation, Northeast. The bike ride will start at 8:00 a.m. and will finish by 1:00 p.m. The route of the race was approved by the following departments: DPW, Police, Fire, and Park and Recreation.**
- 7. Approve a request from Kati Sigel, of Three Squares New England, who is organizing its annual fundraiser “The Ride for Food” bike ride to benefit food pantries in numerous communities including Needham, to have a portion of its ride to go through Needham. The event is scheduled for October 4, 2020**

from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The route of the ride has been approved by the following departments, DPW, Police, Fire, and Park and Recreation.

8. Authorize free meter parking in the area of Town Hall on election days.
9. Accept a \$250 donation made to Needham Youth & Family Services from the Patrick & Patricia Forde Memorial Fund. The monies will be used towards future programs in the Youth & Family Services Department.
10. Accept a \$130 donation made to Needham Youth & Family Services and The Center at the Heights, Council on Aging from The Webster Bank. The monies are to go towards the Intergenerational Program: Bridging the GAP.
11. Accept a \$20 donation made to Needham Youth & Family Services from the ScheckKahn family. The monies will be used towards future programs in the Youth & Family Services Department.
12. Approve a request to modify the pricing recommendation for the sale of surplus fire alarm boxes.

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0.

Mr. Matthews expressed appreciation and thanks to the Middlesex Bank for their generous donations to the Police Department and Fire Department.

7:15 p.m.

Town Manager:

Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager appeared before the Board to discuss three items:

1. Close Annual Town Meeting Warrant

Ms. Fitzpatrick reviewed items in the Annual Town Meeting Warrant and asked the Board to vote to close the warrant for the 2020 Annual Town Meeting beginning Monday, May 4, 2020.

Motion by Mr. Handel that the Select Board vote to close the warrant for the 2020 Annual Town Meeting, subject to minor technical corrections to be made by the Town Manager, Town Counsel, and Bond Counsel.

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0.

2. Accept and Refer Zoning

Ms. Fitzpatrick said the Town received two requests for amendments to the Zoning By-Laws. Under state law, the Select Board has 14 days to accept the proposed amendments and refer them to the Planning Board for its review, hearing, and report. The Board's action in the matter is not discretionary.

Motion by Mr. Handel that the Board vote to accept the following proposed zoning amendments: "Amend Zoning By-Law - Pediatric Medical Facility in the New England Business Center District" and "Amend Zoning By-Law - Map Change to General Residence B Zoning District" for referral to the Planning Board for its review, hearing, and report.

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0.

3. Town Manager's Report

Ms. Fitzpatrick thanked the Middlesex Bank for their donation, pointing out the police department intends to use the funds to offset costs associated with the junior police academy and a new therapy dog for use in the schools.

Ms. Fitzpatrick reported Needham has officially been designated a Green Community and received a grant of approximately \$148,000 for use in funding a study to review energy reduction and energy efficient projects in Town.

Ms. Fitzpatrick reported on the meeting and turnout for the "Complete Streets Prioritization Plan" held on February 4, 2020. She said a draft plan will be presented to the Select Board in March 2020.

7:30 p.m.

Public Hearing: Ridge Hill Reservation and Nike Property

Ms. Fitzpatrick updated the Board on the 2018 Ridge Hill Nike Property Assessment prepared by Weston and Sampson, and discussed current uses, conditions, and management of the properties. She commented on short-term and long-term planning.

Mr. Bulian opened the hearing and invited public comments.

Bill Paulson, 147 Lindbergh Avenue said private funds were raised and the Dog Park was established in 2014 at the Nike site. He commented the Town helps to maintain the park and many dogs use the property.

Joe Leghorn, 40 Linden Street, speaking on behalf of the Needham Community Farm gave a brief history of the farm which began approximately twelve years ago. He commented on prior discussion regarding the Needham Housing Authority, and how the farm gives food to people in need. He said approximately 60% of produce supplied to the Needham Food Pantry comes from the farm, and that the farm operates the mobile market delivering food directly to the Needham Housing Authority. He said the farm is used for educational purposes and volunteerism. Mr. Leghorn said the farm of approximately 3.26 acres is a labor of love doing good in Needham. He referred to fig. 22 in Weston and Sampson report where development may occur. He said new development takes away approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ of the original 1.26 acres of the farm and all remaining expansion room. He commented that the farm needs to be considered in the greater scheme and is important to the culture in Needham.

Jim Bonasia, 174 Tower Avenue, board member of Needham Youth Hockey said demand within Needham is strong, the economics makes sense, and Needham Youth Hockey's financials support a loan. He said many properties have already been renovated and a new ice arena will add to the reason people desire to live in Needham. He said many surrounding towns have built or are in the process of building ice arenas due to demand for learning to skate, developmental, U18, and high school programs. He said over 525 children participate in Needham hockey.

programs, and the number grows considerably when figure skating, ice dancing, speed skating, curling, recreational skating, and adult men/women hockey programs are included. Mr. Bonasia commented Needham High School hockey contracts with over ten other rinks for ice time, travelling all over Metrowest, and pays over \$450,000 to rent ice from other communities. He said the main reason families leave Needham hockey is due to the lack of consistency and scheduling in ice time, and the program is at the mercy of other communities. Mr. Bonasia commented on what he has heard/read, available buildable land, and the notion of displacing the Community Farm. He said Needham has the 2.75 acres available for an arena and parking lot, and the project would be out of sight from the road and residents. He said the time is now to push forward for the development of an ice arena.

Janet Bernardo, Chair, Conservation Commission explained the Wetlands Protection Act requires the Conservation Commission to regulate activities to protect specific interests, including wetlands, swamps, streams, vernal pools, and buffer zones related to these areas. She stated the public and private water supply, ground water supply, flood control, prevention of storm damage, fisheries, and wildlife must be protected from any negative development. Ms. Bernardo said Ridge Hill Reservation is a dedicated nature preserve, consisting of wetlands and floodplains and has 8 miles of walking trails. She commented it is the largest, contiguous, unfragmented, undeveloped parcel in Needham, providing significant value to the Town. She said the Ridge Hill property was acquired with federal land and water conservation funds, Needham town funds, and gifts with the intent to protect the valuable open space and diverse wildlife. As stewards, the Conservation Commission is dedicated to protecting the land and wildlife habitat. She concluded saying removing a large number of trees to construct a road to connect both areas is not in the spirit of protecting this wildlife habitat.

Mr. Bulian invited public comment and asked for ideas for using the Nike site.

Patricia Falcao, 19 Pine Street said an ice arena should be in the industrial park area. She said open space and conservation is a place to get away from noise and air pollution, and to meditate, destress, and have a picnic with family.

Julia Greenway, 600 Charles River Street supports the community farm and would like more greenhouses at the Nike site. She said the owls at Ridge Hill are being disturbed by lights, which are unnecessarily bright.

Susan Welby, 857 Webster Street said ecological areas need to be preserved and the Community Farm is a town asset. She suggested the Dog Park be in a location closer to the center of town. She said it is a beautiful open space to enjoy quiet walks in the woods. Ms. Welby said, as a hockey parent for 20 years, she understands the problem with people having to travel for games/practice. However, people will survive and there must be a better place for a hockey rink.

Deb Schmill, 38 Maple Street, concurred with comments made about the farm. She said the farm is an important asset to Needham, and any development at the Nike site must be compatible with the farm, its mission, and the natural environment. She asked people to think broadly about land use priorities in Needham and the need to preserve open space. She said over the last decade the environmental landscape has changed and that climate change was not part of the lexicon. She said people must let go of long held attachments to specific uses and view each parcel in the lense of the 2020 reality. She commented that discussion must be built on a foundation of relevant facts everyone can agree on, including the reality of climate change and its impact on the environment. Ms. Schmill said agriculture, forestry, and other open space land use, as a sector, has a vital role to play in emissions mitigation efforts. She said all parcels of land are not equal and we no longer live in a world with the luxury to devalue our natural environment. Ms. Schmill said determining the best use for land should not pit one community organization against another, saying land priorities must be decided. She concluded saying that with creative thinking a solution can be found together to meet the needs of athletic programs, while preserving the fragile ecosystem at Ridge Hill Reservation and the Nike site.

Lois Sockol, 611 Greendale Avenue said she is committed to preservation and supports the farm as there is great need for food. She said she also is a lover of ice hockey and figure skating. Ms. Sokol commented two valuable things are being discussed and that one does not need to be destroyed to realize the other. She suggested a hockey rink at the former Hillside School. She concluded saying land preservation and hockey are both important and implored the Select Board to make both happen.

John Gallo, 298 Brookline Street suggested an indoor swimming pool for high school and youth programs.

Madeline Wolfield, 31 Barrett Street spoke in defense of Ridge Hill Reservation, Nike site, and all its land, as the open space is a place for the entire community to use. She commented there are a myriad of reasons not to allow the town or a unique, private entity to destroy the land at Ridge Hill or Nike site. She commented if a hockey rink is allowed, other organizations will want to build there as well, and all the open space will soon be filled with sports facilities and parking lots. She reminded the Board that two decades ago the Town voted for the Community Preservation Act, which added a 2 ½% tax on yearly tax bills to build a fund to help purchase, protect, and preserve historical community buildings and land vital to Needham culture. She said public land should not be given to a unique, special interest group, and that Ridge Hill and the Nike site belong to everyone. She commented on climate change. She concluded saying she supports the Needham Community Farm and its mission.

Sue Biasizzo, Needham Food Pantry coordinator commented on the partnership between the farm and pantry. She said the farm provides invaluable education

and there are many people in town and the surrounding communities who cannot afford the cost of fresh produce.

Alice Cornwell, 634 Charles River Street said Ridge Hill is a beautiful open space and being outside in nature has proven beneficial for physical and mental health. She commented that discussion should be how best to preserve the space and restrict motor vehicle access. She said while the maps in the Weston and Sampson study identify wetlands and animal habitats that need protecting, it completely fails to protect the Reservation's "heart," which is the beauty of the sweeping meadows and trees. She said she doesn't understand why the town needs to develop the land and should be looking at ways to preserve the space to decrease the carbon footprint. She concluded the study suggested buildout options including a recreation center, noting that Ridge Hill already is a natural recreation center.

Josh Darwin, 669 South Street referred to the number of hockey people in the room. He commented that previous speakers lost the kids' interest for local government. Mr. Darwin suggested a sports complex including an ice rink. He commented there is plenty of land for the dog park and farm. He implored the Select Board to deliver a rink.

Cindy Landau, 57 Pine Street concurred with other speakers. She said the repercussions of building go way beyond the land, wildlife, and people. She said the neighborhood is quiet and residential, and traffic would be terrible. Ms. Landau said while she supports a hockey rink in Needham, she asked what other sites were considered for a rink? She suggested hockey representatives speak with the Muzi Ford owners or some other accessible location. Ms. Landau suggested Ridge Hill should be a place for weddings, receptions, and family gatherings.

Dan Henderson, 710 Webster Street said the barn at Ridge Hill has been used for over 50 years to store set pieces for the Needham Community Theatre. He asked the town to allow continued use, maintenance, and more space in the barn. He commented that the theatre would "fold" due to lack of storage space. Mr. Henderson said 2,700 people attended the spring 2019 Needham Community Theatre production.

Brian King, 8 Prospect Street concurred with Mr. Henderson, asking for continued use of the barn by the Community Theatre, saying quickest way to sink a non-profit is to lose the availability of the space.

Anna Aguilera, 12 Glenwood Road, along with her daughter, expressed the importance of open space. She commented climate change, sustainability, and food insecurity creates anxiety and mental health issues in today's youth. Ms. Aguilera said the land is not insignificant and goes a long way in helping the environment and the crisis currently faced.

Tom Langford, 49 North Hill Avenue said he loves the idea of a hockey rink in Needham, but Ridge Hill Reservation and Nike are the wrong location. He encouraged a rink close to the highway and said the town should look for ways to preserve open space for future generations.

Hugh Curran, 76 Donna Road said without access to a local rink, many hockey players have to travel long distances to play hockey. He said building a rink would help the hockey program and bring the community together.

Kurt Brinkhaus, supports building a rink in Needham. He said he must leave by 4 p.m. to avoid rush hour to get to practice in Watertown. He said it makes it difficult to get extra help from teachers after school.

Cole Nawrocki, 6 Carol Road said driving to practice outside of Needham is dangerous, and that now is the time to seize the opportunity to build a rink for the kids in Needham. He commented he supports the farm and dog park but believes 2 acres is not a significant amount of land to affect the wildlife or ecosystem at Ridge Hill/Nike.

Mike Labrecque, 1002 Greendale Avenue suggested looking at Prindle Pond Nature Center in Charlton, MA, as it has a nature conservancy, roads, sports, and an education complex. He said it would be possible to have all the activities and keep conservation and wildlife in mind.

Lisa Zappala, 379 Charles River Street as a mom of a hockey player and ODLA (Outdoor Living Adventure) camp counsellor, and community farm volunteer she must represent herself and the people who sent her comments as she is a Town Meeting Member. She acknowledged the importance of recognizing both needs. She said the rink should be located elsewhere, and proponents must understand a significant amount of money would have to be spent in order to get water and sewers into Ridge Hill/Nike, not just the \$6.5 million they have already raised to build a rink. She said as a Town Meeting Member and Finance Committee member for 9 years, she is assured there is not enough money in the town budget to support a project of this size in the foreseeable future. She suggested land on Greendale Avenue or in the New England Business Center be considered. Ms. Zappala said she supports passive activity at Ridge Hill.

Molly Pretorius-Holme 128 Garden Street supports expanding the community farm and agrees with having passive activities and educational programs at Ridge Hill. She encouraged creativity in finding a way forward.

Maria DiCarli, 32 Avon Circle said the farm is important, an ice rink should be located elsewhere, and other facilities should be available for teenagers.

Artie Crocker, 17 Fairlawn Street, thanked the boys for their thoughts and respectful tone. He said open space keeps people healthy, and while he supports developing certain parts of Needham, a rink at Ridge Hill is not appropriate.

Resident, Pheasant Landing expressed concern for traffic on Pine Street and Charles River Street.

Joan Onofrey, 49 Pine Street said Pine Street is one way and a tough street to walk down. She said cars always drive the wrong way and traffic would become worse. She suggested a mini Tanglewood with educational, creative, and summer activities. She said an ice rink should be located elsewhere.

Resident, Aldridge Road supports an ice rink at Ridge Hill.

Jane Evans, 1637 Great Plain Avenue suggested enhancing the passive uses at Ridge Hill with a pavilion, picnic tables, and bathrooms. She said Ridge Hill is an underutilized asset of Needham. Ms. Evans also suggested renting land at the farm for people to have their own garden plot.

Resident, suggested preserving natural land and expanding the farm. She said an alternative location should be considered for a hockey rink.

Donna Vello, 141 Hawthorn Avenue said she supports an ice rink and pool in Needham, but not at Ridge Hill/Nike. She suggested expanding the farm to supply more food for people in need.

Mr. Bulian closed the public hearing, thanked residents for their comments, and asked the Board for their input.

Mr. Handel said it is clear there is a lot of interest in the current uses at Ridge Hill/Nike and a lot of passion for hockey. He said the public hearing is for finding out the best and most appropriate uses for the property. He acknowledged if there is a need for a hockey rink there should be a search for a site. He said uses should be appropriate for the character of the Ridge Hill and the surrounding neighborhood.

Mr. Matthews said he is disappointed the hearing did not cover what was in the hearing notice i.e. planning and information about current conditions at the property, and short- and long-term steps. He commented there are complicated issues regarding the property and a 5-year capital plan for the town that is already fully committed. Mr. Matthews said while Needham is a wealthy community, that does not mean people can have everything they want. He said while the town owns almost 300 acres, all but 21 acres is conservation property. Discussion continued on available acreage for active use, connection of the two properties, changing access, and the Weston & Sampson study. Mr. Matthews said there are a lot of unusable wetlands. He said it is frustrating that people attended tonight's meeting

thinking a decision is imminent, noting the Select Board does not have the power to reconfigure or commit any property, and that any long-term development would require approval by Town Meeting through the capital process. He said the issue of boundary changes or additional roadways must be settled before committing to any further programming on the site, requiring agreement from the Conservation Commission. He noted conservation property is regulated by Article 97 of the Massachusetts State Constitution, and seemingly simple things require approval through an act of the legislature. He noted that while building at the Nike site could be possible, it is not simple or quick. Mr. Matthews concluded saying he is impressed with the enthusiasm for a hockey rink, historically a private activity in Massachusetts. He noted that under social policy rules applying to public construction, any private construction is subject to town rules and would increase costs by 2 ½ times. He said private sector options may be a better route for a rink, and that anything constructed at Ridge Hill/Nike site must be a good fit within the natural values of the surrounding acres.

Ms. Cooley concurred with several comments by Mr. Matthews. She said the goal of the study was to better understand the property. She pointed out less land is available than people may perceive, noting the slopes and wetlands account for less developable land. She noted extensive infrastructure would be required for development, hence the reason the school department made the decision a few years ago that it was not land they would continue to be responsible for, nor land suitable to build a school. Ms. Cooley concluded saying that whatever happens she hopes the property remains beautiful.

Mr. Borrelli reiterated no decision will happen tonight and the process is long. He concurred the site is challenging and any active use on the site must be compelling. He agreed Needham should have a hockey rink, community recreation center. He commented on Elm Bank and people who enjoy it, greenhouses, biking, and outdoor activities. Mr. Borrelli said a cohesive plan must be developed for deciding what is the best fit for the Town. He thanked everyone for attending.

Mr. Bulian said he is a fan of the farm and dog park, and a fan of having an ice rink in Needham. He said he is not sure if Ridge Hill/Nike is the right place for a rink. He thanked everyone for their input, noting all residents can come together on the issue.

9:10 p.m. Board Discussion:

1. Committee Reports

No Committee Reports were made.

9:10 p.m. Adjourn:

Motion by Mr. Handel that the Select Board vote to adjourn the Select Board meeting of Tuesday, February 11, 2020.

Second: Mr. Borrelli. Unanimously approved 5-0.

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

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