



APPROVED

RELEASED

MINUTES  
SELECTMEN'S MEETING  
REMOTE PARTICIPATION ONLY  
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2021  
6:00 PM (EXECUTIVE SESSION)  
6:30PM (REGULAR SESSION)

**SELECTMEN PARTICIPATING:** Larry Ballantine, Michael MacAskill, Donald Howell, Edward McManus and Stephen Ford

**ALSO PARTICIPATING:** Town Administrator Joseph F. Powers

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Ballantine called the meeting to order at 6:00PM

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

A. Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30 section 21 (a) paragraph 3 to discuss with respect to collective bargaining for Harwich Employees Association (HEA) and the Highways and Maintenance Employees Association (HMEA) if an open session would have a detrimental effect on the town's bargaining position and the Chair so declares.

Chairman Ballantine reopened the meeting for February 22, 2021. The meeting was opened at 6:00PM and moved to Executive Session with a motion to return to open session at 6:30PM after that meeting. The Board discussed contract negotiations with the Harwich Employees Association and the Highways and Maintenance Employees Association. The discussion with the HEA is on going. An agreement has been reached with the HMEA resulting in a one year contract, retroactive. It ends June 30th of this year. Included in that contract is a 1 %, one year, salary increase.

**WEEKLY BRIEFING**

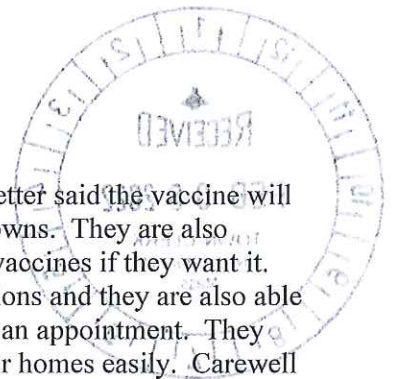
A. COVID-19 Updates

Interim Health Director, Meggan Eldredge reports that there have only been 3 positive cases in the last 7 days. That is a significant decrease. There are only 13 active cases at this time. She noted statistics on how many tests were administered over the last two weeks and how many were positive. Our positivity rate went down and we remain in the yellow. Ms. Eldredge spoke with the school system on Friday, trying to get a game plan together for this coming week. The school sent notices out reminding people of the travel order and what their responsibilities are if they went out of state over school vacation. Regarding vaccines, we have moved onto the next priority group within phase 2. A letter was received from Secretary Sutters. It was a disappointing letter sent out to all local Boards of Health. The letter states that as of March 1st, the state is no longer going to provide first doses of the vaccine to individual municipal clinics. Each town had tried to become an individual provider instead of going with the county model. Unfortunately, the state decided that, that wasn't going to happen. They are focusing on sending vaccines to mass vaccination sites such as Gillette Stadium and Fenway Park. Those sites are getting 1000 shots a day and Barnstable County was getting 1000 shots a week. With the new model that the state is going with, if we regionalize with 3 to 4 regional sites on Cape Cod that are open every day, we could have 500-1000 doses a day. Those sites may be at Cape Cod Community College, the Fairgrounds in Falmouth or at a new mobile site in Eastham at the National Seashore. At least one of those sites would have to be open everyday. It would increase the number of vaccines given on Cape from a weekly

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number to a daily number. This is not yet official but it is the plan so far. The letter said the vaccine will only be going to regional clinics that have collaborated with their surrounding towns. They are also ramping up supplies to retail pharmacies, they are eligible and able to get more vaccines if they want it. Also, Outer Cape Health Services has been able to obtain vaccine for their locations and they are also able to vaccinate non patients. Anyone who is eligible can give them a call to get up an appointment. They are also able to help homebound or vulnerable populations that cannot leave their homes easily. Carewell Urgent Care in South Dennis also has vaccine. In the packets are a couple of charts regarding vaccine. As of last week we have received 1.2 million doses of the vaccine. Only 225,000 have been administered. The others are going to second doses right now. Barnstable County shows that a big percentage of our population has been vaccinated, approximately 13-14%. Barnstable County has been asked to show where they get that number. They may be including the long term care facilities. The Health Department, the Town and Outer Cape Health has been working with the Counsel on Aging to keep up with the homebound population. They are making sure everyone who is homebound has been identified so they are able to get a vaccine if they are looking for one. The Counsel on Aging has been hard at work getting a "How to, Step by Step" document together for residents to help them navigate the mass [immunizations.org](https://www.immunizations.org) site. That is the site where all the clinics are listed. The site can be overwhelming especially for people who have never used that type of internet service. The COA is training some volunteers to help people through that process. There is discussion about a help line for Harwich residents. Lastly, testing is still free at Outer Cape Health Cape Cod Health Care is still offering 7 day a week testing, however travel testing is not free. Report concluded.

Mr. Ballantine agreed, it is disappointing that there are 2 new sites in Massachusetts and neither is on Cape.

B. Update on ongoing efforts by the Town in support of the business community.

Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce, Cynthia Williams noted a new business going into Harwich Port. It is a new soft serve cream shop called Seagull's Ice Cream and Soda Fountain and it will be next to Hunter's and Reed Books. They have joined the Chamber and taken an ad in the magazine, already getting involved in the community. Regarding the 3 new marketing initiatives that were mentioned last week, they've started videoing for the restaurant show as well as the hotel and inns, to prompt people to book vacations. They are also starting the Talk with Local Businesses videos. They hope to have them on the Harwich Chamber You Tube Channel within the next week to 10 days. Things are still moving ahead and they are hopeful with the numbers coming down that some restaurants that have not been open, will open.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Cemetery Director Robbin Kelley announced that she has received confirmation back from Arbor.net. She read the letter confirming the James G. Marceline Arboretum at Oyster Pond in Harwich has been awarded a Level 1 Accreditation by ArborNet Accreditation Program in the Norton Arboretum. This is the only global initiative to recognize arboreta at various levels of capacity and professionalism. Ms. Kelley read the entire letter and thanked everyone that has supported them. She spoke with Mark Smith of the Monomoy Regional School District who is excited for the programs they will do at the Arboretum for the children.

Mr. Ballantine noted that they're all pleased and proud that Jimmy Marceline's name is on that as well.

Chairman of the Finance Committee Jon Chorey spoke regarding a letter that he sent to the Town Administrator on Friday concerning the joint meeting of the department heads.

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Mr. Ballantine noted that this would be discussed toward the end of the agenda.

## **ANNUAL COMMITTEE PRESENTATIONS**

### **A. Waterways Committee**

Chairman of the Waterways Committee, Thomas Themistos noted that 2020 was a challenging year for them and all the committees in town. They missed a few meetings because of COVID restrictions and in additions they lacked a quorum for a couple of months due to resignations from the committee. The committee is now at full membership and the virtual monthly meetings are attended. They are looking forward to getting together in person again. Despite the many challenges associated with COVID-19, the 2020 boating season was extremely busy and managed in a safe and effective manner thanks to the Harbormaster and his efficient staff along with the cooperative spirit of all ship mooring permit holders and the general boating public. The Harbormaster responded to 37 maritime assistance cases in 2020. This was a 35% decrease in the number of maritime assistance cases compared to the previous year. Regarding dredging and beach nourishment, Allen Harbor had their annual channel dredging performed and the sand from the area was piped to the various beaches along the sound. The Town was awarded a Mass Dredging Program Grant in the amount of \$36,000.00 from the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development to fund a portion of the Allen Harbor Dredge Project. Wychmere Harbor Channel was also dredged this past year and the material was trucked to Red River Beach. Regarding revenue, the Harbormaster Department generated \$1,386,000 in harbor and waterways related revenues. This is a \$126,000.00 increase from FY 2019. Regarding the Round Cove Boat Ramp, a competitive general bid was awarded to Robert B. Our Company for construction services for the reconstruction of the Round Cove Boat Ramp. This project will be completed prior to May 1, 2021. The Allen Harbor jetty rehabilitation is in the process. GEI Consulting has been contracted to perform a site investigation, required permitting and concepts and final design to repair the Allen Harbor west jetty. The tentative construction period has been pushed to FY 2024 if construction funding is approved. The member attendance has been good, all members have been sworn in, the state ethics testing is a work in progress with two members certified. Agendas and minutes are being posted. Mr. Themistos thanked Matt Hart and Steve Root for their years of service, both have retired. He welcomed two new members and an alternate. Report concluded.

Mr. Ballantine notes that our maritime assistance number has gone down while there was an increase in boat traffic. He questioned why.

John Rendon responded that one reason is that Tow Boat has become more active in the area. Also, he feels people are being more prudent. They do a public safety day and seminar that they try to get out to the public prior to the start of the season. Also, they are on the water as much as they can be as a deterrent. He thinks it's a combination of reasons.

Mr. Ballantine read that the county is going to increase their fees for dredging. There was discussion at one time about buying dredging equipment. He asked if the county will be competitive or if that is a concern.

Mr. Rendon stated that it is a concern and one of the factors is the timing of it. They may choose to not to raise their rates until all the departments in town have an opportunity to budget for those increases. They will be charging for mobilization and demobilization which is currently included.

The county has and will continue to be a great deal, we've always had success using the county. Mr. Rendon is not surprised about the increase, the county bought a new dredge and is purchasing another. They've also made equipment upgrades. The increase is coming but hopefully will not be significant.

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Mr. Rendon also expressed thanks to Matt Hart and Steve Root for everything they did for the Town and for him personally.

## B. Youth Services

Secretary of Youth Services Meredith Henderson reported. The Harwich Youth Services is a collaborative committee working with schools and the community to inform the public about resources, educational events and support for Harwich youths and family. Their primary undertaking over the last three years has been planning and hosting Middle School socials. During these events students from grades 5-7 come together to engage in fun and healthy activities. The average attendance was 100 students. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 they were only able to hold two socials at the beginning of 2020. Other events promoted by the Harwich Youth Services Committee are: a showing of the document *Angst*, sharing information about the Alternative Peer Group Program and Teens and the Tweens and Quarantine webinar. The Harwich Youth Counselor, Shelia House saw a rise in referrals and case management this year due to social isolation and anxiety during the pandemic. Also involved were the Barnstable County Regional Substance Abuse Commission, Substance Use Prevention Counsel, Monomoy Regional School District Crisis Response Team, The Children's Fund and The Friends of Harwich Youth and Behavior Health Innovators. The goals for 2021, they are hoping to bring their "Stable Life" presentation to the juniors and seniors at Monomoy High School, to share understanding of impaired driving, to support the elementary school nurses, the Beautiful Me Self Esteem Program and organizing future Middle School events when the COVID restrictions are lifted.

Harwich Youth Counselor Shelia House acknowledges Paula MacGuire who has been an active member of the Board and is stepping down. Alternative Peer Groups started popping up in the south. It's a unique model as it is not a conservative, strict, stringent alcohol treatment. It's a peer to peer recovery model, recovery meaning help. It meets twice a week virtually with three amazing, young clinicians who are working with them. It is a format where kids can talk to each other about their situations and concerns with the guidance of the counselors. The "live" site is in Hyannis and they are opting to open one in Harwich and one in Wellfleet. Kids are responding well to the program. The Beautiful Me Program is a self-esteem program for third and fourth grade girls. They are planning to expand Girl Power in the next two years so that simultaneously there will be a third grade Girl Power and a sixth grade Girl Power and a tenth grade Girl Power going with 3-4 sessions a year. They are hoping to write a grant to have this program funded.

Mr. Howell commends the Girl Power program and the positive benefits and hopes they can expand after COVID. He asked if Ms. House coordinates with other Youth Counselors across the state. He knows there are not many on Cape and commends her for her work.

Ms. House answered that there are 85 state wide and they do work together.

## **PUBLIC HEARINGS/PRESENTATIONS**

### A. Update from the director of Golf and Golf Course Superintendent on golf projects and procurements

Town Administrator Joseph Powers noted that a few weeks ago it was mentioned that it would be helpful if Roman and Shawn gave an update on the many projects they are working on and the procurements.

Director of Golf, Roman Greer submitted a packet to the Board on updates and procurements, also has a few additional updates. The Cart Barn project is the biggest and various aspects of that are ongoing, it includes the Front of the Clubhouse Landscaping Project, the complete date is mid-April. The next phase is the Solar Project which is currently in the final stages of completion and will be completed by the end

of February. The Charter Grid is in the packet, it was completed by an engineer for the creation of this RFP. They are expecting a bid opening on March 28th. The Charter Grid has to be in place to support the electric carts, Mr. Greer is working with the procurement team once again on the procurement of an electric cart fleet and a state contract. They expect to transition to an electric cart fleet at some point mid season. Due to COVID, golf cart vendors are behind in production and it will be a few months after an order is placed before they can provide them. There is an operation going in the Starter Shed with a remote payment kiosk. They expect to use this and a Remote Fee Payment after COVID also. There was a bid opening today on the restaurant owner fee. There is a committee that is going to evaluate the bids and Mr. Greer will come back to the Board with a recommendation shortly. Some Pro Shop displays were purchase, also in the packet. They have been working on the displays for a few years, adding something each year. Mr. Greer thanks the Procurement Team, he appreciates all their help and it has been a lot of work.

Mr. Ballantine requested this update to let people know that they Golf Course is not standing still through this pandemic. He asked Mr. Fernandez for a brief update on what is going on with the Golf Course itself, maintenance etc.

Mr. Fernandez commented that through COVID they have worked hard to maintain the golf course to the standards that they have set over the last couple of years. Each year they take on a bit more. This year they are trying to become an Audubon Sanctuary. They're almost ready to submit the paperwork so they can be recognized. It is a long process especially when there are many projects going on. It has been well received and will put Cranberry Valley right where it used to be which is right at the top. Fertilizer has been reduced since Mr. Fernandez started which helps with the septic issues. They have taken on challenges and are achieving the goals that have been set in front of them. He hopes to be able to report in the future that Cranberry Valley is an Audubon Sanctuary.

Mr. MacAskill asked if there was only one bidder on the restaurant.

Mr. Greer answered yes and the bidding process is closed.

Mr. MacAskill commended Mr. Greer and Mr. Fernandez for keeping the golf course going through the pandemic and for all their hard work.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. Discussion and possible vote to Approve Board of Selectmen Minutes 01-21-20**

Mr. Howell moved to approve the Board of Selectmen's Meeting Minutes for 01-21-20, 2nd by Mr. MacAskill. The vote was 5-0-0 with Mr. Howell, Mr. McManus, Mr., Ford, Mr. McManus and Mr. Ballantine voting aye by roll call.

### **B. Discussion and possible vote to create a Human Services Committee**

Town Administrator Powers introduced Counsel on Aging Director Emily Mitchell who has been the front person for the Town. She is interested in taking it to a higher direction and expanding and is asking the Board if it is willing to establish a Human Services Committee that would assist staff in the review of RFPs in the grant process in addition to other tasks.

Council on Aging Director Emily Mitchell included a recommendation memo in the packet. The way it is set up now, the Town appropriates a certain amount of money every year, to award to individual nonprofits that serve Harwich residents. Typically an RFP is issued in February, different organizations

respond and then Emily puts together a team of 5 town employees representing different departments with different experience. They review the information and put together a recommendation for the Board to review. The packet outlines our process and what some of our neighboring towns do. All other Cape towns have a Standing Human Services Committee. She is recommending that Harwich follows the same model which adds continuity to the process, to allow for more in-depth review of the applications and the programs themselves and most importantly provides an opportunity for public input. A draft charge is also included in the packet.

Mr. Howell noted that this started out as a committee, we are the only ones that allocate through staff.

Mr. McManus added that after Jim Noonan passed away there was no driving force to round up people to serve on the committee. The responsibility fell to Tony Pagliaro who kept the committee going for a couple of years until the Board voted to have the county office handle the process. If a new group of people is interested, he would rather have a local group doing the process.

Mr. Howell points out that from the consumer's point of view, when it went to the county it was a nightmarish process. Nobody controlled that.

Michael MacAskill supports the request and feels we'd be better served by adding a mechanism where people or town employees can be appointed in case this committee turns out to be like others, not populated.

Mr. Ford agrees with Mr. MacAskill's comments.

Mr. Howell feels this should be brought back. He agrees with Mr. MacAskill's idea of adding a mechanism and added that if voted on tonight, that will not be included.

Mr. MacAskill noted that Ms. Mitchell put together a draft, the membership piece should change to allow her to pick from staff. He feels that for tonight they can say by consensus that they support it.

Mr. Ballantine wants to leave this with a positive motion or a direction going forward.

Ms. Mitchell will address whatever changes the Board wants to make and bring it back whenever the Board would like.

Mr. Howell feels that the bigger it gets the harder it will be to populate and mentions 5 members may be preferable to 7 members.

Ms. Mitchell had based that number comparing to what the other towns were doing. Most have 7 members. She is comfortable with 5 members.

Mr. MacAskill suggested that if it is 7 members, 2 could be Town employees. He requested that Ms. Mitchell think that through and asked Town Administrator Powers how he would like the Board to send their feedback on the proposed piece.

Town Administrator Powers suggested the feedback be sent in an email and he will work with Ms. Mitchell. It may not be brought back on March 1st which is gearing up to be a big agenda. This is more of a tradition, closing out this year's process. We have time to work on and finalize it, to work through the current RFP and get the next group set up to do next year.



Mr. Ballantine summarizes that the consensus is that they're all in favor of this, they'll work on a couple of more details and bring it back.

C. Discussion and possible vote-New Class IV Auto Repair License - A & G Accident Repair, DBA Cranberry Collision - 161 Queen Anne Road Inc.

Town Administrator Powers notes that this is a new Class IV Auto Repair License, staff has reviewed everything and is recommending approval.

Mr. MacAskill moved to approve the new Class IV Auto Repair License - A & G Accident Repair, Inc. DBA Cranberry Collision- 161 Queen Anne Road as submitted, 2nd by Mr. Howell. The vote was 5-0-0 with Mr. MacAskill, Mr. Howell, Mr. Ford, Mr. McManus and Mr. Ballantine voting aye by roll call.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

A. Discussion and possible vote- Amendments to the Town Administrator's FY 02022 Budget

Town Administrator Powers stated that this is the last opportunity for the Board to make amendments to the budget as submitted before it is transmitted to the Finance Committee no later than the close of business tomorrow. He is also following up on last week's discussion highlighting some of the items that would or may change. The packet contains a document called Source and Uses which identifies the various sources. Noting the column FY 2022, second line from the top is Local Receipts. That is factoring in the golf receipts projection of 1.8 million backed with documents from the Finance Director. On page 5, document known as Town of Harwich Local Receipts, under Golf Revenue Snack Bar Concession -no change. Greens fees increase with anticipation of \$100,000.00, Driving Range increased \$15,000.00, Residents Fee increased \$50,000.00, Cart Rental increased \$50,000.00, for a net difference of \$215,000.00. Regarding insurance: The Momonoy Regional School District, The Town of Harwich and The Town of Chatham were budgeting for a 5% increase and it went up 3% on Blue Cross and 2% on Harvard Pilgrim. Director of the Finance Committee Carol Coppola was asked if the numbers on Sources and Uses on line 26 reflect their assumptions on health insurance.

Ms. Coppola responded that she has not received anything from the School District regarding a voted budget. However, the meeting on February 11th suggested that they would make a reduction.

Town Administrator Powers continued that he had hoped to have that in place. What the Board has in front of them is his last best effort in conjunction with Ms. Coppola. At this point, he is prepared to walk through some of the questions that he has been receiving and some of the information the Board may want to review before getting into potential amendments. In the original documents is the Departmental Operating Budget, line by line and department by department. He has identified two areas that are not level funded due to labor obligations. Those are in Accounting and Library. Regarding percentage change, see lines 68, 69, 70, 72, 73 and 74. The majority of those are zero or lower. On Fire vs Ambulance, it appears that the Fire Department went up 5% but the Ambulance and EMS Budget was subsumed within the Fire Department Budget. Regarding the Total Departmental Budgets, with the directive of level funding. A definition of level funding was offered. Town Administrator Powers is hoping for a vote of the Board, after any amendments that would direct him to send the final product to the Finance Committee by tomorrow close of business in accordance with the Charter.

Mr. Ford commented and commended Town Administrator Powers and Ms. Coppola for the terrific job they have done on a very challenging budget. It reflects something better than it has in previous years.

Mr. Howell echoed Mr. Ford's statements and also appreciates being heard.

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Mr. MacAskill also echoes Mr. Ford and Mr. Howell. He questioned the 4% Air B & B tax and asked if that number rolled into what the actual revenue was.

Town Administrator Powers replied that the numbers came in last year, higher than the traditional lodging numbers. His understanding is that we are not relying on those funds, more that they have been earmarked. As of now, those funds continue to be in the general fund. There are draft articles talking about potential increases as well as a potential use of a Community Impact Fee. That can be used as a mechanism for this Board to determine the use of those funds. Neither he nor Ms. Coppola relied on those funds in the use of the preparation of this budget. Any money that was derived, not present when the budget was presented, is a beneficial difference in what was projected for health insurance, or a beneficial difference when we hear that Chatham may give some positive news on wastewater operating. Whenever money becomes available, it will be his recommendation that those funds be held aside, perhaps to rebuild our Free Cash. He does not see any number coming up that we could use to change what was given for the foundation on the level funding budgets.

Referring to General Fund, Mr. MacAskill asked if it stays in General Fund or goes into Free Cash until a decision is made on what will be done with it.

Town Administer Powers understands that if it is not used, it is carried into the Free Cash Certification. He will defer to the Finance Director to correct that answer.

Finance Director Carol Coppola clarified that it still stays in the General Fund as Certified as Free Cash.

Mr. MacAskill notes, that is the money the Board uses to buy capital items. He feels that is a conversation they should have soon especially if they are going to be presented with adding another 2%. He and Mr. Howell questioned the 4% because there was no target on where that money was going. As we move forward on budget conversations after tonight, he requests that this be proposed as one of the warrant articles. Mr. MacAskill asked for clarification, he has 2 copies of the budget dated February 5th and February 18th. One says 3.3% total sources, the other says 3.6% total sources. He asked for the overall budget number.

Town Administrator Powers asked that they draw their attention to the document in the folder that says 02/18/2021, that is reflective of the revenue changes that he just mentioned with golf, we are operating off that document. The one dated 02/05/2021 was his for the presentation. On the Feb. 18th document, right hand column, total transfers in from other sources, is the 6% increase. A portion of that is because of the expanded estimates in golf. That is the most current document which if voted on tonight, will be transmitted to the Finance Committee.

Mr. Ballantine clarified that it is on the agenda as amendments rather than the budget.

Me. MacAskill-Looking at some of the revenue, Hotel and Motel Tax, in 2020 we had \$905,000.00, for 2021 it's \$456,000.00 projecting in 2022 \$700,000.00. How actual are these past numbers and why such a fluctuation? Same questions for Motor Vehicle and Boat Excise Tax. This has been a tremendous year for purchases, especially of boats. Are these projected numbers or are these actuals collected?

Ms. Coppola answered that for FY 2018, 2019 and 2020, those are accurate. For FY 2021 they were very conservative because they didn't know how the market was going to act, how many hotels and motels would have full occupancy or what short term rentals were going to come in at. Regarding meals tax, that number was reduced significantly, there weren't sure of restaurant occupancy. Those numbers came in well this years. Same for motor vehicles, they were conservative due to many unknowns.

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Mr. MacAskill, given the conservative nature of these numbers, and given the increased revenues, it is highly likely that there is more money here. Also, 2% was budgeted for salary increases and although the Board did not support 2%, that money was budgeted. What is the difference in that number, now that we are settling contracts at 1%?

Town Administrator Powers replied that in FY 2021, they did not reduce the built in 2%. We have settled contracts for 1% this year. He had suggested and told the Board that he was building in a 0% increase in cost of living/wage increase across all contracts and employees for FY2022. This budget is not only level funded, it does not allow for increases in wages. There will still be the contractual step increases and other contractual obligations.

Mr. MacAskill clarified that, regarding the savings from 2021 to 2022 that money will go into the General Fund. There have been conversations about how much Free Cash is being generated, which ends up with these budgets continually going up and then larger numbers of Free Cash. For purposes of OPEB and stabilization, some of that makes sense. To consistently have a budget increase of any percentage outside of the directive of the Board not to go over 2%, we should relook at our Free Cash policy and determine how much money we want to try and build and create a current policy. We are building a pretty significant Free Cash number every year and then we're spending that significant Free Cash number every year. He mentions to Mr. Ballantine that he'd like to have that conversation in the future. In closing, he feels the whole team did a great job on the budget so far. It has been mentioned that we should vote this and it's our final. It is not our final, the final is after the Board votes, after the Finance Committee does their part and after there are department meetings with department heads. The Board will have another crack at whatever they want until they vote the final budget. We are putting Band-Aids on a budget every year, taking money from different places, filling holes, and we've reduced the cost of living. There's a lot that is being done. Whether we continue with a 5 year forecast or drop to a 3 year forecast, we haven't seen that. This Band-Aid approach to the budget, trying to come in at these numbers after 11 years, 44% increase, is not going to go well 3-5 years out. We will have to make a much more drastic decision whether we increase the taxes or downsize the Town's operation. What we are going to do 3-5 years out is a very important conversation. He knows and appreciates how much Mr. Ford has done with the school. Ehen are we going to realize that once a year they voter. Whether or not Chatham wants two kick into the budget each year is, not going to work for the tax payers. To think that Chatham is going to vote to give us \$5,000,000.00 to \$7,000,000.00 a year for the next 3-5 years, and they're going to support that, on a Town Meeting level is foolish. They are not going to support that. We need to start the process, of letting somebody else on the state level get involved and say, is it ok that Harwich is ultimately going to pay 90% and Chatham's got to pay 10%. This has been a one year conversation and it will continue to be a one year conversation. That 600,000 or 550,000 number for this year in this budget, makes a huge difference to our tax payers. He feels they Board should make a multiyear decision.

Mr. Ballantine offered a comment on the Free Cash. It was reduced in 2018 and that is an important discussion to have. It also needs to be tied into the Capital Plan. We should send a message to Chatham for the May Town Meeting that we need a long term fix.

Mr. MacAskill asked if it's too late for a warrant article and for our tax payers to weigh in this year and not rely on a full Town Meeting. Can we get something on the warrant to spell out what's happening?

Town Administrator Powers replied technically yes. The Town Meeting Warrant is a creation of the Selectmen, you set the agenda and add to it the articles that you see fit. The rub comes in on this particular topic. Harwich could not conceive of a warrant article that would impact upon the regional agreement, solely. There are articles that could be created to get a sense of where the public is on this issue but not where it pertains to the regional agreement. Any changes to that require a concurrence at

both town meetings. It also requires prior approval from the Department of Early and Secondary Education. So yes, we could use a warrant article to gauge the sentiment of the public but not to impact upon the Regional Agreement Assessment process.

Mr. Howell says that even a policy wouldn't make him feel all that comfortable because he has seen that certain Boards have less discipline than other Boards. He feels that before accepting anything more on rules taxes is tying it specifically to an obligation by the Town's people. One thing people are forgetting is, it's not just our taxes, living here is really expensive. We have to recognize that we have to figure out a way to rein things in and adjust it in terms of things that are affordable. Every opportunity we have had over the last 15 years, we've dumped something into the General Fund and then spent it. The Board needs to discipline themselves so that if we get additional money, it should translate into something tangible to the tax payers that live here all year. It shouldn't just be for Town Meeting time when we have some Free Cash and we find ways to spend it. That's not a sustainable way to operate.

Mr. Ballantine asked, if we approve the submittal of the budget tonight, what happens if we are able to reduce the amount of Monomoy expenses, clarifying that the number can be changed. Regarding the school, our next agenda item is to look at the \$507,000.00 hoping that there will be a strong motion requesting support from Chatham on that payment. He agrees there should be an article at Town Meeting addressing what direction the voters would like to take. There were 3 different options considered.

Chairman of the Finance Committee Jon Chorey commended Town Administrator Powers on the budget and the tremendous job that he has been tasked to do. He also spoke to the Department Head meetings that are traditionally held in March. That is an important meeting to have.

Town Administrator Powers spoke to the Department Head Meeting which was typically a daylong event. March 7th was the last meeting with the full Board of Selectmen, the full Finance Committee, with many staff members in a room with many people from the public and department heads there. The question remains, is there a desire to continue that process. He knows there is from the Administration, the Finance Committee and from Department Heads. It would be a time intensive, and Go to Meeting driven exercise. Staff is ready, willing and able to modify schedules if it would be over a series of days. It will be broadcast on channel 18, the public will have ample opportunities to engage in the discussion either as its happening or on replay on You Tube or Channel 18. He asked the Board how they would like him to proceed with planning that. It could be broken up to a couple of Saturday mornings.

Mr. MacAskill feels we should have the meeting, it will prove to be challenging this year given the way we have to do it and agrees splitting it up over 2 Saturdays is a good idea. Mr. McManus, Mr. Ford, Mr. Howell and Mr. Chorey all agree with that the 2 Saturdays.

Town Administrator Powers suggested Saturdays March 6th and 13th. Mr. MacAskill is unavailable March 6th. March 13th and March 20th are also possible dates as there are no charter mandated activities before the 22nd. Mr. Ballantine is unavailable the 20th and suggested a Saturday doing smaller departments as part of a regular meeting and larger departments on separate dates. Deadlines were also discussed. The meeting dates are as follows: Monday evening, March 8th for the smaller departments, Friday morning March 12th and Saturday morning March 13th for the remaining departments.

Mr. McManus moved to approve the budget that was submitted tonight as our initial referral to the Finance Committee. 2nd by Mr. Howell. The vote was 5-0-0 with Mr. McManus, Mr. MacAskill, Mr. Ford, Mr. Howell and Mr. Ballantine voting aye by roll call.

B. Discussion and possible vote- Monomoy Regional School District Budget Regarding Potential Alternative Assessment for FY 2022

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Mr. Ballantine hopes to write a motion to inform Monomoy and Chatham of our desire for them to help on what we're calling the subsidy. It is not necessary to discuss the overall agreement at this point, there are many people working that language.

Town Administrator Powers refers to the meeting of the Harwich Board of Selectmen, the Chatham Board of Selectmen and the Monomoy Regional School Committee that was held on Wednesday, February 10th. The meeting was a deeper dive into the present situation, the assessment. The chasm grows wider to the detriment of the Town of Harwich and the tax payers in Harwich. We know that the Regional School Committee is going to take this up again. Following any potential action by the School Committee, the Chatham Select Board and the Harwich Select Board can then take reactive action. However, this Board has expressed a desire to revisit as a Harwich Board of Selectmen, to engage in a discussion on where we are. He clarifies that he was one of the first to use an imprecise term of subsidy, he will endeavor to get a better word for that. This is not because Harwich is in poor condition or because we don't have our financial house in order. We are looking for a more rational approach to how we build our budgets. To call this a subsidy or say that the Town of Harwich is looking for help, is not the case. The net effect for FY 2022 is about \$507,000.00 and that represents the delta between how much more Harwich's assessment went up how much more Chatham's assessment went into the negative. It is a disconnect in the assessment process.

Mr. Howell follows up and says there is a subsidy going on but it's not them subsidizing us. There is a school which is a building, there's overhead in it, you've got an administration for that building that only has one classroom running in each of the grade levels. If anybody is subsidizing anything it would be Harwich subsidizing the luxury of having a school that only has one classroom for each grade level. He understands what the agreement said but this is a problem that's only going to fester. Once those kids are out of the Elementary School and in the Middle School process, the ever dwindling enrollment in Chatham is going to become our obligation in terms of the funding formula. That was never contemplated. He disagrees about a warrant article of any kind. He is totally prepared to vote against the school budget unless something breaks. It's a question of fairness, not a question of subsidy.

Mr. Ballantine agrees that we need a long term fix and is hoping to arrive at a motion that signals and informs Chatham that we request financial support of the \$507,000.00 to continue the payment of the Elementary School.

Mr. MacAskill agrees, so moved but it should be worded differently.

Mr. Howell 2nds because something has to happen now. Taking no action is an action because it punches a hole in our budget. He doesn't begrudge the taxpayers of Chatham to have their own Elementary School if they want that option. But if they want to keep it open, it is a burden on the relationship between Harwich and Chatham. We'll pay for our school, you pay for yours until they're blended in the Middle School. It's not a handout, it's just the recognition of the overhead cost, if you want to keep it open.

Mr. Ford states that the key members on that Board need to take this more seriously. They're trying to roll it out another year and hope the process takes quite a while, this is a situation of the percentage of the student body coming from Chatham that we can't just let go by this year. He said that to them, in the subcommittee meetings and got a half-baked answer to it. He feels it is a good idea to send our sentiment to them that we are not going to sit by on this. We want them to address this in a serious fashion. If they don't, we need to figure out what we are going to do.

Mr. McManus comments that the growing problem that's being caused by the diminishing enrollment is surfacing with the issue of the Elementary School. But as Mr. Howell indicated, as those children move into Middle School and High School, it's going to magnify. The basic issue is that when we joined the two school systems, we figured for each town alone to carry a school program. There are certain built in costs that wouldn't be swayed by the number of students you have. As the student body in Chatham falls, more and more of that base cost is being shifted to Harwich. That needs to be segregated out in some fashion. The actual costs that are pupil based needs to be assessed on that basis.

Mr. MacAskill comments that he will stand with Mr. Howell on a no vote on their budget as it stands now. As much as he appreciated the School Committee coming forward on this problem and supporting the Town of Harwich, it is irrelevant to him. We have watched increases and increases over the years with a promise. That promise hasn't come to fruition. This year, the way it is being presented, he will absolutely vote no on the school budget. At some point the hand has to be forced. We can't expect to have an elementary school unless the tax payers can afford it. The Town of Harwich cannot continue to pay for their elementary school. Regionalization was a great idea, but we should have thought about this. As this compounds and Harwich is paying 90% of the school district, Chatham houses are selling on the low end for one million and their assessments continue to climb. They are not going to get school age kids. The burden is going to continue to shift to Harwich. We need to take a strong stance now and let the other players get involved, meaning the state, meaning the School Committee, meaning if the Town of Harwich and our voters don't approve the budget it's going to force their hand anyway. This budget is going to hurt us and Chatham needs to step up. They're not going to save us 38.5 or 38.7 million on a high school. We could have gone it alone, the same programs were available on financing on the building. He does not believe for a second that we saved 38.5 or 38.7 million as one of the Selectmen said at a meeting two weeks ago.

Mr. Ballantine moved that the Board sends a message to Chatham that we need their consideration and financial support on the \$507,000.00 this year to continue payment on the Elementary School. 2nd by Mr. Howell. The vote was 5-0-0 with Mr. Howell, Mr. MacAskill, Mr. Ford, Mr. McManus and Mr. Ballantine voting aye by roll call.

#### C. Ongoing Discussion-Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP)

1. CWMP Revision Strategy
2. Chatham Sewer Coordination]

Town Administrator Powers explains that it is a repeat of the last agenda and explained why. It repeats this week to remind the Board of the discussion with them last week, we continue to work on it, and will be bringing update on these. We will also be coming forward in the future for a broader calendar. Their group of 5 had a meeting today. He explained that there are going to be some stand-alone articles related to potential funding mechanisms. They will follow up on the revision strategy for CWMP and come back with the deliverables that the Board gave them last week.

Mr. Howell noted that the other 3 Selectmen are not totally aware of all these comings and goings. As we are having a meeting again on Friday, he states publicly that they are in no way near voting the final position of the Board because it hasn't been discussed. What they talk about on Friday is that there is nothing new to report.

#### **TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

Just a reminder to the Board and to the licensees, the seasonal liquor licenses packet materials have been assembled and will be mailed out at the end of the week. That is to guard against

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the ABCC's strict requirement that nothing be signed other than in the month of March. As they are received by the Administration Office they will be brought before the Board for renewal. Report concluded.

### **SELECTMEN'S REPORT**

Mr. MacAskill refers to an email sent to the Board by Mr. Ballantine. He thanks Mr. Ballantine for his time in assembling that document and as we have concerns we share as much of that information as we can. It's basically an overview of what the Board has been discussing. He requested a few things from the budget for future agenda items, He would like to add to the agenda, what was a controversial topic but is no longer. There is a pending law suit on the road. A warrant article is needed this year or next year on taking the county roads. The county no longer owns roads and Selectmen Howell pointed out that the Town never accepted the road from the county. We have several county roads in the Town of Harwich. Route 39 is one of them and we have not accepted those roads as a town. He feels we should accept those roads from the county so we don't have to have that conversation ever again. He would also ask to have a conversation about petition articles, specifically in banning things. He would like the conversation to be on whether or not it is legal or not legal for those to go to the ballot and be approved at the ballot. Given COVID-19 and lack of participation in Town Meetings, it would make sense to get a wider number of people to weigh in on some of these petition articles and let the town's people, at the ballot, decide if they support it or not. He would like to add those two conversations to the agenda in the near future if possible.

Mr. Ballantine suggests that we may need some legal guidance on those issues.

Town Administrator Powers comments that the mechanism for road takings is rather simple given by how it has been laid out by the Commonwealth over the years. It is possible that it could appear in your draft warrant. Regarding petition articles, that does warrant a broader discussion. While the Town cannot ban or prevent petition articles, there are a number of tools that municipal governments can use to counter the effects of them so that the Town Meeting has a chance to consider proposals.

Mr. Howell responds to the first subject that Mr. MacAskill brought up, there is a closed loop that concerns him. It represents the Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan as being a rationale for growth but the CWMP itself assumes things that we are trying to get at, whether or not they are still current assumptions. Before we start using something that has assumptions in it to create, we need to go back to the beginning, there is no way that you can make an assumption about a village center when it's been 7 years since that statement has been made. There's been no action to bring it to a Town Meeting. It really needs to be where we left it before the email that we've got to take a clean sheet of paper and see where we are, what the zoning is and what kind of growth we have given the zoning. The CWMP has to be revised. If we go to a Town Meeting, there's linkage between, we want you to include some robust growth in this and by the way that'll cost you this much in sewerage. The assumption can't be that we throw in the possibility of something that's not even on the horizon.

Mr. Ballantine explains that he put that together for the Board to see what the discussions have been in the past. He mentions in the email that all of these things need to be discussed.

Mr. Ford-no report

Mr. McManus-no report

Mr. Ballantine-no report

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Mr. MacAskill moved to adjourn, 2nd by Mr. Howell. The vote 5-0-0 with Mr. MacManus, Mr. Ford, Mr. MacAskill, Mr. Howell and Mr. Ballantine voting aye by roll call.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith R. Moldstad  
Recording Secretary

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