

**Town of Needham
Select Board
Minutes for Tuesday, December 5, 2023
Powers Hall
and
Via ZOOM
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89068374046>**

6:33 p.m. Call to Order:

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

6:33 p.m. Town Manager:

American Rescue Plan Act Funding Update

Ms. Fitzpatrick reported that \$130,000 remains available to be reallocated. Major projects are out to bid or almost out to bid. The plan is to use all the funds available, and any remaining funds at the end of 2024 will be put towards remaining projects.

Stormwater By-Law Working Group

Ms. Fitzpatrick noted that work has continued on updating the Stormwater By-Law due to the requirements in both water quality and stormwater capacity. The proposal is to create a working by-law working towards October Town Meeting with a Select Board Member, Conservation Commission, a builder, Town engineer, Director of Conservation, Building Commissioner, and a resident. Mr. Keane volunteered to represent the Select Board.

Preliminary FY2025 – FY2029 Capital Improvement Plan

Presenters: Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager, David Davison, Deputy Town Manager/Finance, Katie King, Deputy Town Manager/Operations

Ms. Fitzpatrick reviewed the current recommendations for funding:

- A/V Updates in Powers Hall
- Library Renovation of the Young Adult Area
- School theater, Lighting, Sound and Rigging Repairs: will await MSBA decision and determine recommendation following their decision
- Claxton Field: significantly more expensive than the start due to environmental work, currently recommending funding through debt
- Electrical Vehicle Charging Stations: \$800,000 item that was not in the plan last year, currently recommending funding through cash
- High School Tennis Court Improvements: structural work including retaining walls, currently in Tier Two debt

- Infrastructure: possible to skip a year but not recommended, could use Chapter 90 as a funding source
- Quiet Zone Safety Upgrade: currently an unknown number, plan to fund through cash

Town Manager Report

Ms. Fitzpatrick reported that the Town was awarded a hybrid programming grant. The Council on Aging received approximately \$40,000 to expand its tech and tutors with the Community Council.

On December 4, the Town was well-represented at the Massachusetts State House at the 17th Annual Leading by Example Awards where Hank Haff, Director of Design and Construction, received an award for his devotion to sustainability and climate efforts. Mr. Haff was nominated by Director of Public Works Carys Lustig.

7:02 p.m. Public Comment:
No hands raised for public comment.

7:02 p.m. Public Hearing – Tax Classification:
Presenters: Board of Assessors (John Bulian, Chairperson, Michael Niden, Secretary, Arthur Tzouros), Melissa Motta, Director of Assessing, David Davison, Deputy Town Manager/Director of Finance

The Board of Assessors presented the certified valuation of property with the opportunity for public comment. Mr. Bulian began his presentation by noting the addition of Kyle Frain, Finance Assistant, who started in July 2023. Mr. Bulian also noted that he and Michael Niden were elected to Board of Assessors this past year and Arthur Tzouros, Former Board Chair, was appointed to the Board as well.

Mr. Bulian reported that land sales have been steady, while cost of construction rose necessitating an increase across the board in dwelling values. Valuation adjustments were made to bring total assessed values into compliance with the statistical standards acceptable to Massachusetts Department of Revenue. There has been an increase of 7.5% for single family residential assessments for FY 2024. There has also been an increase in overall commercial property values for FY 2024.

Ms. Cooley clarified that assessed values have increased over prior years due to the cost of the dwelling whereas in recent years this was due to the cost of the land. We are still limited to our taxes increasing to 2.5% plus new growth, therefore the result is a decrease in the rate that people see, but this does not mean that taxes have decreased. Any individual situation will vary. Mr. Bulian added that the change in value has been 7.5% but the rate has been adjusted to offset the increase, showing a net increase over the prior year of 3.21%. This increase would be over a year, not quarterly. Ms. Cooley thanked the Board for their presentation.

Motion by Mr. Keane that the Select Board establish a residential factor of 0.8917446 for the purpose of setting the fiscal year 2024 tax rates and to retain the same shift as last year.

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

7:23 p.m.

Consent Agenda:

Motion by Mr. Keane that the Select Board vote to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

1.	Approve for calendar year 2024 requests for license renewals of Restaurant – All Alcoholic Licenses for each of the following establishments (subject to receipt of required completed paperwork): • Blue Restaurant Needham LLC d/b/a Blue on Highland • Cappella LLC d/b/a Cappella • Ceed Corp d/b/a Cook Needham • Eat Farmhouse LLC d/b/a The Farmhouse • Fu Yuan, Inc. d/b/a Fuji Steak House • Fusion Cuisine, Inc. d/b/a Gari • Henry Hospitality Inc. d/b/a The James • Low and Zhang Co. d/b/a Mandarin Cuisine • Metrowest Dining LLC d/b/a The Common Room • Needham Food and Beverage LLC d/b/a The Heights • New Garden, Inc. d/b/a New Garden • Sai Restaurants, Inc. d/b/a Masala Art • Sol Soul Family Foods, LLC d/b/a Hearth Pizzeria • Spiga, LLC d/b/a Spiga
2.	Approve for calendar year 2024 request for license renewal of Restaurant – Wine and Malt Beverage License for the following establishment (subject to receipt of required completed paperwork): • French Press LLC d/b/a French Press Bakery & Café • PM Story Corporation d/b/a Little Spoon
3.	Approve for calendar year 2024 requests for license renewals of Package Stores- All Alcoholic Beverages for the following establishments (subject to receipt of required completed paperwork): • Gordon’s Fine Wines of Needham Inc. d/b/a Gordon’s Fine Wine • Innovative Distributing Concepts, LLC d/b/a Bin Ends • MDM Wine2 LLC d/b/a Vinodivino • Needham Wine & Spirits, LLC d/b/a Needham Wine & Spirits • Reveler Beverage Company, LLC d/b/a Reveler Beverage • Shivmegh LLC d/b/a Needham Center Fine Wines • Volante Farms Inc d/b/a Volante Farms

4.	Approve for calendar year 2024 request for Innholder – All Alcoholic License Renewal for the following establishments (subject to receipt of required completed paperwork): • 365 Management Company LLC d/b/a Residence Inn by Marriott Needham • Needham Lending Company LLC d/b/a Sheraton Needham Hotel
5.	Approve for calendar year 2024 requests for license renewals of Club – All Alcoholic Beverage Licenses for the following establishments (subject to receipt of required completed paperwork): • Lt. Manson Carter Post 2498 V.F.W. of U.S. • The Needham Golf Club Inc. • Village Club Building Association Inc. d/b/a The Village Club
6.	Approve for calendar year 2024 requests for license renewals of Common Victualer Licenses for the following establishments (subject to receipt of required completed paperwork): • 1056 Gyro and Kebab House Corp. d/b/a Gyro and Kebab House • 365 Management Company LLC d/b/a Residence Inn by Marriott Needham • A New Leaf LLC d/b/a A New Leaf • Bagels’ Best, Inc. d/b/a Bagels’ Best Bakery Café • Blue on Highland, LLC d/b/a Blue on Highland • Boston Bread LLC d/b/a Panera Bread • Capella LLC d/b/a Cappella • Ceed Corp. d/b/a Cook Needham • Chapel Street Corporation d/b/a Fresco • Coffee and Fresh Bagels Inc. d/b/a Café Fresh Bagel • K & K Pie Company, Inc. d/b/a Domino’s Pizza • ND Donuts d/b/a Dunkin’ (1203 Highland Avenue) • ND Donuts d/b/a Dunkin’ (260 Chestnut Street) • ND Donuts d/b/a Dunkin’ (399 Great Plain Avenue) • French Press LLC d/b/a French Press Bakery & Café • Fu Yuan, Inc. d/b/a Fuji Steak House • Fusion Cuisine d/b/a Gari • H & B Pizza, Inc. d/b/a Sweet Tomatoes Pizza • Henry Hospitality Inc. d/b/a The James • International House of Pizza Inc. d/b/a Needham House of Pizza • Low and Zhang Co. d/b/a Mandarin Cuisine • Needham Food and Beverage LLC d/b/a The Heights • Needham Lending Co LLC d/b/a Sheraton Needham • Niki Corp. d/b/a Town House of Pizza • North Hill Inc. d/b/a North Hill Café • Sai Restaurant, Inc. d/b/a Masala Art • Shallots Needham Inc d/b/a Sweet Boba • Sol Soul Family Foods LLC d/b/a Hearth Pizzeria • Spiga, LLC d/b/a Spiga • Starbucks Corporation d/b/a Starbucks Coffee

	• Subway of Needham LLC d/b/a Subway • TH McCoy Restaurant Group, LLC d/b/a McDonald's • The Needham Golf Club, Inc • Treat LLC d/b/a Treat Cupcake Bar • Village Club Building Association Inc. d/b/a The Village Club • Volante Farms Inc. d/b/a Volante Farms • Yeat, Inc. d/b/a Sweet Basil
7.	Approve for calendar year 2024 the following requests for Class II Used Car Dealer Licenses (subject to receipt of required completed paperwork): • Auto International Ltd. • Center Automotive • Chestnut Motors • Copley Motorcars Corp. • Needham Service Center
8.	Approve for calendar year 2024 requests for various license renewals as detailed below for the following establishments (subject to receipt of required completed paperwork): • Needham Lending Co LLC d/b/a Sheraton Needham – Innkeeper License • Babson College – Lodging License • Blue on Highland, LLC d/b/a Blue on Highland – Seven Day Entertainment License • Henry Hospitality Inc. d/b/a The James – Seven Day Entertainment License • Sol Soul Family Foods, LLC d/b/a Hearth Pizzeria – Seven Day Entertainment License • Sai Restaurant, Inc. d/b/a Masala Art – Seven Day Entertainment License • Needham Lending Co LLC d/b/a Sheraton Needham – Seven Day Entertainment License • Ceed Corp. d/b/a Cook Needham – Seven Day Entertainment License • The Needham Golf Club Inc. – Weekday Entertainment License
9.	Accept the following donations to the Needham Free Public Library: • From Maxim Tulebaev, <i>Needham Public Library</i>, acrylic on canvas, donated by the artist (no estimated value); • <i>Tenacity in Children and Handbook of Resiliency in Children</i>, by Sam Goldstein and Robert Brooks, Evan Haller (estimated total value \$175), donated by one of the authors, Sam Goldstein; • <i>The Lioness of Boston</i>, by Emily Franklin (estimated value \$29), donated by the author; • <i>A History of Boston</i>, by Daniel Dain (estimated value \$55), donated by the author; • \$1,000 from the Hazard Family Foundation, for the permanent donation fund; • \$5,000 from Ann MacFate for the Ann MacFate Fund for the Visually Impaired; and • \$7,963.57 from Tom Harkins, for the creation of a trust fund named in his honor.

10.*	In accordance with Section 20B of the Town Charter, and upon the recommendation of the Town Manager and the Personnel Board, adopt a revised classification and compensation plan (Schedule A) for FY2024.
11.	Accept the following donation to the Needham Health Division: • \$2,500 for the Needham Domestic Violence Action Committee (DVAC) from the FRIENDS of Needham Board of Health & Traveling Meals Program
12.	Accept the following donations to Needham Youth and Family Services: • Two grants from the MetroWest Health Foundation in the amount of \$7,500 each to be used to support clinical interns; and • \$200 gift card from Wegman's to be used towards future programs
13.	Accept the following donation to the Needham Council on Aging: • A hearing device from the Needham Commission on Disability under retired NCOD member Babs Moss's name
14.	Accept the following donation made to the Needham Community Revitalization Trust Fund: • \$500 from Carol DeLemos
15.	Accept the following donation to Needham Parks and Forestry Division: • Planters with winter greens assortment worth an estimated value of \$538.50 from the Needham Garden Center and Copley Motor Cars to be planted in Patrolmans Plaza

7:24 p.m. Needham Power Choice:
Presenters: Paul Gromer, Peregrine Group and Marlana Patton, Peregrine Group

Ms. Cooley introduced Mr. Gromer and Ms. Patton of the Peregrine Group and reviewed the potential implementation of a municipal electric aggregation agreement for the Town. This would allow the Town to make progress on carbon goals by increasing the green power in the Town.

Ms. Patton introduced Needham Power Choice and the Aggregation Plan and explained that it is a municipal electricity aggregation program, which is a form of group electricity purchasing. This presentation is to help the public understand the Aggregation Plan, which outlines how Needham Power Choice will function. Public comments on the Aggregation Plan will be accepted until January 5, 2024. The document itself will be submitted after this 30-day period of public comment.

Ms. Patton outlined the reasons why residents may want to participate. Needham Power Choice will offer competitive, stable prices, consumer protections, and more electricity from renewable sources. While Eversource will continue to be the electric utility in the Town of Needham and will deliver electricity to residents, Needham Power Choice would provide an option for electricity supply. In a municipal electricity aggregation, the Town signs a contract with an electricity supplier that you can benefit from. Eversource continues to deliver electricity, but Needham buys cleaner electricity from a supplier that it chooses.

Ms. Patton outlined that the next steps in the process are to go through the regulatory process, receive approval, and go out to bid in order to determine how much the extra renewable energy will cost. Further information can be found by visiting www.NeedhamMa.gov or www.NeedhamPowerChoice.com. Hard copies of the Aggregation Plan are available at the Office of the Town Manager.

Ms. Cooley asked a clarifying question to ensure that residents would not be committed to an increased price after the regulatory process. Ms. Patton responded that the Town is not committed until a contract is signed, therefore it is possible to go out to bid again. Ms. Cooley asked how many other towns are going through the regulatory process. There are currently twenty towns whose applications are currently pending before the Department of Public Utilities. Many others are preparing to file over the next few months.

Ms. Cooley thanked the presenters and noted that it is the recommendation of the Climate Action Planning Committee that the Town move forward with this process.

7:51 p.m.

Board Discussion:

Indigenous People's Day Policy Vote:

The Select Board adopted a goal to hold a public hearing and determine if the Town will change Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day (Goal #1, Initiative #6). Staff have researched recent decisions on other local communities and provided options for the Board's consideration. A public hearing was held on November 28, 2023. Ms. Cooley reported that the Select Board has received quite a few emails since the public hearing that have been overwhelmingly in favor of a change from Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day as well as several emails in favor of celebrating both Columbus Day and Indigenous People's Day. Ms. Cooley reiterated her comments that the initial celebrations of Columbus Day reflected a pride in the progress of America rather than Christopher Columbus himself and that he was a difficult character to defend.

Mr. Keane offered his thoughts, noting that Christopher Columbus was heavily criticized by his contemporaries for the atrocities he committed. Mr. Keane agreed with a change to Indigenous People's Day.

Ms. Dowd discussed how our holidays and monuments are statements of our values, and our values today are not the same as those of the early twentieth century. Honoring indigenous people and their contributions is the appropriate response at this time. Ms. Dowd added that she would support something in honor of Italian heritage since that was the original motivation for Columbus Day, without naming Columbus the individual, as he does not reflect our values as a Town.

Ms. Frail explained that as circumstances change, and that we must revisit the stories we are teaching and that the reasons for establishing Columbus Day do not hold today. The circumstances have also changed for indigenous people, and we

have not addressed this sufficiently. Ms. Frail supported changing Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day and revisiting whether it is appropriate to institute a day to another ethnic group at another time.

Mr. Nelson reiterated the points made by other Select Board Members, emphasizing the lack of recognition for indigenous people and their contributions. He supported changing Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day and revisiting celebrating Italian heritage in some other way at another time.

Ms. Cooley thanked Select Board Members for their contributions and recognized that some residents in Town will feel a loss as this change occurs. She stated that the Select Board is open to suggestions for how to recognize the positive contributions of immigrants to Needham and the United States.

Motion by Ms. Frail that the Select Board vote to replace official observance of Columbus Day with Indigenous People's Day.

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

Committee Reports:

Mr. Keane reported on two flood meetings he attended this morning. The DPW has been very responsive, and it is appreciated.

Ms. Dowd reported on the Oversight Committee on the Needham Housing Authority Project. Needham Housing Authority gave a very thorough presentation of their plans, including financing and the role that the Town financing will play in attracting money from State and Federal governments. The Committee will move forward with oversight of the money that the Town has already allocated to this totaling \$1.4 million and continue education on the process of financing public housing in Massachusetts. Additionally, the Needham Housing Authority is currently in negotiations with the Cambridge Housing Authority on a development agreement.

8:10 p.m.

Adjourn:

Motion by Ms. Frail that the Select Board vote to adjourn the Select Board meeting of Tuesday, December 5, 2023.

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

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

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

The next Select Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 19, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.