

State of Rhode Island

County of Washington

In Hopkinton on the fourth day of April 2022 A.D. the said meeting was called to order by Town Council President Stephen Moffitt, Jr. at 6:15 P.M. in the Town Hall Meeting Room, 1 Town House Road, Hopkinton, RI 02833.

PRESENT: Stephen Moffitt, Jr., Sharon Davis, Robert Marvel; Scott Bill Hirst, Michael Geary; Town Solicitor Stephen Sypole; Town Manager Brian Rosso; Town Clerk Elizabeth Cook-Martin.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR HIRST AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR MARVEL TO CONVENE IN OPEN SESSION AND RECESS TO EXECUTIVE SESSION UNDER: RIGL SEC. 42-46-5(A)(2) LITIGATION.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Hirst, Geary, Marvel

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR HIRST AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR DAVIS TO RECONVENE IN OPEN SESSION.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Hirst, Geary, Marvel

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

Council President Moffitt reported that no votes were taken in Executive Session.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR HIRST AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR MARVEL to Seal the minutes of the Executive Session.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Hirst, Geary, Marvel

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

The meeting opened with a moment of silent meditation and a salute to the Flag.

CALL TO ORDER – ROLL CALL

Councilors Moffitt, Davis, Marvel, Hirst and Geary announced they were present.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No one spoke during the first public comment period.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Council President Moffitt announced the Chariho Budget Referendum would be held tomorrow, April 5, 2022 with voting to occur at the Hopkinton Town Hall from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA ORDER

There was no vote taken and no concerns voiced over the agenda order.

CONSENT AGENDA

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR HIRST AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR DAVIS TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS FOLLOWS: Approve Town Council Meeting Minutes of March 21, 2022; Approve Petitions of National Grid-Verizon New England, Inc. for Joint Pole locations on High Street, Diamond Hill Road and Canonchet Road.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Hirst, Geary, Marvel

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

VACANCIES & APPOINTMENTS:

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Caleb Grant had applied to be a member of the Communications Committee and had been interviewed.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR HIRST AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR GEARY TO APPOINT CALEB GRANT TO THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Hirst, Geary, Marvel

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

Etta Zasloff had applied to be a member of the Communications Committee and had been interviewed.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR DAVIS AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR MARVEL TO APPOINT ETTA ZASLOFF TO THE

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Hirst, Geary, Marvel

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

Sarah Steverman had applied to be a member of the Communications Committee and had been interviewed.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR HIRST AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR MARVEL TO APPOINT SARAH STEVERMAN TO THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Hirst, Geary, Marvel

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

ZONING BOARD OF REVIEW

Mr. Sposato had submitted a letter requesting to be reappointed to the Zoning Board of Review.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR HIRST AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR DAVIS TO REAPPOINT RONNIE SPOSATO TO THE ZONING BOARD OF REVIEW.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Hirst, Geary, Marvel

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

Mr. Heil had submitted a letter requesting to be reappointed as the alternate to the Zoning Board of Review.

Councilor Hirst indicated that he would be voting against reappointing Mr. Heil for he felt that Mr. Heil did not work well with people and had shown a lack of respect for the Potter Hill Dam Information Committee. Councilor Davis noted that Mr. Heil had written letters to residents asking them to complete the well survey and she believed he did a good job. Councilor Hirst suggested that you

also have to have an ability to work with people. Councilor Geary would support him as he had volunteered his time to serve the town.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR DAVIS AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR MARVEL TO REAPPOINT CLIFFORD HEIL JR. AS ALTERNATE TO THE ZONING BOARD OF REVIEW.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Geary, Marvel

OPPOSED: Hirst

SO VOTED

Mr. York had submitted a letter requesting to be reappointed to the Zoning Board of Review.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR HIRST AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR GEARY TO REAPPOINT JOSEPH YORK TO THE ZONING BOARD OF REVIEW.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Hirst, Geary, Marvel

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

RECREATION COMMISSION

Mr. LaBounty had submitted a letter requesting to be reappointed to the Recreation Commission.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR HIRST AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR MARVEL TO REAPPOINT MATTHEW LABOUNTY TO THE RECREATION COMMISSION.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Hirst, Geary, Marvel

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

Mrs. Cook had submitted a letter requesting to be reappointed to the Recreation Commission.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR HIRST AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR DAVIS TO REAPPOINT CHRISTINE COOK TO THE RECREATION COMMISSION.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Hirst, Geary, Marvel

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

NEW BUSINESS:

PROPOSED LEGISLATION HB 6676

This matter had been scheduled to discuss, consider and possibly vote to oppose proposed legislation HB 6676 Relating to Taxation- Levy and Assessment of Local Taxes. Tax Assessor Tiana Zartman was present.

Mrs. Zartman explained that HB 6676 proposed that the land located beneath the solar arrays cannot be reclassified, revalued or reassessed due to the presence of renewable energy sources. There is an allowance to reclassify farmland to the classification and the tax that predated the farmland classification. In essence, the Town would be limited to taxing the land under the solar array at \$3,000 per acre and there would be no allowance to change any other land value. Mrs. Zartman indicated that she went through each approved solar project from 2018 to 2022 using the estimated tax rate, and it would equate to approximately \$450,000 that Hopkinton would have to refund; this did not include any potential or future investments that Hopkinton was expecting to receive from solar. She noted that this legislation did not address forestry or open space, which would continue being valued at the current assessed levels - forests at \$115 per acre and open space at \$2,500 per acre. The current residential per acre value is \$3,000. Currently, when a solar project is approved, that land is valued at \$15,000 per acre; once they commence construction on the project the land is valued at \$22,500 per acre; and, when the project is online and up-and-running the land is valued at \$45,000 per acre.

Councilor Hirst stated this was outrageous for when solar companies were promoting their solar projects they led everyone to believe that this would be a financial benefit to taxpayers. This shows how dishonest those claims were or

that certainly they were not made in good faith. Councilor Hirst also noted that the attorney who presented the defeated Brushy Brook solar project was Joseph Shekarchi who is the current Speaker of the House, which is a very powerful position. He wished the Council President to send a letter opposing this bill. Councilor Davis agreed that a letter should be sent. She also noted that she had used the letter prepared by Mrs. Zartman as part of a letter she submitted to the Editor of the Westerly Sun and added that the actual revenue collected from solar projects has fallen far short of its goals. Based on an updated solar project list, between Fiscal Year 2017 and Fiscal Year 2022, we will have collected a small percentage of the projected revenues that were provided as justification for the original projects. The town has already suffered emotionally due to solar projects and now this proposed legislation would reduce our revenue even further. Paying for the refund of already collected taxes and preventing the town from increasing future solar land assessments and taxes would result in millions of dollars in lost revenues over 20 years and would require an increase in our property taxes. Clearly this was not the rosy picture presented to get these projects approved. In May 2021, the Hopkinton Town Council wrote a letter in opposition to similar bills – House Bill 5634 and Senate Bill 0832 – relating to taxation of renewable energy. Councilor Davis proposed the Council edit that letter of opposition to greatly emphasize our horror at this second attempt to defund our town in favor of outside speculators and developers and send it again to the Rhode Island legislature. She also urged all Rhode Island towns that have approved solar projects to wake up and also send letters in opposition to the reduction of their incomes. Council President Moffitt also wished to include Mrs. Zartman’s memo with their letter. Councilor Geary noted that two of the legislators proposing this bill have represented solar companies. Councilor Hirst stated that he was very concerned about this bill passing and wished to implore the citizens of Hopkinton to contact their representatives and even the Governor’s office so it can be killed.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR HIRST AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR MOFFITT TO SUPPORT THE SENDING OF A LETTER IN OPPOSITION TO HB 6676, WITH CHANGES AS PROPOSED BY

COUNCILOR DAVIS AND TO INCLUDE THE MEMO WRITTEN BY TAX ASSESSOR TIANA ZARTMAN.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Hirst, Geary, Marvel

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

PROPOSED ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS TO CHAPTER 17 ARTICLE II

The amendments to Chapter 17, Article II – Streets, Sidewalks and Other Public Places of the Code of Ordinances of the Town of Hopkinton, as amended included proposed amendments to Division 4 – Building Numbers and Street Names and a proposed amendment to add a Division 5 - Official Street Map had been introduced and sponsored by Councilor Marvel and the hearing had been held on February 22, 2022.

Proposed amendments to Division 4 – Building Numbers and Street Names.

Clerk Cook-Martin suggested that the amendment to Division 4 as it pertained to building numbers and street names was complete after some minor adjustments were made after their most recent meeting.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR HIRST AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR MARVEL TO APPROVE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO DIVISION 4 – BUILDING NUMBERS AND STREET NAMES.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Hirst, Geary, Marvel

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

Proposed amendment to add a Division 5 - Official Street Map.

Clerk Cook-Martin noted that in speaking with Sherri Desjardins of the Building and Zoning Office, it was mentioned that Bridge Street should be removed because it is a state road and there needs to be a new street map prepared. Mr. Rosso felt that it would take a couple of weeks to update the street map. Councilor Marvel stated that the map and the list of private roads were always going to change; however, the ordinance should not change, so perhaps they

should reference the private roads as being a separate document that can change and be updated. Mr. Rosso felt that was a great idea and noted that every year they could review this and make changes as needed. Chief Palmer thanked the Council for considering this amendment and also thanked Sherri Desjardins for doing the lion's share of the work on this amendment. Mr. Rosso noted that in Section 17-147 they would add language to suggest that the list of private roads and roadways can be found on the official street map of the Town of Hopkinton located at the Town Hall and/or listed on the town's website. Councilor Marvel believed that with this wording change they would be able to vote on the amendment. It was agreed that Section 17-147 with the proposed changes would read: *The list of roadways recognized as non-town maintained private roadways in the Town of Hopkinton shall be found on the official street map located at the Hopkinton Town Hall and/or posted on the Town of Hopkinton's website.*

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR DAVIS AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR MARVEL TO APPROVE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO ADD A DIVISION 5 - OFFICIAL STREET MAP WITH AMENDMENT.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Hirst, Geary, Marvel

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

MUTUAL AID RESOLUTION – HOPKINTON AND UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

This matter had been scheduled to discuss, consider and vote to adopt an additional Mutual Aid Resolution and authorize the Hopkinton Police Chief to enter into an additional non-reciprocal, non-emergency aid agreement between the Town of Hopkinton/University of Rhode Island. Chief of Police David Palmer was present.

Chief Palmer noted that this was basically the same agreement that was done between his department and the Westerly, Charlestown and Richmond Police Departments. Chief Palmer noted that for approximately two decades Hopkinton and many other municipalities travel to URI to assist with their commencement graduation. At the Police Chief's Association it has been noted that there should

be a mutual aid agreement in place from all of the departments that assist URI. They do not assist URI very often but he felt there was a need to have this non-reciprocal, non-emergency aid agreement. Councilor Hirst wondered what Hopkinton received for doing this and Chief Palmer indicated nothing directly; however, at times URI will host law enforcement activities and the Special Olympics which was great for the community.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR HIRST AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR DAVIS TO ADOPT THE LAW ENFORCEMENT MUTUAL AID AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TOWN OF HOPKINTON AND THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND.

IN FAVOR: Moffitt, Davis, Hirst, Geary, Marvel

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

The Mutual Aid Resolution follows:

**Town of Hopkinton
State of Rhode Island**

**RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL
RELATIVE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT MUTUAL AID AGREEMENT**

Resolved, that

WHEREAS, the Rhode Island General Assembly has enacted R.I.G.L. 45-42-2 and R.I.G.L. 45-42-3, which allows the chiefs of local police departments to enter into reciprocal non-emergency aid agreements with other local police departments which share jurisdictional lines; and

WHEREAS, any such agreement entered into by a local police department must be approved by the town council by resolution in order to be effective; and

WHEREAS, the borders of the Town of Hopkinton with neighboring towns and cities are irregular and disjointed, and in some criminal and traffic cases, charges have been dismissed due to jurisdictional issues; and

WHEREAS, the establishment of mutual aid agreements with neighboring police departments will result in improved services to the community, clear guidelines of jurisdictional authority and a better relationship with our neighboring police departments; and

WHEREAS, a mutual aid agreement has been developed for the **Town of Hopkinton and the University of Rhode Island Police Department** and is ready for review by the Town Council; and

WHEREAS, this is a matter of importance to the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Hopkinton.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Town Council hereby approves the mutual aid agreement between the **Hopkinton Police Department** and the **University of Rhode Island Police Department**, in the form attached hereto.

The Town Clerk of the Town of Hopkinton is directed to forward a copy of this Resolution to the Chief of the Hopkinton Police Department and the members of the Town Council of the Town of Hopkinton, to the Chief of the University of Rhode Island Police Department and to the Superintendent of the Rhode Island State Police.

The Resolution shall take effect upon passage.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No one spoke during the second public comment period.

ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR HIRST AND SECONDED BY
COUNCILOR MARVEL TO ADJOURN.

SO VOTED

Elizabeth J. Cook-Martin

Town Clerk

Marita D. Murray

Deputy Town Clerk