

State of Rhode Island

County of Washington

In Hopkinton on the twenty-first day of February 2023 A.D. the said meeting was called to order by Town Council President Michael Geary at 7:00 P.M. in the Town Hall Meeting Room, 1 Town House Road, Hopkinton, RI 02833.

PRESENT: Michael Geary, Scott Bill Hirst, Stephen Moffitt, Jr.; Town Manager Brian Rosso and Town Clerk Marita Murray. Solicitor Sypole attended remotely. Sharon David and Robert Burns were absent.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR HIRST AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR MOFFITT TO RECESS TO EXECUTIVE SESSION UNDER: RIGL SEC. 42-46-5(A)(1) - INTERVIEWS: BOARDS & COMMISSIONS: TAX BOARD OF REVIEW.

POLL VOTE:

IN FAVOR: Geary, Hirst, Moffitt

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

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

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR HIRST AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR MOFFITT TO RECONVENE IN OPEN SESSION AND SEAL THE MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE SESSION.

IN FAVOR: Geary, Hirst, Moffitt

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order with a moment of silent meditation and a salute to the Flag.

ROLL CALL

Councilors Hirst, Moffitt and Geary announced they were present.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Joseph Moreau of Old Depot Road stated that at the last Town Council meeting of February 6, 2023, there were some issues with the monitoring equipment and microphones, and he had some trouble hearing. He noted that a resident had spoken at length and raised some valid points concerning a proposed housing development. Almost everyone who spoke was asked to move along and it appeared that one resident who called in was not allowed to finish her comments; she was under the impression that she was being cut off. After the meeting Councilor Geary indicated that he felt bad about that caller and asked Mr. Moreau to speak with the resident, which he did. Mr. Moreau advised that he had reviewed the last three Town Council agendas and noted that there have been many discussions concerning housing issues. At one of the Planning Board meetings they were speaking about housing and what other towns were doing and the Board stated that they wished our Council was involved in that. Mr. Moreau advised the Board that the Council had been discussing these issues and Councilor Moffitt called in and explained that they have sent out letters in this regard. On another note, he heard that the Richmond Town Council stated that at a prior meeting they had a public forum in the beginning of their meeting which took up most of their meeting. He believed that some of the Councilors, especially Michael Geary, has taken some unfair criticism over the lack of what we have done over this housing development and a lot of the posts on Facebook are untrue and people should reach out and ask for some information.

Etta Zasloff of Karen Drive wished to express her gratitude to Robert Marvel for applying to be on the Communications Committee. She felt he would be a great addition. She also asked about the progress on the new website and believed it was supposed to be finished in March. Brian Rosso noted that he would have to speak with IT Director, Jeff Frenette, regarding the website but felt it would be possibly April before it was up-and-running. Ms. Zasloff noted that the Communications Committee would next meet when the new website was ready to be reviewed.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA ORDER

There were no changes to the agenda order.

CONSENT AGENDA

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR MOFFITT AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR HIRST TO TABLE THE CONSENT AGENDA TO MARCH 6, 2023.

IN FAVOR: Geary, Hirst, Moffitt

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

VACANCIES AND APPOINTMENTS

Communications Committee

This matter was scheduled to discuss, consider and possible vote to appoint Robert Marvel to the Communications Committee.

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

IN FAVOR: Geary, Hirst, Moffitt

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

Tax Board of Review

This matter was scheduled to discuss, consider and possible vote to accept the resignation of Michael Brocato from the Tax Board of Review.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR HIRST AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR MOFFITT TO ACCEPT THE RESIGNATION OF MICHAEL BROCATO FROM THE TAX BOARD OF REVIEW WITH REGRET.

IN FAVOR: Geary, Hirst, Moffitt

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

NEW BUSINESS:

Resolution regarding Land Use and Low- and Moderate- Income Housing

This matter was scheduled to discuss, consider and possibly vote to approve a Resolution regarding Land Use and Low- and Moderate-Income Housing.

Council President Moffitt noted that this was an issue where they needed to have a lengthy discussion, but he wished to schedule that discussion for the next meeting; however, the Resolution should still be voted on.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR MOFFITT AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR HIRST TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION REGARDING LAND USE AND LOW- AND MODERATE-INCOME HOUSING.

IN FAVOR: Geary, Hirst, Moffitt

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

RESOLUTION OF THE HOPKINTON TOWN COUNCIL
IN SUPPORT OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT & LAND USE

WHEREAS, Housing continues to be a priority at all levels of government in Rhode Island; and

WHEREAS, Municipal leaders stand together in welcoming the development of responsible housing in our communities and are interested in working with stakeholders across the state to improve housing opportunities for Rhode Islanders; and

WHEREAS, Local leaders agree zoning and land use should remain a local decision; and

WHEREAS, as members of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, we supported the establishment of both the Land-Use and Low- and Moderate-Income Housing study commissions to identify ways to help cities and towns meet their obligations under the Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Act to ensure that at least 10% of their housing stock qualifies as affordable; and

WHEREAS, there have been challenges with implementing changes to state law that were approved in the last legislative session; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town Council of the Town of Hopkinton strongly encourages the state to work with cities and towns to encourage housing construction and rehabilitation, and remove barriers to housing, such as infrastructure improvements; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, to accomplish our housing goals, municipalities need the following:

- A clear menu of innovative solutions and funding opportunities from the state that can be implemented during the winter season.
- Increased funding for infrastructure improvements and remediation, outside of federal aid opportunities.
- To preserve and promote quality of life, based on the different communities' needs and respect the local voice in land use decisions.
- Funding the implementation of programs and systems to support process improvements.
- Increased technical support and adequate funding to departments and agencies that facilitate housing growth, including the Division of Statewide Planning and Department of Housing.
- Workforce development to expand the pool of municipal planners and building and zoning officials.
- Adequate state and education aid to support the needs of residents.
- A commitment to expanding reliable transportation opportunities for residents, extending the urban service boundary; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, both Commissions ensure that they will listen to municipal leaders regarding these meaningful policy changes so they can be implemented and enforced at the local level; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town Council of the Town of Hopkinton supports the housing and land use needs identified by the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns referenced above; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Hopkinton Town Clerk transmit a copy of this Resolution to the Governor, the Speaker of the House, the Senate President, the members of the Hopkinton's state legislative delegation, and all municipalities in the State of Rhode Island.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Conservation Commission

This matter was scheduled for discussion regarding the Hopkinton Conservation Commission.

Councilor Hirst, the liaison for the Conservation Commission, indicated that the Conservation Commission currently has only three members, Gary Marsh, Dawn Spears and David Augustyn; however, it was unclear as to whether Mr. Augustyn was going to continue to be involved. Councilor Hirst was attempting to get volunteers to sit on the commission. Gary Marsh, Chairman of the Conservation Commission, was present. He noted that they needed more members and he needed a secretary. He noted that Harvey Buford had approached him many years ago and indicated that they needed a farmer on the commission. Mr. Marsh advised that they now had two farmers on the commission, he and Ms. Spears, and they needed to have diversified members who would see other things besides farm problems. Councilor Hirst felt that members of the Conservation Commission did not need to have any expertise, just an interest in the subject area and a general knowledge of what the commission did.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Joseph Moreau of Old Depot Road felt the recruitment of members for boards and commissions should be placed on the front page of the town’s website and that possibly an ad should be placed in the Westerly Sun.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

POLL VOTE:

IN FAVOR: Geary, Hirst, Moffitt

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

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

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

IN FAVOR: Geary, Hirst, Moffitt

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR HIRST AND SECONDED BY
COUNCILOR MOFFITT TO SEAL THE MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE
SESSION.

IN FAVOR: Geary, Hirst, Moffitt

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

ADJOURNMENT

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

SO VOTED

Marita D. Murray

Town Clerk