

Freetown Board of Selectmen  
Meeting Minutes  
Monday, July 25, 2022 – 6:00pm  
Police Station Community Room  
15 Memorial Drive, East Freetown, MA

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FREETOWN TOWN CLERK  
2022 AUG -9 AM 9: 29

**Call to Order**

Selectmen Trevor Matthews called the meeting to order at 6:00pm. Selectmen Jared Zager, Selectmen Carlos Lopes, Interim Town Administrator Deb Pettey, Executive Assistant Lu-Ann Souza, Freetown Vocational Education Exploratory Committee members, Will Sienkewicz, Jean Fox, Cheryl Estrella, and Superintendent Alan Strauss were also present.

**Board of Selectmen**

Discussion/possible action on the following topics:

1. Discussion, and vote whether to approve the open session meeting minutes from 6/21/22, 6/29/22, 7/11/22 & 7/14/22.
  - Motion to approve the open session meeting minutes from 6/21/22, 6/29/22, 7/11/22 & 7/14/22 was made by Selectmen Zager and seconded by Selectmen Lopes.
  - Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote.
2. Acknowledge Rainbow Workshops use of Hathaway Park on 8/22/22, 10a-1p.
  - Motion to Acknowledge Rainbow Workshops use of Hathaway Park on 8/22/22, 10a-1p was made by Selectmen Zager and seconded by Selectmen Lopes.
  - Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote.
3. Discussion and vote on whether to approve the Town of Freetown Americans with Disabilities Act Notice.
  - Motion to approve the Town of Freetown Americans with Disabilities Act Notice was made by Selectmen Zager and seconded by Selectmen Lopes.
  - Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote.
4. Discussion, and vote on whether to approve the Town of Freetown American with Disabilities Act Grievance Procedure.
  - Motion to approve the Town of Freetown American with Disabilities Act Grievance Procedure was made by Selectmen Zager and seconded by Selectmen Lopes.
  - Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote.
5. Discussion, and vote on whether to adopt the IRS increase in mileage rate of 62.5 cents per mile effective 7/1-12/31/22.
  - Motion to adopt the IRS increase in mileage rate of 62.5 cents per mile effective 7/1-12/31/22 was made by Selectmen Zager and seconded by Selectmen Lopes.

- Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote.
- 6. Discussion, and vote whether to approve ambulance abatements and write offs for June 2022 in the amount of \$187,777.75
  - Motion to approve ambulance abatements and write offs for June 2022 in the amount of \$187,777.75 was made by Selectmen Zager and seconded by Selectmen Lopes.
  - Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote.

### **Board of Health**

Discussion/possible action on the following topics:

- No topics for discussion.

### **Personnel Board**

Discussion/possible action on the following topics:

- 7. Approve the appointments of:
  - a. Michael Souza as Laborer effective 7/26/2022.
  - b. Swede Magnett to Zoning Board of Appeals effective 7/1/2022-6/30/2023.
- Motion to approve appointments a & b was made by Selectmen Matthews and seconded by Selectmen Zager.
- Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote.

### **Board of Parks Commission**

Discussion/possible action on the following topics:

- Discuss Boat Ramp Kiosk and Staffing.

Selectmen Lopes stated the kiosk has the new credit card reader it needed and is up and running. Staffing is also going smoothly. Ms. Pettey stated the staff worked 2 to 6 on Friday and Sat is an overlap as one person comes in at 8 to 2 and the other comes in 12 to 6. Sundays they both work 8 to 4. We are working on the reporting end of the kiosk.

### **Town Administrator's Report**

Discussion/possible action on the following topics:

- No topics for discussion

The Board signed the required documents.

- Motion to go into recess and return at 7pm made by Selectmen Zager and seconded by Selectmen Lopes.
- Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote

## **Board of Selectmen/Freetown Vocational Education Exploratory Committee Meeting**

Discussion/possible action on the following topics:

- Motion to open the Freetown Vocational Educational Exploratory Committee into open session was made by Jean Fox and seconded by Cheryl Estrella -
- Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote

In attendance are Jean Fox, School Committee, Will Sienkewicz Freetown Lakeville School Committee, Cheryl Estrella Parent Representative and Freetown Town Clerk, Carlos Lopes Board of Selectmen, Jared Zager Board of Selectmen, Trevor Matthews Board of Selectmen, Deborah Pettey Interim Town Administrator, Margaret French Finance Committee, Rick Medeiros Former Superintendent of Freetown Lakeville School District, Alan Strauss Superintendent of Freetown Lakeville Schools, Alex Magalhaes Superintendent of Bristol Plymouth.

Ms. Pettey started off by saying the Town of Freetown has not belonged to a Vocational School District, we do work with Bristol Agricultural High School. We previously have sent students to Old Colony and partly, we are allowed to send students to Bristol Plymouth. A couple of years ago it came up that we need to belong to a vocational school to guarantee our children a place to go. There are no guarantees we belong to a vocational school district. The committee did a search and they determined Bristol Plymouth with there offerings was the best choice for joining a vocational school. The process began in 2020. The district has to agree to let the Town of Freetown in, including the other surrounding towns that belong to that school district have to agree. Our town has to vote also to be part of the district before 12/31/22. We will have a Town Meeting in the fall. Also, Bristol Plymouth is building a new vocational school and that will have some financial commitment to our town.

8. Discussion on Freetown joining the Bristol Plymouth Regional Technical School.  
Jean Fox stated we were in an uncomfortable position for our children to be accepted and then summarily dismissed. We needed to find another option. Many years ago, we had the opportunity to become a member of Old Colony and declined to do so. Old Colony allowed us to continue sending students at a higher tuition level and send students consistently. We have maintained a steady enrollment of the years until that horrible year. The committee went out to several schools to see what the options were. It came down to Bristol Plymouth which has more opportunities for our students. Now, all vocational schools in our area are building new schools and expanding, relying on the communities to support them. Mr. Sienkewicz stated on the building project we will need to begin to educate folks on. As a town we will have to sell the value of this for our students. We can offer our students more shops and save the town money. Ms. Pettey stated the cost is a percentage based on our student enrollment. We project to have 76 to 80 students there. Our portion of the debt would be approximately 5%.

Approximately \$183 million is the overall debt. Freetown's portion might be \$15 million dollars. The guesstimates we are using is about a \$700 thousand dollars a year commitment for the bond funding. The average of \$365 thousand dollar per household is about \$130 dollars annually in a tax increase. It will have to go to town meeting and town vote. If the town does not approve a debt exclusion the \$700 thousand dollars would have to come out of our current operating budget and that is a concern because we do not have \$700 thousand dollars available in extra funds currently. There is definitely a commitment that needs to be made. The big question is whether it be a debt exclusion or not. Estimated completion date of the new Bristol Plymouth school is 2026. Mr. Medeiros stated that all vocational schools are in the process of a building project, so there will be an assessment regardless of the outcome. We have to look at that long term in relation to programs and facilities. Short term you look at tuition, it is less than Old Colony, it is not the driving force. Transportation is about equal. For the next couple of years in addition to your own piece, a slight savings based on the numbers and then as the capital project rolls in those numbers increase, you will start to project out some of the numbers that Ms. Pettey shared with the community tonight. So, there is no sticker shock. Vincent Karppinen of Freetown asked what our options are for students, the next four or 5 years. Mr. Magalhaes noted, the school committee is voting on 15 students a year, once we become members, we are in a pool and could get 30 students. Once official you will have students in the current school year going forward. Ms. Estrella asked about the other towns and the representation of those towns. Taunton has 2 members, Bridgewater, Raynham, Middleboro, Dighton, Rehoboth, Berkley all have 1. Mr. Strauss stated his concern was if we do not become a member of Bristol Plymouth where are our students going to go? Old Colony will not give us any assurances that our students would get in. Old Colony is in debt, and we would then be part of that debt as well. Bristol Plymouth has no debt. Our committee looked at financials and educational aspects of all the vocational schools. Bristol Plymouth has the best educational value for our students. The State says it is unacceptable for a town to not have a vocational option for their students. Mr. Medeiros stated it was not us prohibiting this. We had a system in place for 18 previous years where we were attending as non-member students and Old Colony said no. The other towns in the vocational district were the first vote of support to ask Freetown to join. Christine Johansen asked if the debt exclusion is one time or an annual event? Ms. French answered it is for the life of the loan, about 30 years. Mr. Matthews also said which will fluctuate based on enrollment. It is a variable expense. Ms. Estrella asked about the Police Station project year of being paid off. The bond has another 6 years. We pay \$500 thousand dollars a year and is a debt exclusion as well. Ms. French stated once we pay off the Police Station it will no longer be charged in your tax bill. The deadline is December for joining. Ms. Pettey stated the next step is to approve the debt exclusion which would increase the taxes. The town does not have \$700 thousand dollars in the budget. We need to know this before they vote on whether to join the

school district. This is important to have for the town meeting. They can vote no on the debt exclusion and still vote to join the school. Ms. Fox noted the good turnout for the meeting tonight but also suggested we need to be spreading the word of this. We have talked about getting a one pager out detail all this. This is an important decision for the students of Freetown. We need to share the facts in one open house. Circulate more widely of what we are proposing. Mr. Sienkewicz stated when we went through the regionalization process we met at the VFW, The Senior Center, Parents nights at each school. We must educate the public on this.

August 15 will not give the school committee enough time to be able to reach out to townspeople. We need to push it out further and not rush this. Mr. Strauss mentioned the school open houses are coming up in September and October. Mr. Matthews agreed to the timeline being September, and October. Ms. Fox agrees as the school year launches, we have instant opportunities with the in school open houses.

Selectmen Matthews tabled agenda items 9 thru 13.

9. Discussion, and vote on calling a special election vote (ballot) to approve debt exclusion to fund Freetown portion of new Bristol Plymouth Regional Technical School if we join district.
10. Discussion, and vote whether to hold a Special Town Meeting on 8/15/22, 7pm at the Freetown-Lakeville Middle School auditorium 98 Howland Road, Lakeville.
11. Discussion, and vote to open the Special Town Meeting Warrant for meeting on 8/15/22.
12. Discussion, and vote to approve the articles to be added to the Special Town Meeting Warrant for meeting on 8/15/22.
13. Discussion, and vote to close the Special Town Meeting Warrant for meeting on 8/15/22.

**Old Business:**

Potential discussion on pending items – action will not be taken at this meeting:

- Town Buildings
- Public Input

- Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Selectmen Zager and seconded by Selectmen Lopes at 7:42pm.
- Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote.
- Motion to adjourn the Freetown Vocational Educational Exploratory Committee was made by Cheryl Estrella and seconded by Jean Fox.
- Vote: was approved in a unanimous roll call vote.

Respectfully Submitted,



Lu-Ann Souza

Executive Assistant

List of Documents/Exhibits utilized by the Board during meeting:

- Agenda
- Meeting minutes from 6/21/22, 6/29/22, 7/11/22, & 7/14/22.
- Email from Rainbow Workshop requesting to use Hathaway Park
- Email Victoria D'Antoni regarding ADA Planning Grant
- ADA Notice
- ADA Grievance Procedure
- Webpage on IRS Increase mileage rate
- Memo for June Ambulance Abatements and Write Offs from Fire Dept.
- Appointment slips, Michael Souza & Swede Magnett
- Documents on joining BP estimated costs
- Town of Freetown Omnibus Budget