State of Rhode Island

County of Washington

In Hopkinton on the second day of February 2026 A.D. said meeting was called to order by Town Council President Michael Geary at 6:45 P.M. in the Town Hall Meeting Room, 1 Town House Road, Hopkinton, RI 02833.

PRESENT: Michael Geary, Robert Burns, Sharon Davis, Edwin James, Jasmin Roy; Town Manager Brian Rosso, Town Clerk Marita Murray, and Town Solicitor Stephen Sypole.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR ROY AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR BURNS TO RECESS TO EXECUTIVE SESSION UNDER:

RIGL SEC. 42-46-5(A)(1) – INTERVIEWS: BOARDS & COMMISSIONS: RECREATION COMMISSION.

IN FAVOR: Burns, Davis, Roy, James, Geary

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

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

IN FAVOR: Burns, Davis, Roy, James, Geary

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

Councilor Geary noted that no votes were taken in Executive Session.

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

IN FAVOR: Burns, Davis, Roy, James, Geary

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 Burns, Davis, Roy, James and Geary announced they were present.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Susan Rosen of River Road spoke as a member of Save the Wetlands and the Pawcatuck River Association, which is a nonprofit group formed by a group of Westerly and Hopkinton residents. She explained that previous Town Councilors familiar with their organization had submitted a Resolution to the Town of Westerly and the Legislature of Rhode Island asking them to stop their plan to remove the Potter Hill Dam, destroy wetlands, and lower the head pond of the river but this was ignored. The prior Westerly Town Council, when presented with the plan by a local group of so-called environmental groups, denied the continuation of it due to its lack of scientific justification and their distrust in the engineering firm doing the presentation. Then another Council came on and completely changed that opinion. It was later proved that the plan that was put forth by these groups would have increased the chance of flooding in the Town of Westerly. There was also proof that the dam itself was not in danger of collapse, but it was a sleuthways by the mill and the fish ladder that could benefit from remediation. Another concern of theirs was the damage that would be done to the wells of approximately one hundred homes on the Hopkinton side of the river and numerous homes on the Westerly side as well. This fight has been an ongoing for approximately six years. When a new plan emerges by the engineering firm, their group has been able to show its false claims. As of now, a plan for dam removal is still being formulated; they have denied all of the prior plans and in fact NOAA was funding the grant but this is now on hold. The situation has become more dire for recently it has come to light that the site of the Bradford Dying Association has been leeching PFAS, which are everlasting chemicals, into the river which is poisoning the fish and the drinking water of residents of both towns. The Pawcatuck River is a soul source aquifer, which means it provides over 50% of the drinking water for residents. They are in communication with the EPA and also Clean Water Action Rhode Island. According to EPA regulations, no action can be taken to change the river

without a special permit, and this was never done. The RI Department of Health and DEM have done some testing by the Bradford site and recommended that the height of the river should not be altered due to the effect it would have on the PFAS that are nesting in the river silt. They also believe that if the head pond was lowered, it would change the velocity of the river which would then upset all of the PFAS that nesting in the silt. This also impacts an area within the Hopkinton Wellhead Protection Zone. Last week, Westerly held a poorly advertised public meeting to present a grant that they are seeking to remediate the Potter Hill Mill site itself. The only attendees were one Westerly resident, two Westerly Town Councilors, and six members of their group. When questioned by their group, information came out that there is arsenic being released into the river and highly likely leeching into the wells of the residents of Laurel Street, as well as the Westerly side. The levels of arsenic are above what DEM has deemed to be safe. Westerly has known about this since last Spring and has never notified Hopkinton as far as they know. There also is most likely asbestos in the water because of the materials that were demolished from the boiler room of the mill. She felt that Hopkinton should take a more serious stance on what is happening as this is now an environmental hazard. Their group has just hired an environmental attorney to look into this matter. Lastly, she noted that Washington County has one of highest levels of cancer in the State of Rhode Island. Councilor Davis asked if all residents in the surrounding area should get their water tested and Ms. Rosen felt that they should, because the Department of Health was not testing well water because they were moving their lab. Rhode Island Analytical Laboratories is a lab in Warwick that tests well water for a price. She also stated that thirty-eight families had written a letter to Town Manager Shawn Lacey telling him what they were objecting to and they never received a response.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA ORDER

There were no changes to the agenda order.

CONSENT AGENDA

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR DAVIS AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR ROY APPROVE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF

JANUARY 20, 2026; APPROVE TOWN COUNCIL EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES OF JANUARY 20, 2026.

IN FAVOR: Burns, Davis, Roy, James, Geary

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

VACANCIES AND APPOINTMENTS

Board of Canvassers

This matter was scheduled to discuss, consider, and possibly vote to reappoint Sandra Johanson to the Board of Canvassers.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR DAVIS AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR BURNS TO REAPPOINT SANDRA JOHANSON TO THE BOARD OF CANVASSERS.

IN FAVOR: Burns, Davis, Roy, James, Geary

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

Recreation Commission

This matter was scheduled to discuss, consider, and possibly vote to appoint a member to the Recreation Commission.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR ROY AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR BURNS TO APPOINT ANNA LEWIS TO THE RECREATION COMMISSION.

IN FAVOR: Burns, Davis, Roy, James, Geary

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

NEW BUSINESS

Tax Assessor presentation regarding revaluation

This matter was scheduled for a presentation by the Tax Assessor regarding the new assessment letters residents will be receiving and what the revaluation numbers and figures mean.

Tiana Zartman, Tax Assessor, presented a PowerPoint regarding Statistical Revaluation and what the revaluation numbers and figures mean. She explained that there were two different types of revaluation, full revaluation and statistical revaluation. The process involves performing all the necessary market analysis and valuation steps to determine accurate and equitable values for all properties within a municipality. A full revaluation was conducted at the last revaluation as of December 31, 2022. The difference between a full revaluation and a statistical revaluation is that a full revaluation involves visiting every single property that was approved upon is visited in the municipality, while a statistical revaluation reviews only those properties that have been sold or have pulled building permits. They also mailed data mailers in order to ensure that the interior aspects of all properties are correct. They update property assessment using real market data rather than visiting every property in town. They analyze recent qualified sales and building permits, which are used to get an estimate of the costs of construction for the current market. The goal is to ensure fairness and consistency, so all properties are assessed accurately and uniformly. By studying actual home sales and recent improvements, they were able to update values for all properties in town without needing to physically inspect every property. She explained that fee appraisal takes the subject property and compares it with sales in the area to get an opinion of value. This is usually done when you obtain a mortgage if you are purchasing a new home. Mass appraisal is based on an analysis of sales within a market during a specific period of time which helps establish valuation parameters, which are then applied to the properties that sold. While the appraisal concepts are the same and the results are similar, the process is very different. A revaluation simply updates assessed values of each property in Hopkinton, so they reflect the fair market value. She noted that assessments don't suddenly spike, they just catch up to what buyers are already paying. Revaluation does not set the tax rate, so it does not determine how much revenue the town raises and just because the assessed value goes up, does not mean there will be an increase in taxes. She emphasized that reevaluation redistributes the tax burden – it doesn't create it. She explained that revaluation happens because Rhode Island General Law dictates that the Town much conduct a revaluation every three years, with a full revaluation conducted every nine years. The process starts

with data mailers and property inspections, and they then analyze market and construction data. They update valuation models and apply them to those properties that have sold to make sure new assessments reflect their selling price and then apply it to all parcels in town. This results in an approximate market value of each property in Hopkinton. Ms. Zartman will then review and analyze the final analysis before valuation notices are mailed to residents. Informal hearings will happen once residents receive their mailings should they feel this is necessary. The factors that impacted the last revaluation were inflation, supply and demand and construction costs but there are specific characteristics for each property that are also taken into account. She gave a couple examples of 2022 revaluations and 2025 revaluations which showed approximately 30%-40% increases in sales prices. Overall, single-family home values have increased by 29%, condos by 23%, and commercial properties by 9% or 7% if you exclude the Foster Parrots property. She emphasized that revaluation redistributes the tax burden, it doesn't create it. Tax bills depend on the tax rate, which depends on the school and town budgets and how a property's value has changed relative to others. A higher assessment does not equate to a higher tax bill automatically. The goal is not to raise taxes but to create an equitable distribution of the tax burden. Revaluation letters will be going out this week, and in the letter, it will explain how to set up an informal hearing with a representative from Vision. After all of the hearings are done, there will be second notice letter sent out to everyone who has had a hearing. Once the resident receives the second letter if they still do not agree, Ms. Zartman will schedule an inspection, which is required. If adjustments are warranted, they will be done at that time and if they are not, then she will explain where the assessment came from. If the residents are still aggrieved, they can submit a formal appeal form no later than December 8, 2026, to go through the formal appeal process.

Blue-Ribbon Study

This matter was scheduled to discuss, consider and possibly vote on whether the Town should send a letter or Resolution to the legislature regarding the Blue-Ribbon Study.

Councilor Roy attended the Senate presentation from the Blue-Ribbon Commission regarding how they would like to create a new funding formula to fund the schools. She felt this would take away from rural communities who were deemed to be wealthier and redistributed to areas that were underserved. She felt the presentation was manipulative and that it would be in the best interest of Chariho, Hopkinton and Newport to prepare a Resolution to send with potential help from our senator. Councilor Geary noted that there were some things in the study that he did like, such as taking care of buildings and busing. He added that it costs the Chariho School District $24,000 per day for busing; but he ultimately agreed with Councilor Roy. He wished to see a Resolution before voting on it.

Gary Williams of Wich Way, wished to add that on the Brown University website, the Blue-Ribbon Commission report was up for anyone to view. The Boston Globe put up a podcast discussing all of the potential recommendations which included, busing, maintenance of schools, and pensions. As far as taking things away from Chariho, he suggested having a representative come to a meeting to discuss it. Councilor Davis felt that the bottom line was that the Chariho would lose $7.7 Million Dollars. It sounded great that they would take care of all transportation, IEPS, pensions, and were trying to spread things around until you look at who is losing.

Carl Rosen of River Road did not agree with the state not allowing taxing the land under solar farms at a greater price. He noted that in the legislation it stated that the town could tax the equipment on the site and the Town should look into this. Councilor Davis noted that there was a tangible tax used to tax the solar panels. Solicitor Sypole added that the solar farms had a rate of $5 per kilowatt hour for the land under the panels and $3.50 per kilowatt hour for the land under the panels themselves.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR ROY AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR DAVIS TO TABLE THE LETTER OF RESOLUTION UNTIL THEY CAN ARRANGE FOR AN EXPERT TO COME IN TO DISCUSS THIS MATTER OR DISCUSS WITH A LEGISLATOR, THE PROPER RESOLUTION LANGUAGE. This Motion was withdrawn.

Councilor Davis noted that there was a time limit on getting something to the Blue-Ribbon Commission and there was not time to prepare a Resolution. The Council decided a letter in opposition should be prepared and sent out.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR DAVIS AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR ROY TO SEND A LETTER TO THE BLUE-RIBBON COMMISSION STATING THAT THE HOPKINTON TOWN COUNCIL DISAGREES WITH THE EVALUATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE BLUE-RIBBON STUDY REGARDING THE CHARIHO SCHOOL DISTRICT.

IN FAVOR: Burns, Davis, Roy, James, Geary

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

Resolution – Restore General Revenue Sharing to Rhode Island Cities and Towns

This matter was scheduled to discuss, consider and possibly vote to adopt a Resolution Requesting the Rhode Island Governor and General Assembly to Restore General Revenue Sharing to Rhode Island cities and towns.

Councilor Roy explained that she had been told that if a Resolution was adopted, Senator Elaine Morgan would try to ensure this was heard. She thought that this would greatly benefit every municipality, because a portion of all sales tax collected would be returned to the cities and town as revenue.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR ROY AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR BURNS TO ADOPT A RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE RHODE ISLAND GOVERNOR AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO RESTORE GENERAL REVENUE SHARING TO RHODE ISLAND CITIES AND TOWNS.

IN FAVOR: Burns, Davis, Roy, James, Geary

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

Town Hall, DPW, and Police Department Server Upgrades RFP

This matter was scheduled to discuss, consider and possibly vote to award the RFP for the Town Hall, Department of Public Works, and Police Department server upgrades to UpLinkIT for a total project cost of $22,025.75.

Mr. Rosso stated that significant server upgrades were needed to improve cyber security at the police station, town hall and public works. The town would be using the remaining funds from the RIEMA grant which was previously awarded and they were allowed to repurpose $26,000 for townwide upgrades in servers. There were two bids submitted, UpLinkIT for $22,025.75 and JKS Technologies for $62,717.96.

Nicholas Spinale from JKS Technologies which to ask about the cost difference noting that a large part of the bid was based on hardware and software needs, which he believed were fixed costs. The bid required ten Window server licenses, which run at $800 each, and 60 or 85 user licenses, which run at about $40 a piece or approximately $11,000. The specifications for the server outlined a very powerful server that the Police Department requested. He noted that their server was priced at $24,000 just in hardware. He wished to see a price tabulation to determine how UplinkIT was able to bid so low. Mr. Rosso noted that this would be something that could be addressed through a public records request, or by calling his office directly. Mr. Rosso explained that the price discrepancy seems significant, but the bid documents were very clear about what the town was looking for.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR DAVIS AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR JAMES TO AWARD THE RFP FOR THE TOWN HALL, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, AND POLICE DEPARTMENT SERVER UPGRADES TO UPLINKIT FOR A TOTAL PROJECT COST OF $22,025.75.

IN FAVOR: Burns, Davis, Roy, James, Geary

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Economic Development Commission Letters

This matter was scheduled to continue discussion and possibly vote to approve letters prepared by the Economic Development Commission to be sent to new business owners and prospective business owners.

Councilor Roy read one of the proposed letters which welcomed new and prospective business owners to Hopkinton.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR ROY AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR DAVIS TO APPROVE THE LETTERS PREPARED BY THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION TO BE SENT TO NEW BUSINESS OWNERS AND PROSPECTIVE BUSINESS OWNERS.

IN FAVOR: Burns, Davis, Roy, James, Geary

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

Tomaquag Valley Road Bridge

This matter was scheduled to continue discussion and possibly vote to allow the Town Manager to move forward with the design work to make repairs on the Tomaquag Valley Road bridge.

Niverio Carvalho of Commonwealth Engineers was present via zoom and explained that the initial goal was to be as efficient as possible in order to put the bridge back into service and put back a timber deck as before. He provided a slideshow of photos relating to the bridge noting that the bridge has plank decking, and they were proposing nail laminated deck which he believed to be more durable since the nail heads would not be sticking out. With the laminated decking, the planking would be a more solid block of timber. Mr. Carvalho felt this was a quicker, cost-effective option because the beams were still in good condition. He was concerned with placing a concrete topping or steel plate to smooth out the surface because there would need to be four to five inches of concrete with rebar and this would add a lot of weight to the bridge, which only has an 18-ton limit. The timber deck option was lightweight, which allowed for the reuse of the existing substructures and beams. Another advantage is that it would make it easier to attach

a better railing system to the edge of the deck. If there was a full bridge replacement, DEM would have to get involved and there would be a need to obtain an environmental permit. Councilor Burns was concerned about water drainage on the bridge. Mr. Carvalho thought that they could provide a few cut outs to allow for drainage. He noted that adding a wearing surface on a timber deck, it does tend to crack a little more because the timber would be more flexible and would not adhere as well. Councilor Burns wished to clarify that they would use 8-to-10-inch timber and Mr. Carvalho noted that it would be borne out in the preliminary calculations. Councilor Burns asked what the life expectancy of the wood would be and Mr. Carvalho noted that it would be pressure-treated dimension lumber which should last approximately twenty years. Councilor Burns noted that they were rating this bridge at 36,000 pounds and if they were to go to concrete, how much weight capacity would have to be dropped on the bridge. Mr. Carvalho did not have that number but could get him the answer. Councilor Burns indicated that at the last meeting he had asked Mr. Rosso to obtain price comparisons, rough comparisons, what the tonnage would go down to, etc. Mr. Rosso explained that they were not in the design phase yet because they have not been hired. In order to get him those answers, they would need to enter into the design phase, and a contract would have to be in place. If the Council wants that type of analysis, with cost estimates and various options, we need to hire them to do that. Councilor Burns felt they could hire Commonwealth Engineers to bring options to the Council.

Ronald Prellwitz of Main Street indicated that there had been no discussion on open grading, which he felt was the lightest, strongest and least expensive way to go. He noted it was used in draw bridges all over the country.

Councilor Davis asked with the timber vertical how much more weight would be added. Mr. Carvalho felt that compared to the other loads on the bridge, it was not significant and this was accounted for in the calculation.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR BURNS AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR JAMES TO ALLOW THE TOWN MANAGER TO MOVE FORWARD WITH THE DESIGN WORK TO BRING THE TOWN COUNCIL

OPTIONS TO MAKE REPAIRS TO THE TOMAQUAG VALLEY ROAD BRIDGE. Discussion ensued:

David Caswell, DPW Director, noted that every nickel that is taken away from the road improvement preservation program will affect future road improvements. Discussion ended.

IN FAVOR: Burns, Davis, Roy, James, Geary

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

Councilor Geary asked residents to watch the Warwick School vote happening tomorrow. They are now requesting more money from taxpayers for a previously approved new school, which they had promised would not happen.

Councilor Davis noted the Wood River Village is now officially open for members to sign up and start receiving services. Information is on the Hopkinton Town website.

ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR BURNS AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR ROY TO ADJOURN IN MEMORY OF SUSAN URSILLO.

SO VOTED

Marita D. Murray
Town Clerk

Sydney Fernandes
Deputy Town Clerk

A full audio and video transcript of this meeting can be found at:
https://www.youtube.com/@HopkintonRI/streams