

Hanscom Are Towns Committee
DRAFT Meeting Minutes
November 30, 2017

HATS Selectmen: Suzie Barry, Lexington; Jonathan Dwyer, Lincoln; Steven Ng, Concord; Mike Rosenberg, chair, Bedford.

Other HATS members: Peter Braun, Lincoln; Margaret Coppe, Lexington.

Others in attendance: State Sen. Michael Barrett; State Sen. Cynthia Friedman; Anthony Gallagher, community relations, Massachusetts Port Authority; Amber Goodspeed, manager, airport administration, Hanscom Field; State Rep. Jay Kaufman.

Rep. Kaufman noted that the so-called “fair-share” constitutional amendment intended for the November 2018 state ballot will raise close to \$2 billion in revenue through an additional tax on earnings of more than \$1 million. The money will be designated for education and transportation, passage is critical, he said. The campaign will focus on the regressive nature of the state tax system, he added. Rep. Kaufman said his constituents are separated from much of current federal policies.

Sen. Barrett said Rep. Kaufman’s announced retirement represents an “irreplaceable loss.” He always has been mindful of local issues, he said, and has been a leader statewide in areas such as energy. He noted that state government has broadened into the international arena because of new federal policies, and a coalition of states and non-profit organizations is developing. There may be a major focus on energy moving through the State Senate, he said adding that the HATS towns are leaders for this issue.

Rep. Kaufman noted that when he first became involved 24 years ago, there were constant concerns about potential Hanscom Field expansion and changes in the mission of the Air Force Base. Sen. Barrett said the Massachusetts Port Authority and airport management have been more responsive to the community.

In answer to a question from Selectman Rosenberg about the impact of federal budget and tax law changes on Massachusetts programs, Sen. Barrett said his posture is one of “watchful waiting.” The loss of income tax deductions for mortgage interest and real estate taxes will put pressure on local and state government, he said. Sen. Barrett added that administration policies seem to be targeted to damage “blue” states. This includes a “hidden assault” on Medicare. He pointed out that Medicaid is a 50 percent federal match. He added that the anticipated huge deficit will force future federal budget reductions. Meanwhile, the state will fully fund its foundation budget, he said.

Sen. Friedman said she is involved with criminal justice reform, and its intersection with behavioral health. She said she serves as Senate chair of the Joint Committee on Mental Health and Substance Abuse Disorders. Other priorities are the \$15 minimum wage, housing for older residents and transportation.

Selectman Ng asked the legislators to find more ways to focus on the older demographic. Sen. Friedman multi-level residential arrangements would allow seniors to downsize or remain home independently.

Selectman Barry called for improvement in public transportation, noting the challenge of connecting jobs with residents. This is a state responsibility, she said. Government needs to hear from industry and the communities. She noted regional transportation initiatives such as those being developed by the Middlesex 3 coalition. Sen. Barrett said the problem is throughout the metropolitan area and the solution has to be “massive investment. He added that “we assume there will be less federal underpinning. So the question is: do we substantially raise the gas tax?” He said his preference would be a carbon tax. Local government will be in deep trouble without state assistance, he said. Sen. Friedman added that the state needs to give the towns more tools.

In answer to Selectman Dwyer's question, Sen. Barrett said state revenues are difficult to predict, although there could be a temporary bump in January. Rep. Kaufman said the rising cost of health care jeopardizes every other budget line. He said consumption taxes are mostly regressive, and all of the state's tax options "have serious problems in terms of equity."

Asked about the community preservation program, Rep. Kaufman said it is sustainable only through its original concept, a property transfer tax. He said state government should regard those conditions as an opportunity and be creative.

Mr. Braun said Dr. Thomas Glynn, Massport chief executive officer, is a big asset to the communities. He thanked the Legislature for establishing the Massport Community Advisory Committee. He also emphasized the value of community partnerships with Hanscom AFB.

Mrs. Coppe asked about the impact of the anticipated referendum rolling back the state sales tax. This would cost the state billions, Rep. Kaufman said, and could be an incentive for the Legislature to act. Rep. Kaufman said there are implications for local aid. Se. Barrett agreed, but noted that legislators are trying to find ways to help retailers. Mr. Coppe also noted that positive environmental choices can be more costly.

Sen. Barrett said military families are delighted with the quality of local public schools. Local services are among the reasons why personnel love Hanscom AFB.

Municipal issues: Selectman Rosenberg said Bedford may ask taxpayers to pay for the first time for lifeguards. Mr. Gallagher said Massport has a program that may be helpful. Bedford town meeting also voted to prohibit recreational marijuana dispensaries. Selectman Dwyer reported on Lincoln's informational meeting on new school and community center plans. Town officials are preparing budget guidelines. Lincoln is working with Concord to share fiber optic installation and equipment for town buildings. Selectman Dwyer also said he noticed work underway by the Air Force expanding the search pit in the Vandenberg Gate area.

Selectman Barry said Lexington voters will be asked to decide on an \$85 million debt exclusion, to finance construction of a new school, pre-kindergarten and fire station. She said she is cautiously optimistic. Departmental budgets will be level-service for the coming fiscal year. Selectman Ng said Concord is examining legal access rights to conservation land, as some residents have been exercising dogs there. The town is also trying to get Acton to approve a treatment plant for Nagog Pond, Concord's reservoir. A system of charging for parking in Concord Center continues to develop. Work continues on the Bruce Freeman bike path in West Concord, including parking.

Ms. Goodspeed said the most recent Hanscom Field Advisory Commission agenda included the 2016 noise report, reflecting decreases in operations and noise. Also, the ESPR scope has been certified, and data will be assembled over the next year. Mr. Gallagher said the Massport CAC at its recent meeting focused on Logan Airport flight procedures. He said he will try to get monthly noise reports.

The Jan. 18, 2018 HATS meeting will be a round table on local and regional transportation initiatives.

The minutes of Oct. 26, 2017 were approved as amended. The meeting was adjourned at 9:17 p.m.