

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TOWN OF CONWAY, MA
MINUTES
December 14, 2009

Meeting Open: 7:00PM

Present: Maureen Chase, Jack Lockhead, Chuck Trombley, Tom Spiro

Others Present:

Appointments

7:00 Finance Committee – Roy Cohen, Robert Stone, James Cabrel, Patty Walker

Jack brought up the yearly cost of living adjustment (COLA), but he said this was called the salary adjustment. He explained that due to the decrease in state reimbursements and the economy as a whole, it will be harder to justify cost of living salary increases. James asked if there was a method or state figure that could be used as a guide in making this decision. Jack noted that the Selectboard had looked at the state retirement and social security numbers for direction in this decision. It was also noted that State COLA increases were 3% normally and would also be this year but this should not be "automatic". Maureen pointed out that social security would see no increase. Roy asked about the union increases for school employees. It was thought that their contract had included an increase of between 1% and 3% for COLA. Roy said that the school COLA should be considered with along with compensation to school employees as well. It was noted that the union negotiations were the reason for these figures and those decisions were out of the control of the Town. There was a discussion about how to determine COLA for this year. Roy asked if the Personnel Committee was prepared to help with this process, but Tom and Maureen noted that the committee was focused on creating a new Bylaw as directed by the town warrant article at the last annual Town meeting and wouldn't have the time to create a new process for suggesting a process for determining the COLA. Roy asked Elizabeth what the additional cost would be for a 3% salary increase for Town employees excluding contracted employees. There was discussion about the tax rate and holding it level. The school budget was discussed and it was suggested that the School Committee be requested to hold their operating budget at level spending as well. It was determined that COLA would be from 0-3%, but no specific decision was made at this time on a final figure. Department heads would be asked to budget salaries to reflect the 0-3% range until a final cost of living adjustment decision could be made.

Jack explained that he was waiting for an answer from Town Council about how much input the Selectboard can have on the grammar school roof project. It was noted that the repairs would be a capital expense and should come under the purview of the Selectboard. Maureen noted that the Capital Improvement Committee was meeting on the 17th and would discuss this project also. Chuck reiterated that there was a need to have another consultant review the current engineer's proposal. There was discussion about how the school's leaking problems had been long term and not adequately and in a timely manner. Jack explained about how time was a factor, and that it seemed that the school committee and administration was pushing and this should be avoided so as not to lead to poor decisions along the way. Everyone was in agreement. Chuck then described the process of how the Town came to deciding it truly needed to buy the new fire truck and equated this process with the need for finding the best long-term repair proposal for the school.

Chuck noted that the contingency fund would be discontinued as recommended by the Department of Revenue and the reserve fund would be bolstered by the \$30,000 from this account. James asked about the Retirement of Debt account. Roy again asked Liz for her opinions about various accounts. She noted several accounts where money had not been spent and some accounts that looked to go over their bottom line. The Assessors Office, the Board of Health and Winter Roads accounts were specifically noted and the reasons, such as re-evaluation process for the assessors, were discussed.

The unexpected cost of a student attending Smith Vocational School was discussed with the Finance Committee. Jack explained the situation and that the Selectboard had asked Smith if they would accept a quarter payment now. Tom confirmed that Smith had accepted the arrangement and would wait for the balance until the next annual Town meeting could approve the final payment funds. The Finance Committee approved the payment from the reserve account funds.

8:30 Utility Pole Hearing – Paul Agillo, John Lawless

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TOWN OF CONWAY, MA
MINUTES
December 14, 2009

There was a discussion about two existing poles on Graves Road. Paul noted that they were currently on the land of one of Mr. Lawless' neighbors and that they must be moved onto his land. Both men noted that there was a complaint made regarding this trespass which required the poles being moved. Maureen questioned how far the poles would be moved. Jack noted that burying the lines underground was suggested by the complainants but Paul noted that this would be very expensive and Mr. Lawless it was cost prohibited. The Board voted approval for moving both utility poles.

The Finance Committee returned to discuss what budgetary items should be addressed specifically. They talked about various department monies and articles that might be brought to hearings. The Highway Department, the School Committee budgets were noted and conversation came back to the school repairs.

9:00 School Committee – Janice Warner, Joe McGranaghan

Jan explained that Conway missed a deadline for grant money from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) that may have paid for some of the repairs at the school. The Board was asked to write a letter to the MSBA that requested emergency funding. Maureen, Chuck and Jack voiced concerns about funding that may have prohibitive strings attached. Joe did not know of any strings that may be attached to this grant money. He noted that he was aware that the Board and others wanted to have input on this project and that he was hoping to include as many voices as possible. There was more discussion about how the Selectboard had seen the original construction and repairs as not done well and noted their concerns for not repeating these types of things and questioned the best way to proceed forward. Joe was asked how another review of the proposed plan could be handled. He was also asked if a second opinion was requested from another engineer. It was agreed that another consultant or engineer should look at the existing plans. It was noted that it should not be someone with a vested interest in working on this project. James said that he felt more studies should be done, but it was determined that this would only be necessary if the plan was not approved at all by other reviewers. There was more discussion about who was responsible for the initial poor construction, including state guidelines that may have contributed to the problems. Maureen suggested that perhaps other towns along with Conway, should work to find out if the state could be held liable. It was suggested that may make the state review its mandates/guidelines in this kind of building projects. Joe noted that the clerk of the works and contractor may and should be held responsible to the utmost. The Board authorized Maureen to sign a letter to MSBA once it was reviewed by all Board members. Jan gave out a draft letter that was reviewed by all. There were several suggestions made to update this letter. It was noted that thought should be given to efficiency and longevity in terms of repairs or any upgrades to the school building. The School Committee will be meeting on Thursday, and will plan public meetings as well. Jack and Chuck noted they would be at that meeting. Maureen noted she has a Capital Improvements Committee meeting but would suggest the committee adjourn to attend the School Committee meeting.

meeting items

- Tom explained that the Board's decision to apply health coverage under M.G.L. Chapter 32B could not be only for the three Boards in Town. Tom noted that coverage levels could be selective i.e. as to hours work, and he will draft a memo to be given to the HR office.
- Updates submitted by Conway Conserves regarding the Guilford trust application will be review next week.
- An application submitted to Conway Conserves was given to the Board for their approval. The request was for a \$7,080.00 project and was approved.
- The Board decided to leave the mileage rate for reimbursement at \$0.47.
- An update on the Bardwells Ferry Road slope project was given and talk focused mostly on releases that had or had not been signed by abutters. Letters had been or would be sent out to the remaining abutters who had not signed a release/consent form, making them aware of a deadline for response.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TOWN OF CONWAY, MA
MINUTES
December 14, 2009

- Ken Ouimette came in to the meeting and noted that there was no movement with regard to the garage committee. He said Reinhardt and Associates had been paid for all services rendered. He had not met with anyone else and that the committee had not met in several months. There was discussion about the school roof project and the cost. Jack noted that this project might be done by an energy service contractor.
- The Board agreed to interview Thomas Erickson for the Highway Department job.
- There was discussion about sub-contracting for snow plowing. Chuck questioned whether the Town should hire a new assistant, given the quantity and quality of applicants, and also the necessity to bring the Highway crew to a full complement. The Board talked about changing the posting to a regular department employee and then let an applicant be aware of the change in job description at this time. Chuck felt there could be improvements in the way the Highway Department, specifically with regard to snow plowing. He also felt that highway supervisor position should have an annual review. Tom will ask Bob to call Chuck on work performed by other department personnel.
- The Board was given a first draft of the Conway Master Plan and will review it this week.

Mail and Other Items

- other mail items as per agenda

11:05 PM Motion to adjourn by Maureen, 2nd by Jack, all in favor.