

Minutes
CONWAY SELECT BOARD
Town Office, 32 Main Street
September 8, 2015, 7:00 p.m.

Select Board members present: John O'Rourke, Chair; Jim Moore, Clerk; Robert Baker

Select Board members absent:

Others present: Tom Hutcheson, Town Administrator; Ronald Sweet, Highway Superintendent; Roy Cohen, Russell French, Dana Goodchild, Thomas Pleasant (and Jim Moore), Capital Improvements Planning Committee; Lee Whitcomb (and Russell French), Assessors; Lacey Arnold, Chris Collins, FCAT.

Minutes

- The Select Board expressed their preference for the use of full names in the meeting minutes. **On a motion from O'Rourke, seconded by Moore, to accept the minutes of August 24, 2015, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Warrants

- **On a motion from O'Rourke, seconded by Moore, to sign the vendor warrant for \$87,188.61, the payroll warrant for \$85,070.10, and the payroll deduction warrant for \$21,741.60, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Meetings Attended by Select Board Members

None.

Citizens' Concerns

None.

Old Business

- *South River restoration project: review and signing of permit applications (Natural Heritage and DEP)*
As no applications were presented, the item was tabled.

New Business

- **7:05 JOINT MEETING WITH CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLANNING COMMITTEE:**

- *Highway Department: truck trade-in*

Tom Pleasant asked about the current truck's assessed value, procurement procedures, and life expectancy. Ron Sweet explained that the value according to the dealer (Patriot Truck in Northfield) is \$32,000. That is the same price of the '97 Ford he intends to purchase from the Town of Westhampton. Regarding a question on procurement law, he will get three quotes; the upper limit before bids must be sought is \$35,000, not \$25,000. The life expectancy of the truck to be procured is unknown, but with minimal rust, as opposed to the current truck, he thought it would be at least as long, and less expensive to maintain. He said that in the past year and a half, the current truck has been out of service for thirteen weeks, at unpredictable and inconvenient times, and provided the repair invoices. There was some general discussion regarding Highway Department operations. Dana Goodfield said that he opposed trading in a newer vehicle for an older vehicle. Tom Pleasant said he was concerned about the age of the truck, as he did not want to have to ask the Town to replace all the old trucks within a short time period. **On a motion from John O'Rourke to proceed with the procurement, seconded by Jim Moore, the vote was 2-1 in favor, Robert Baker voting nay.**

- *Fire Department: pumper repairs*

Robert Baker, speaking as Fire Chief, said that seals on the pumper were not functioning properly; repairs are estimated to cost \$2,600 to be able to pump from a deep draught. John O'Rourke said that he thought that keeping fire equipment fully functional was a priority for Conway residents. **On a motion from John O'Rourke to make the repairs requested, seconded by Jim Moore, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

- *Green Communities:*
 - *Town Hall insulation project: sign contract for re-design*
The proposed re-design contract not being ready, the item was tabled.
 - *Designate Peter Rosnick, Peter Martin, Sue Bridge, and Tom Hutcheson as Town contacts for the Mass. Energy Insight program*
 - **On a motion from John O'Rourke to designate Peter Rosnick, Peter Martin, Sue Bridge, and Tom Hutcheson as Town contacts for the Mass. Energy Insight program, seconded by Jim Moore, the vote was unanimous in favor.**
- *Franklin County Technical School: vote to elect representative to collective bargaining negotiations (9/9/15)*
None of the Select Board, nor the Town Administrator, was available to meet tomorrow night.
- *250th Anniversary Committee: Vote to close covered bridge for dinner September 18-20, 2015*
 - **On a motion from John O'Rourke to close the covered bridge for the 250th Anniversary Committee's dinner, including preparation and clean-up, from September 18 to the 20, 2015, seconded by Jim Moore, the vote was unanimous in favor.**
- *All Committee Meeting: Set date; Monday, October 26 proposed*
 - **On a motion from John O'Rourke to set the date of October 26 for the All-Committee Meeting, seconded by Jim Moore, the vote was unanimous in favor.**
- *FRCOG/FRTA: proposal for emergency transportation services*
 - The FRCOG has supported a cooperative agreement between towns and the FRTA to provide transportation services in case of an emergency. All aspects of the plan, except for the insurance clause, were approved by our EMD. Tom Hutcheson forwarded the insurance clause to MIIA, who opposed the waiver language in the proposed agreement. He suggested that he reply to the FRTA and copy the FRCOG, relaying that advice and declining to sign the agreement unless it is amended; the Select Board agreed.
- *Municipal Energy Technical Assistance (META) grant: Sign contract for state*
 - **On a motion from O'Rourke to sign the contract with the state for the Municipal Energy Technical Assistance grant, seconded by Moore, the vote was unanimous in favor.**
- *Human Resources study: discussion of comparable communities*
Tom Hutcheson explained that our consultant wanted to make sure that the Select Board was comfortable with the communities used to compare job positions and compensation. After some discussion, including input from Lee Whitcomb, the Select Board asked Tom Hutcheson to tell the consultant to include at least Leverett and Shutesbury, and to look at more communities with about the same per capita income level as Conway.
- *7:30 JOINT MEETING WITH ASSESSORS: Tax Classification Hearing*
 - Lee Whitcomb presented the Assessor's recommendation, keeping a single tax rate for both residences and business. She said there is not enough business in town to justify the increase, and those that are in town are generally small businesses. Robert Baker noted in contrast that there seem to be a growing number of home-based businesses. Lee Whitcomb said that valuations have been generally stable, with some softening in the commercial sector, due mainly to utility personal property value loss, as electronic equipment depreciates quickly after an initial spurt of new growth. The average residential value is now \$255,500, down from a high of \$295,000 a few years ago.
 - Lee Whitcomb expects a tax rate of approximately \$16.68, up \$.51, or 3.15%, from last year. On the positive side, we have about \$363,546 in excess levy capacity, leaving the Town in excellent financial health. Regarding free cash, she agreed with Tom Hutcheson that it was likely to be on the order of \$150,000, down considerably from earlier years.

