

Minutes  
CONWAY SELECTBOARD  
Town Office, 32 Main Street  
January 25, 2016 7:00 p.m.

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

Others present: Tom Hutcheson, Town Administrator; Liz Jacobson-Carroll, Assistant to the TA; Ben Tillona, FCAT; Brian Kuzmeskus

*Minutes*

- **On a motion from John O'Rourke to accept the minutes of January 11, 2016, as amended, seconded by Jim Moore, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

*Warrants*

- **On a motion from John O'Rourke to sign the vendor warrant for \$137,563.35, the payroll warrant for \$100,858.86, and the payroll deduction warrant for \$26,381.60, seconded by Jim Moore, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

*Meetings Attended by Selectboard Members*

Jim Moore: Municipal Coalition Against the Pipeline, Pipeline Task Force

John O'Rourke: Massachusetts Municipal Association annual meeting and trade show for 2 days last week, along with Tom Hutcheson (John O'Rourke reported that the governor provided helpful budget information. Tom Hutcheson reported that it was an excellent conference with superb workshops, information from which he will be using imminently.)

*Citizens' Concerns*

- Brian Kusmeskus complained about the manner in which the Town roads are being treated thus far this season; in particular, he noted his disapproval of the use of screened gravel instead of sand on the dirt roads near his own home, as it hampers his daily walks. Further, he attributed the Highway Superintendent's use of salt instead of sand on the paved roads as a reason for their deterioration. Linking these concerns, he said that the Town should not "cheap out" on using sand (v. gravel) on the dirt roads since it is using expensive salt (v. sand) on the paved roads, then suggested that if the current practice is to continue throughout the rest of Town, he would appreciate an appropriate amount of sand/salt mix be used on the roads, even if only near his home. Robert Baker thought that the Superintendent should be invited to the next meeting. Tom Hutcheson said that he will talk to Ron Sweet and get his replies.

*Old Business*

- *FY 2017 Town Budget*
  - Tom Hutcheson reported on selected budget requests in the areas of public safety, public works, and Town administration, among others, noting that he has not yet received reports from the Parks, Recreation & Trails Committee, the schools, and the Franklin Regional Council of Governments. For revenue, he predicted an increase reflecting \$40,000 in new growth, a modest increase in Unrestricted General Government Aid to Conway, and a very modest increase in Chapter 70 funds toward the schools. For expenses, he suggested increases for the Highway Department to cover Building Maintenance responsibilities, and an increase in Information Technology to cover a subscription to VisualGov. He estimated a 4.27% increase in operating expenses and an increase of up to \$247,197 in capital spending requests (prior to any reductions suggested by the Capital Improvement Planning Committee.)
  - Tom Hutcheson enumerated requests for increases in the Town Administrator line item, including those for an audit of Town books, some payroll items, and some design work for the renovation of the Town Hall. He reduced the potential payroll adjustment, and indicated that a discussion of the human resources review will be on the agenda of the next meeting or two. Finally, he projected a net increase of approximately \$100,000 in Article 2 on the Town Meeting Warrant. While that is not much of a rise, the addition of the money articles, and the fact that we have little free cash, are cause for concern. He

explained that simply funding various stabilization amounts would use more than this year's sharply reduced amount of \$165,000. He recommended maintaining \$400,000 - \$450,000 in free cash annually going forward.

- Tom Hutcheson described his request for a new Information Technology line item, which will include an increase in telephone expenses, and the maintenance of a backup server/back-end system, software and subscriptions (including that for Crocker), and the funding of a computer replacement schedule, as well as technical expertise.
  - Pertaining to the costs of Building Maintenance, outdoor electricity has gone down, building repair has gone up, and grounds maintenance has gone up significantly with the addition of a contract to cover ball field fertilization, aeration, and other treatment, he said. Tom Hutcheson reminded those present that the current grounds maintenance allocation to Bear River of approximately \$15,000 is supplemented by additional payments from Town trust funds.
  - After he explained that the Ambulance Department request has come down, John O'Rourke asked about the reduction in the cost of licenses/exams, and Robert Baker expressed concern regarding the lack of EMTs in Town.
  - Tom Hutcheson noted the Highway Department request for more money for materials/blacktop which would bump it up to \$10,000 to cover the hard pack layer to be applied on top of gravel previously applied to stretches of roads he is trying to build up. This is not coming out of Chapter 90 because he does not want to leave himself short on funding his planned paving projects, Tom Hutcheson explained. Robert Baker said that he would like to hear the Superintendent's plans for work to be done the following year. After noting that vehicle maintenance costs have gone down, Tom Hutcheson explained that Ron Sweet is again asking for funds to cover last year's increase in the price of salt. He reminded the Select Board that the Finance Committee told Ron Sweet to deficit-spend instead; having done so, Ron Sweet remains concerned that deficit-spending will get too far behind the rising cost, and would also rather pay for adequate salt in the operating budget of the current year rather than the next year, he said. Jim Moore noted, with concern, that people are taking salt from the garage; Tom Hutcheson confirmed that they should not be doing so. Robert Baker said that it was always Town policy to allow people to take salt. Tom Hutcheson said that the Select Board could develop a policy regarding how much salt individual residents may take each year. Both Jim Moore and John O'Rourke reported that they have seen residents taking large loads.
  - Health insurance costs are increasing by 6.4% (\$21,000 for the Town) Tom Hutcheson explained, noting that the school budgets will reflect this increase as well. The Hampshire County insurance rate is increasing less than that of the MIAA health insurance. After Tom Hutcheson said that overall employee benefits will increase from \$550,000 to approximately \$581,000, John O'Rourke agreed that the board has little control over those costs.
  - Tom Hutcheson drew attention to a chart of Conway real estate tax rates covering FY2010 - FY2016. Conceding that it would represent a significant change in one year, he noted that regionally, Conway's rate is not unreasonable. He noted that much of the increase is a reflection of the lack of free cash, and predicted that the Capital Improvements Planning Committee will likely reduce the overall budget slightly.
- *Credit cards policy and application form for department heads*

Tom Hutcheson explained that the revised policy reflects Town Counsel's suggestion to remove committee members from the list of officials who might receive a Town credit card. Treasurer/Tax Collector Jan Warner's spending limit of \$5000 is higher than that of others because it allows for her to make purchases on behalf of committees. [There was a conversation about the possibility of the Festival Of the Hills committee dissolving so that a private organization could form; mention was made of the accounting and procedural steps that would need to be followed to ensure that the FOH scholarship funds currently held by the Town could be distributed to the organization for a similar use.] In response to a question from Jim Moore, Tom Hutcheson explained that having access to a credit card will enable Town employees to purchase items from businesses unable to provide the Town with an account.
  - **On a motion to sign the recommended credit card policy as represented by the Town Administrator this evening, seconded by Jim Moore, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

- **On a motion to sign the credit card application form for department heads, seconded by Jim Moore, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

#### *New Business*

- *Solarize Mass approval and forms to be signed*  
Tom Hutcheson reminded members that Peter Martin had described the program at an earlier meeting, and that the \$5000 of funding will enable the Energy Committee to cultivate interest among residents. Regarding the program, he noted that as more people participate, the discount for each of them will increase, and that local installers may now be hired. In response to a question from Robert Baker, John O'Rourke referred to Solarize Mass as a marketing and promotion grant. Tom Hutcheson added that Conway is partnering with Shelburne and Colrain. Jim Moore praised the program and Peter Martin for his hard work in securing Conway's involvement.
  - **On a motion from John O'Rourke to sign the community contract for Solarize Massachusetts, second by Jim Moore, vote was unanimous in favor.**
- *Approve disclosure form for Roy Cohen*  
Tom Hutcheson explained that the hiring of Roy Cohen to work on information technology for the Town, while he is a member of the Finance Committee, prompted the need for formal disclosure.
  - **On a motion from John O'Rourke to allow Roy Cohen to be a member of the Finance Committee while being under contract with the Town to provide Information Technology services, as required by 930 CMR 6.02(3) seconded by Jim Moore, the vote was unanimous in favor.**
- *Appoint list of residents to position of Election Officer-Alternate for term ending 6/30/16 - Tabled*
- *Next Town audit: FY15 or FY16 depending on borrowing and timeline*  
John O'Rourke read from a letter from Treasurer/Tax Collector Jan Warner in which she voices her concern that without a FY15 audit, the Town may be charged a significantly higher interest rate, or not be approved, for a loan to purchase a new fire truck. Reminding members of their prior decision to proceed with bi-annual audits, Tom Hutcheson noted that he has included funds to pay for a FY16 audit in his FY17 budget proposal. He clarified the options: wait until September for a FY16 audit, or request funding for a FY15 audit immediately following a vote at Town meeting; if the purchase can be delayed until FY17, requesting funds for a FY15 audit would be unnecessary. Robert Baker indicated that the purchase could not take place soon after Town Meeting in any case, because once the design of the truck has been finalized, it will take the company a year to build it. Members agreed to forego a FY15 audit and to request that a FY16 audit be scheduled for the fall.

#### *Items Not Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting*

- **On a motion from John O'Rourke to approve the appointment of Brice Hereford to the Capital Improvement Planning Committee, based on the recommendation of Chair Dana Goodfield on behalf of committee, seconded by Jim Moore, the vote was unanimous in favor.**
- **On a motion from John O'Rourke to approve Brice Hereford being both a member of the Capital Improvement Planning Committee and a Solarize Mass coach, seconded by Jim Moore, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

#### *Town Administrator Update*

- There will be a Mass DPU hearing on the pipeline in Greenfield on Wednesday, March 30th at Greenfield Middle School, at 7 pm.
- The earlier cost given for ClearGov, the website that puts Town finances in an easily manageable form on the web, was only an introductory, time-limited offer; the cost for FY 17 would be \$3,000/yr., which makes the other choice – Visual Government – look much better. That has a higher \$3000 initial cost, but a \$1000 lower ongoing cost. [Robert Baker reminded members of an earlier discussion regarding the value of asking townspeople, at Town Meeting, whether or not they want the Town to spend money on this via a Town Meeting warrant article; members agreed that this was a good idea.]
- The Human Resources review is proceeding well; the Personnel Committee met and approved the process, and proposed a minor language change in the job descriptions. They also brought up a number of policy issues

regarding payroll adjustments to be decided by the Select Board, and I hope to have a summary of those with my own recommendations to you by your next meeting.

- In response to a question from our last meeting, the LPVEC does not bid on propane.

#### *Concerns of the Selectmen*

- Jim Moore, having been asked to do so while attending the MCAP meeting, asked those present whether or not Conway will respond favorably to Montague's request for contributions toward its legal expenses related to their efforts as intervenors in the upcoming MA Department of Public Utilities/Northeast Energy Direct review process. He explained that while Montague's concerns emphasize its position as a town with natural gas service, it will represent the concerns of the broader community, including many towns without such service. Tom Hutcheson noted his understanding that the DPU process was primarily on behalf of towns that have natural gas service, and that are affected by the Berkshire Gas moratorium on adding new accounts. Since Conway is not an end-user of gas, and since it has already devoted funds to the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, it needn't consider contributions to Montague, he said, because while the concerns regarding need pertain to the whole pipeline issue, they are less directed for the non-gas towns such as Conway. Jim Moore expressed his frustration with the pipeline proposal, saying that residents of towns through which it would pass would not benefit, but would suffer hazards with potentially serious negative impacts, and pay a tariff that will go into Kinder Morgan's pocket. He noted his particular concern regarding impacts we are unable to anticipate fully, such as those on area aquifers, and reiterated his opposition to the project.

#### *Mail*

None.

#### *Announcements*

- Jim Moore indicated that on Saturday the 30<sup>th</sup> there will be a presentation on the potential health impacts of the proposed pipeline at 4:00 at Deerfield High School.

#### *Documents and Other Exhibits Used at the Meeting*

- Materials pertaining to the budget prepared by the Town Administrator
  - Budget Items for FY2016, January 25, 2016
  - Recommended Spending
  - Projected Article 2 for the May 9, 2016 Annual Town Meeting
  - Comparison of regional tax rates sorted by FY2016 tax rate, lowest rate to highest
  - Certified Free Cash – Conway
  - Budget Input Sheets FY2017: Treasurer, Collector, Town Administrator, IT, Building Maintenance, Police Department, Fire Department, Ambulance, Highway, Employee Benefits
- Memo, application, and materials from People's United Bank regarding the Town of Conway credit card
- Massachusetts Clean Energy Center Website announcing Solarize Mass program including Conway
- Disclosure of Election or Appointment to an Uncompensated Position as Required by 930 CMR 6.02(3) pertaining to Roy A. Cohen dba Network Advantage Associates
- Letter from Treasurer/Tax Collector Jan Warner regarding impact of audit/no audit on the Town's ability to borrow funds to purchase a new fire truck
- Letter from Brice Hereford requesting approval to hold two positions (member of Energy Committee, Solar Coach for Solarize Mass program) in light of the Conflict of Interest Law
- Email from Pixie Holbrook regarding upcoming presentation on health effects of compressor stations and natural gas infrastructure

#### *Next Meeting*

- Scheduled for Monday, February 1, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. at the Town Office, 32 Main Street
- **On a motion from John O'Rourke, seconded by Jim Moore, the meeting was adjourned at 8:07 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Moore