

Minutes
SELECT BOARD and FINANCE COMMITTEE
Town Hall, 5 Academy Hill Road
Monday, February 26, 2018 6 p.m.

Select Board members present: Robert Baker, Bob Armstrong; John O'Rourke, Chair

Others present: Mary McClintock, Co-Chair, Planning Board; Joe Strzegowski, Planning Board; Alan Singer, Chair, Finance Committee; Roy Cohen, Tom Donovan, Andrea Beaudoin, Finance Committee; Alyssa Tan, FCAT; Tom Hutcheson, Town Administrator; Lisa Turowsky, Assistant to the Town Administrator

John O'Rourke called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Minutes

- **On a motion from John O'Rourke to approve the minutes of Tuesday February 20, 2018, seconded by Robert Baker, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Meetings Attended by Select Board Members

Robert Baker and Bob Armstrong attended a presentation by the Historical Society about the anniversary of the tornado in Conway. FCAT recorded the meeting.

Citizens' concerns

None.

Old Business

Proposal to extend moratorium on marijuana operations for six months

John O'Rourke attended a Mass. Municipal Association Board of Directors meeting at which they were told that the Attorney General is entertaining six-month extensions of the moratorium through June 2019, possibly even longer. The rationale for this is that the Cannabis Control Commission may not have all the regulations in place by March 15, 2018, and there is a tremendous amount of confusion especially regarding edibles. Joe Strzegowski said it would require a Town Meeting vote to extend the moratorium, which could happen either in May or at a Special Town Meeting in the fall. Strzegowski and Mary McClintock both recommend waiting until the fall to ask for a vote on the proposed extension, at which time there will be some indication of how things are looking. John O'Rourke reiterated that the Attorney General implied that the regulations that are being promulgated may not be sufficient to manage retail sales. Strzegowski said it might be confusing to residents if they're asked to vote for a 3% tax and an extension of the moratorium at the same time. A public hearing has been scheduled for March 29th and Strzegowski is getting ready to mail out the required notices.

- **On a motion from John O'Rourke to include an article on the May 14, 2018 Town Meeting warrant to extend the moratorium on commercial marijuana establishments for six months past the current date, December 31st, to June 30, 2019, seconded by Robert Baker, the motion passed. Bob Armstrong voted no.**

Result of request for quotes for audits

Tom Hutcheson obtained three quotes for the Town's biennial auditing needs and distributed these to the Select Board.

- **On a motion from John O'Rourke to keep Roselli, Clark for another two years, seconded by Robert Baker, the vote was unanimous.**

Annual Town Meeting warrant

Review and discussion of draft

To be discussed below with Finance Committee.

New Business

Comcast – negotiations for new contract

A new committee to deal with Comcast negotiations will be appointed in June. The Select Board recommends that the new contract have the same terms as the Deerfield/Whately/Sunderland contract, which would make it a seven-year contract.

JOINT MEETING WITH FINANCE COMMITTEE, 6:50 p.m.

Finance Committee: consider reserve fund transfer request for oil spill clean-up

Tom Hutcheson prepared a request for signature by Finance Committee chair authorizing a transfer from the reserve fund into the Board of Health account in the amount of \$20,000. This represents the ceiling of what the clean-up is expected to cost. The Town will be billed by DEP, then may be able to recoup some of the expense from the resident. No invoice for the emergency clean-up has been received yet.

- **On a motion from Alan Singer to transfer \$20,000 from the reserve fund to the Board of Health to pay for the oil spill clean-up, seconded by Tom Donovan, the Finance Committee vote was unanimous in favor.**

Review FY 2019 Proposed Budget

Tom Hutcheson distributed the proposed budget to the Select Board and the Finance Committee. He noted that he had posted it on the website and encouraged those present to publicize it. He explained that, if everyone got what they wanted, the budget would be \$92,000 in the red. He then delivered a series of options for budget reductions. Some of these options were: paying for the Ambulance Department Lucas unit from general stabilization instead of from “raise and appropriate”; use general stabilization funds to bring capital stabilization back up to its usual \$125,000; and halving the money placed into Conway Grammar School and Highway garage stabilization accounts. Hutcheson explained that it is his intention to keep the “raise and appropriate” amount low so that the tax rate won’t be impacted as much. Hutcheson also noted that the raise and appropriate figure is only \$157,000; much of the roughly 4.3% budget increase is accounted for by the Conway Grammar School/Frontier Regional School budgets, which the Town has no control over. There is about \$431,000 in general stabilization currently.

There was a lengthy discussion about the Town’s financial health, in light of its low debt burden and the concern about an ever-increasing tax rate. It was noted that the only borrowing that has been done recently was for the new fire truck. Borrowing for capital expenditures is not necessarily a bad thing, said John O’Rourke and Tom Hutcheson. A 3% debt level would be reasonable; the standard for many other small towns is 5%. The Town has a lot of borrowing capacity that is not being used. Halving the contributions to the Highway garage fund would require the new garage to move forward; Tom Hutcheson noted that the Highway Garage Committee has not been very active, as it has been seeking members.

The Finance Committee will meet separately next week to closely examine the budget and prepare to make recommendations. Final recommendations should be ready by March 12th.

Review FY 2019 Proposed Warrant

Article 2 of the warrant contains the information that is presented at the end of the proposed budget. Tom Hutcheson cautioned everyone that anything in italics in Article 2 or the budget is not final. No general pay raises are included in the figures in Article 2 or the proposed budget. Hutcheson encouraged everyone to check the budget numbers. In terms of Articles on the warrant, Article 23, which deals with joining the mosquito control district, will be addressed at Town Meeting by Carolyn Shores Ness of South Deerfield. Article 25 deals with the 3% marijuana tax. Article 32 is the citizens’ petition to bring landscaping work within the purview of the Highway Department. Tom Hutcheson noted that the estimated \$61,000 that it would cost to bring the landscaping work “in house” is not included in his budget.

Items Not Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting

None.

Town Administrator update

Committees

We’ve gotten a final accounting for the 250th Anniversary celebration and have ended with a positive \$31,293.57 balance. There may be some outstanding bills or revenue, but those would be minimal at this point, and we’re preparing to close the books at the end of the year.

Departments

I've been working more on the parking issue on Delabarre Avenue and hope to have a letter prepared explaining the situation as completely as possible soon.

We have gotten a preliminary notification of our Chapter 90 money, which is \$264,963, down slightly from \$265,608 last year, which was down from \$268,147 the year before.

Other

For your information, the Festival of the Hills is slated for September 30-October 1. It is that early because the following weekend is the weekend of the Ashfield Fall Festival.

Concerns of the Selectmen

None.

Mail

None.

Announcements *None.*

Next Meeting Scheduled for Monday, March 5th, 2018 at the Town Office, 6:00 p.m. The Finance Committee will meet separately on Monday, March 5th at 6:30 p.m. at the Town Hall.

At 8:00 p.m., on a motion from John O'Rourke to adjourn, seconded by Robert Baker, the vote was unanimous in favor.