

Minutes
SELECT BOARD
Monday, January 7, 2019 6:00 p.m.
Town Office 32 Main Street

Present: Bob Armstrong; Phil Kantor; John O'Rourke, Chair

Also present: Dan Fentin-Thomas, FCAT; Ron Sweet, Highway Dept.; Bob Dean, FRCOG; Alan Singer, Tom Donovan, Finance Committee; Tom Hutcheson, Town Administrator; Lisa Turowsky, Assistant to the Town Administrator

Minutes (12/26/18) Tabled.

Kantor requested that the language in the 12/26/18 Meeting Minutes under JOINT MEETING with Personnel Committee be revised to read as follows: "**Barten stated that** Fentin represented the voice, not only of reason, but also of employment law....**Fentin opined that** some personnel policies pertaining to the Conway Grammar School are not compliant, and this can be an issue because the Town is the employer of school employees."

Warrants

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to approve the vendor warrant of \$49,210.16, the payroll warrant of \$112,220.16, the payroll deduction warrant of \$29,786.06, and the student activity account warrant of \$1,628.03, seconded by Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Meetings Attended by Select Board Members

Kantor reported attending Frontier school committee budget meetings where good progress has been made. Armstrong attended these meetings as well.

Public Comments None

Old Business

Consider draft marijuana host agreement policy

Tom Hutcheson sent around a sample host policy agreement from Montague. This sample agreement was used for Buckland's policy, which introduced the escrow account idea. There was discussion of whether the escrow account level is too high. The idea of having a sliding scale for the escrow account depending on type of operation (cultivation v. processing v. retail) or potential size of the operation was discussed. It was noted that our bylaw limits the size of retail marijuana business to small operations.

O'Rourke asked whether Hutcheson has run the draft host agreement past Town Counsel yet; Hutcheson has not. Armstrong likes the idea of a sliding scale for the escrow account Hutcheson said the point of it is provide for review of draft license applications. Two other Town board permitting bodies make applicants pay for permit review. \$5,000 may be a lot of money. If the applicant doesn't have \$5,000 to be held in escrow they *may* be undercapitalized although Hutcheson said not necessarily. Kantor would like the Select Board to think about what makes sense for the Town in this regard, not what any individual applicant should get. The Select Board agreed that the escrow concept is a good thing in principle, as long as it's not terribly onerous. O'Rourke said they can decide on the actual amount at a future meeting. Another issue discussed was the review of draft licensing applications. The Select Board believes it's a good idea to review draft applications to learn about the sources of applicants' funding.

Consider raising credit limit on Highway Department account

Ron Sweet explained to the Select Board that raising the credit limit for the Highway Department's account will give him more flexibility when making purchases online. Anything over \$2,000 will have to be approved by the Town Administrator.

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to increase the credit limit on the Highway Department's account to \$5,000, over \$2,000 to be approved by Town Administrator, seconded by Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

New Business

Chapter 90

Reimbursement for Matthews Road, Main Poland Road, North Poland Road

Sweet shared information about the various projects for which he is submitting requests for Chapter 90 reimbursements. Mathews, Main Poland, North Poland requests are ready for SB signatures.

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to approve a request for ch. 90 reimbursement for Mathews Road in the amount of \$107,782.50, seconded by Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor.**
- **On a motion from O'Rourke to approve a request for ch. 90 reimbursement for Main Poland Road in the amount of \$203,359.75, seconded by Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor.**
- **On a motion by O'Rourke to approve a request for ch. 90 reimbursement for North Poland in the amount of \$153,769.47. seconded by Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Request for Chapter 90 funding for Hoosac Road Tabled

Consider Community Compact best practice grant application to support FRCOG accounting function

Bob Dean requested that the Select Board support an application related to FRCOG's accounting function. Dean manages this regional program for accounting services and explained the difficulties they've been having filling an opening for a PT accountant. There is no money in the FRCOG's budget for a FT position, and it's hard to find trainable accountants for PT positions. They are looking to create a training program and are asking the state for funding. DLS is interested in this effort; the Lt.Gov. has initiated a task force to address the statewide skills gap in the accounting area. FRCOG would take on training a person to become a municipal accountant. There is an online application through which the Town could express its interest in the municipal accounting project; then DLS would take it on. Hutcheson noted that MMA is also investigating a program to support these positions all over the Commonwealth. Hutcheson asked how registration is going for the short course in Northampton that's being offered this spring; Dean didn't have any information on it. Kantor said we're paying too much for accounting services; but O'Rourke expressed his belief that the FRCOG program is going well. It was noted that the transition after Joyce Muka, our previous accountant, retired has been a challenge. Kantor asked how a regional training program would work financially. Dean stated that if he can replace an accountant that leaves the program with a trained municipal accountant, this would be a success. Success is not going to lower the price but it's going to keep us serviced by a competent accountant. We're looking at increasing capacity; the training program could be used for other towns in our region.

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to authorize Tom Hutcheson to submit the Community Compact grant application supporting regional accounting training at FRCOG, seconded by Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Consider Town scholarship for Festival of the Hills donations

Kantor made this request after he found a way for the Town to have a Town scholarship based on donations to the Festival of the Hills group. Hutcheson distributed excerpts from state law that governs this situation. A committee would be formed, and funds would be managed by the Treasurer and distributed to recipients by the Select Board. Kantor stressed that this would provide a lawful way for Festival of the Hills to be "Town-affiliated" and would not cost the Town a penny. Something could go into the tax bills asking people to donate to the scholarship fund. O'Rourke asked why the Festival of the Hills people would to put money in Select Board's hands. Kantor answered that availability of Festival of the Hills scholarships is central to the Town's identity. O'Rourke asked what would the incentive be for Festival of the Hills to give donations to the Town to be disbursed? They have their own scholarship committee. Kantor says this is a way to get a discussion started about helping them out because it's important that the Town support Festival of the Hills. Hutcheson stressed that this arrangement would not create an affiliation between Festival of the Hills and the Town. A scholarship committee formed under this law would not result in Festival of the Hills becoming a Town committee. There has to be some discussion with Festival of the Hills about the arrangement that Kantor is proposing. They may want to stay the way they are with their own separate scholarship committee. Kantor will have someone from Festival of the Hills send a proposal to Hutcheson.

FRCOG – Direct Local Technical Assistance priorities

Survey from FRCOG has to be in by 1/25; Hutcheson has received the Planning Board priorities re: housing needs assessment, zoning bylaw assistance, etc. The Select Board should rank their priorities and give them back to Hutcheson.

6:30 **JOINT MEETING with Finance Committee**

Review Highway Dept budget, with Ron Sweet, was as follows:

- \$2,000 was requested for increase in OT pay
- \$10,000 was requested for rental of a boom lift that was voted last year; the department is using it a lot. Kantor asked if they can make this more efficient. Sweet explained the way the rentals work (longer periods of time cost less.) Armstrong asked how it's being used. They're currently doing tree trimming. Discussion of how difficult it is to know when you're going to be able to use this equipment (weather, etc.) and desirability of buying a used lift.
- budget for subletting by raised by \$5,000
- \$1,000 was requested for office operations
- \$10,000 requested for repairs including tires, anything made out of metal, prices have been going up a lot
- Fuel oil costs \$1 more than it did last year
- Overall there is an increase of \$30,000, a rise of 4.7%

Sweet will put together a list of repairs for last year and this year per Hutcheson's request to more accurately reflect reality.

Items Not Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting *None.*

Town Administrator update

Town Meeting: Budgets and Warrant

Budgets: Several departments are still working on their budgets: the Town Clerk (along with Elections) and the Assessors. The Town Clerk and Assessors budgets will have substantial changes based on providing back-up for their positions of responsibility. As per my budget memo, I have submitted level-funded budgets for rest of those that have not been submitted: the Moderator, Select Board, Reserve Fund, Town Audits, ZBA, AgCom, EMD, and Historical Commission.

For the Veterans account (543, under the "540 series" of Human Services), we are currently providing Chapter 115 benefits to only one veteran, at a cost of \$4,284. I am planning to budget conservatively for two veterans in case someone getting benefits moves into the community, raising last year's benefits budget of \$5,500 to \$8,568. I am also going to start including the cost of two grave flag medallions per year (\$50) as part of the veterans' graves flag sub-account, based on conversations with Don Graham, our Veterans' Flag Officer.

As you know, Gov. Baker has signed the short-term rental legislation. We can now move forward with setting a "occupancy excise" rate for short-term rentals. We will need to make a policy decision regarding whether and how this would affect licensed and permitted B&Bs (it could be an incentive to get Airbnb units licensed and inspected). One question is whether we want to simply use the maximum rate set by the state—6%—or whether we need a broader conversation, perhaps including people who run bed-and-breakfast operations as well as those who use Airbnb or similar services. This could lead to a warrant article for the upcoming Town Meeting. For your easy reference, Town Meeting approved the article:

To see if the Town will vote to adopt M.G.L. Part I, Title IX, Chapter 64G, Section 3A and 830 CMR 64G.3A.1, **Local Option Room Occupancy Excise**, as amended, for short-term (under 90 days annually) rentals, and an Occupancy Excise on short-term rentals in excess of 90 days annually, not exceeding 6%, but that no excise shall be imposed if the total amount of the rent is less than fifteen dollars (\$15.00), or take any action thereto.

Departments

I have signed up for the two remaining three-day procurement classes this spring for my MCPPO designation. One is at the beginning of February, one is at the end. They are in Lowell and Boston, and I plan to pay for my own accommodations rather than commute.

The Conway Grammar School water tank is now slated to be re-lined next summer. Since the tank was meant to be lined, I have an e-mail out asking whether MassTank can assure us that using an unlined water tank for five or six months will not compromise the integrity of the tank.

I have been discussing the possibility of a shared human resources function with the four Frontier towns and the Superintendent. Without objection, I'd like to apply as the lead town for a state "efficiency and regionalization" grant to study the possibility.

Other

The new FRCOG wage and salary survey is out if anyone would like to look at it. I have an electronic version I can send and one paper copy here; just let me know.

Select Board Comments *None*

Mail

Memo from Bob Dean re: request for Community Compact Support of Regional Accounting Project

Letter from Northampton DPW re: right of first refusal for Ch. 61 land conversions

Notice of public hearing for vegetation management plan from MDAR

Annual Report from Upper Pioneer Valley Veterans' Services District

Announcements *None*

Next Meeting

Monday, January 14, 2019, **Town Hall**, 6:00 p.m. with Finance Committee

- **On a motion from O'Rourke at 7:43 p.m. to adjourn, seconded by Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor.**