

Minutes
SELECT BOARD
Monday, January 14, 2019 6:00 p.m.
JOINT MEETING with the FINANCE COMMITTEE -- 6:30 p.m.
Town Hall, 5 Academy Hill Road

Select Board present: John O'Rourke, chair; Bob Armstrong; Phil Kantor

Others present: Robert Baker, Fire Chief; Gemma VanderHeld, Ambulance Director; Alan Singer, Roy Cohen, Tom Donovan, Finance Committee; Dan Fentin, FCAT; Tom Hutcheson, 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 January 7, 2019, seconded by Bob Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Meetings Attended by Select Board Members

Kantor attended the Small-Town Summit on education funding and the upcoming Ch. 70 bill, a subject which he found is treated with a depressing lack of urgency. He pointed out that the final education reform bill did not include earmarks for either Conway or Frontier, though Sen. Hinds had said he would propose that. Armstrong also attended that meeting and noted Hinds' sparsity aid bill (though that was not presented as a solution to small town education funding). He also attended the Conservation Commission meeting; they are working on the Nexamp solar proposal for Main Poland Road, and Natalie Blais's office hours in Shelburne Falls.

Public Comments *None.*

Old Business

Consider draft marijuana host agreement policy

O'Rourke noted that at the last meeting, the Board agreed in principle on providing for an escrow account and stated that in order to start a business, applicants need money, and he thought \$5,000 was not too much. Armstrong said he thought it was more money than necessary. Kantor suggested \$2,500 and noted that it would deter those simply floating an idea.

- **On a motion from Kantor to approve the policy, with a \$2,500 escrow amount, seconded by Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

New Business

Consider Jack Ramey as subject of In Memoriam in Annual Report

O'Rourke said that they all knew Jack Ramey and that he has been recommended by the Town Clerk as the most fitting recipient of the "In Memoriam" dedication for the Town Report.

- **On a motion from John O'Rourke, on the recommendation of the Town Clerk, to approve Jack Ramey as the subject of the In Memoriam dedication of the Town Report, seconded by Bob Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Appoint Peter Jeswald, Hank Horstmann to Highway Facility Committee

Hutcheson reported that the individuals had been recommended by the chair of the committee.

- **On a motion from John O'Rourke, based on the recommendation of the chair, to appoint Peter Jeswald and Hank Horstmann to the Highway Facility Committee, seconded by Bob Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Planning Board notification of site plan review for solar project

Hutcheson noted that per the mail item of last week, there is a copy of the site plan and related documents for the proposed solar installation on Main Poland Road at the Town Office. The Planning Board is the coordinating board for this, with the Conservation Commission weighing in independently.

Employee Handbook – proposed revision regarding retiree language

Hutcheson explained that the section on retiree insurance benefits has been clarified and additional citations provided. Kantor asked that the citations be briefly explained. Hutcheson agreed to include an explanation in the memo informing employees of this change and will incorporate the new language and explanation into the handbook during next year’s annual update.

- **On a motion from John O’Rourke to approve the section as amended, seconded by Bob Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Chapter 61B right of first refusal: John L. Harris, Map 407, Lot 2 (Shelburne Falls Road)

Hutcheson explained the process and noted that various committees have 30 days to reply to the Select Board as to whether there may be a compelling municipal interest in the Chapter land under discussion. After the Board hears from the other committees, it can decide whether to exercise its right of first refusal.

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

Town Administrator update

Committees

The Capital Improvement Planning Committee will be meeting Wednesday night to begin considering the capital requests. I have let the chair know my proposed budget approaches for the capital stabilization fund and the current round of requests.

The Highway Facility Committee is meeting Wednesday night with Andrea Woods of the FRCOG to go over possible approaches to funding, including the possibility of building the two buildings as two separate projects.

Budget and Town Meeting

I am considering starting a special revenue fund for audits, as the current practice of bi-annual audits means a difference of between \$15-20,000+ each year. A fund that receives a steady \$12,000 per year would be able to pay for such audits without changes to people’s taxes year-to-year.

I have adjusted the Highway figure for winter roads wages and salaries, as the figures we were using did not include the 2.5% general pay raise. This raises that line item a total of \$472, from \$18,874 to \$19,346.

I am making progress on the budget document anyway. We’re in a strong financial position, but I want to move forward smoothly and not spend all our free cash. It will be possible to have all of the money articles in the body of the warrant (that is, aside from Article 2, the omnibus budget article) be funded from sources other than raising and appropriating money, whether free cash, capital stabilization, or other sources.

Other

I have applied for a Community Compact “best practice” for the FRCOG’s accounting program’s idea for a training program.

At least three of the four Frontier towns are interested in a Community Compact “efficiency and regionalization” grant proposal to see what the scope and structure of a regional human resources function would look like. The Superintendent is also considering it. I plan to move forward on that as well.

Select Board Comments *None.*

Mail

Sen. Markey replied to the Board's advocacy for cable PEG Access funding, agreeing and informing the Board that he had sent a letter to the FCC with the same message.

Attorney Tom Lesser sent a letter outlining the Community Host Agreement process.

Sen. Hinds sent a letter highlighting the Senior Circuit Breaker Tax Credit, for eligible seniors, of up to \$1,100 on their municipal property taxes. Hutcheson will post the information to the Town website.

6:30 JOINT MEETING with the FINANCE COMMITTEE

FY 2020 budget review: Public Safety

Fire Department

Chief Baker noted that vehicle maintenance was more expensive than anticipated, with some pumper valves needing work which cost \$2,500 each; they decided to have them re-worked instead.

Ambulance Department

VanderHeld noted the increase in cost for radio fees; the FRCOG, which runs the county network, has been aware of the need to upgrade for several years and has been working on that steadily. There was also discussion of billing and collections, and the structure of funding for the department and its stabilization fund. Hutcheson will also add a transfer from receipts reserved to Ambulance Stabilization as a money article.

Police Department

Chief Ouimette was working and unavailable, but there was only one variation from level funding, a \$400 rise in software support.

Other Town Meeting and budget business

Hutcheson handed out sheets showing free cash history and drafts of sources and uses for proposed special (money) articles, as well as an overall spreadsheet for the budget and Town meeting warrant. He noted that due to a high FY 2019 free cash level, it will be possible to fund all the special money articles (not including the omnibus budget article) without raising and appropriating funds. He also proposed funding the Town Audit with a steady amount each year, even though we currently have biennial audits in order to avoid high and low years; this was met with general agreement.

Announcements *None.*

Next Meeting

Tuesday, January 22nd, 2019, at the Town Hall, 5 Academy Hill Road, at 6:00 p.m.

- **At 7:26 p.m., on a motion from John O'Rourke to adjourn, seconded by Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor.**