

SELECT BOARD
Monday, January 28, 2019 6:15 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: Dan Fentin-Thomas, FCAT; Tom Hutcheson, Town Administrator; Lisa Turowsky, Assistant to the Town Administrator; Rick Martin and Russ Kaubris, Franklin County Technical School; Alan Singer and Bob Stone, Finance Committee; Ken Ouimette, Police Chief

John O'Rourke called the meeting to order at 6:18 p.m.

Minutes

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to approve the minutes of January 22, 2019, seconded by Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor (2-0-1), Kantor abstaining.**

Meetings Attended by Select Board Members

Kantor went to several school-related budget meetings and negotiating strategy session; he reported that the school committee and Darius Modestow signed a 5-year contract for Modestow as superintendent. Armstrong attended a ConComm meeting to discuss the Nexamp project. In light of some concerns about the plans Nexamp submitted with respect to possible violations of the wetlands act, the ConComm asked Nexamp for a new set of plans. Armstrong also listened in on the phone call with the Governor's office regarding school funding. O'Rourke went to a FRCOG finance committee meeting and FRCOG council meeting at which the budget was approved. There will be a slight increase in Conway's assessment because the equalized valuation is up a bit.

Public Comments *None.*

Old Business

Review Direct Local Technical Assistance priorities for the Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Hutcheson described the projects that he, the Planning Board, and the Select Board identified as priorities. These include: a housing needs assessment; a culvert assessment; flood risk management; river corridor planning; zoning bylaw development; continuing education workshops; shared (regional) HR and OSHA compliance services; abandoned properties task force; municipal engagement including succession planning and Town academy; regional opioid task force; accountant training program; pollinator habitat corridor management training; digital literacy for seniors. Hutcheson will ask Pat Lynch, COA chair, if she knows of any local digital literacy efforts.

New Business

6:30 JOINT MEETING with the FINANCE COMMITTEE

FY 2020 budget review

Franklin County Technical School: Rick Martin and Russ Kaubris

Martin and Kaubris explained that the information they presented is only the draft budget; the vote to approve the budget will take place in March. They talked about projected enrollment for next year, both overall and as it related to Conway. There are currently 463 students. There has been an influx of special needs students, so some staff had to be added to accommodate their needs. There is a new program in Vet Tech being planned which will include a separate building for a clinic which students will build. An effort is being made to keep programs relevant so that students won't have to go out of district for the education they desire. The cost of students going out of district for technical school could be as much as 1-2% of Town's operating budget. The public hearing on the school's budget is on February 13th. There was some discussion of administrative costs; Martin and Kaubris pointed out that they are operating two schools, the vocational school and the regular education school. Some administrators have two titles. Transportation costs will be going up about 9%. Annual assessment went up a total of 2.8%.

Other Town Meeting warrant and budget business

Hutcheson revised the line item for insurance down; he explained that workers comp and property liability insurance had been overbudgeted for some time. Insurance cost in his proposed budget has decreased \$13,000. He noted that the Town may be challenged in its levy limit depending on how school budgets come in.

Items Not Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting

Ken Ouimette reported that he has been having a difficult time filling details in Town because our rate is lower than the rate in surrounding towns such as Buckland, Deerfield, Shelburne, etc. Those towns follow the state rate which is \$50/hour. After it was determined that an increase to \$50/hour won't impact the budget, the Select Board agreed that it makes sense to raise Conway's rate to \$50/hour.

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to increase the detail rate to \$50/hour for police details in Conway, seconded by Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Town Administrator update

Committees

The Garage Committee is almost ready to propose an article for funding the design for the proposed Highway Facility. They are planning to use some funds left over from the last project to hire the FRCOG to manage a Request for Qualifications for an owner's project manager to be able to give Town Meeting a hard figure for that cost. The design cost would still have to be estimated.

Due to a posting error, the Capital Improvement Planning Committee did not meet on Wednesday, January 23. The chair is aware that the Committee's report is expected February 11. He also indicated that he did not feel the Committee as currently constituted was capable of taking on the task of capital planning; it seems we should consider recruiting others for the work.

Departments

I have in the past been able to present a proposed budget around the last week in February. I may or may not be able to do that this year. In the past, our utilities have regularly submitted their personal property values to the assessors well in advance of their deadline of March 1. However, not only is this not guaranteed, but I will be at a procurement class most of the last week of February. Normally, I would have submitted the budget before then, but if the utilities are later than usual in getting us their figures, I may not have the budget ready till early March.

I'm checking with Town Counsel about several matters related to taxing Airbnb operations. First, I believe this would cover existing (and permitted) bed-and-breakfast operations as well as Airbnb operations (the real object of the article) and have asked if he concurs. Second, I've asked whether setting the tax rate really needs Town Meeting approval, or whether it is just a Select Board action, now that Town Meeting has accepted the statute, and if so, can the Board set different rates for permitted B&Bs versus unpermitted Airbnb operations.

The Attorney General has approved the Town's marijuana establishment by-law, with the following caveat (resulting from a motion to amend the Planning Board's proposal on the floor of Town Meeting):

Section 11.5.F of the by-law states that: "Permitting priority will be granted to organic cultivation." It is unclear what the Town intended by this text. Since organic cultivation is not a criterion for grant of a special permit, and since the Town does not establish a limit on the number of cultivators, it is unclear whether the Town intended to authorize the Planning Board, as the special permit granting authority, to deny a special permit if organic cultivation methods are not used. As drafted, the text quoted above may grant undue discretion to the special permit granting authority.

We have received a report from the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority for our regional Community Development Block Grant. For the quarter ending at the end of December 2018, 2 Conway housing units completed their rehab; 1 is under construction, and 2 are in the application process.

Select Board Comments *None.*

Mail *None.*

Announcements

Community Outreach Meeting for marijuana cultivation/manufacturing at 1230 Main Poland Road will be held on Saturday, February 2 at 7 p.m. in the Town Hall.

Next Meeting

Monday, February 4th, 2019, at the Town Hall, 5 Academy Hill Road, at 6:00 p.m.

- **At 7:40 p.m., on a motion from O'Rourke to adjourn, seconded by Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor.**