

Minutes
SELECT BOARD
Tuesday, October 15, 2019 6:00 p.m.
Town Office, 32 Main Street

Select Board present: Phil Kantor; Bob Armstrong

Others present: Dan Fentin-Thomas, FCAT; Ron Sweet, Highway Department; Peter Freisem, Resident; Walter Goodridge, Highway Facility Committee; Tom Hutcheson, Town Administrator; Lisa Turowsky, Assistant to the Town Administrator

Minutes

September 30, 2019

October 1, 2019

- **On a motion from Armstrong to approve the minutes of September 30, 2019, seconded by Kantor, the vote was unanimous in favor.**
- **On a motion from Armstrong to approve the minutes of October 1, 2019, seconded by Kantor, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Warrants

- **On a motion from Armstrong to approve the vendor warrant of \$161,152.79; the payroll warrant of \$111,727.55; the payroll deduction warrant of \$28,020.96; and the student activity warrant of \$1480.19, seconded by Kantor, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Meetings Attended by Select Board Members

Kantor attended state mediation for the Union 38/Frontier contract. He also went to the first Town Academy session.

Armstrong went to both Town Academy sessions which have been well-attended. He also went to a Cable Advisory Committee meeting in preparation for contract renewal with Comcast. He noted that FCAT is looking at ways to live-stream Town government meetings.

Public Comments

None.

New Business

Cemetery issues

Request for plot in Shirkshire Cemetery; Possibilities for the Cemetery Commission

The Town owns Shirkshire Cemetery but has no information about whether there are plots available. A question arose about the availability of plots. Kantor said there should be rules; it's a historic cemetery. Are there deed restrictions, Kantor asked? The Select Board currently acts as the Cemetery Commission. Freisem suggested having a separate cemetery commission, to be appointed by the Select Board. Freisem was contacted by Town resident who's interested in helping with cemetery mapping. It would be appropriate to have someone from Historical Commission working on a Cemetery Commission. Freisem also wants to have a workshop to start the process; this could lead to other residents being interested in serving. Hutcheson will do some of the preparatory work.

Use of Assessors' GPS camera

This could be part of a commission mapping project. Freisem mentions that the Board of Assessors is looking into getting a grant to improve the software used with the GPS camera.

Approval for mileage – Peter Freisem attended a workshop on Longmeadow's experience with ground-penetrating radar. Freisem said the workshop provided useful information and networking opportunities.

- **On a motion from Kantor to approve mileage for Freisem's attending the workshop, seconded by Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Possible MVP regional grant with Deerfield

Hutcheson said the Town has been invited to participate in a regional grant. The Town can apply for grants as an individual grantee as well as part of a regional effort. Deerfield is going with a private consultant; they might be looking at flood plain mapping. The private consultant contacted Hutcheson to see if Town is interested in applying for this regional grant.

There's not a lot of impact on Conway. Kantor doesn't want to be part of this grant process especially since there is a need for community septic. Hutcheson doesn't know the maximum dollar value of the MVP grant. The MVP has been refunded, said Hutcheson; he'll check this out with Joe Strzegowski. We could still sign on with a regional grant with Deerfield.

Driveway to Highway salt shed and new shed: speed bumps

Sweet spoke about some new speed bumps on the Pleasant property roadway going up to the salt shed. He said he had no contact with the Pleasants before they put up the speed bumps. Kantor said he had contact with Pleasant before it happened. Hutcheson called Town Counsel about the right of way and thinks we should send an invitation to a meeting before telling them to take it down. Sweet is not happy with their height. Kantor noticed that there are no signs for the speed bumps. Sweet doesn't understand why there need to be two. He said no one had complained about trucks speeding in the driveway. Sweet said the Town will probably have to do something about it with the new building being built. Kantor would like the Town to meet with the Pleasants about the situation but said the owner of the property would probably not want to come for a meeting. Sweet was looking into moving the driveway but Kantor reported that the school wasn't interested. Hutcheson thinks the speed bumps are something that the Town can say are an obstruction of the Town's right of way and will continue working with Town Counsel on a letter to Pleasant for the Select Board's comments. The Town should take its time in deciding how to handle the situation. Kantor would like to know what Town Counsel thinks the options are going forward.

Electric vehicle chargers for Conway Grammar School

Hutcheson found some information about what the state has done in the provision of EV chargers. He'll send information around to the Select Board members. Kantor said they asked the Grammar School to do a survey. No current staff drive an electric car, but they have no objection to having chargers at the school or to having members of the public use the chargers there.

Public Comments

None.

Items not anticipated within 48 hours of the meeting

Accept value engineering contract for Highway maintenance building

Goodridge said he spoke to the designer, Vreeland, about how they haven't been as prompt as the Town would like, especially as regards the HVAC. Vreeland recommended an engineer, Richard Parks, who has a company in Keene. Goodridge spoke to Parks and he recommended some things that could be taken out of the HVAC plan. Goodridge said Parks has worked with Vreeland before. Debbie Anderson at the Mass. AG's office okayed the Town using value engineering and said they may use any procurement they desire. Parks sent a proposal to the Highway Facility Committee. They decided to leave the plumbing as is. This is going to speed things up in getting a design to present at a special town meeting before the end of the calendar year. Vreeland will cut their fee by \$4,000. Also, some supervision by Parks will be provided. The Select Board watched a video of the current state of the site.

- **On a motion from Kantor to approve the value engineering contract for \$14,900 for the highway maintenance building, seconded by Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Town Administrator update

Committees

The Open Space Committee has been working with the Highway Department around their needs and desires regarding mowing.

Departments

The first two Town Academy sessions went well. The first had a total of 20 attendees, of whom 11 were not there in an official capacity, which I believe is a very good number. The second had 17, 9 of whom were not there in an official capacity. This Thursday is Public Works, followed on October 24 with Public Safety—Police, Fire, and Ambulance.

We received an update on our OPEB liability. It is slightly down, from \$1,490,637 to \$1,469,196. If we continue to invest \$20,000 per year into the fund, it would take about 75 years to reach that number. At a \$50,000 annual investment rate, it would take about 30 years. The arguments in favor of funding OPEB at a greater pace include a better bond rating (OPEB has a weight of about 5% in a bonding agency's rating). The main arguments against more OPEB funding is that Conway can easily pay as we go, and it ties up taxpayer money, though the savings could be a windfall in the case of a major change to the structure of health care funding.

The state Rural Policy Advisory Commission published its rural policy plan October 2, which is available on the FRCOG website; it documents rural disadvantages and proposes a State Office of Rural Policy. As of 2:30 p.m., the report had still not been posted on the state's Rural Policy Advisory Commission website, perhaps demonstrating the need for a state office.

I submitted a grant application for the Town Hall lift to the Massachusetts Office on Disability; we will need Town match of \$50,000 to get \$75,000 from the state, a 60/40 match ratio.

I also submitted a grant proposal for a Community Compact IT grant, for \$76,250, for the Assessors, for both hardware and software that will make their work easier and provide more information to the public.

We received the very first version of a new DOR-DLS long-range financial planning tool. It is quite complex, but DOR is more than willing to help walk the Town through the spreadsheets. I have contacted them to ask for proposed training dates.

FRCOG traffic counts for Elm St. and Reed's Bridge Road are in and I have forwarded them to the Police and Highway Departments. They will help show any future changes in traffic patterns around the center of town.

A recent article in the Recorder on Community Development Block Grants did not mention the one Conway participates in, which is through the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority; to set the record straight Conway has assisted, and continues to assist, low- and moderate-income homeowners in need of housing rehabilitation.

Select Board Comments

Kantor had comments about OPEB. Urban school districts are more likely to have huge OPEB liabilities. The state will have to bail out such school districts. Kantor thinks Conway will be penalized for being "super responsible." Armstrong said the way we're looking at OPEB is wrong. Kantor said what we really need to do is to be on the "cheap side of being responsible." Hutcheson said we've never had any problem paying as we go. MMA's main way of tackling the OPEB issue is to try to repeal the law that says cities/towns don't need to pay retiree's health insurance. Hutcheson thinks in the long term the structure of funding health insurance will change which may reduce the pressure on cities/towns for OPEB liability. The Select Board and Hutcheson discussed the effect of OPEB on the Town's bond rating.

Mail

Announcements

Executive Session

Under reason #7, to comply with any general law: approve minutes of October 8, 2019 executive session

- **At 7:15 p.m., on a motion from Armstrong to enter executive session for Reason #7: to comply with any general law: approve minutes of October 8, 2019 executive session, and adjourn immediately therefrom, seconded by Kantor, Armstrong voted yes, and Kantor voted yes.**

The meeting returned to open session at 7:20 p.m.

- **At 7:22 p.m., on a motion from Kantor to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Next Meeting

Monday, October 28, 2019 at the Town Office, 32 Main Street, at 6:00 p.m.