

Minutes
SELECT BOARD
Tuesday, January 21, 2020 6:00 p.m.
Town Office, 32 Main Street

**Joint Meeting with Finance Committee at 6:30 p.m. to discuss
FY2021 Budget**

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

Others present: Dan Fentin-Thomas, FCAT; Janet Chayes, OSC; Ginny Knowlton, Carl Nelke, Veronique Blanchard, Board of Health; Alan Singer, Roy Cohen, Tom Donovan, Finance Committee; Tom Hutcheson, Town Administrator; Lisa Turowsky, Assistant to the Town Administrator

Minutes

January 13, 2020

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to approve the minutes of January 13, 2020, seconded by Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Warrants

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to approve the vendor warrant of \$157,282.51, the payroll warrant of \$110,070.36, and the payroll deduction warrant of \$27,470.67, seconded by Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Meetings Attended by Select Board Members

Kantor attended more school meetings. Armstrong attended the annual FCAT meeting; he was elected president of the board again. He reported that the FCC changes might not be as harmful to FCAT as was feared. He also attended a ConCom meeting. Roaring Glenn did not show up with an RDA as they were supposed to. O'Rourke attended the FCAT meeting. He noted that FCAT is seen as a model for other local access television stations in the area.

Public Comments

None.

Old Business

Direct Local Technical Assistance prioritization

Janet Chayes was here to talk about the open space and recreation plan which is scheduled to be updated in 2020. She would like the FRCOG to do it again. It costs about \$20,000 to do this seven-year plan. She asked the FRCOG planner to request that DLTA money be earmarked for this expensive process. This will be one of the top priorities for the DLTA process, said Hutcheson. Chayes will check to see if CPA money can be used for this planning process. Hutcheson can file a preliminary set of priorities and see if we can use CPA money for a planning grant.

When Hutcheson did the compilation of responses to the 2020 Local Technical Assistance Request Form, he noted that there was substantial interest in the housing items (Housing Planning and Implementation Technical Assistance, Small Town Housing Working Group). The Planning Board wanted to participate in the small town housing working group. Exploring the feasibility of new shared services under Town Hall Functions came in pretty high as well. There was interest in some zoning bylaw development items. More river corridor management still needs to be done. Other things that were mentioned included: climate resiliency; culvert assessments (there is a state list which has ranked culverts, the problem has been getting the money to do this); managing flood risks, implementing the recommendations in the MVP report; EV placement; continuing ed workshops for local officials; the fostering of civic engagement and education; and implementation of the rural policy plan, a project led by Linda Dunlavy at FRCOG. It's very difficult to pick only three items as top priorities, said O'Rourke. The Select Board will give five top priorities instead of three, including the open space/rec plan, placement of EV charging stations, small town housing working group,

Appoint Town Hall and Office Renovation Committee

Patricia Lynch, John O'Rourke, Ron Sweet, Janice Warner, Lee Whitcomb

Hutcheson also wanted someone from CIPC to be on this committee. They are meeting tomorrow, then one member of the CIPC will be recommended for this new committee.

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to appoint Patricia Lynch, John O'Rourke, Ron Sweet, Janice Warner, and Lee Whitcomb to the Town Hall and Office Renovation Committee for a term ending June 30, 2021, seconded by Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

New Business

Appoint to Board of Cemetery Commissioners: Peter Freisem, Stephen Jackson Tabled.

Peter is on the verge of getting a third person who will then come in with Peter and Stephen to be appointed.

Appoint Robert Nowak as the Conservation Commission representative to the Community Preservation Committee

The chair of the ConCom nominated Nowak to be their representative to the Community Preservation Committee.

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to appoint Robert Nowak as the Conservation Commission representative to the Community Preservation Committee for a term ending June 30, 2022, seconded by Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

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

Town Administrator update

Committees

In writing my submission to the Town Report, I noted that there are the committees which do not have sufficient membership to continue—the Housing Committee, with no members, the Agricultural Commission, with three out of five members, but none willing to be chair (and no farmers), and the Energy Committee, with just two members. I am planning to ask for the inclusion of articles on the annual Town Meeting warrant proposing that the Town rescind the Town Meeting votes establishing the Housing Committee and Agricultural Commission, and that the Select Board consider not re-appointing the Energy Committee for FY 2021.

Town Counsel is currently reviewing the proposed contract for the Planning Board for a cell tower peer review consultant and the proposed bid documents for the Highway maintenance facility.

Departments

A couple of suggestions have been made for brownfields assessment, which in this case is for materials other than petroleum. The first the current Town Garage; the second, the former Sunset Garage. The owners of the former Sunset Garage are out of town, and unless the property is going to remain commercial, the assessment grant would not apply. For both properties, there is some risk to an assessment, as it may uncover contamination that would be required to be removed. Still, the Town should be accountable for its own property, so I plan to request an assessment of the current Town garage site.

We have received our quarterly report from the Franklin Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, which shows that Conway has completed work on nine units on Conway, more than Leverett, Sunderland, or Deerfield, the other towns participating in this regional grant.

The FRCOG had applied for a regional Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grant. Unfortunately, one of the anticipated sources of funding the local match (a grant the Franklin Land Trust had applied for) was not funded, so Kimberly MacPhee and I are trying to work to come up with a smaller program and alternate sources of funding. I have said that I could contribute some but not all of the grant match account voted by Town Meeting, and the Highway Superintendent has agreed to a small amount out of his budget, as one of the main items was culvert design.

Regarding the Chapter 61 parcel that was sold without going through the proper process, Town Counsel advises that since there is not a change in use, and the buyer is willing to sign an affidavit, there is no need to go through the committee notification and approval process.

6:30 p.m. JOINT MEETING WITH FINANCE COMMITTEE on FY 2021 BUDGET

Board of Health (Ginny Knowlton, Carl Nelke)

The Board is requesting a total of \$228,429. The increase in the operating budget is the result of a \$20,000 increase in the cost of recycling disposal, and in the slightly increased costs of running the new compactor. They don't have a figure for the nursing program, so they had to give an estimate for that increase. They also requested some money to pay for the transportation of composting. The composting program is going well according to Nelke.

Finance: Treasurer/Collector, Debt, Employee Benefits (Janice Warner)

Treasurer/Collector budget is essentially level-funded, with minor increases of about 1% for dues and meetings. The Treasurer has added a new line called Treasurer fees to cover some occasional fees that come up. The cost of software support went up a bit; Warner is proposing an article for the annual Town Meeting warrant to cover the conversion of the payroll company that the Town has been using since 2007. Warner believes the company, which has proposed some upgrades that won't be in the Town's interest, is going to be out of business soon. Warner proposes changing to a new company called Zobrio which provides the Town's accounting software already. She distributed an analysis of the cost of conversion to the Select Board and Finance Committee. The current company costs a lot more than switching to Zobrio would cost. It was noted that Town residents may pay property taxes online – it's very easy for the Treasurer/Collector and low-cost option for taxpayers.

Debt: not much debt, paying down fire truck loan. Short-term interest number is new and represents a plan for the upcoming loan for the highway facility.

Employee benefits: "the big one" says Warner. She planned for a 3% increase, but FY 2021 will see a bigger increase due to the number of employees that will be added to the health insurance plan. There was a six-employee increase this year, rather than the two she had planned for. The Town is going to need an additional \$30,000 to cover the cost for the additional employees. The Town's share of the health insurance premiums is 70%.

Town Administration: Select Board, Audit, Legal, Town Administration, IT, Cemetery Commission (Tom Hutcheson)

The Select Board budget increased slightly to cover an increase in the cost of dues. Audit: Hutcheson thought it would be good to set up a Town fund so we could ask for the same amount every year, but the Town Accountant said that, since we've been funding it through operating budget, it's not appropriate to move something off the operating budget if it's really part of operating budget. Hutcheson has asked for money to cover the biannual audit. Legal: no questions. Town Administrator: Hutcheson read into the record his notes on the Town Administrator's budget. He explained what the budget covers and noted that his position is under contract negotiations. In this budget the Town Administrator position is level-funded. The Town Administrator's budget also includes the salary for the assistant to boards/committees, and Hutcheson has proposed slightly increased salary and hours, in the event that the cable advisory committee needs the services of the assistant. The Town Administrator's budget also includes money for the Town Administrator and the Assistant to the Town Administrator for training and mileage. Kantor has serious problems with increases for two assistants happening in the course of one year, and suggested that if increases are to be given, they should be phased in over a longer time period. In general, though, Kantor objected to giving increases to the two Assistants because such increases are not available to IAs through their contract. IT budget: costs of subscriptions are going up; maintenance/technical expenses are going up because the IT consultant is doing more work for the Town. The IT consultant reported that the costs of software etc. will continue to increase over time. Cemetery commission: Hutcheson submitted budget for new cemetery commission.

Other FY 2021 Budget Business

Assessors will be in February 3 to review their budget.

Concerns of the Selectmen

None.

Mail

The Select Board received its annual report from the regional housing authority. There were two pieces of communication about the new fluorescent yellow school bus signs on Route 116, including a thank you note from the resident who brought the issue to the Select Board.

There was a thank you letter from a person who had an accident on Shelburne Falls Road recently; she was very happy with the EMT/Police/Fire personnel who came to the scene.

Announcements

None.

Executive Session

Under Reason #2, to conduct contract negotiating sessions with non-union personnel (the Town Administrator)

- **At 7:45 p.m. on a motion from O'Rourke to enter Executive Session for reason #2, to conduct contract negotiating sessions with non-union personnel (the Town Administrator), and adjourn immediately therefrom, the vote was unanimous in favor, Kantor voted yes, Armstrong voted yes, O'Rourke voted yes.**

Returned to open session at 8:30 p.m.

- **At 8:30 p.m. on a motion from O'Rourke to adjourn, seconded by Armstrong, the vote was unanimous in favor, Kantor voted yes, Armstrong voted yes, O'Rourke voted yes.**

Next Meeting: Scheduled for Monday, January 27, 2020 at the Town Hall, 5 Academy Hill Road, 4:30 p.m.