

*Minutes*

**SELECT BOARD**

Monday, May 11, 2020, 6:10 p.m.

**ZOOM MEETING**

<https://zoom.us/j/91548611789> (Meeting ID: 820 7887 9307 #)

To call in via telephone: Dial 929 205 6099 US (Enter Meeting ID: 820 7887 9307 #)

*Select Board present:* Phil Kantor; Bob Armstrong; John O'Rourke, Chair (all remotely)

*Others present (all remotely):* Hope Crolius, Priscilla Lynch. Marilyn Webster, Residents; Roy Cohen, Alan Singer, Finance Committee; Darius Modestow, Superintendent; Tom Hutcheson, Town Administrator; Lisa Turowsky, Assistant to the Town Administrator

*Minutes*

**May 4, 2020**

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to approve the minutes of May 4, 2020, seconded by Armstrong, O'Rourke voted aye, Kantor voted aye, Armstrong voted aye, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

*Warrants*

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to approve the Vendor warrant in the amount of \$64,049.43; the Payroll warrant in the amount of \$118,008.39; and the Payroll deduction warrant in the amount of \$28,693.13, seconded by Armstrong, Kantor voted aye, Armstrong voted aye, O'Rourke voted aye, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

*Meetings Attended by Select Board Members*

Kantor attended Frontier Budget Committee meetings; Union 38 contract negotiations; and a Frontier EDS group meeting. There was a discussion of sharing Deerfield personal protective equipment (PPE).

O'Rourke had meeting with the Select Board chairs of Sunderland, Deerfield and Whately at which school budgets were discussed. He also attended a webinar for MMA with the state Lieutenant Governor and other officials to talk about the latest happenings with the budget and health situations; there was not much information available at the time.

*Public Comments*

*None.*

*Old Business*

*Vote to pay registry fees for mortgage release from Guilford Fund*

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to approve a vote to pay registry fees for mortgage release from Guilford Fund, seconded by Armstrong, Kantor voted aye, Armstrong voted aye, O'Rourke voted aye, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

*Sign loan paperwork for Highway maintenance building: Greenfield Cooperative Bank*

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to sign loan paperwork for Highway maintenance building, seconded by Armstrong, Kantor voted aye, Armstrong voted aye, O'Rourke voted aye, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

*Forest Stewardship plan development presentation by Alex Barrett and Mary Wigmore*

There was nothing to report this week. Priscilla Lynch said she is concerned that there are some areas that are not addressed/definitions that are not present in the survey that has been posted on the website. She has not contacted Mary Wigmore to discuss her concerns; O'Rourke asked Lynch to make suggestions to Wigmore for changes to the survey. Marilyn Webster scanned the survey and was curious about the process. The survey is a means of seeking public input, said O'Rourke. Based on some of the questions, it appeared to Webster that parts of the plan are going to cost money to implement. Where does money come from? O'Rourke and Hutcheson said this survey is part of a planning grant. Webster asked if there would be grant funding to implement identified activities. The example of paving trails for accessibility was

given. O'Rourke said we have money for planning only. Webster asked how people will find out about public input sessions. O'Rourke said this information would be on the website.

*Request to Moderator to postpone Town Meeting to June 20*

The Select Board could extend Town Meeting for 30 days. They extended it to June 8; but now they want to extend it further because the state does not have much information to give to Conway about budgeting. It will be better to wait until June 20 (rain dates June 21, June 27, June 28) for the meeting, which will be held at 1:00 p.m. at an outdoor location to be determined.

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to hold Town Meeting on June 20, rain date of 21<sup>st</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> or 28<sup>th</sup>, seconded by Kantor, Armstrong voted aye, Kantor voted aye, O'Rourke voted aye, the vote was unanimous in favor**

*MIIA renewal proposal*

Kantor reiterated his opinion that MIIA's cost is too high; he stated that Conway is subsidizing other towns. O'Rourke said Kantor should have researched this earlier.

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to renew MIIA insurance, seconded by Armstrong, O'Rourke voted yes, Armstrong voted yes, Kantor voted no, the vote was 2 in favor, 1 against.**

*New Business*

*Carl Nelke: Board of Health request for new glass compactor to save money on trucking*

Nelke described the equipment being considered. A new compactor for cans and plastic is proposed; rebates for costs will be available over a period of time. Nelke thinks the total cost will be close to \$30,000, including prep work costing about \$10,000. A review of the spreadsheet that Nelke provided showed that 45% of everything that is recycled is glass. There would be more than 50 recycling runs next fiscal year; FY21 haul savings would be about \$21,600. Kantor asked if there are any assumptions that could change over the years. Nelke said starting with FY21 they are on a 5-year contract so there should not be any surprises. Is there any reason this compactor must be acquired this year, given the grim economic forecast? Nelke said we are going to be here eventually. Kantor said this is actually an investment, not an expense, and the economic situation will be worse next year. What would it cost next year? Nelke said it would not be substantially more expensive but there would be an uptick in the cost.

*Re-opening strategy (not including timeline): introduction by Town Administrator*

Hutcheson is just introducing this; he wants everyone to know a re-opening strategy is being considered in advance of the May 18<sup>th</sup> date that is being considered for ending this period of quarantine. There were no questions for Hutcheson from the Select Board at this time.

**6:30 p.m. JOINT MEETING WITH FINANCE COMMITTEE**

*Revised Town budget and warrant*

First, Hutcheson confirmed that everybody got the memo he sent out about proposed changes to the warrant. He would possibly consider something for the BOH recycling effort that was discussed with Nelke. Some of the proposed changes are: scheduled Highway truck replacement could be accomplished through capital stabilization instead of free cash; consider adding general stabilization and free cash costs as a backstop for possible revenue loss; paying OPEB out of the OPEB trust fund (which would lower the Article 2 amount); increase the debt service line item to pay \$77,000 for highway garage debt service, and \$27,000 for free cash, that was inadvertently left out.

Armstrong initiated a conversation about the necessity of paying OPEB this year, as it is an emergency time. Hutcheson said it is a good idea to put something into OPEB every year and said he is also proposing to take much of the OPEB contribution out of the OPEB trust fund and putting \$10,000 back into it.

Kantor said there were a lot of interrelated issues presented by the memo. He said it is important to start with school funding. He wanted to find out how close we can get to a level-funded school budget? He cited the example of what would happen if Frontier tried to do a level-funded budget; this could result in the need to lay off two teachers. He asked whether we could find something else to cut instead of two teachers' jobs? O'Rourke wanted to get as close to level-funded as possible. O'Rourke asked Darius Modestow who was on the call for his input. Modestow said he could not speak for the school committee who are meeting tomorrow. He did speak to the importance of keeping programming, which made it hard to look at cutting. The other concern is that FY22 could be a lot worse than FY21. He does not have information about what

will be happening in September. There is a lot that still must be figured out, and it is necessary to put some money aside just to fund anticipated stuff. O'Rourke supported doing whatever we can to keep jobs intact.

Kantor would like to find a way to get money back to the taxpayers. He would vote to reduce capital contributions for a year rather than reduce staff at school. Cohen asked what was going to happen with transportation especially if school was not physically open. Modestow said if we are still in COVID-19 lockdown you would think there would be reductions in transportation. More information is necessary for these kinds of decisions to be made.

Hutcheson has asked departments to review the budgets they submitted to see if there are any further reductions that can be made. Hutcheson does not have responses yet, other than the Assessors could cut \$10,000 from their budget; Hutcheson can deduct \$2,700 from the Town Administrator's budget.

There was a discussion about what can be done if there is a revenue deficit. There could be revenue shortfalls due to property taxes not being collected in a timely manner. Hutcheson looked at Great Recession figures to get a sense of what could be at stake in this economic crisis. He would like to have some reserve funds in place if there ended up being a revenue deficit which, if the figures from the Great Recession economic contraction were relevant, could be upwards of \$318,000. Kantor would rather make cuts to spending and advocated cutting some percentage out of the operating budget. Hutcheson emphasized we should not pass a budget that is not balanced. Alan Singer asked how funds would be replenished. Hutcheson said this would happen over time and recommended assuming a worst-case scenario and then not having to make the cuts.

The Select Board agreed to pay FY 2021 OPEB from the OPEB trust fund; add the debt service and free cash for the Highway maintenance building borrowing; add \$10,000 to the OPEB trust fund; reduce the replenishment of the grant fund to \$5,000 (from \$15,000); and take money from capital stabilization for the Highway truck (instead of free cash). There was no resolution or action on wages and salaries.

Hutcheson said the \$318,000 was a worst-case scenario where money would be set aside in case it is needed. The money would not be spent unless there were insufficient revenues. He would like to aim for the warrant to be approved, or close to approval, next week.

#### *Items Not Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting*

The Town Clerk has a timeline for elections authorizing election warrant. She needs the vote tonight so she can set the date for June 30<sup>th</sup>.

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to set Town elections for June 30<sup>th</sup>, seconded by Armstrong, Kantor voted aye, Armstrong voted aye, O'Rourke voted aye, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

#### *Town Administrator update*

##### **Committees**

We've sorted out invoicing issues with the Newsletter Committee; one member had fronted a considerable amount of money and we had to take a step back to make sure her paperwork for reimbursement was in order. Everything should be in order from now on.

##### **Departments**

The excavation for the Highway Maintenance Facility is completed and the forms for the footings are expected to be set up this week. The four-foot foundations will be formed and poured over the several weeks, and finally the slab, before the frame starts to go up.

The Treasurer/Collector reports that she has only gotten two calls from residents requesting payment plans for their taxes, which she is developing. This is good news in relation to possible revenue shortfalls in FY 2020, but probably too little information to guide decisions regarding FY 2021. She has received just 81% of expected revenue instead of the usual 93-94%, but the deadline has been extended, so we don't know what that 81% figure represents, although I thought I'd report it.

The current Forest Stewardship grant is probably not able to be postponed. A different grant, focused on South River activity, an MVP grant, which can be extended, but not the Forest Stewardship grant, so the initial narrow timeframe holds.

As you've heard, the Governor will announce a re-opening plan on May 18, which will look something like Rhode Island's (which I have not examined).

*Concerns of the Selectmen*

Armstrong said there are people in town looking for a drop-off spot for Instacart in Conway, which they currently do not have. Anyone wishing to use Instacart should keep this in mind.

Kantor read a letter from a resident re: working on the front line in COVID-19. This woman, an RN, wrote about having to reuse PPE and she wondered “How can this be real?” in this country. She feels betrayed; seeing people not observing social distancing makes her angry. She asked her neighbors to “please stand by us and do your part by staying home.” The letter was printed in the Greenfield Recorder a few days ago.

*Mail*

*None.*

*Announcements*

Tomorrow is the Frontier budget meeting; people will be able to call in to the meeting. Kantor will distribute information about the call.

***Next Meeting:*** Scheduled for Monday, May 18, 2020, ***via Zoom***

*The listing of agenda items includes matters reasonably anticipated by the Chair to come under discussion at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.*