

Minutes
SELECT BOARD
Monday, May 18, 2020, 6:00 p.m.
ZOOM MEETING

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82821230934 (Meeting ID: 845 6606 9886 #)
To call in via telephone: Dial 929 -205-6099 (Enter Meeting ID: 845 6606 9886 #)

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

Others present (all remotely): Alan Singer, Tom Donovan, Roy Cohen, Finance Committee; Tom Hutcheson, Town Administrator; Lisa Turowsky, Assistant to the Town Administrator

Minutes

May 18, 2020

Tabled.

Warrants

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to approve the vendor warrant in the amount of \$84,776.91, the payroll warrant in the amount of \$111,243.60, and the payroll deduction warrant in the amount of \$27,948.04, seconded by Armstrong, Kantor voted aye, Armstrong voted aye, and O'Rourke voted aye; the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Meetings Attended by Select Board Members

Kantor attended school committee revised budget meeting, Union 38 contract negotiations, and a conference call with Peggy Sloan re: Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership grant.

Armstrong attended an electricity aggregation meeting which went very well. The 5% extra green will be lower than Eversource's summer rates. In the winter, a 25% extra green option will be available; Armstrong anticipates this will be lower than Eversource's price. All 13 towns joined the aggregation and signed documents for bids. Participating in the aggregation will save about \$10/month for usual kilowatt hour usage.

O'Rourke attended a FRCOG meeting where the idea of buying PPE in bulk for all the towns was discussed and was passed. He had an MMA-sponsored webinar today with the Lieutenant Governor.

Public Comments

None.

New Business

Allow FRCOG to bid on behalf of Highway Department

This is an annual permission the town must give; Hutcheson recommended sticking with this program.

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to approve FRCOG going to bid on behalf of the Highway Department, seconded by Armstrong, Kantor voted aye, Armstrong voted aye, O'Rourke voted aye, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Additional work on Town Hall: repair chimney

There has been a tree growing out of the Town Hall chimney for years. Because the CPC article is for repairs to Town Hall in general, there is enough money to cover this cost (\$6480). This would exclude the cost of renting a lift which has already been done. It was suggested that the chimney be capped after the tree is removed. Hutcheson and Sweet recommended using the CPC article to take care of capping the chimney. Kantor spoke to someone a local resident named Charlie who has guaranteed doing the job for \$6000 or less. O'Rourke asked Kantor to get him something in writing tomorrow from

Charlie. Unfortunately, Sweet already said he'd pay for chimney work out of his budget. As of the time of the meeting the chimney repair work, except for capping the chimney, was completed; the need for a motion on additional work of repairing the chimney was eliminated.

Town Administrator update

Committees

CPC has indeed added an item to their list: \$50,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance for conservation of the MacLeish Stone House. As I mentioned last week, I have added that to their article, as it does not affect the budget.

The Friends of the South River and the Conway Open Space Committee are organizing garlic mustard pulling at the South River Meadow. Michelle Turre is the contact.

Departments

I recently learned that municipal legislative bodies—Town Meeting, in our case—are exempt from social distancing requirements. That said, I believe people would still feel substantially safer having Town Meeting outdoors. I paced out the Conway Grammar School playground, which has an accessible and relatively large hard surface along with the majority of grass surface. It could hold at least 200 people in a rectangle spaced six feet apart, and well over 200 if there were just an aisle at the center and not on the sides. There would be ample parking and setting up the chairs would certainly be easier.

Note: after writing that, I just got an e-mail from Bruce Jouannet which states:

Tom, ...Years ago a teacher borrowed some chairs for a backyard party and the chairs all came back with "no feet" which leaves exposed raw metal tubes for feet and needless to say the gym floor would not do well with a great number of tubes to destroy the finish. There are no external electric outlets, but you could run extension cords (I have plenty) out any exterior door. I would still think you would be better off at the ballfield, there is electricity under the American flag, and you could have great social distancing if folks all brought a blanket or a lawn chair. It is a natural amphitheater down there and maybe the Bovios would help with the parking. Bruce

I've been fleshing out the re-opening plan I shared two weeks ago. We have re-installed the half-door to the Finance offices at the Town Office and are waiting for a plexiglass shield. We've gotten a supply of disinfectant wipes; I'm creating a checklist for cleaning based on CDC guidance. Until those are in place, we're not open to the public, but I expect we will be in the not-too-distant future. We will also maintain our current schedules, especially for the Treasurer/Collector's Office. The Town Clerk is working regular hours; we are planning to send all able-bodied visitors to her office to the back door.

I expect to have a draft application for a second Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership grant for your review next week. Peggy Sloan is drafting it to fit the Williamstown project. The deadline for submittal is June 18.

The FRCOG has informed us that they are "following a positive Anaplasmosis test result in a Conway resident. The resident was seen and treated with antibiotics. Tick disease continues!"

The team that has been coordinating information about the Town's COVID-19 response is suspending its weekly calls unless the situation changes. There has been little news lately, and PPE and cleaning supply items are now being procured mainly through private firms—MEMA has stopped distributing such items, though the FRCOG is still offering them.

Select Board note: Armstrong wanted to send the FRCOG grant to the members of the public who came to their meeting where it was discussed. Kantor will take care of it.

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

Addressing FY 2020 budget needs

Reserve fund transfers

There are three items that need to be addressed to pay some bills, said Hutcheson.

Request \$1100 from town reserve fund to pay a fiscal advisory fee associated with the highway garage borrowing.

- **On a motion from Singer to approve payment of \$1100 for fiscal advisory fee, seconded by Cohen, Singer voted aye, Donovan voted aye, and Cohen voted aye, with one abstention, vote was 3 in favor, 1 abstention.**

Request \$28,400 from the reserve fund to cover unexpected enrollments in health insurance plan.

- **On a motion from Singer to approve payment of \$28,400 to cover unexpected enrollments in health insurance plan, seconded by Cohen, Singer voted aye, Donovan voted aye, and Cohen voted aye, with one abstention, vote was 3 in favor, 1 abstention.**

Request \$6533 from the reserve fund to Conway Grammar School for payment of steamer in kitchen.

- **On a motion from Singer to approve the transfer of \$6533 from the reserve fund to Conway Grammar School, seconded by Donovan, Singer voted aye, Donovan voted aye, and Cohen voted aye, with one abstention, the vote was 3 in favor, 1 abstention.**

Transfers between accounts

None.

Revised Town budget and warrant

Set operating budget cuts.

Ouimette said for 5% cut he would look at fuel budget; for 10% cut he would look at reducing staff hours/patrol time. Hutcheson did hear from departments about the operating budget cuts. The Treasurer said she would not be comfortable with cuts to her budget.

Set amounts and sources for funding estimated revenue shortfall

Hutcheson stated that there was less of a risk of people being unable to pay their taxes than there was during the Great Recession because people who have been laid off are getting unemployment now plus a subsidy of \$600 a week. Hutcheson said even his conservative estimate of last week was too conservative. He thought that a revenue shortfall of \$300,000 could be made up with a combination of free cash and general stabilization; an upper limit of \$200,000 could be made up for with borrowing. Hutcheson and the Board members discussed the impact of a 5% cut from the operating budget in conjunction with a wage freeze. Hutcheson stated that if the town were to lose six figures there's no way that could be taken out of the budget and maintain services.

Members of the Finance Committee and the Select Board talked about different scenarios that would require borrowing \$200,000 to \$300,000. The idea of going to level funding along with a 1/12 budget was discussed. Hutcheson said a 1/12 budget based on FY20 spending wouldn't be sufficient due to increases in external costs. A scenario where the town would have a Special Town Meeting if adjustments needed to be made was discussed. Hutcheson said if a tax rate wasn't set for FY21, this would negatively impact people's May bills; the May tax bill would have to make up for the first and second tax bills.

O'Rourke proposed language for Article 2 of the budget; he thought it would be sufficient if \$150,000 were taken from free cash and \$150,000 from general stabilization, with authorization to borrow up to \$200,000 if that were needed. This approach could cover up to \$500K in shortfalls. The wage freeze would still be in effect.

O'Rourke suggested that going into a new fiscal year with no budget was not a good idea, especially if surrounding towns were not going to do it. Members of the finance committee thought we should have a budget, recognizing it's a guess but reasonably within the realm of things. Some wanted to cut from Hutcheson's proposed budget, with no borrowing until cuts to the budget are made. Hutcheson noted the seriousness of implementing a wage freeze, which would only recover \$16,000 and risked the result that town employees felt disrespected. O'Rourke opined that the budget should cover essential services and cover uncertainty.

- **On a motion from O'Rourke to approve the operating budget proposed by Hutcheson, with voluntary cuts, mandatory wage freezes and revenue shortfall covered by free cash, general stabilization, and borrowing if necessary, seconded by Armstrong, Kantor voted aye, Armstrong voted aye, O'Rourke vote aye, the vote was unanimous in favor.**
- **On a motion from Singer to approve the operating budget proposed by Hutcheson, with additional voluntary cuts, seconded by Cohen, Singer voted aye, Donovan voted aye, Cohen voted aye, 1 abstention, the vote was 3 in favor with 1 absent.**

Recommendations on warrant articles

The Finance Committee will meet again before the next Select Board meeting on 6/1, to vote on all the money articles.

Old Business

Consider operating budget cuts

See above under New Business.

Consider amounts and sources for funding estimated revenue shortfall

See above under New Business.

Recommendations on warrant articles

See above under New Business.

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

Concerns of the Selectmen *None.*

Mail *None.*

Announcements *None.*

Next Meeting: Scheduled for Monday, June 1, 2020, **via Zoom**