

Minutes
SELECT BOARD

Monday, September 14, 2020, 6:00 p.m.

Present: Bob Armstrong, Phil Kantor, Erica Goleman, Mary Wigmore, Alex Barrett, Louise Beckett, Alan Singer, Hope Crolius, Mary Parker, Janet Chayes, Tom Hutcheson

Bob Armstrong called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. Tom Hutcheson noted that in case the Zoom meeting is interrupted, the agenda includes instructions for calling in to a conference line; he will include that going forward.

Minutes

- **On a motion from Bob Armstrong to approve the minutes of August 31, 2020, seconded by Erica Goleman, the vote was unanimous in favor.**
- **On a motion from Armstrong to approve the minutes of September 10, 2020, seconded by Goleman, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Warrants

On a motion from Armstrong to approve the vendor warrant of \$162,933.97; the payroll warrant of \$119,198.05, and the payroll deduction warrant of \$30,483.69, seconded by Goleman, the vote was unanimous in favor.

Meetings Attended by Select Board Members

Phil Kantor attended multiple school negotiating committees, including discussing a Memorandum of Agreement with Frontier and teacher and instructional assistant unions, along with a memorandum for non-union employees; there was some give and take. Technical issues (including a denial-of-service attack) stymied a Google Meets meeting. A further meeting discussed possible responses to leaving the meetings completely open. The technical issues have been a substantial additional strain.

Armstrong had a Conservation Commission meeting; one recent issue has been invasive species mitigation. The Conservation Commission has agreed to require only a Request for Determination of Applicability instead of a Notice Of Intent from the Open Space Committee and see whether the state will accept it.

Public Comments

Janet Chayes commented on the issue of landscaping around the town office building, She agrees that improvements could be made, but recommended cutting the milkweed in July and letting it grow back in to enhance habitat restoration. Kantor noted a volunteer is working on a plan for re-designing the front lawn of the Town Office.

Old Business

Forest Stewardship Plan

Armstrong turned the meeting over to the consultants to review changes in the draft plan and assist in drafting the goals statement for the Forest Stewardship Plan.

Alex Barrett noted that the plan is largely written, and the amendments, based on a number of great comments, have been distributed. The Town needs a goals synthesis. Something in the Town's words would be useful; the plan had six goals, ecosystem function and environmental benefits. Comments included forest health and resiliency, treat the forest as a carbon sink, protect habitat and diversity. Comments from the Zoom meeting are now incorporated into to the plan.

Chayes asked that recreation and habitat preservation be included; Barrett noted that although it is not in the revisions, it is prominently featured in the plan.

Barrett noted a new emphasis on the carbon project aspect of the plan. Wigmore noted that each revision incorporates specific comments from the public meetings, including noting that all practices mentioned should be seen in the context of carbon management.

Wigmore noted that the survey indicated that the community was supportive of sustainable silviculture and forestry if it supported the goal of long-term sustainability, including carbon storage. She also noted that the amount of reserve in each area was expanded; that the work on removal of invasives be explained to the public; that options are included for flexibility; and that the Town have a detailed policy on best practices. They also included optionality around silviculture (including as

“crop” trees as habitat trees, visually appealing trees, rare trees, etc.) as opposed to completely proforestation, as a means of increasing the Town’s flexibility in the plan.

Armstrong asked about the terminology of “harvesting,” “crop,” and “release” trees. Wigmore referred back to the intended flexibility of the terms. “Release” trees would be taken from out of the canopy. She will consider revising the language in the document.

Wigmore noted she had reached out to the Grammar School Principal to assess interest in using the first as a teaching resource, and they were very supportive, so it is now explicitly laid out in the document. Kantor noted that staff have a clear understanding of what’s desired, and the path will be cleared, he believes by September 23.

Finally, Wigmore noted that the plan contains a summary of inventory focusing on a future carbon project. We’re now eligible for a community outreach program, and further grants.

Armstrong asked about the necessary “goals” language to be added. Wigmore and Barrett suggested people send things to Hutcheson for summarizing by the end of the week, which was agreed. He will also put final approval and a letter of support on the next agenda.

Chayes noted that there is a recommendation for a forest stewardship committee, perhaps together with a reconstituted trails committee, would be useful, as opposed to trying to do the work within the Open Space Committee. Kantor noted Hutcheson had some reservations about forming a new committee; Hutcheson noted that when tasks can fall under an existing committee, it can obviate miscommunication and stepping on toes.

New Business

Appoint Assistant to the Town Administrator

Hutcheson reported that after several weeks of having an advertisement out, he got two applications, and he and Susan Fenton of the Personnel Committee met with both and agreed that Louise Beckett was the most qualified.

- **On a motion from BA to appoint LB as the new ATA, seconded by Kantor, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Finance Committee Chair: request for consultation on by-law regarding appointment of members

Alan Singer, (Finance Committee Chair) said that a new person was appointed to the Finance Committee who had never been to a Finance Committee meeting, and no one on the Committee knew him. The Committee did not have an opportunity to make a recommendation to the Moderator. Rhyanna McLeester went to the Citizens’ Academy and became interested. Singer found out after the fact. He had had a person in mind who would have contributed gender diversity. He is proposing that the whole process of appointment be re-examined. The current by-law speaks to Committee input. He also would like younger members for continuity.

Kantor said that he had heard that the person appointed expressed his interest to him, and contacted Singer, who encouraged him to apply. He then had the opportunity to meet the Moderator, who thought there were two openings, and that he would appoint both of them. Singer said the new member will be a great addition, but the process was flawed, and he again expressed his desire for a younger generation to become involved. Kantor noted that for the School Committee, the chair can abdicate the right to vote and have another member involved. Armstrong noted that auxiliary members might also be possible. Singer said the member he has in mind is a former Finance Committee member and a professional municipal auditor. The idea that Roy Cohen might be leaving the Committee was erroneous. Armstrong noted that he appreciates the independence of the Finance Committee and that the Select Board would not try to insert the Board in the selection of Finance Committee members.

Chayes requested that the Open Space and Recreation plan update be moved up in the agenda.

FRCOG contracts:

Open Space and Recreation Plan update

Chayes noted the update committee and recommended approving the contract. Armstrong briefly commented in favor.

COVID-19 services (reimbursable)

This had been sent to Select Board members for review.

- **On motion from Armstrong to sign both contracts, seconded by Goleman, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Agriculture Commission: proposal for “A Right-to-Farm Community” signs

Mary Parker and Hope Crolius presented their idea. They intend to get estimates and come back to the Board. Two small signs, one at junction of Bardwell Ferry Road and Shelburne Falls Road, just words. Another on Whately Road at the

town line with Whately. They have coordinated with the Highway Superintendent. Other two signs, going through state, and they require a 20-foot setback. Now they are also proposing a larger sign, with the edges encased in wood, on the triangle where Whately Road intersects 116. Coming in from Ashfield, they can't find a spot. So now, they are also considering a double-sided sign where Whately Road intersects 116. Maybe a small sign where Shelburne Falls Road intersects 116, facing Ashfield.

Goleman asked whether placing the signs on private property would be solution. Parker said she didn't know the legal issues. Kantor suggested placing it near the Festival of the Hills sign, on private property. Other possibilities were discussed. Kantor voiced enthusiasm for the distinguishing wood border. Goleman supported getting estimates. [Parker said they would be back with estimates.

Vote to participate in the state's Microenterprise Assistance Program, through the City of Greenfield

The Select Board received the memo from the Town of Greenfield. Hutcheson explained the Greenfield grant and the needed confirmation by towns to be included in applying for resources.

- **On a motion from Armstrong that Conway participate in the program, seconded by Goleman, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Proposal for drop box at Town Office

Hutcheson introduced the proposal, based on COVID concerns and due dates for various purposes. The last time it was brought up it was turned down because it would be unsightly on the Town Office front lawn and people might drop things in it we didn't want. It could be difficult to make it happen in six weeks. There have been no specific complaints, but there was one issue with a ballot being delivered.

The Board did not believe it was so pressing that it needed to be acted on immediately. Hutcheson said he would bring back details at the next meeting.

Items Not Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting

None.

Town Administrator update

Departments

The state DOR has issued preliminary free cash certification based only on free cash turnover from the last fiscal year. Conway's free cash turnover has been certified at \$196,527. This can be spent only on COVID-19 expenses until the whole of free cash is certified, probably later in September or October. At that point, budget overages will also be included, and since spending was substantially reduced in the last few months of FY 2020, I expect to have more free cash than usual. I had been aiming for just \$100,000 in free cash turnover, but as you will recall, the Select Board wanted to maximize flexible funds (mostly free cash versus stabilization funds) to maintain a nimble position in the case of a substantial reduction in state local aid.

A note from MEMA on drought: Due to above normal temperatures throughout July and early August and more than three months of below normal rainfall, Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Kathleen Theoharides declared a Level 2 – Significant Drought in all seven regions of the Commonwealth. At a Level 2 – Significant Drought, as outlined in the Massachusetts Drought Management Plan, conditions are becoming significantly dry and warrant detailed monitoring of drought conditions, close coordination among state and federal agencies, emphasis on water conservation, more stringent watering restrictions, and technical outreach and assistance for the affected municipalities.

Ron Sweet reports, in response to the complaint about old plows and other equipment, that he did move the equipment, and does intend to use some of the parts from the old equipment. He has not had time to do yet that but does have it on his list of tasks. He also notes that there is no hydraulic fluid in the equipment to leak, so that is thankfully not a concern. He is preparing a written statement on his plans for the equipment.

Conway Youth Sports has noticed some interest in starting up soccer practices in Town—not games, but practices only one day a week for each "team". They aren't planning to charge a fee, but they we still will need to have parents sign the standard waiver for CYS. In addition, they have adapted Deerfield's coronavirus waiver and will have parents sign that as well.

I heard from Cows' that they are no longer using the landing site, so that problem is temporarily solved. One other item is important—the landing site was on state land, not Town land, which I verified as the way they proposed it in their cutting plan, which the Town gets a copy of.

I am pleased to announce that Conway's grant proposal for a study on the possibility of carbon storage has been awarded, for \$20,000. Congratulations to Phil, who had the vision and made it happen.

Concerns of the Selectmen

Kantor asked about the state of a path from the school to the forest. Hutcheson said Highway Superintendent Sweet did meet with a school representative and understands the plan. Kantor emphasized the school was counting on the path to get kids out of the school at the beginning of the year. Hutcheson noted that Sweet's first responsibility is to take care of the roads, but will check that Ron understands that the school would like a path by the time school opens.

Mail *None.*

Announcements

Kantor said that after weeks of meetings sending people back to school he is wondering when the Select Board will start to have meetings in person again. Frontier has a room set up. Hutcheson noted that Conway also has a room set up. Goleman said she would love to go to an in-person meeting. Armstrong asked about the meeting two weeks from now; Kantor said he would like to try to have it in person. Hutcheson will make sure it is set up.

Next Meeting: Scheduled for Monday, September 28, 2020, at 6 p.m., at the Town Hall, with a call-in line.

At 8:11, on a motion from Armstrong to adjourn, seconded by Goleman, the vote was unanimous in favor.