

*Minutes*  
**SELECT BOARD**

Monday, September 28, 2020, 6:00 p.m.

*Present: Bob Armstrong, Phil Kantor, Erica Goleman, Louise Beckett, Tom Hutcheson, Bob Baker, Priscilla Lynch (by phone); Sue MacDonald, Michelle Harris, and Sheila Harrington, representing the Festival of the Hills Committee, joined the meeting in progress.*

Bob Armstrong called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. and noted that this is the first Select Board meeting to be held in the town hall since March.

*Minutes*

- **On a motion from Bob Armstrong to approve the minutes of September 14, 2020, seconded by Erica Goleman, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

*Warrants*

- **On a motion from Armstrong to approve the vendor warrant of \$437,159.30; the payroll warrant of \$115,903.38, and the payroll deduction warrant of \$29,114.38, seconded by Kantor, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

*Meetings Attended by Select Board Members*

Kantor attended three school meetings: one at Frontier, one at Conway Grammar, and one Union 38 meeting. He described the meeting with the grammar school, noting that this is the first time since the 1918 pandemic that a vote was made to buy a blanket for each child, since they are experiencing outdoor education at this time. Attendance has been at 100%, with two days at school, two days at home, and on Wednesdays all are at school. There is a bus contract with Grybko but circumstances may make changes necessary.

Armstrong attended a Conservation Commission meeting; one recent issue has been invasive species mitigation, in particular Japanese knotweed.

*Public Comments*

Priscilla Lynch asked if there was a Zoom connection for the Select Board meeting, if the meetings were posted, and if so when. Armstrong replied that meetings are posted inside the notices board outside of the town office by the Thursday prior to the date of the meeting, and also on the calendar on the town website.

*Old Business*

*Approve Forest Stewardship Plan; sign letter of support*

Regarding the Forest Stewardship Plan the Board was asked to sign a letter of support. Armstrong commented that Mary (Wigmore) and Alex (Barrett) did a good job with education, and included in the plan what the townspeople really wanted. Goleman agreed that she was comfortable signing the letter if it states that Wigmore and Barrett have done the work to the select board's satisfaction. Priscilla Lynch said that as a matter of principle she had an objection to signing a letter with a commitment for 5 years when there is another study being done. Hutcheson said the carbon market study required the existence of a Forest Stewardship Plan, so we could lose the grant if we did not accept the plan. Kantor said he didn't think we'd lose the grant, but remarked that to participate in the carbon credit market, we need an active forest stewardship plan and that if a neighboring town is putting together their own plan it would facilitate our plan. There is an option to put off decisions: 'optionality' for future decisions, and that feedback is ideal for what we want to accomplish. Goleman remarked that all that matters is that we have a plan, and that there is no penalty for changing it later. Armstrong suggested that members of the community participate in a committee; Lynch said she would be interested in serving. **Armstrong moved that the board sign the plan. Goleman seconded, and it was voted unanimously.**

Armstrong moved that the Board sign the letter of support for the consultant's work. Kantor seconded, and it was voted unanimously.

*Approve signing state contract for carbon credit study*

**Armstrong moved that the board sign the Carbon Study Contract, seconded by Kantor, and voted unanimously.** Kantor noted that we are cooperating with Williamstown on the study, and there would be a meeting within the next few weeks to select a vendor for the study.

*Memorandum of Agreement with FRCOG re: Franklin County Emergency Communication System*

Bob Baker described the 800 mhz. Emergency Communication System. The Memorandum of Agreement starts the process of purchasing the radios for police, fire and emergency through a grant. The majority of the cost will be under the grant. Baker noted that all towns in Franklin County supported it, and that the board should sign the agreement tonight as the deadline for completion is October 15. The proposal was upgraded from what was originally offered (approved by the town) because their experience with the upgraded model has been positive in the past. FRGOG administers the grant and the system. **Kantor moved to sign the MoA, Goleman seconded and it was approved and signed by all members of board.**

*New Business*

*Appoint Michael O'Connell as Associate Firefighter*

Bob Baker proposed a new position for the fire department: Associate Firefighter, which puts restrictions on those who may not be able to take on full fire fighter duties. Someone in this position can help at fire scenes, but not drive the truck: such a person is willing and wants to help but for can't fulfill all the duties of a fire fighter. If a vote to approve this new position is not taken, the department would have to fire the person involved. It was noted that anyone in the associate firefighter position could eventually move up to the regular fire fighter position pending ability; education, etc. **Kantor moved to appoint Michael O'Connell to the associate position; Armstrong seconded, and it was approved unanimously.**

*Festival of the Hills issue regarding property bought when a Town Committee*

Sue MacDonald said the issue came up when Julie Petty recently asked for access to tables and was told by the town administrator that they belong to the town. The festival says that the money spent came from funds the festival raised over the years. Though the festival was at that time a Town committee, they split from the town and have been an independent 501(c)(3) organization for some years. Armstrong asked if when the split came, there was any agreement on who got what? MacDonald said their contract stated that they were running the festival, as not part of the town and must pay their own insurance, etc. Harris noted that if the Town owns the Festival property, it also owns everything currently stored at the GSB bank basement. Hutcheson stated the Town has no interest in signage, etc. The festival committee has always felt that when a request comes in, anyone can use the tables if they bring them back clean. Armstrong remarked that the reverse is true: if the town owns them, anyone could also use them. Kantor doesn't recall that the town ever owned the tables: to his knowledge they were always was 'the festival tables'. Harris remarked that the loss of the tables is just one more roadblock to the continuation of the festival. MacDonald remarked that the festival has been around for over 50 years and needs the support of the town. Armstrong said that this is the first time he has heard of this conflict. Goleman asked if the board could designate that the tables belong to the Festival? Armstrong said that there would need to be better coordination: What if the town needs the tables and someone else wants them at a specific time? Harrington said that they would be willing to communicate when a request is made to ensure that the town hasn't already loaned them out or doesn't have a need for them at that time. Hutcheson cautioned that it is not legal for the town to give town property away. MacDonald reiterated that the festival had paid for the tables. Armstrong noted that all money raised by the festival at the time it was under the auspices of the town is town money, including scholarships. Harris remarked that the festival committee has done everything over the past number of years without support or permission from the town. How have they been a 'town' committee? Armstrong noted that when they were under the town, the festival was covered by town insurance. MacDonald asked why, upon leaving the town and reorganizing as an independent group, if the town allowed the festival to take the money they had raised, why not the tables? Hutcheson noted the Festival was contracted to produce the festival, thereby providing a service to the Town, for which it was paid. **Kantor moved to declare the tables Festival property. Goleman seconded, and the motion carried.**

*Discussion: Creating a Forests and Trails committee*

Goleman asked if Parks and Recreation should form this committee. Kantor noted that Janet Chayes, chair of the Open Space Committee, had stated earlier she did not want it to be part of that committee. Kantor thought the board should hold off a decision on the matter until there's more information, and asked if this committee wouldn't be overlapping with other committees? Hutcheson said that's why it is on the agenda as simply a discussion item, and that it was important to give the committee a clear charge.

*Proposal for drop box at the Town Office*

Hutcheson opened the conversation with his research on costs, possible partial reimbursement (COVID-related needs) and a date for completing the project if approved. The cost is about \$1,500. Armstrong said that having the dropbox might be a problem, since people can put anything in it. Goleman asked if there would be a problem with having people dropping their ballots off in the box? Kantor questioned if there is a need for it: People could leave their ballots and other items with the Town Clerk, the Treasurer etc. There was a brief discussion of the impact of a dropbox in regard to our local post office: If we don't support the town post office, Conway may lose it. Hutcheson remarked that a dropbox would be a convenience for those who can't make town office hours. The Board did not support installing a dropbox.

*Items Not Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting - none*

*Town Administrator update - September 28, 2020*

#### **Departments**

I filed for CARES reimbursement for FY20; I requested \$2,679, based on figures from the accountant, who is tracking all COVID expenditures, provided department heads submit their invoices correctly. Perhaps only \$2,293 is eligible, as I did not hear from all departments when I made the original filing, though I have requested the additional amounts be treated as an amendment. This of course does not include the Chromebooks for the Grammar School; that will be an FY21 invoice.

The Highway Garage project is waiting for a plan from Franklin County Technical School for doing the trades work we have arranged for them. The good news is that the project was approved by the Board of State Examiners of Plumbers and Gas Fitters, which is charged with approving technical school project proposals. Their work on the Highway Garage hinges on the school's overall educational plan, which as of 9/3 had not yet been finalized. Their main electrical teacher is no longer with them, a situation which Walter Goodridge is working to solve, so that we don't have to re-bid for the electrical work.

I received more information on the Microenterprise forgivable loan program for COVID-related losses. Any low-to-moderate income owner is eligible to apply, and the figure is based on the last eight weeks, so it may well include those otherwise above that bracket. The loans are forgiven upon documentation of eligible expenses (payroll, rent, etc.). The Franklin County Community Development Corporation is having two information sessions for businesses next week on Tuesday and Thursday; the application deadline is October 15. There is a total of \$600,000 available for the county (excluding Rowe and Monroe). More information is available on the FCCDC website: [www.fccdc.org](http://www.fccdc.org).

We are currently undergoing our biennial audit, this time for FY20. If you visit the Town Office, you may find representatives from Roselli, Clark & Associates there through Thursday.

#### *Concerns of the Selectboard*

Kantor suggested School Committee rules: 'First Read' – must be brought up before the vote is taken and suggested its use in Select Board meetings? Armstrong agreed with the principle but did not want to make it an official policy.

*Mail – none – but warrants need to be signed*

#### *Announcements*

Kantor reminded all that there are flu clinics coming up. Hutcheson said that there are forms in the town office which must be filled out ahead of time.

**Armstrong moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:16. Kantor seconded it and it was unanimously agreed.**

**Next Meeting:** Scheduled for Tuesday, October 13, 2020, at 6 p.m., Town Hall, 5 Academy Hill Road

*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.*