

s Minutes
SELECT BOARD

Tuesday, January 19, 2021, 6:00 p.m.
Via Zoom

Present for the Select Board: Bob Armstrong, Erica Goleman, Phil Kantor

Others present: Carl Nelke, Board of Health; Alan Singer, Steve Dinkelaker, Roy Cohen, Rhyanna McLeester, Finance Committee; Mary Byrne, *Greenfield Recorder*; Tom Hutcheson, Town Administrator; Louise Beckett, Assistant to the Town Administrator

Armstrong called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Minutes

Approval of minutes from January 11, 2021

On a motion from Armstrong to accept and approve the minutes of January 11, 2021 as amended, seconded by Goleman, the vote was unanimous in favor.

Warrants

Approval of Warrants

On a motion from Armstrong to approve the Vendor warrant for \$99,062.98, the Payroll warrant for \$104,486.83, the Payroll deduction warrant for \$26,047.01, and the Student Activities Fund warrant for \$2,649.21 the vote was unanimous in favor.

Meetings Attended by Select Board Members

Erica did not attend any meetings since last week. Phil attended a school committee/Deerfield Board of Health meeting on the 13th, to discuss metrics and winter sports. Changes done with sports are remarkable, making it as safe as possible, but games don't start for two weeks and will be limited. On Thursday he attended a Conway Grammar School meeting regarding using the gym for the town caucus. They expect 25-30 people so the committee agreed to the use of the hall contingent on Board of Health approval. They can't have a school budget until the Governor announces the state budget. Bob had no meetings this week outside of the last select board meeting.

Public Comments

Carl said the next Board of Health meeting is on Monday, and that they will likely approve the March 1 town caucus taking place at the Grammar School gymnasium.

Old Business

Closing Town offices to the public

Tom said that he wanted to clarify that what he's trying to do is to get out in front of the B117 variant of the virus, which is more contagious. Carl said that right now we have six cases (positive tests or an individual actually has it) in Conway. There are no hospitalizations. The website is updated each Monday and the number of cases remains pretty small. In comparison, Deerfield has 23 cases. Conway is next to the bottom in the county in terms of cases. Carl said he doesn't see that we have a problem in Conway. Tom said that we need to be proactive about the new variant because it is so much more contagious. Phil said that this is what the teachers' union has been pushing for. Should what happens in more concentrated towns determine our response? Carl said he thinks we have a good handle on what's going on: We are getting updates every day. He added that if we saw 3 or 4 cases every day, that would get our attention, and we would be agreeable to shutting down the town offices. Tom emphasized that the new variant is unpredictable, and we should take precautions

before there's a chance of it spreading. Staff might become infected with this new strain and not even know it. Carl said that we will stay in touch with it.

New Business

Giving additional Conway CARES money to Frontier

Tom has talked with the staff at the school and everyone is now on the same page. Phil said we should focus on the Grammar school. We can't bill any losses as CARES expenses. Erica asked what kind of expenses. Phil said air circulation, monitoring, tent rentals, winter blankets for the students, etc. are not included. Bob said that some of those items were included and what about the Chromebooks? Phil said we have until the end of December, 2021 to spend the monies.

6:30 P.M. Joint Meeting with Finance Committee

FY 2022 Budget

General update

Tom did not have any general update.

Hearing: Administration and Finance, Board of Health

Board of Health: Carl Nelke

Overall, we are only asking for a little over \$2,000 more this year. Waste Management had their numbers completely wrong and underestimated for the coming year. Recycling costs more now because China no longer takes our waste. With the employee budget there's not a great deal of difference. We're down a person so the Board of Health stipends are less. The 2-1/2% pay increase is for the employees. Last year some people were to get raises, and some not, and this was a source of internal friction. Bob asked about 'Other Services' which went up a lot. Carl said that this used to be broken out some time around 1990. A bunch of stuff was subsequently lumped together: CFC recovery, electronics, fire control, port-a-potty, propane cylinders, equipment repairs, metals, snow removal. We used to rely on the town road boss to clear the snow at the transfer station after the roads have been cleared, but sometimes it doesn't work out when it snows overnight for example, and a truck comes in early the next day. So it's necessary to use an outside company. If we want the town to plow, Ron will need more resources. Compost also went way up; we pay \$3,500 to have someone haul the compost out. Carl said he'd like to see the line broken down to separate lines, rather than being lumped together. Putting the stickers on the website rather than selling them at the transfer station was a good move, but there are still some issues. Carl thanked the Select Board for their good questions.

Administration and Finance: Tom Hutcheson

This account covers not only expenses for the Town Administrator and his Assistant, but also general expenses for the Town Office, including office supplies, copier expenses, the Town report, and other, smaller items.

The largest line-item increase, \$2,600, is for office supplies. This line had been cut as a response to anticipated state revenue cuts, but that was not realistic, given that 6-month spending even during the pandemic is approaching \$2,000. Some items, including a large order of copy paper, were ordered just as FY21 began, which contributed about \$500 to that sub-total.

Next, the \$1,850 increase in salary, is due to the Town Administrator's contract, and is a rise of 2.5% from FY 2021. The same rate of increase is contractually provided between FY 2022 and FY 2023.

Audit

This budget comes under Town Administration rather than Finance, as audits are an administrative check on Town finances rather than the finances themselves. We have typically believed biennial audits are sufficient, given their cost, and are currently awaiting a draft of our FY 2019 finances. The proposal for this budget is \$1,

as there is an audit fund of just over \$32,602 due to posting errors from many years ago. Therefore, the Town will not have to raise audit funds for at least the next two years.

The next Town audit will be for FY 2021 and so be performed in FY 2022. The next triennial single audit of the school will also be in FY 2022 (this has cost about \$2,500 in past years). I will note that our three-audit contract with our current auditor, Roselli, Clark, and Associates, will be done this year. It can be useful to switch auditors every five or ten years so that different eyes look at the books, as details that might be missed by one firm may be noticed by another.

Legal

The budget for Town Counsel is proposed to be level-funded, at \$10,000, close to the actual expenses in recent years. FY 2019 has so far involved little legal expense but there has been a recent increase in activity mainly due to real estate matters. Legal advice is sometimes needed on short notice, so relying on the reserve fund is not preferred.

Information Technology

The original request for FY 2021 was \$35,663 for FY21, which was pushed back to \$34,431 in the interest of keeping increases in-line with what was felt to be reasonable given the revenue uncertainty last year. The current request is for \$37,586, which represents a 9% increase over the \$34,431 figure. If we had funded the postponed services, maintenance, and equipment last year, the increase this year would be 5.5%.

This year, we need to include higher software subscription costs, a rise in the cost of data back-up, and again, catching up with postponed services, maintenance, and equipment purchases.

Items Not Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting

Appoint representative to MIIA annual meeting (during the MMA annual meeting)

Bob and Erica will attend: Bob as the delegate at the business meeting, and Tom will be the voting delegate at the annual MIIA meeting.

Annual request for Direct Local Technical Assistance preferences (FRCOG)

Tom said we just got an email this afternoon and they need a response by February 5, but they could give an extra week for a response as the notice was so late. This is an annual program where FRCOG channels money from the state for specific projects to help on all kinds of things. Everyone should have the form. What people should do is see if there are a few things from each category, prioritize them, and Tom will compile the responses and send them in.

Town Administrator update

Departments

There's a new electric vehicle charging opportunity that Bob Armstrong and I are looking into. It involves "high speed" charging, probably 240 volts rather than 120. Public parking spaces open 24 hours receive 100% equipment and installation funding. The longer-term questions are the development of a payment policy and the cost of maintenance (including any associated payment system costs). Since these opportunities seem to come along periodically, it would be good to have a well-thought-out policy in place even if we don't move forward with this particular opportunity, so we're planning to put that on the agenda.

We've received a request from Jason Silverman to consider extending his lease for haying on the South River Meadow. I've asked him to reach out to the haying community to see whether a mutually-agreed-on arrangement can be made.

In financial news, the president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston is projecting a “robust recovery” in the second half of 2021, or the start of FY 2022, believing that the start of COVID-19 vaccinations and the new round of government relief spending will allow gains in economic growth and employment.

Concerns of the Selectmen - none

Mail

Bob said the Select Board got a letter from Lynne Hanley regarding entering into an agreement for the Conway seniors to join the Shelburne Falls Senior Center. Phil said that Deerfield is also interested in having the Conway seniors join them, and that they may have more facilities than Shelburne Falls. Bob said that a regionalized system makes sense. Is there a reason we couldn't facilitate our seniors joining with multiple towns? Maybe Pat Lynch, Chair of the CoA of Conway can come in and comment. Tom will reach out to Pat.

Emails regarding the Nexamp solar array/panels have been aggressive. People complain they can see them from their windows. Tom reported that since this is a Conservation Commission and Planning board issue, they are dealing with it.

Announcements – Tom said that due to attending the MMA meeting Thursday and Friday, his in-office schedule will be curtailed this week.

Next Meeting: Scheduled for Monday, January 25, 2021, at 6 p.m., via Zoom