

Minutes
SELECT BOARD

Monday, February 8, 2021, 6:00 p.m.
Via Zoom

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

Others present: Mark Cappadona, Denise Allard for Capital Power Group; Alan Singer, Roy Cohen, Steve Dinkelaker, Rhyanna McLeester, Finance Committee; Patricia Vinchesi, Capital Improvements Planning Committee; Ron Sweet, Highway; 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 the minutes from February 1, 2021

On a motion from Armstrong to approve the minutes of February 1, 2021, Erica seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.

Meetings Attended by Select Board Members

Erica did not attend any meetings since the last Select Board meeting. Phil attended a Deerfield Board of Health/Frontier meeting and numerous Frontier and Conway school budget meetings. Bob had no meetings.

Public Comments *none*

Old Business

Low- to moderate-income electric bill discounts through the state SMART program via aggregation program.

Mark said there are issues that need to be worked out. As soon as the project is ready, a developer will step forward. Bob asked if there was anything to be aware of. Mark said he doesn't know what the details may be. Bob asked if it wouldn't involve changing the SMART program? Mark said they have a pre-authorization letter but there may be more input from DOR, DPU and the Secretary of Energy. Mark said the one good thing is that we do not have to re-file our plans. Tom asked if it isn't a good thing to be positioned with the program as soon as possible because there are a limited amount of credits available, and we might lose out to others if we are not ready soon. Mark agreed. Phil voiced some skepticism about the plan and Colonial's interests, but in the end agreed that this program seems to be a good thing.

On a motion to sign the Administrative Services Agreement, Erica seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.

New Business

Appoint Michele Turre to Open Space Committee for a term ending June 30, 2024

On a motion from Armstrong to appoint Michele to the Open Space Committee for a term to end June 30, 2024.

Approve renewal of Comcast cable license

Bob said that the agreement was not ready so it needs to be tabled for now.

Discussion: draft Town Warrant

Tom said one article proposes changing by-law language from 'Board of Selectmen' to 'Select Board'. The other change is at the very end, where it has in the past said 'given under our hands this ninth day of April "in the year of Our Lord" . . .' We should recognize religious/non-religious diversity by removing 'the year of Our

Lord'. The statement is traditional, but there are other traditions that may not be in agreement. Aside from those two items, the warrant is very much in a draft stage.

6:30 P.M. Joint Meeting with Finance Committee and Capital Improvements Planning Committee

Alan called the joint meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

FY 2022 Budget

General update: timeline for Town Meeting and its implications for budgets, including school budgets

Tom said we should discuss our date for annual town meeting because others are holding theirs later than usual. Phil said that vaccinations are also going to have an impact on when annual meetings should be held from the point of view of safety. In May we will be in stage 4.

On a motion from Armstrong to have the town caucus on March 1 in the Conway Grammar School at a time set by the Town Clerk and with the permission of the Board of Health, Erica seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.

Hearings:

Capital requests: Highway – truck, paving

The town needs to replace the 1998 large town-owned truck, and replace it for \$220,000. We don't yet have the one that was replaced last year – it takes a year or so once ordered to actually receive these items. We should trade in newer vehicles because they have good trade-in value and would actually save the town money, rather than running the trucks until they are no longer useful or worth anything. Last year, the town didn't agree with this premise, and it doesn't seem likely they would agree to it this year. The truck we're trading in has a value of \$2,500 – \$7,500 but he won't get a price until we actually bring the truck in for trade. Steve asked, why get a 2-wheel drive instead of a 4-wheel? Ron said the plow route doesn't warrant the wing plow, or the 4-wheel drive that would necessitate. Its purpose will be for hauling and using a front plow. A truck with a wing plow needs 4-wheel drive because of the steep hills and the need for heavy acceleration. We will have two 4-wheel trucks with wing plows, and 2 without.

Paving a section of road: Ron is asking for the town to pass a capital request to pave a section of road on Shelburne Falls Road. We have only spent Chapter 90 monies to re-pave roads. The costs of asphalt and chip-seal have gone up to make it \$150,000 per mile to pave. If the town has 65 miles of roads, and we take away the dirt roads, we have 45 miles of roads we have to resurface about every 10 years, so about 4-1/2 miles of road to re-pave every year. Ron has applied for a grant every year for the past 3 and has not yet gotten any grant. Tom said that if we could show costs and time lost in emergencies because of the road problems, we would be in a better position to qualify for the grants. Patricia said that paving should be in the capital because we continue to try to address capital projects with operating budget monies. Other towns finance these big-ticket items by borrowing. We don't have a lot of free cash to put into a stabilization fund for future needs. Phil said we should keep working on a capital plan so that the problem of not having monies for needed large project allocations for new growth isn't always a problem. Trish said she would be willing to review road conditions with Ron to see which ones need attention and how importantly, and to put a dollar figure on the cost of a given road project to give people a frame of reference on the costs.

Money articles

Tom said we should table these matters until next week, as he doesn't have changes at this time. Alan asked if there would be a preliminary budget to share by next week. Phil said the Grammar School and Frontier budgets should be ready by next week, though the final votes won't be in until March.

Items Not Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting

Erica said LifePath is asking Conway to apply to the AARP to be an age-friendly community. They are looking for a Select Board letter. Bob asked if it was a matter of paying dues. Erica said no, just a letter of support.

However, there is no urgency at this time. Bob said it's a good idea to get such things on the agenda ahead of time in case the public wants to comment. Tom has it on the agenda for next week.

Town Administrator update

Committees

At this point, it does not look as though the Community Preservation Committee has any projects, though the stone house project from last year may come back.

I have scheduled a joint meeting with the Council on Aging at the Feb. 22 meeting to discuss their operations and the history of Conway's choices regarding regional senior center affiliation. I've invited Lynne Hanley, who wrote a letter suggesting considering formal relations with the Shelburne Falls Senior Center, to be present as well.

Lee Whitcomb is also planning to be on the Feb. 22 call to discuss her shelving system proposal. Since the proposal met with some sticker shock I thought I'd have her explain what it entails.

Janet Chayes is organizing a Forest and Trails Working Group within the Open Space Committee. If it's a Town group, they should be appointed either to the Open Space Committee or their own group.

Departments

I was able to help resolve a neighborhood issue with Nexamp – a complaint that someone was using their driveway to turn around and dumped some snow in the process – and found them very responsive.

Rep. Blais and Sen. Hinds reached out to schedule some time to speak, and I have tentatively scheduled them for the March 1 Select Board meeting.

We got a suggested message for our reverse 911 system for vaccines for those over 75. I passed it on to our Emergency Management Director, but note that it is a very targeted message and that our call list includes a lot of people who would not be affected.

Select Board Member Concerns

Erica asked about an issue at the Transfer Station as to what to do when someone won't wear a mask – the governor's mandate. Bob said we should be getting a solution between Carl (Nelke) and Ken (Ouimette). Tom said that the attendants are not currently authorized to give out tickets.

Mail - none

Announcements

Tom said that he has been offered the Town Manager position in Dalton but that they are still in contract negotiations. He will send out his notice when they have been concluded.

Next Meeting: Scheduled for Tuesday, February 16, 2021, at 6 p.m., via Zoom

At 7:55, on a motion from Armstrong to adjourn, seconded by Goleman, the vote was unanimous in favor and the meeting was adjourned.