

Agenda
SELECT BOARD

Tuesday, February 16, 2021, 6:00 p.m.
Via Zoom

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

Others present: Marcus McLaurin, Jacob Smith of Jacob Smith Engineering, UCC; Trish Vinchesi; Tom Hutcheson, Town Administrator; Louise Beckett, Assistant to the Town Administrator

Bob called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Approval of the minutes from February 8, 2021

On a motion from Bob to approve the minutes of February 8, 2021, Erica seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.

Approval of the Warrants

On a motion from Bob to accept the vendor warrant of \$124,932.96, the payroll warrant of \$110,989.86, and the payroll deduction warrant of \$27,628.93, Erica seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.

Meetings Attended by Select Board Members

Erica had no meetings since the last select board meeting on February 8. Phil attended a Frontier Regional Budget meeting, a Frontier School Committee meeting, and two Conway Grammar School meetings. He said the budget numbers all look good and should not exceed the past year's figures. On Friday he had a telephone meeting with FRCOG. Bob attended a Conservation Commission meeting and had some conversations with Eversource. They will be replacing some of the metal towers and may be clear-cutting in the area close to the Ashfield town line where they have a right-of-way.

Public Comments *none*

Old Business

Request from United Church of Christ for Town partial funding for construction

Marcus McLaurin representing the church and Jake Smith, an engineer he has consulted gave a presentation on the church's request. The property is bisected by Whately Road, likely by way of an easement. The foundation was built in 1841 on the same site as the first church, which burned in 1840. Whately Road was not paved until much later. The retaining wall which is all that is left of the church building cannot stand without a building behind it. Marcus felt that Ron was wrong when he said the road is not jeopardized. The fieldstone portion of the wall, not being a monolithic pour, and not designed to retain the road is subject to such pressure as truck vibrations. Bob asked Marcus: If you re-build the church, the area will be filled in further back from the road, and so the problem only exists if the church is not rebuilt on this spot? Marcus asked, what has the town done for the church as a community center? The church before it was destroyed did a lot for the town. The church feels it's adding something to the town in rebuilding, but if they aren't able to start soon, the road might be affected by runoff, etc. Marcus emphasized that the town's giving money is to support the road – not the church. Rebuilding the church is a benefit to the town, specifically in this location. Erica said the lawyer's letter states that the town cannot give money to the church to fix its retaining wall and said she would need Ron's input before making a decision.

Revised budget meeting schedule

Tom gave the changes. The FRCOG will meet with us on February 22, and we will cover the shelving system requested by the assessors. Regarding preliminary budgets: We have to get our EQV certified by the state and need to go over projected revenue figures with Lee. We only have estimates via the cherry sheets, which are not final figures until the state sets the next year's budget. If we postpone Town Meeting by a month or 5-6 weeks, then we won't have the usual March discussion until April. Since our election is part of town meeting, the Select Board can postpone the annual town meeting. Tom would like to put it on the agenda soon. The other towns have postponed their meetings until June on the recommendation of their Boards of Health.

Draft Town Meeting warrant

Tom had a few items to bring to select board's attention, which were included in the February 10th draft:

- Article 3 had listed \$60,000 for a capital expense to fix the generator. But it's now up by \$6,500 to \$66,500
- Article 6: He had a placeholder for \$330,000 for paving a section of Shelburne Falls Road (2 miles). The Capital Improvements Committee is asking to reduce it to One mile, so the final figure is more like \$170,000.
- Article 8: Capital Improvements Article: The truck for the Highway Department, and shelving for the assessors. Tom added that it would be great if the Capital Improvements report could have it in the form of a warrant article and identify the funding sources. All that work by the select board should be done early on to help the budgeting process.
- He also has placeholders for amending the zoning bylaws. 1. Revision to large-scale solar bylaw; 2. Removing the Fournier property from the solar overlay. There will be a hearing on March 24.

Report from Capital Improvement Planning Committee

Tom reminded everyone that a recommendation from the committee for each of the capital items will be needed.

New Business

Agreement for haying the South River Meadow

Jason Silverman couldn't come to tonight's meeting so the item is tabled until March 1, when he will attend.

Age-Friendly Communities – letter of support

Erica said that the Age-Friendly Communities participants wish to apply to become a part of the AARP member network.

On a motion by Erica to accept the letter of support, Bob seconded, and the vote was unanimous.

Town Administrator transition

Bob said that we should start the search sooner rather than later. Should we hire an interim to get us through town meeting or try to hire the final candidate now? Tom would be leaving in two months. Tom said hiring a final candidate now is a disadvantage for the shorter term because you might not get as many candidates or as broad a field of candidates. The benefit to hiring right away is that you can get things done right away. Bob said there might be some overlap with the new person that could be beneficial. Tom said nothing is official until he finalizes with Dalton. Erica asked when we first had a full-time administrator. Tom said end of 2012. Tom came in August of 2013. Was it a town meeting decision to bring it to a full-time position? Phil said it was. Trish Vinchesi said it is probably best to use an interim. Take the time to get a really good permanent candidate, someone who is qualified. There are a half-dozen positions open in the Commonwealth. Tom is leaving at a good time, with the budget largely complete. The next manager will have time to get to know the town. Bob asked if everyone supported the idea of hiring an interim manager and Erica agreed that now is a good time to review the position and so she supports hiring an interim. She also agreed that if the interim works out, they should be considered for the final position. Trish said she felt that it would be best to keep the position fulltime.

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

Town Administrator update

Committees

We have received the annual contract for the Cultural Council funds, which amount to \$4,800. I have it in the Town Office for Bob to Sign.

Based on current spending, the Newsletter Committee is now expected to spend at least \$5,500 in FY 2022, up from \$5,000. Without objection, I'll adjust the budget to reflect that.

The Board of Health sent postcards to all residents over 75 last Friday letting them know of this week's vaccination schedule in Deerfield. The clinics are Thursday and Friday from 9:30 – 2:15; registration links are on our website.

The Planning Board will hold a hearing on changing the Protective (Zoning) By-laws to replace “Selectmen” with “Select Board,” probably March 24, to mirror the proposed change in the general by-laws. [The Board prefers “Selectboard.”]

Departments

I have drafted a request for proposals for the carbon credit study and Phil is reviewing it. We’re hoping to get it out soon, as there’s a lot of work for the time left in the year.

Select Board member comments and concerns *none*

Mail *none*

Announcements

Phil announced that there is to be a Covid Clinic at the former Channing Bete location (Tree House Brewery) February 18 and 19, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:15 p.m.

Bob said that we should regularly talk about the Germain Fund and that the application is available at the Town Office and also online.

SPAM email – why are we getting so many phishing emails? We need to be aware of these.

Next Meeting: Scheduled for Monday, February 22, 2021, at 6 p.m., via Zoom

On a motion to adjourn at 7:30 by Armstrong, Phil seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.