

**Minutes
SELECT BOARD**

Monday, March 29, 2021, 6:00 p.m.
Via Zoom

Present for the Selectboard: Bob Armstrong, Chair; Phil Kantor, Erica Goleman

Others Present: Alan Singer, Steve Dinkelaker, Roy Cohen for the Finance Committee; Janet Chayes, Open Space Committee; Joe Strzegowski; Lee Whitcomb, Russ French for the Assessors; Thomas Hutcheson, Town Administrator; Louise Beckett, Assistant to the Town Administrator

Bob called the meeting to order at 6:13 p.m.

Minutes

Approval of minutes of March 22, 2021

On a motion from Bob to approve the minutes of March 22, 2021, Erica seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.

Warrant

Conway Grammar School W21-20A (missed on March 22)

On a motion from Bob to approve the Conway Grammar School warrant W21-20A for \$18,380.67, Erica seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.

6:05 JOINT MEETING WITH THE BOARD OF ASSESSORS

Tax Classification Hearing

This classification hearing is to decide whether you will split the tax rate by type of holder. If we went for a split tax rate it would put a large burden on commercial businesses, including the post office, Village Shoppe, the bank and Chapter 61 farmland and land in forest management. These areas would be taxed proportionately different. In the past, the town has voted not to do that. Most of these businesses contribute to the town and are having trouble trying to stay in business in town. We take this into consideration when setting the rate as we try not to burden our businesses. So the decision is to vote either a single rate for all or multiple tax rates. The decision to make is whether we want to use a tax rate of 1. Erica asked what is considered personal property? Lee responded: All the contents of our homes. What is taxed is, say a farm tractor, bucket loader, things like that used to produce income. Horses that are pets aren't taxed as personal property. Items over \$10,000 in value get billed; items under that cost do not. Phil asked as the factor being 1, what would be the arguments in a higher or lower factor? Bob said that if we have a split rate, it penalizes the commercial side of town. Our commercial businesses are small and to make any amount over the personal rate, we would have to charge them a very high tax rate, and it incurs ill-will. **On a motion from Phil to set a single rate: Erica seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Meetings Attended by Select Board Members

Erica had no meetings this week. Phil had a Frontier School Committee meeting to re-vote track project, an open space trails committee to explain the carbon credit program and a Planning Board Committee meeting. Bob had a conservation committee meeting with FRCOG and people interested in the pollinator program for Conway. Habitats and how to seed them were discussed.

Public Comments *none*

Old Business

Update on Interim Town Administrator position

Today is the application deadline: we got one late application and the committee meets Thursday to interview. The Board will need to interview in a public meeting; and contract negotiations would be in executive session. Steve said that there are three interim candidates to submit and three permanent candidates at this time. The committee will meet on April 1 and will send its recommendations after that. Wednesday the 7th is the projected date to do interviews.

Possible warrant article(s) on revision of Community Preservation Committee by-law

A potential change in the wording in the bylaw for how we appoint committee members is being considered. We weren't able to come to a consensus at our last meeting, and if that remains so it would go to town meeting. Phil said he felt bringing it to town meeting would be an unneeded distraction, and that we should go with the interpretation that Janet may have in mind. Dusty King is in favor of individual boards making the appointments. Janet said she has not seen any information published about the possible bylaw changes. Bob said it is a question of clarifying the language of the bylaw: Committees 'designate' their members; not appoint in several places in the bylaw. Janet said her understanding is that the Selectboard appoints the two at-large members; committees appoints the others. This is how it works in other communities in the Commonwealth, and this is the language that came from the state law. Bob said he is just as happy not to bring it to town meeting. Janet said the bylaw was approved the State's Attorney General. The Selectboard agreed not to bring it up in Town Meeting; to leave the bylaw as is.

New Business

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

FY 2022 Budget and warrant - General update

Joe Strzegowski said he received a notice about COVID money coming in through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and is asking if it can be earmarked for the downtown sewer system. He has tried a number of other avenues for funding but has been refused. If it can be earmarked for the sewer system, he will apply to MassWorks, etc. Phil said that it's COVID money, but CAN be used for water and sewer. Bob said that if we had \$500,000 to put into this project, it would increase the money we can get back in grants.

Janet said that the Town needs to be business-friendly for revitalization to happen. A lack of septic for the downtown is one impediment. Tourists, bikers, etc. won't come if there are no bathrooms available. Joe said one problem is that people not in the downtown area don't want to see a project that will 'only benefit the downtown area.' If we can get free or grant money, that's probably the only way to pull this off. Bob asked where else can we get funding? Tom mentioned the ARPA funds could also expand our broadband; capacity for overflow town meetings; and town hall/town office systems coordination. Roy asked if this money can be put into the stabilization fund for this infrastructure spending that's supposed to happen. Tom said he didn't think we can put it into the stabilization fund as it has to be spent by 2024. In the past, Joe said, people were not willing to participate in the municipal sewer plan as put forward some years ago, as there isn't a lot of money downtown. The town would have an easement to put a tank on your property so that only the liquid comes out and the system only has to be pumped every 7-10 years. As people have to maintain their current systems with more frequent pumping now, that would be a savings. However, there is only one place in MA where the sludge can be processed. The homeowners would have to pay for the operating costs. If we had other money it would make the MassWorks application stronger. **On a motion from Bob to earmark \$500,000 for the downtown sewer project, contingent on the receipt of MassWorks funding, Erica seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Recommendations for operating budgets: General Government; Health and Human Services; all schools

Recommendations on money articles

On a motion from Alan to recommend Article 2 accounts 114-161 as presented, Roy seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.

On a motion from Bob to recommend Article 2 accounts 114-161 as presented, Erica seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.

On a motion from Alan to recommend Article 2 accounts 162, 163, 170 and 190 as presented, Roy seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.

On a motion from Bob to recommend Article 2 accounts 162, 163, 170 and 190 as presented, Erica seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.

On a motion from Steve to recommend Article 2 accounts 512-900 as presented, Roy seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor

On a motion from Bob to recommend Article 2 accounts 512-900 as presented, Erica seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.

On a motion from Alan to recommend Article 2, accounts 300A, 300B, 892A, 892B, 320, Steve seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.

On a motion from Bob to recommend Article 2, accounts 300A, 300B, 892A, 892B, 320, Phil seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.

Agreement on non-controversial items: proposed Article numbers 5 through 10

On a motion from Alan to recommend Articles 5-10, 12, 14-16, 18-21 as presented, Steve seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.

On a motion from Bob to recommend Articles 5-10, 12, 14-16, 18-21 as presented, Erica seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.

Further discussion on Articles 3, 4, 13, 17, 22

Alan said he would like to have Ron's input on Article 4 and asked if he could join the Selectboard meeting next week. He also asked if Jan would be available for next week's meeting. Tom will ask her.

Items Not Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting

Phil said someone had asked about bear feeding. Tom said all such matters should be referred to the animal control officer.

Town Administrator update none

Select Board member comments and concerns none

Mail none

Announcements none

Next Meeting: Scheduled for directly after this meeting, to vote the Vendor, Payroll, and Payroll Deduction Warrants.

On a motion from Bob to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m., Phil seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.

SELECT BOARD

Monday, March 29 2021, 7:00 p.m.

Via Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88037761847?pwd=Q0NlTnVqSTREcEhGRWpVZEZMUndSUT09>

Meeting ID: 880 3776 1847; Passcode: 113495

Phone: 929-205-6099

Warrants:

On a motion from Bob to approve the Vendor warrant of \$292,246.94, the Payroll warrant of \$108,705.12 and the Payroll deduction warrant \$27,431.12, Phil seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.

On a motion from Bob to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m., Phil seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.

Next Meeting: Scheduled for Monday, April 5, 2021, at 6 p.m., via Zoom