

Minutes
SELECT BOARD

Monday, April 5, 2021, 6:00 p.m.
Via Zoom

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

Others Present: Mary Wigmore, Mike Berry, and Collin Mettey, Wigmore Forest Resource Management; Jan Warner, Treasurer; Alan Singer, Roy Cohen, Rhyanna McLeester, Steve Dinkelaker for the Finance Committee; Ron Sweet, Highway Superintendent; Lara De Lucca, Appointee to Boards/Committees Position; Thomas Hutcheston, Town Administrator; Louise M. Beckett, Assistant to the Town Administrator

Bob called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Minutes

Approval of minutes of March 29, 2021

On a motion from Bob to approve the minutes of March 29, 2021, Erica seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.

Meetings Attended by Select Board Members

Erica had no meetings this past week; Phil had none; Bob had a meeting with the conservation commission around new people in town. He said they are for the most part interested in water protection where it is an issue.

Public Comments *none*

Old Business

Carbon Credit study: discussion with Mary Wigmore

Bob said we are here to support the carbon credit program. Mary Wigmore said she has a sub-contractor who should be joining tonight and asked the board if they had any questions. Phil said he has been meeting with property owners and that people have a personal relationship with their land. Mary said that we respect the ethic people have with their property. There is a continuum of management. How to create trust is the biggest challenge. She asked Phil to share his list of people who are interested and Phil said many have given permission when he spoke with them in person. A public Zoom meeting might not be the best outreach approach. Bob said he has heard a lot of talk about trees: among these discussions carbon credit comes up. Mary spoke of carbon contributors and carbon users . Large trees store carbon so they are desirable. If an aggregate is formed, the plan won't dictate peoples' management philosophy. Phil said that if you want people in this town to sign up, it will require a personal visit. Bob said the money in the grant is covering that outreach. Mary said it is important to have a universal message to all the participants. Mike said there will be a subset of people who will not be interested, so outreach there would be limited. Bob asked if Mary had any other issues she needed answered. TNT is trying to get 40,000 acres of land, but they are going to get the credit. That's an option we would explore. Tom reminded everyone that there are time limitations and that the contract (2 copies) is ready to sign. Mike said he sent a request to the assessor to find out if there is any updating that needs to be done. Phil said the list he had was only single-owner parcels of 100 acres or more. Mike said he used a list of 40-acre owners. Mary asked how should Wigmore be accountable to the board – weekly, monthly meetings or reports? Phil said initially it might be best to work together so that people who members of the board know very well could be contacted by local people in advance of Wigmore's contact.

Close warrant for annual Town Meeting

On a motion from Bob to officially close the warrant Erica seconded, Phil agreed and the vote was unanimous in favor.

New Business

Germain Fund Scholarships

Two applications have been received, but the deadline is not until April 16th.

Letter of support for using American Rescue Plan Act money for downtown wastewater treatment

There will be a letter for the Selectboard to sign to earmark \$500,000 from funds granted to the Town through the American Rescue Plan Act for a downtown wastewater project, contingent on receiving a MassWorks grant for the remaining funds.

Appoint Lara de Lucca as the Administrative Assistant to Boards, Committees, and Commissions

Bob welcomed Lara de Lucca and congratulated her on the position. **On a motion from Phil to appoint Lara de Lucca to the position of Administrative Assistant to Boards, Committees, and Commissions, at a rate of \$20.00/hour for a period ending June 30, 2022, Erica seconded and motion passed unanimously.**

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

FY 2022 Budget and warrant - General update

Tom said that if the interim could overlap with the permanent administrator for a month, and that we should add that to the warrant so that if we need to be able to pay that person, the selectboard could approve \$6,250 as the maximum of overlap that would need to be available. Tom said he would probably only have two weeks with the interim. The interim is an unbenefitted position. Motions to approve from both the Finance and Selectboard are needed. **On a motion from Bob to approve \$6,250 to the Administrator budget to cover the overlap period between hiring of the interim administrator and the permanent administrator, Erica seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.**

On a motion from Alan for the Finance Committee to approve \$6,250 to cover the transition between the interim and permanent administrators, Steve seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.

Recommendations on money articles: Highway Paving; Highway truck; retroactive pay raise; conservation land purchase; authorize revolving fund expenditure

Highway Truck

Ron said that the cost of the truck and equipment may be going up by 50 percent. He said the dealer was confident they could hold the price until town meeting is over. Roy said though the price may be going up now, it is likely to come down later. **On a motion from Bob to recommend spending \$220,000 for a new Freightliner 6-wheel dump truck with a front plow and changeable body to accommodate a sander to replace the 1998 108SD, Erica seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor. On a motion from Alan for the Finance Committee to recommend spending \$220,000 for a new Freightliner 6-wheel dump truck with a front plow and changeable body to accommodate a sander to replace the 1998 108SD, Roy seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.** Funding is coming from the Capital Improvements Stabilization fund.

Paving

The cost is \$170,000 to do a mile for the area over Dill Hill. Phil asked about the borrowing cost. Jan said she did an impact analysis for \$175,000 for 5 years, and the impact is \$45 per household. Her loan advisor said the market is volatile so no-one wants to do a 5-year loan. She said she thought she could get a bid for 3-4 percent or so and if we could consider a 3-year note, paid off in 3 years. Low end payments would be \$58,000 @ 8% and the impact per household would be \$66. It all comes down to a 5-year at \$45 per household, or a three-year note for \$66/per household. Tom asked if we can write the article to say 'no greater than a five-year term'. Jan said she thought this was possible. She said she didn't see away to write the article to cover both, so the Board

needs to make that decision. Alan and Roy thought that the 3-year was better. \$21,675 for the 5-year; 3-year is \$3,040. Jan favors the three-year loan. **On a motion from Alan for the Finance Committee to recommend financing the paving project with a three-year option for \$170,000 for a PEN?, Roy seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor. On a motion from Bob to recommend a three-year option for \$170,000 for a PEN?, Erica seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Retroactive Pay raise

Bob said the difference was very small. Phil thought that 2% for last year, as that was what it would have been, and 3% for this year, was agreeable to him. Schools are getting 2% this year. Tom said the schools get other raises that are significantly greater than 2%. He added that he thought the only vote last year was for no raise, and that he felt it was important to remember what people have been going through with the Pandemic this year, and that morale is important. When asked, Jan said there has been no decrease in tax payments. Phil said the town's employment rate is back to normal too. **On a motion from Bob to recommend a 2-1/2% staff retroactive raise and a 2-1/2% raise for the coming year, Erica seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor. On a motion from Alan for the Finance Committee to recommend a 2-1/2% staff retroactive raise and a 2-1/2% pay raise for the coming year, Roy seconded and the motion was unanimous in favor.**

Revolving Funds

(Article 20) Tom said the town created a revolving fund some years ago, so that we didn't have to borrow to pay this expense and would be able to pay it on time. Jan said that for the Medicare reimbursement we pay the fee for filing the paperwork out of it. Tom said the amount in the fund is currently \$48,000. Jan said eventually we need to decide what to do with it. **On a motion from Bob to recommend paying \$15,000 from the Medicare Revolving Fund Erica seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Conservation Land

Municipal Vulnerability (Article 21) combining two special revenue funds, Cricket Hill Road which was money from logging and can only be used for conservation purposes. The other fund was the sale of the old grammar school which has about \$84,000 in it. Joe Strzegowski and Janet Chayes have worked on it for helping to buy land along the South River. There is another parcel, but we would like to dedicate this money to that when it becomes possible to buy the land. We should change Article 21 to specify where the money is coming from on the Draft Warrant. **On a motion from Bob to recommend that Article 21 be changed to state 'for purchasing properties along the South River for purposes of conservation and flood mitigation' Erica seconded and Phil agreed with reservations and the vote was unanimous in favor. On a motion from Alan for the Finance Committee to recommend that Article 21 be changed to state 'for purchasing properties along the South River for purposes of conservation and flood mitigation' Rhyanna seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Items Not Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting

Jan has a banking license agreement payment contract (ZOBRIO) that needs to be approved. **On a motion from Bob to sign the contract with ZOBRIO, Erica seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Town Administrator update

Departments

Regarding the letter of support approved earlier for a possible grant for a downtown wastewater system: the state now lumps ten or so grant programs, including MassWorks, into one application, the "one stop program," so that any related grant programs may be brought into the package if that seems appropriate. The Expression of Interest (EOI), Joe Strzegowski is filing gives the state a chance to weigh in on the proposal before its submission so it can suggest tweaks that might make it more likely to be funded. This will be the case going forward, so please keep this in mind, especially when considering grant proposals for the downtown area.

The Highway Supervisor reports that there were two bad patches of mud in town, one on East Guinea Road and one on South Part Road. Both seem to be drying up now, and this week should see the end of those particular problems.

The Town has been approached by Habitat for Humanity regarding their acquisition of a parcel in Conway on which they'd like to build a house for affordable housing. They available to meet with you either April 19 or 26.

We have received our quarterly report from Colonial regarding our aggregation program. There have been 667 meters participating, and the savings have been growing since January, as the gap between Eversource and the standard Dynegy plan has increased from a tenth of a cent to almost a cent.

Select Board member comments and concerns

Phil said that Frontier is going to be doing the mowing this year. Conway is the only one of the schools where practices are not held, so they have never mowed for us. This year, though they won't bring their sports teams here, they will mow the grammar school lawns.

Mail

Karen Eldred had written regarding mowing the grammar school lawn, and Phil will let Karen know that a solution has been found.

Announcements *none*

Next Meeting: Scheduled for Wednesday, April 7, for interviewing candidates for Interim Town Administrator at 6 p.m., via Zoom

Next Selectboard meeting will be on Monday, April 12th at 6 p.m. via Zoom.

At 8:05 p.m. on a motion from Bob the adjourn, Erica seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.