

Minutes
Joint Meeting – Selectboard; Finance Committee
Monday, January 24, 2021
Via Zoom

Select Board; Phil Kantor, Chair; Bob Armstrong, Erica Goleman

Others Attending: Mike Kane, Community Relations, William Hayes, Sr. Supervisor for Vegetation Management, Eversource; Jen Bartak, Grace Larson, Conservation Commission; Janet Chayes, Open Space Committee; Howard Boyden, Library Committee; Roy Cohen, Rhyanna McLeester, Alan Singer, Finance Committee; Ken Ouimette, Chief of Police; Chris, Larabee, *Greenfield Recorder*; Véronique Blanchard, Town Administrator; Louise Beckett, Assistant to the Town Administrator

Meeting Called to Order
Approval of Minutes

Phil called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
On a motion from Erica to approve the minutes of January 18, 2022, Bob seconded, all said aye and the vote was unanimous in favor.

Approval of Warrants
Meetings Attended by
Select Board Members

None
Neither Erica nor Bob had meetings. Phil had a Frontier IA Union negotiations meeting.

Public Comments
Unfinished Business
New Business

None
None

Eversource representative William Hayes, Jr. to speak to the Selectboard letter requesting that Eversource provide assurances to the town that required Best Practices will be followed regarding future herbicide applications in Conway.

Mr. Hayes said that he and Mike Kane were there to respond to the SB letter sent in early January. The original impact off Bardwells' Ferry Road was related to the gravel access road. Eversource disclosed the error to MA Wildlife Endangered Species Program. Heritage delayed issuing a conservation management permit until the design was redone, which was back in 2013-14. In 2018 Eversource did an herbicide application on the right-of-way, and a touch-up in 2019. At this time, they mistakenly sprayed the American bittersweet, which was intertwined with the Oriental bittersweet. Arborist Sean Giroux reported it through the chain of command to Heritage. The crew hadn't read the item correctly and so sprayed where they shouldn't have. MA Wildlife came up with a 10-Year Plan to restore the American bittersweet. They will cultivate 90 plants for the 30 that were destroyed so that they are viable (3 to 1 replacement). They have also implemented signage to direct anyone who is working in the area to contact them before doing any work. There will be annual monitoring for the next 10 years. Mike Kane then reiterated what Mr. Hayes had explained about what happened in 2000 and apologized that Eversource had made a mistake in not spraying the invasive bittersweet. Phil said that the issue in his mind was the herbicide application itself, that residents are fearful of it. Mike said that they didn't use a practice back in 2000 they should have for the right of way but have now corrected their program. Herbicides are used on a rotational basis, usually every four years. They cut one year, and apply

herbicide the next. Bob explained that through the Conservation Commission, herbicide control along the South River is done manually to control knotweed and bittersweet. The DEP doesn't allow us to spray because it's close to the river, but we use a form of herbicide that's applied manually. Mike made the point that applying herbicide in September-October is best, as in summer time it is less effective. Phil thanked Eversource for their explanation.

***Jen Bartak;** discussion of potential issues and opportunities regarding Police services in Conway*

Jen's interest stems from her position as a Conway resident and as a police officer in what policing will look like in Conway once Chief Ouimette retires. This retirement has not been announced but will take place at some point in the near rather than far future. Policing in all small towns is going to be more expensive because of certification, the extent of which is not yet known. Part-time officers must go through 'bridge academy' training. Small towns like Conway may also face attrition as part-time officers may seek employment elsewhere. Zero police presence in Conway is not a viable or safe position. Relying on State police is not viable either: The Shelburne Falls barracks has two troopers and a desk officer, covering 15 communities, so we shouldn't think we can depend on them for our own issues. FRCOG is looking at policing in the County and Conway should be a part of that conversation. We could expand our existing police department, which is costly but viable. Regionalization, such as has happened in Leverett-Wendell as an example, could be cost-efficient. Other thoughts besides partnering and regionalization efforts include using state police but we would need to prepare for long wait times. FIDs are also a problem: if you have no officer in your community you must go through a regional major of MSP for licensing. Phil said the legislative remedy covers only a small percentage of the overall cost so is an unfunded mandate doesn't address the needs of rural towns. Chief Ouimette agreed with much of what Jen brought up. There are new additional expenses that need to be covered. The bridge academy is something everyone needs to be involved in. For behavioral health issues, we currently send people up to Greenfield. If they have the personnel and can respond to the scene, that would be very beneficial. Jen's experience has been that they have been very helpful, but response time is about an hour.

Jen noted that for officers to be certified through the bridge academy it's 200 hours of classroom training, then a week-long training of defense tactics, ammo, abuse to your cruiser, etc. so a generous estimate for each officer is \$4-6,000, which FRCOG has offered to help cover. Every officer has to re-certify every three years, To maintain training, firearms (2 shooting courses and one classroom course) as well each year CPR, and first responder training, each year we need to budget for 80 hours per year per officer for continuation training. Regarding Mental Health - If the town could reach out to the CSO which holds the seat in the county for behavioral health issues, we should have a conversation to see how they can help.

ARPA Discussion and vote on Grammar School request for \$118,766.74 in ARPA funds to cover the amount the town is contractually obligated to pay under the collective bargaining agreement for sick pay buy back upon estimated six pending retirements.

Vote to approve/accept cyber security grant from the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (EOTSS)

6:30 Joint Meeting with Finance Committee

This expense will be paid for out of the town's taxes or out of ARPA, but it must be paid this year. It's a one-time sick pay buy-back, which was negotiated 15 years ago, so the town is obligated to pay it. The decision is needed now because there is a public hearing in March and the question is whether to pay it out of the town assessment or out of ARPA funds. **On a motion from Phil to use ARPA funds in the amount of \$118,766.74 to cover the 6 pending Grammar School retirement sick pay buybacks, Erica seconded, all said aye and the vote was unanimous in favor.**

There is no cost to the town, and there are four learning modules and phishing simulations available throughout the year. **On a motion from Erica to accept the EOTSS cyber security grant, Bob seconded, all said aye, and the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Alan called the Finance Committee Meeting to order at 6:57 p.m.

FY23 Budget Presentations: 114-Moderator; 131-Finance; 135-Audit; 170-Open Space; 171-ConComm; 175 Planning; 176-ZBA; 292-Animal Control; 294-Tree Service; 491-Cemetery Maintenance; 541-COA; 543-Veterans; 610-Library; 630-Parks, Rec & Trails; 691-Historical Commission

170-Open Space Janet said they were level-funding as most of the budget goes to mowing the South Meadow path. Early on, there was a transition from the Highway Department in terms of who was paying what portion, but now it's all an Open Space expense.

610-Library Howard said that the amount they need (2-1/2%) is necessary to keep the library up to required standards.

171-ConComm Only increase was for \$4. The town doesn't have to pay for advertising the public is obligated to do, so their expenses stay relatively static.

114 - Moderator - level funded

131 - Finance - level funded

135- Audit – It is recommended by the accountant that this funding be brought to town meeting as a special article which would allow the town to carry the funds forward every year rather than every other year.

175-Planning - only change is to increase advertising by \$100; otherwise level-funded.

176-ZBA – level funded

292-Animal Control - level funded

294-Tree Service - level funded

491-Cemetery Maintenance

541-COA - level funded

543-Veterans - this item moved to a later date

630-Parks, Rec & Trails - level funded

691-Historical Commission - level funded

At 7:15 Alan moved that the Finance Committee Meeting be adjourned.

**Items Not Anticipated 48 Hrs.
in Advance of the Meeting**

None

Town Administrator update

Attended MMA and had a couple more budget meetings.

**Select Board member
comments/concerns**

Véronique sent an email regarding the FRCOG budget hearing. Phil is the FRCOG council member and Erica is the alternate. Phil has a Frontier meeting on Thursday, and asked if Erica could attend instead. Erica agreed. Phil said the budget to be presented is a big deal because it becomes a line item. Every year there is an objection at town meeting. Must be defended and must go before Finance as well. Pay raises are being considered this year, which will be a big deal.

**Mail
Announcements**

None

Véronique said people should sign up for notification on the website, for example: the transfer station closed this weekend and had people been signed up, they would have received a notification email.

**Next Meeting
Adjourn**

January 31, 2022, 6:00 p.m.

At 7:28 on a motion from Phil to adjourn, Bob seconded, all said aye and the vote was unanimous in favor.