

Joint Meeting of the Selectboard and the Finance Committee
Monday, January 31, 2022, 6:00 p.m.
Via Zoom

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

Others Attending: Thad Bennett, Nelson Shifflett; Jiyanna Vagedes, Gerry LeBlanc; Alan Singer, Rhyanna McLeester, Roy Cohen, |Finance Committee; Ken Ouimette, Chief of Police, Bob Baker, Fire Chief; Véronique Blanchard, Town Administrator; Louise Beckett, Assistant to the Town Administrator

Minutes

On a motion from Erica to approve the minutes of January 24, 2022 Bob seconded, all said aye and the vote was unanimous in favor.

Warrants

On a motion from Erica to approve the Accounts Payable Warrant W22-17 for \$146,712.51, The Payroll Warrant PW22-17 for \$119,869.18, and the Payroll Deduction Warrant WDW22-17 for \$29,976.22, Bob seconded, all said aye and the vote was unanimous in favor.

Meetings Attended by Select Board Members

Erica attended a FRCOG budget meeting and reported that Conway's cost has gone down this year. They approved salary increases of 6%. The vote was unanimous to approve the budget even though the FRCOG is now doing the health inspections. Bob and Phil attended the Frontier capital meeting. There are alternatives to paying for capital costs which haven't been explored but were discussed. Phil thought the tennis court paving could possibly come out of CPA funding. Phil also had school board and contract negotiation meetings. There is a tentative agreement with Frontier but with Union 38 there are no agreements yet, so they will continue to meet.

Public Comments

None

Unfinished Business

Vote to approve signature of \$5,000 Mass Cultural Council grant allocation for FY22.

The grant is not specific as to what exactly the funds can go to, but it is for cultural events. The Friends of the Field Memorial Library are sponsoring a poetry workshop, a 4-day creative writing workshop and in the summer a music event at the library and another creative writing event. But the library has to come up with additional funding. **On a motion from Phil to approve signing the Mass Cultural Council Grant allocation for FY22 in the amount of \$5,000, Erica seconded, all said aye and the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Nelson Shifflett: As a follow up to our Jan 3rd discussion with the Selectboard, Thad and I request that the Selectboard review and support the initiative outlined in the attachment: "Town Meeting Attendance Plan"

Thad said he and Nelson thought it best to put something in writing for the Selectboard to review. Important points: have a general time line; do community outreach; publicize the town meeting date well before the date; liaison with the Selectboard; make the meeting more efficient. Introduce a warrant-like article explaining the warrant. Have media presentations on why it's important to come; billboards, signage and for residents with children bring back the issue of child-care. Phil said that he had met with the PTO and that both they and the principal, Kristen Gorden are on board. Thad said that the volunteers would not do anything in terms of expenditures without the Selectboard's approval. Bob noted that the area schools' sports events conflict with town meeting dates, and that it's unfortunate if those dates need to be given up. In the interests of keeping tradition but also retaining the help of those who have done pre-town meeting for many years in the past, Thad and Nelson were encouraged to work with Jimmy Recore and Mary McClintock and also with the Town Clerk in regard to financing. **On a motion from Phil to support the creation of a task force to work with the Selectboard and others to increase town meeting attendance, quality and excitement, and with Véronique as the liaison to the Selectboard, Bob seconded, all said aye and the vote was unanimous in favor.**

New Business

6:30 Joint Meeting of Finance Committee & Selectboard

210 Police Department

At 6:30 p.m. Alan opened the joint meeting of the Selectboard and the Finance Committee.

Ken said most of his budget was level-funded, with the exception of dues which will go up substantially due to training costs. This expense was in the past covered by Mass Chiefs. He said he was going on best-guess based on what he has been told. \$2,100 will be coming from the FRCOG and will cover about half of one individual's state-mandated training. He had one capital request for solar radar signposts. He has put in for two as they're \$3,696 apiece (\$7,400 total) which are pole-mounted but can be moved around. They are solar-powered and also monitor speeds and give violator alerts. A question was asked if Ken's capital request could be submitted as an ARPA funds request? Veronique is monitoring what has been requested in ARPA funds usage. Phil thanked Ken for presenting his budget.

Bob asked if the Finance Committee could act as the Capital Committee, since there are only two members and so can't have a quorum. Bob is the Selectboard liaison to the Finance Committee and asked if it's something that should be put on the warrant. Roy said that as it stands today, the Capital Committee only makes it more organized and easier for departments to submit their requests. Integrating them could be under a 15-year plan.

Véronique said that the increase in Chief Baker's stipend over two years was made according to Tom Hutcheson's request. Bob when asked said that that was what he remembered and explained all his budget increases. Clerical expense will go up a bit as his part-time clerk has left, and a new clerk should be hired at \$18.00/hour for one hour each week. All others are pretty much the same except for the 2% increases. Deputy Chiefs Adam Baker and Ron Hawkes, quoted at \$99.16 every six months. All are part of the next labor budget. He commented on stipends that they will separate specific labor budgets from stipends. He's not asking for anything else new because at the budget meeting with his officers, they agreed the most important thing is to expand in the garage after the highway department has moved. Cell phone expense went down because of moving to an AT&T FirstNet account. The cost has gone down dramatically for Bob's and the ambulance phones as they dropped the rates: from \$130 to \$45/month. In addition, the old town phone wasn't acceptable - (not 5G) but as coordinator, which Bob is, he was able to get a new i-phone for \$1. Alan asked about vehicle maintenance. The last three years it has exceeded the budget. Bob said something catastrophic and unexpected had happened to one of the trucks. Alan suggested that the maintenance line budget be increased to \$9,700 (or even \$10,000) as a baseline just in case something unforeseen happens. If not used, it goes back into free cash in any event. Most vehicle problems are because of valve problems and pump replacements. Fuel costs have doubled, but Bob says he doesn't use that much fuel, and prices are apt to go down. There is a capital request to replace one of the trucks (the pumper) which is going on 25 years. The Chief suggested that \$100K be set aside in a special stabilization fund for the next five years starting in FY23 so that the total for the purchase won't be \$650K+ in FY28. Roy noted that both Ken's and Bob's vehicle maintenance budgets are the same or not increased this year. Ken said his maintenance budget of \$2,500 this year should be adequate but agreed it would be o.k. to bump it (the cruiser) up to \$3,000. On fuel he thinks he's going to be fine. Roy asked about the old fire/ambulance/highway building up on Route 116. It's on the edge of the river and there are other issues: Is anyone discussing this? Phil said the town will be putting money into the building. There is a working group composed of the departments that will be using the building. They are looking for ways to save money. Alan asked for suggestions for moving money for the new fire truck: Should we establish a special stabilization fund? How much of a deposit do we need to put down to get a quote for 2028? Bob said he didn't think we can get a quote for five years out. The new truck will have the same features as the one that is being retired, only updated. Bob said if we go with the size we have now, we would have to pay extra to get it shrunk down. If we move to the new bay in the renovated garage building, we can probably get the slightly longer truck for less money. Trying to merge fire, ambulance and police in the current fire/ambulance building, and to move the offices from the second floor of the town office to that building. There are ongoing discussions about funding including the possibility to use ARPA or CPA funding. Bob said he had asked to put \$100,000 each year into the stabilization fund for the new truck, which will be needed by FY28. Phil thanked both Ken and Bob for their presentations.

Vote to Close Joint Meeting

At 7:20 p.m. Alan moved to end the joint meeting with the Selectboard.

Items Not Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting/Public Comment

Gerry wanted to check in with the Selectboard to find out what's going on with Nexamp. Who has the authority over this? Is it the Selectboard or is it the Planning Board? Bob said that the Selectboard doesn't have any leverage with Eversource or Nexamp other than to ask questions. Bob said the Board wrote to Nexamp but hasn't heard anything. They wrote to Véronique. Gerry and Jiyanna have not been contacted but have been in touch with Dan Lewis who is an engineer at Nexamp. The Town has a designated Eversource contact - Mike Kane. Véronique said they came to the office and said they were in touch with people, but apparently didn't have Gerry and Jiyanna on their list. She will follow up. Gerry wants documentation in hand. He said Dan Lewis told him there's a frequency of 5 kilohertz, which is way out of the tolerance of what's acceptable (120-160 hertz). This is in the document Nexamp says they sent. Bob said the problem is either the lines that go from the facility up to Route 116, or with the equipment that generates the AC. Nexamp purchased the equipment that was approved by Eversource and Eversource hired an engineering company to look at the lines and approved them. Something is not right. Gerry said he needs documentation in case any problems come up that need to be legally addressed. Bob said that any letters the Selectboard has received from Eversource will be made available to Gerry. Bob said that the inverters purchased by Nexamp - there is an allowable amount of harmonic distortion - but though they purchased inverters that would be way lower than the amount allowable, they're measuring much higher than that. Devlin (Selman) sent recordings to an audio engineer and he measured 5,620 hertz. The state says that towns can regulate solar if it impacts health, safety and welfare of the residents. We need to hold them to account if these frequencies are harmful. Bob said he hasn't heard anything about Nexamp walking away from the problem, and Gerry agreed he hadn't either. The array has been turned off, but they may need to come in and turn it on occasionally to test. Gerry said that they have turned it off, but problems persisted for a long time. All the electronics in his home have been negatively impacted. Harmonic distortion is the problem. They need to fix it. Gerry thanked the Selectboard for giving them the time to express their concerns.

January 31, 2022 Town Administrator Update

Our first cyber security awareness training has begun, with each account holder having been given a preliminary assessment test to see what our current awareness level is. Next will be an assignment and some random phishing tests.

Phil and I have met with our new MEMA representative, Chris Marsden, who is extremely helpful in providing us with information and next steps to updating our emergency operations protocols.

I have already had feedback on the new *Conway Currents* column, with a suggestion that the town use Facebook and/or Twitter to alert residents when there are issues at the transfer station.

**Select Board member
comments/concerns**

Phil said it's important to get people to sign up on the Get Notified page of the town website. The transfer station compressor stopped working over last weekend, so there was no ability to deal with trash. He felt that voicemail is intrusive, and that sending a text is better. There's a problem in discarding old/non-viable numbers. A handout could be distributed at the transfer station giving them instructions on how to sign up.

Mail

Bob said he got a nice note from a guy on the Williamsburg Road end of Conway. The plow driver on his road noticed that he had brought some huge blocks of ice in the guy's driveway so stopped and moved them out. Ron has also been advised.

Announcements

None

Next Meeting

February 7, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom

Adjourn

On a motion from Erica to adjourn the meeting, Bob seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.