

## Selectmen's Meeting Minutes January 4, 2021

**7:00 PM** Meeting called to order by Selectboard Chairman, John Esposito. Also in attendance were Selectmen Kim Roberge and Tim Berry.

Esposito led the meeting in a moment of silence.

Cindy Raspiller, Library Trustee, let the Board know that they will be submitting a warrant article for March Town Meeting in the amount of \$20,000 to be added to the Library Capital Reserve Fund. She also said that the Daland Trustees have tentatively agreed to match these funds.

Esposito said that, Town Moderator, David Sturm will join us in next Monday's meeting to discuss the Town Meeting. Esposito would like to keep Town Meeting on March 9, 2021 if possible – it will have to be virtual.

If so, the Governing Body will have to send a mailing to each registered voter in Town, no matter how many voters live at each address, 1 week in advance of the first session (there must be two sessions). The warrant articles would have to be voted on by ballot the same day as the elections.

Bonnie Angulas asked what the deadline would be to partition the Town to move Town Meeting.

Esposito said he is not sure of the date, but the State would not be against it.

Angulas stated that the internet is not great all over Town; someone could amend an article and someone else wouldn't get the information.

Roberge asked Raspiller about the RFP for the road and when the Selectmen were going to get it.

Raspiller said that the RFP already went out, responses are due January 6<sup>th</sup>. She said that they have met with the Cemetery Trustees already; we all want to be together on this. She wished that this was happening in November, but it is what it is.

Roberge asked Brown why it was not passed along to the Selectmen.

Brown responded that she never got it.

Raspiller said that she has not even seen the final version.

Roberge said that she thought we discussed that the BOS were going to get it before it went out. That is her recollection from the last discussion.

Berry said that he was at the last Library Trustee meeting in December. John Quinlan, Bill McKinney, Ben Crosby and Jay Wilson collaborated on this. Berry knew of the RFP and did not ask Raspiller to send the Board a copy. It will be a joint effort on the warrant article. It was designed by the architect and he knows what he is doing better than the rest of us.

Raspiller said that the point of the RFP is to understand the phasing and the cost of the 3 phases. We all agreed that, because they did the work thus far, they would be the best people to do the RFP. Those that bid on it will know that it may differ slightly from the plan. Our intent is to be as transparent as possible; everyone was invited to the December meeting.

Roberge said that she was unable to make the December meeting, but that she was looking to be sent the RFP before it went out – she would like to have an overview of the process.

Brown said that the warrant article needs to be to the Selectmen by January 16. The article can be tweaked for a short time after that, but the intent cannot be changed.

Raspiller said that she is glad to know that.

Roberge asked Raspiller to forward the RFP to the Selectmen's office.

Raspiller agreed.

Esposito said that, in reference to Steve O'Keefe's question last week, he remembered the unpaid taxes on the Kaminski property. The increase in retained fund balance can be directly related to the unpaid Kaminski taxes.

Berry offered that the School can encumber surpluses. In order to make the tax rate fluctuate less the school encumbers the money directly. The Town would have to have a warrant article.

Roberge said that the Kaminski number is well over \$350K.

Berry said that the extra \$200K that we retained does not even cover that.

Berry said that he has had a discussion with the people who will restore the Town Hall windows and provide storms for \$78,000. We had enough to cover half, but we didn't get the LCHIP Grant. At the very least, we should ask the Town for money to put into the Repair and Maint. for the rest of the windows. They can do the job in July. Berry is trying to decide if we should reside and paint also this year.

Esposito asked if the renovation bid included money to replace the windows.

Berry said no; a couple would be relocated, but they will do that with old or new windows. If this were my building, I would rather have it resided and painted like we did to the McCollom building, not restored. There is going to be a considerable amount of trouble areas if we try to restore, at least all around the windows and doors. These are the things that have me thinking.

Esposito said that he agrees with doing the windows and asked for a cost of siding and painting.

Berry said that he was going to ask Roberge to reach out to DEW to get a cost.

Esposito said that we all know the lousy working conditions that the girls have to deal with, and we can all see what the outside looks like. We probably won't be able to get the Town to vote for a bond issue this year, the windows can be the first step.

Roberge asked what the bond rates are, saying they have never been this low. No one doubts that the building needs to be completely renovated. The inside of the building has hazardous working conditions. We can't control the heat or ventilation. The plumbing and electric are awful - there is still knob and tube wiring in there. People go in there for all kinds of reasons. We cannot move forward without putting the whole thing back on the warrant. The fallback could be adding to the building maintenance fund.

Esposito asked Roberge if she thinks it will get approved.

Berry was adamant that we need to do more community outreach. Last year we didn't get good buy-in. The people in Town that worked on the previous plan did not buy into the new plan. People were upset that we didn't get more community input. Also, there are competing interests in Town. Maybe doing the windows will get people more interested in the project. When we ask for big money, we need the Town to be invested.

Roberge said that she looks at this as a necessity rather than a want. We came in under \$2 million last year. This year will be the same number and the interest rates are less than 1%. We went with who we thought would do the best job. Everything on that plan was moveable - nothing was set in stone. There are safety issues that need to be addressed and were talked about before I was even on the Board.

Esposito agreed with Roberge and said that bond rates are so low, what we add to Building Repair & Maint. would cover a bond payment. He believes it would be an error not to put the whole project before the Town this year with the bond rates so low.

Berry said that he agreed with every point Roberge made. People may think they haven't had enough say, or aren't ready to spend the money. We need to get buy-in or else we will get turned down every year. It will shut down our ability to raise funds. Bond rates were low last year too and we got 70 votes.

Esposito said that he is a great proponent of getting the Town Hall fixed; I think we should put the project forward and also add to the Repair and Maint. line.

Angulas asked what the status of the Seven to Save is, and what about fundraising for the project. It seems like spending a year fundraising would be a good strategy.

Berry explained that there a lot of library's with benefactor's names on them, but he's never seen a Town Hall with a benefactor's name on it. Most of the grant funding sources have an asterisk that says "no municipalities".

Angulas said that she doesn't believe the Board is being responsible by not fundraising.

Roberge said that the 1<sup>st</sup> committee worked on this back in 2009. Some people thought this building should be torn down. It hasn't had any renovation in many years. Last year we brought forth the big number. She believes that absolutely, we should go back before the Town for this, or large amounts of money should be added to the Building & Maint. line.

Berry asked Roberge to think about spending more money on planning. He thinks we need to install a sprinkler system; not on the current plan. Maybe we should be hiring an architect to start from the inside - out; spend \$75 - \$100K to phase the remodel.

Esposito asked if it was possible to do the interior by thirds.

Roberge said that the office staff would have to relocate, and we would be having our meetings at the school. We would need to be very organized and be scheduling meetings for all buildings.

Esposito agreed that it would be a planning nightmare.

Roberge said that she would have a conversation with Matt at DEW.

Berry suggested talking to Matt about design and phasing.

Board discussed an email asking that we put a link to "Resources for Senior Care" on our website. Board agreed.

Roberge referenced an email from the Tax Collector that asks the Selectmen to request, in writing, that she include unpaid taxes in her submission for the Town Report. She cites Mont Vernon as being one of a very few Towns left that do so. It can be a legal issue. Berry, personally, believes that it doesn't need to be in there.

Roberge said that she knows all of that is public information, but she doesn't remember discussing this before.

Esposito believes the practice is passed its time; it is punitive and he thinks we can do away with it.

Roberge asked about liens falling under the same premise. She thinks the liens should stay in the book.

Board agreed.

Esposito said that he will get together with Brown regarding the dates for public hearings etc.

Roberge said that she wants to have a good discussion with David Sturm. Maybe putting Town Meeting off this year would be better.

Berry is inclined to have Town Meeting in March. He asked about the logistics of not approving the operating budget until mid-year.

Esposito would like to have it in March.

Berry asked if we have to notify each voter of the date for the public hearing for the budget.

Esposito said one letter can suffice for all the meetings. The School may have an indoor meeting with separation.

Roberge explained that the deliberative session does not attract many people.

Board reviewed the minutes of 12/28/20. Roberge motioned, seconded by Berry to accept the minutes of December 28, 2020 as written. Roberge; yes, Berry; yes, Esposito; yes.

Jay Wilson came to the Board to tell them that MACC is proposing a \$1 million infrastructure upgrade. The warrant article for Mont Vernon would be \$111,000. If Milford is willing to put it on their ballot, will you put it on ours?

Berry said that he is pleased to see that MACC wants to improve, is there a possibility that Milford will say no.

Wilson said that he anticipates that Milford will say no. MACC has put forth 7 points of action to fix MACC; Milford has shot down every one of them.

Roberge asked if there was wording on this.

Brown forwarded it to her.

Wilson said that we should know about Milford before we have to vote.

Berry asked if it were possible that Milford would include it along with their big number and withdraw it if they get the new communications center.

Wilson said he hoped so, but probably not.

Wilson also wanted to explain the FD's warrant article to fund the capital reserve this year.

He said that, if the new fire truck is voted in, the first payment would be in 2022. It makes sense to fund the capital reserve this year to be able to use that money in the balloon payment at lease end and reduce the yearly payments going forward.

**8:35 PM** As there was no further business before the Board, Berry motioned seconded by Roberge to adjourn.  
Roberge; yes, Berry; yes, Esposito; yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Brown