

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes

January 11, 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 for the Krauss and MacGillivray families.

Esposito asked Town Moderator, David Sturm, to update the Board on Town Meeting.

Sturm said that they held 3 elections during the pandemic and they were all run safely. He feels we can have our balloting day on March 9, 2021, and with the School Budget process we have to coordinate with Amherst. The Deliberative session will take place in person with social distancing and the SB2 balloting will take place on March 9th also. The question is Town Meeting and how to do it safely. The senate said Town Meeting can be postponed. HB1129 sets a process that is cumbersome, but allows us to have a virtual meeting. There would need to be 2 virtual meetings; 1) to set the rules and 2) with public comments considered by the Board. Then there is a requirement for drive by voting. Before the 1st session, the Selectmen send a letter to every voter telling what is going to happen. The 1st virtual meeting can be interactive or not. The Selectboard is the only ones who can amend. They then make the final warrant available to bring to voting. It would be exchanged for a ballot. The first thing is to vote on whether or not this way of voting is ok. It can be all for naught at that point. If it is not approved, we can still vote again in September. The drive by voting needs to be done in March. In person voting can happen, but he doesn't believe it is safe to all get together in the MPR. We can end up with 50-300 people. We could meet elsewhere, like the Amato Center or the Hampshire Hills Dome. We would have to provide transportation etc. If we wait till May or June, we can hold it outside with masks.

Esposito said he agreed with Sturm. He wants to hold the voting on March 9th, but wonders what happens to our budgeting process if we wait until May or June for the meeting. Also, we have dates on the calendar – do those dates stand?

Sturm said if we postpone, we should be able to move the dates also.

Berry said the Secretary of State gives us the deadlines for all the functions. 1) can we find out what the status of those dates are, and 2) currently we could postpone our meeting until May or June. The Senate has voted on this, but the House has not met yet.

Roberge said that she believes that she read that the dates are set depending on if we chose April, May, June or July. It is critical that we come to some kind of consensus.

Sturm said that balloting could easily be done in March, or we could move that also.

Berry asked about the due date for Town Report.

Esposito said that the Town Report is due 7 days before Town Meeting. He agreed to having the balloting in March but feels that Town Meeting should be moved to May as a lot of people will have their vaccine by then.

Sturm offered that the Town green is a natural amphitheater.

Berry said that he is not comfortable with May; could we do it in June.

Sturm said that the longer we wait, the better the factors will be.

Esposito said that the voting will be over with and all the work will be done.

Roberge feels that we won't see a drop in Covid till the end of May. If we set it in June, we will have given the government time to roll out the vaccine.

Esposito said that June would be fine.

Heather Kennedy reminded everyone that the end of April is school vacation. The people who travel will have to quarantine for two weeks after they return. Also, having Town Meeting the same week as Spring Gala would be too busy on the green.

Berry said that we would need a vote to set it on June 8th.

Bonnie Angulas asked if the new officers would be taking effect at the vote, or at Town Meeting.

Sturm told her they would take effect at the end of the vote.

Jay Wilson said that holding Town Meeting outside in May would be the responsible thing to do.

Ben Crosby mentioned that it might cause some scheduling problems with paving.

Esposito said that the paving we do would come out of the Block Grant money – not the budget.

Roberge said that we need to find out if the deadlines do move with the Town Meeting date, and asked if we go to a default budget if it can't be done when we schedule it.

Esposito asked Sturm to find out if it resets the due dates if we don't have it in March.

Sturm said that it is clear that once the election is held, the new people should be sworn in and begin their jobs. If we can't meet on the day we choose, there would be a "rain date". The ballot will be held March 9th with the School budget. Town budget will be held in May or June. We need to know what the last date for public hearing is going to be.

Berry asked if we will handle the public hearing for the budget virtually.

Sturm believes ZOOM is the only way to have it.

Esposito agreed.

Sturm said that notifying every voter would just be for a virtual Town Meeting.

Peter King said that the School is SB2; has to be a deliberative session and a regular session. We are having the deliberative session on February 3, 2021. We can do it in person in a socially distant manner. The school district is planning to video broadcast into each classroom. The people in the classrooms would be only registered voters. If you want to participate, you need to be in the building. You can watch from home on ZOOM but not participate.

Roberge asked if we set May as a date, what is the timeframe, in case things are not going well, to move it out again.

Esposito asked Sturm to use his best judgement on setting it in May or June.

7:45 PM Department Head Meeting. Esposito reminded everyone that their Town Report submission is due.

Bonnie Angulas; Library Director

- The NH State Library is collecting data re: library activities in Covid. We were considered non-essential.
- 4,104 digital materials were checked out. Digital materials were up because of Hoopla (up 80%).
- 102 Virtual library cards were issued.
- Recording the count of visits was not allowed unless you were fully open.
- Even though the library was closed for half the year, 13,665 materials were exchanged. Down only 20% from last year.
- \$11,000+/- in unexpended salary will be turned back to the Town.

7:50 Kevin Furlong; Police Chief

- There are currently 9 households quarantined with positive cases of Covid. Guidelines are working well with Department Heads.
- The Hazzard Mitigation Plan committee will meet on January 28, 2021. They have a total of 4 meetings scheduled.
- We have one officer in quarantine.
- Every member of the PD has had their 1st vaccine with the second scheduled for the 3rd week of January.
- Our operating guidelines are being updated.
- 2020 numbers are being compiled for Police Standards and Training.
- He is drafting a traffic control ordinance to present to the Board.
- We are very busy with several large-scale investigations.
- He met with the Budget Committee last week and feels it went well.

Esposito thanked him for his hard work and said that it is a pleasure having him as our Police Chief.

7:55 PM Heather Kennedy; Recreation Director

- Tree lighting went off very well. 8 nominated parties attended in person (in their cars). The 135 ornaments were distributed the next week. We promoted N2N pretty well. I had hoped to collect more cards, but will extend that as "Cards for Kindness". Hazel Milligan turns 100 this month. I was hoping to host ZOOM sessions for making cards. I want Joan and Laurie to help with the collection bin. People can also make cards for family and friends.
- The Crotched Mountain ski program had 18 children enroll.
- Exercise is still happening on Tuesday and Thursday mornings.
- Will host a ZOOM meeting to coordinate new events.

Esposito asked her about purchasing a new sound system and was told that it could be used for Town Meeting.

8:00 PM Ben Crosby; DPW Director

- Has one employee out under quarantine for the second time.
- Bob Sawyer has a follow up appointment on January 28th and should be back to work on February 3rd. The doctor told him he could come back on light duty – we don't have any light duty for him except if you want a 3rd person at the transfer station.

Roberge said; only if it would help him return to work faster – otherwise I don't see any benefit.

Crosby said that it would not benefit his regular job.

Esposito agreed and added he could do it if someone is sick at the transfer station.

- Waiting for another quote on a generator.
- Trying to see what other Towns are paying for contracting out their winter maintenance on sidewalks. It seems that \$8,000 - \$10,000 per season is what we should expect. If we want to purchase a used machine, it would cost \$55,000 whereas a new one would cost \$140,000 - \$150,000.

Roberge asked if we were talking about 1.5 miles of sidewalk. The Fire Department contracts with a man to snow blow. We really have an obligation to get it done.

Crosby said that the guy who has the snow blower that does the fire station would not be able to do the sidewalks as his snow blower is too big for the sidewalks. We could also rent a machine for \$8,000 per month. Once you snow blow the sidewalks, you then have to treat them.

Esposito said that the biggest concern is children walking in the streets.

- We have been short handed on the highway crew and at the transfer station.

Berry relayed that one of the transfer station attendants is having trouble with a resident who refuses to wear a mask. This person has been very difficult to deal with; the attendant says if something isn't done, he will quit.

Crosby is trying to see what legal action we could take. He may have to take out a personal restraining order.

Furlong feels that no judge will issue a restraining order for this.

Crosby said that he watched the video of the transaction and the man appeared very aggressive on the tape.

Roberge asked if there were signs at the transfer station saying that masks must be worn. She feels it is well within our prerogative to require masks. You are getting closer than 6' – especially outside the shed. Post it outside the transfer station as well.

Furlong said that people are required to wear masks in public places. The employee should not cause conflict – they should just let it go.

My recommendation is to call the NHMA to ask if we can get a letter of trespass.

Berry asked Brown to also put it on the website that masks are required at the transfer station, and print out the CDC guidelines that we can hand out if necessary.

8:30 PM Jay Wilson; Fire Chief

- Everything is in working order.
- 70% of the membership is signed up for the vaccine.

Roberge asked if they would also cover the families of the members and was told: no, just the member.

8:30 PM End of the Department Head Meeting

Esposito asked Brown to put the revised Telecommuting Policy into the Employee Handbook at the end.

Esposito brought up minimum building permit fees and driveway permits.

Roberge suggested leaving septic and setting driveway permit fees at \$25.00.

Berry wants to make all minimum permits and driveway permits \$50.00.

Esposito agreed with making them all \$50.00

Roberge feels that having a fee for driveway permits makes it part of the process.

Crosby said that we don't have to change the permit form.

Esposito asked what date would we start the new fees.

Roberge said February 1st, 2021.

Board agreed.

Berry asked Brown to post it on the Building Inspector's webpage.

Roberge said it should be on the front page of the website and on the DPW page.

Howard Brown asked if the Board was voting to change this tonight.

Berry motioned, seconded by Esposito to change the minimum building permits to \$50.00 and to add a driveway permit fee of \$50.00 effective February 1, 2021. Berry; yes, Esposito; yes, Roberge abstained.

Esposito brought up the renewal of the Comcast agreement.

Roberge asked if she could see any changes to it highlighted so she could compare.

Brown will look it over.

Berry said that he doesn't know anyone who likes Comcast, and this is a 10-year agreement. He asked how much we get in franchise fees from them and was told \$25,000 - \$35,000 annually.

Esposito let the Board know that our portion of the Room and Meals tax will be considerably less this year due to Covid.

Esposito said that Wilton wants to get together with Milford again.

Wilson said that Milford has a bunch of contingencies in there. The best thing to do is to wait and see what happens with Milford's Town Meeting. You don't want to be first out the door. Our microwave system sits on their antenna. I don't want to end up with a lease on our own equipment.

Wilson said that he wants to ask the Selectmen to put in a warrant article for \$25,000 for emergency radio equipment. We may also be able to get a homeland security grant if we have matching funds.

Roberge said that she would like to make sure it could be spent in an emergency to keep radio service.

Wilson said that the biggest cost will be to replace the radios themselves. The article should be non-lapsing and in the control of the Selectmen – we don't want to have to wait for Town Meeting to expend it.

Roberge asked Wilson to spend time with Chief Furlong on this. We have looked at going to other communication centers. I want to make sure we are ready and funded to move forward.

Wilson agreed and said that even if MACC stays, we need to be ready.

Esposito asked if the police radios were up-to-date.

Wilson explained that all the radios have a 10-year shelf life. After 10 years, they are not supported any more.

8:50 PM Esposito asked about Roberge's conversation with Matt at DEW.

Roberge said that she asked what phasing would look like. We need more community input, but how many phases could we do? Matt said 2 phases with phase 3 being siding and painting last. Phase 1) 1st floor renovations with ramp etc. You may need to displace the people in the offices more than once. The exterior ramp with structural improvements would take 4 months and cost \$1.1 million plus insurance, trailer and other soft costs. Phase 2) 2nd floor renovations and elevator will take 3 months and cost \$900,000+ owner soft costs. This brings the cost well over \$2 million. Doing it in one phase will take 5 months and cost \$1.79 million plus soft costs.

Esposito said \$1.8 million over 20 years will cost \$.49/\$1000 of assessed value the first year and will go down every year after that.

Berry said that an alternative would be to ask the Town to spend money on a design and planning. Doing it all at once will always cost less. We need more buy-in from the Town.

Roberge asked Brown to get the schedule for the fire station.

Board reviewed minutes of 1/4/21. Roberge motioned, seconded by Berry to accept the minutes of January 4, 2021 as amended.

Roberge; yes, Berry; yes, Esposito; yes.

Roberge referenced an email sent to the office by a citizen concerned about people trespassing on the Beaver Brook Museum property. She asked Brown to send a letter to the owners advising them of the trespass.

9:15 PM As there was no further business before the Board, Berry motioned seconded by Roberge to adjourn. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Laurie Brown