

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes February 8, 2021

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

Esposito led the meeting in a moment of silence.

Esposito asked Berry to lead the conversation with Lou Springer, Cemetery Trustee.

Berry stated that there was a debate over how far into the cemetery the proposed road goes. It looks like it goes right up to the delineation of the cemetery property. How will you get the trees off the lot when you log it? How soon will the trustees be getting the plan together and, what is your timing for the road into the cemetery?

Springer said that the landing for the logging will be adjacent to Weston Hill Road; we will have to clear the access. We will not be using the back access; it goes over a shared driveway. We will be logging it this year following "Best Practices". We anticipate needing to use the new cemetery in 10 years, but cannot wait that long to develop the lot; maybe 6 years. I am in favor of getting that road done in conjunction with the library soon.

Roberge said that the Library Trustees are having their informal meeting with the Planning Board tomorrow night and asked if the Cemetery Trustees and the Conservation Commission were invited.

Esposito said that the road right now is only planned to the boundary of the cemetery lot.

Bonnie Angulas asked if Springer was planning a paved road or gravel.

Springer said gravel, mostly.

7:10 PM Department Head Meeting

DPW Director, Ben Crosby

- No bad incidents or breakdowns during this last storm
- Bob Sawyer is back full-time
- In a busy trend with anticipated storms tomorrow, Friday and Sunday
- Weather service is in the budget for \$1,295 – gave Brown the contract to be signed. I have found that it is very useful to use as a guide.
- Trying to get options for clearing the sidewalks. Brookline pays \$250/hour. We could purchase a used machine and do our own and take the first payment out of block grant money.
- Bobbi Billow has asked if the Girl Scouts could sell cookies at the transfer station on Saturday.

Esposito has no problem with that.

Roberge said that it is probably the only way they can sell, but that she is not as comfortable with it as she would like to be.

Billow said that there will be a table with a plexiglass barrier, only 3 girls and 2 leaders allowed at one time, and they will be masked.

Berry is ok with it.

Roberge asked to hear from our Emergency Management Director.

Furlong said that he doesn't see a problem if everyone is masked.

Police Chief, Kevin Furlong

- Currently 3 homes in quarantine; 5 active cases bringing our total to 85. NH spiked after Halloween and the holidays. The decrease started 1/11/21.
- Had our 2nd meeting of the Hazzard Mitigation Plan committee last week.
- Every officer will have received their 2nd vaccine; as of tomorrow, it will be 14 days since the 2nd shot and there will be no need to quarantine for any reason.
- Our compliance reports have been submitted and accepted by Police Standards and Training
- I have just submitted our Exculpatory Evidence List (Laurie List) and Mont Vernon has no officers on that list.
- Sunday's storm had 6 accidents that we responded to
- I am finalizing an ordinance re: traffic control around Town. The draft has been sent to the FD and DPW and will be submitted to the Selectmen for review after getting any revisions by those departments.
- Last year we added a 4th full-time officer which extended our service coverage. At 1:00 AM we were called to a domestic situation with reported shots fired. WE made an arrest and no one was injured. This shows that the extra coverage is paying off.

Library Director, Bonnie Angulas

- February is “Love your Library” month.
- Tomorrow our MVVS Principal will be interviewed for “Tiny Town Library” podcast.
- Also tomorrow is our adult craft night; a dozen people signed up to make edible birdhouses. This coincides with the Great Backyard Bird Count which runs from the 12th to the 15th.
- The Friends of the Library will continue with that theme and sponsor a NH Audubon program that is titled “Back Yard Bird Habitats” on February 17 at 6:30 PM on ZOOM.
- Author, Martin Gitlin, will ZOOM in from Ohio to discuss his book “The Ultimate Red Sox Time Machine”.
- JoAnn attended the virtual NH Children’s Librarian Conference. We are looking to collaborate with the Conservation Commission again this year. We would like to use the Pond and maybe Lamson Farm for hikes. The theme for the Summer Reading Program will be “Tails and Tales”. Also reaching out to NH Fish and Game and Peabody Mills to see if they have any offerings for kids.
- We are trying to get people involved and connected. We are looking at the mental health of children and are planning things to promote connection and social interaction.
- Cupcake wars is planned for Friday.
- All of the events are listed on Facebook.

Recreation Director, Heather Kennedy

- Mont Vernon Crotched Mountain Ski program ended Friday. I will be sending out a survey to those who participated to see how happy they are with the program.
- The ZOOM kickoff of Cards for Kindness will be Thursday, and it will be open all of next week. There will be a collection box outside Town Hall.
- Holiday lights are still on – how long do we want to keep them up?

Berry said that the lights should come down.

- Morning exercise continues.
- Shelley Brooks reached out and asked for funding to print a pamphlet regarding hiking for kids and to have badges they can earn.
- March 2nd via ZOOM will be the planning meeting for this year’s events. We need creative ideas in case we are not allowed to gather.
- The egg hunt would be scheduled for April 3rd; do you think we can do it in person at that time? Probably won’t schedule anything in the MPR, but just the hunt. We need to know soon as it takes quite a while to stuff thousands of eggs.

Furlong stated that we need to see what happens to the Covid numbers after Superbowl. He is willing to come back in 2 weeks to discuss this.

Town Clerk, Belinda Yeaton

- The \$5000 grant can be used until June 30th. I can use it to pay for the ballots.
- Can we get a bulletin board for the McCollom building? People are sticking tacks in the new siding.

Furlong said that there is one downstairs; he will bring it up tomorrow.

Yeaton said that she will bring it home and her husband will refinish it.

- Our fire extinguisher needs recharging.

Crosby told her to bring it to the transfer station and buy a new one.

- Has the two hand sanitizing stations for the Town Hall and the Library.

Brown said that she would take the one for the Town Hall now.

7:45 PM End of Department Head meeting.

Board reviewed the minutes of January 25, 2021. Roberge motioned, seconded by Berry to accept as published. Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes.

Board reviewed the minutes of February 1, 2021. Berry motioned, seconded by Roberge to accept as amended. Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes

Board reviewed the 6:00 PM non-public minutes of February 1, 2021. Roberge motioned, seconded by Berry to accept as published. Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes. Berry motioned, seconded by Roberge to seal the 6:00 PM non-public minutes of February 1, 2021. Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes.

Board reviewed the 6:30 PM non-public minutes of February 1, 2021. Berry motioned, seconded by Roberge to table the 6:30 PM non-public minutes of February 1, 2021 until the next meeting. Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes, Berry; yes.

Fire Chief, Jay Wilson (addendum to the Department Head Meeting)

Milford is going forward with their warrant article for a new communications center on March 9th. Mont Vernon and Wilton Boards of Selectmen should sit down and devise a course of action to move forward together.

Esposito feels that it would be a waste of time before we know what happens in Milford.

Wilson suggested putting a committee together to represent the interests of the Towns and to find the best course of action.

Roberge asked if looking with Wilton will limit us as to where we can go. Should we look alone; a Town may not be willing to take 2 or 3 Towns on.

Wilson thinks it is better to look together. Milford is saying it would cost \$1 million to upgrade the center so that we can join them as customers.

Roberge said that we have all stated that we would probably not be looking to become a customer of Milford.'

Wilson agreed, but the committee should tell us that. We have tools to bring with us to another dispatch center; we need to plan.

Esposito said that he agreed with Roberge, but says he has little expertise in this matter. He asked who Wilson would like to see on the committee.

Wilson said he would like someone other than the MACC reps to be on it. It is a very short conversation to get new people up to speed. New eyes on this would be good.

Esposito said that Amherst told us they would have to hire another dispatcher.

Roberge asked if Wilton's Fire Chief was bringing this back to their board too.

Wilson said that he hopes so.

Esposito said that the Board would look into it.

8:05 PM Esposito said that Brown is in contact with website and IT people.

Brown explained that she is in the process of gathering 3 bids for upgrading the website and 3 bids for IT services.

Brown also asked who will pay the charges for the Library Trustees to go before the Planning Board. Total fees to an independent applicant would be \$317 and include postage to notify abutters and the advertising cost.

Berry believes it should come out of the Planning Board budget line.

Library Trustee, Cindy Raspiller, said that we should discuss this after tomorrow night's informal meeting.

Roberge asked what the goal of going to the Planning Board is.

Roberge asked if we had gotten back to the person inquiring about 54 – 56 Weston Hill Road.

Brown said that she had gotten back to them.

Roberge asked if there was anything further with the property on Weston Hill that the Town would like to sell?

Brown explained again that she was waiting for the Tax Collector to search the archives for information.

Roberge asked Brown to find out how many Towns have had to do a re-assessment before the 5-year mark because their assessment had gone up or down by 15%, based on the email that Selectmen received. Is it a suggestion or a mandate?

Roberge said that Fieldstone has still not filed our application with the State. She will be getting in touch with them.

Esposito wanted to talk about the 3 large warrant articles facing the Town this year. 1) \$400K road to the library, 2) \$615K new fire truck, 3) \$1.7 million to renovate the Town Hall. He feels that we need to prioritize these projects – if we ask for all three, nothing will pass. We are getting criticized for our website. We are running on a shoestring budget. The website isn't the best, but it works.

Berry thinks they should put it all before the voters and let them decide. We haven't got any choice in the fire truck article; that is coming anyway. We will have a number for the Town Hall windows and the voters will prioritize them for us. There will be presentations at Town Meeting. We need all those things; let the voters decide what goes first. I want to ask the voters to fund a plan for the Town Hall. I will ask the Heritage Commission if they will help fund the windows.

Roberge said that her thinking is a little different. I am very clear about my priorities. Our Town Hall is in unsafe and almost deplorable condition. This is a need. We may need everything else but we have 4 years before we need the road. I would like the Fire Department to wait until the station is paid off to go forward with the truck. Because I am so frugal, a phasing process for the Town Hall concerns me. There would be so much more cost. A bond for \$1.7Million may not be feasible, but at 2.5% that is \$.47/\$1000 of assessed value the first year. That is something I think we can sell to the taxpayers. Reformulating a committee so we are ready next year with the full amount is the way to go.

Esposito said that it isn't going to all happen at once. The Town Hall is a priority, the Fire Truck is a priority and the library is a priority.

Berry said that \$400K for 10 years at 1.5% is \$.17/\$1000 the first year, or \$51 for a \$300K house. The 7th through the 10th year it would be \$.13/\$1000. I know phasing will cost more but we need to make progress as a Town. There is \$55,600 left in the Repair and Maint to Town Buildings; how much do we need to leave in this fund?

Esposito explained that this is a new fund, I wouldn't want to go much lower than \$35K - \$40K.

Berry said that the windows are \$80K. if we hold off till 2022, we may get some money from LCHIP if we have more money to put to it. LCHIP may fund repair to the framing of the downstairs of the Town Hall. There are some other, smaller grants that we could apply for.

Roberge I would say that \$25K should be left in that fund for emergencies.

Berry said that the library can get an extension from the DES, but the donation is going to expire in 4 years. We only got 70 votes to restore the Town Hall. I am trying to appease two factions this year. I don't think we can get a fire truck until the station is paid. I think we need to put out these three warrant articles: 1) the road, 2) the design of the Town Hall, and 3) the Town Hall windows.

Esposito feels that the money we put away into a capital reserve for a fire truck would make the annual payments for a new truck.

Berry said to ask the voters to decide.

Wilson stated that the fire truck warrant article is \$455K with \$155K coming from the capital reserve. He was upset that it seemed like Roberge was comparing the fire truck with the fire station. Wilson wondered why there can't be a warrant article for a capital reserve for the road; \$25K/year with ½ the block grant money earmarked for the library/cemetery road. The library has done a great job with their capital reserve and the fire department is doing a fairly good job of raising capital reserve funds.

Berry said that Wilson's schedule wouldn't have enough money in time for the road project. I get Esposito's point of the capital reserve money being enough to pay for the truck. I still say to put it all out there and let the voters decide.

Esposito stated again that he is not against any of these things.

Eileen Naber asked what the cost of the fire truck is.

Wilson said that the actual cost is \$625K, but the cost of the truck will be reduced by the capital reserve.

Roberge said that she compared the fire station with the fire truck only on a tax impact basis.

Wilson restated that a capital reserve plus some block grant money would require them to ask for less for the road.

Roberge asked Brown to find out if the Block Grant money can be used to build a road to the library and cemetery.

Angulas feels that we can't push off the funding for the road – it will pile up on the taxpayers. Also, if you keep pushing the Town Hall forward with no changes and it won't go through.

Roberge feels that she likes capital reserves so that it flat lines the tax rate. She knows that they don't make any money. We have a difference of opinion. I like the idea of putting \$100K into a capital reserve for the road.

Esposito reminded everyone that the block grant may be significantly less this year.

Brown asked the Board if they thought it was appropriate to send out the \$17,000 check payable to the Town of Amherst for ambulance service without an invoice.

Board agreed to send check anyway since we know we use the service. Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes.

Brown asked about the weather forecasting service Crosby had brought up as in his budget.

Roberge said that she would like him to justify it from a cost standpoint.

Esposito said that he is not for it.

Berry asked about the free trial, and if we were still under that. We approved the budget and so did the budget committee.

Esposito said that we will discuss it at the next meeting, along with the sidewalk clearing.

9:20 PM As there was no further business before the Board, Berry motioned seconded by Roberge to adjourn. Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Brown