

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes October 28, 2019

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 the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board reviewed the minutes of 10/21/19. Berry motioned, seconded by Roberge to accept the minutes of October 21, 2019 as amended. All in favor.

Board reviewed and signed checks and manifest.

Esposito apprised the Board that the Assessing Company is running behind on their contract obligations. The final assessments were due to the Board on October 18. We won't have them until November 18th. This is putting a strain on the Tax Collecting. Board should have preliminary numbers by November 6th. Letters will go out to property owners with the new assessment items and directions to follow if you have questions or concerns. Any changes will be made before November 18th. Final numbers will get to the Board on November 18th with time to do the MS-1 and set the tax rate by November 20th. Tax bills will be printed on the 20th, stuffed and mailed on or before November 23 with a due date of December 23rd. With the revaluation going on this year and some staffing problems at the assessing company, this is the best we can do.

Roberge mentioned that it should say in their letter to the property owners that the assessing company missed their deadline and that is why everything is so late.

Esposito stated that this scenario is really unacceptable and will no be tolerated next year.

7:10 PM DPW Director, Ben Crosby came before the Board to clarify some of his budget numbers.

#431460 Signs; there are quite a few signs that need replacing due to age and theft, can we increase the budget line? Board kept it at \$1500.

#431463 Radio; prices have gone up, do you think we need more in Radio? Board kept it at \$1500

#431462 Tools & Equipment; need to add \$1400 for the sweeper. Board increased the line to \$9500.

#431490 Telephone & Pagers; pagers are no longer the best way to get ahold of the guys. Crosby suggested getting two cell phones so that the department would not have to use their personal phones. One that Crosby would carry and one that the "On Call" person would take home with them. Board agreed and increased the line to \$4100.

Board had an in-depth discussion regarding the application of Calcium Chloride on the dirt roads. Several scenarios were discussed involving purchasing equipment, but the Board elected to have the company do the application at first to see if we even like it. Crosby explained that it controls dust and the roads should hold together longer after an application. Brown will create a new line item for Calcium Chloride \$9500.

#431255 Culverts; Salisbury Road alone would be \$6800 – should we add any money? Board decides to leave it at \$6000 and use the Block Grant money to pay for the culverts on Salisbury Road.

7: 40 PM Police Chief Kevin Furlong came before the Board to discuss his proposed budget. He said that he and his officers have been budgeted the 2% raise suggested by the Board. He has included \$29,000 for a new full- time officer beginning July 1, 2020. We haven't added an officer since 2004, and overall calls for service are up 99% since 2004.

Roberge stated that the current staff has been handling the increase in volume so far.

Furlong said that what is suffering is the proactive services and administration.

Roberge asked if we would then have 24 hour coverage.

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Furlong said no – that it would extend coverage, but not to 24 hours. So far this year there have been 38 calls after hours. The State Police responded to 17 of them with an average response time of 48 minutes. We need to start covering ourselves. National studies show a need for 2.6 Full-Time officers per 1,000 in population. Those are the Federal guidelines. We now have over 2500 people in Town, and we are the first Town after the Mass border without Full-Time coverage.

Berry asked if the new officer is budgeted for \$29,000, why is the line up \$32,000 and was told it was the 2%.

Esposito said that a new full-time officer will cost us \$100,000 next year.

Furlong went on to say that the other big items is the increase in special duty to allow for Eversource being in Town until at least March 2020 and the new cruiser.

Esposito asked if he was asking for a new cruiser.

Furlong said that the vehicles are running well right now, but it is time for the 6 year turn in if you want to stick to the established schedule. You never know what will happen with the fleet getting older.

Esposito asked if we would be cutting off our nose to spite our face.

Furlong explained that the new cruiser would be a Ford Explorer, not a sedan – they are not making the Interceptor any longer.

Esposito asked if that is why the upfitting is budgeted at \$20,000?

Furlong said yes; nothing will transfer over from the old cruiser and the radio and repeater needs replacing – it is 17 years old. We may want to use the returned surplus from MACC to purchase these as they are communication related.

Roberge asked if the long-term plan is to go all Explorers?

Furlong said that he could go with a Dodge Charger but it is really not big enough.

Roberge said that she thought that last year when he proposed a 4th officer it was to bring us to 24 hr. coverage.

Eposito asked if the officer he was thinking of gone to the full-time academy already and was told yes.

Roberge asked about the budget for the Secretary being so much more than the actuals for the past couple years.

Furlong said that each of the past couple of years the administrator has had some kind of health issue and did not work her full budgeted time. Next year we hope that isn't the case.

Furlong did specify that if it comes down to a new officer or a new cruiser, the new officer takes precedence. He asked that if the Board does not support it, they should please ask him. He asked how the Board feels about it.

Eposito said he had mixed feelings, that we are a small town and it is just a question of economics.

Berry said that his workload may be increasing, but the tax base is not increasing at the same rate – you have to be patient.

Roberge asked if any of the full-time officers take advantage of the special duty and was told yes.

Eposito asked how far up Rte 13 Eversource was bringing the 3-phase electricity and was told up to Old Amherst Rd.

Furlong then presented his proposed Warrant Article for two portable radar speed signs. You install 5" posts wherever you will want the signs and you move them as you wish. The best thing about these signs is that there is an application that provides you a traffic study; you could put it on Dutton Circle for example and it will chart the target times for us to provide a presence. They are having a special: two signs for \$5499.

Berry asked how they are powered and was told that there are 4 batteries; two running and 2 charging, or you can add solar panels.

Eposito said that we can have a discussion as a Board as to whether it should be a line item or a warrant article.

Berry asked if it gave adequate information to call it a traffic study.

Furlong said that the information provided would be a big part of a traffic study.

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8:15 PM Town Clerk, Belinda Yeaton came before the Board to discuss her proposed 2020 budget.

Eposito said that the first thing that hit us is the 5.7% raise, along with the increase in pay for the Supervisors of the Checklist.

Yeaton said that she only budgeted for a 2% raise. It turned out she was using the wrong number for this year's pay to base the 2% on.

She wants to increase the Supervisors of the Checklist from \$7.25/hr. to \$9.00/hr.

Yeaton said that included with the Deputy's 2% raise is an extra 14 hours to cover for the Town Clerk in the event of sick or vacation and an extra 60 hours for training in the event of having to train a new Deputy.

Roberge wants the training line to be separate and Brown will add the line and separate it out. She also wanted to know how Yeaton was going to make up for going over on this year's Deputy line. She explained how tight the budget is this year with the PD's Special Duty line going over because of the Eversource project in Town.

Yeaton explained that she would not be using money on the computer line or the rest of the convention line, and that her bottom line will be just under budget.

8:35 PM Board reviewed a survey that came in from CTA (the company that Milford has hired to study communications). It was decided that the Department Heads involved would be better suited to complete the information than the Selectboard.

8:40 PM Board reviewed the Library's proposed 2020 budget. Included in the \$22,000 increase is a \$21,000 increase in salaries. Brown explained that the Library Director asked the Trustees to perform a Wage and Benefit Survey and have demonstrated that some personnel are underpaid. This increase will add hours to the Director (bringing her to 30 hours/week) and Children's Director along with the increase in pay.

Roberge asked for a breakdown showing who is scheduled to work when, and the hourly wages for each person.

She said that the Town set a precedent last year, and if we allow an increase to 30 hours, the position would have to be offered benefits.

Eposito remarked that that is the price of doing business.

Roberge feels that Mont Vernon should have a Town Manager or Town Administrator.

Berry feels we need another Police Officer before we need a Town Manager, and feels that the Selectmen do a really good job of managing the Town.

Eposito said that very few towns operate like we do here; we have great relationships with our Department Heads.

Board asked Brown to find out if the Landscaping line in the Cemetery budget comes from taxpayer's money or is paid for with Cy Pres money.

Eposito relayed that he spoke with Jay Wilson of the Conservation Commission, and the light will indeed be done this year at Carleton Pond.

The Public Hearings for spending the money the State of NH sent us (\$17,000+) on the engineering for a culvert replacement on Brook Road and the rest on reconstructing Salisbury Road, and for Eversource needing to remove one tree from the corner of Rangeway and

Purgatory Roads will be held November 25th at 7:15.

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Esposito brought forth a complaint against the Building Inspector alleging that applications are not being responded to in a timely fashion.

Roberge, read into the minutes a written response from the Building Inspector's office. See attached.

Esposito asked Roberge several times who signs the building permits.

Roberge responded each time saying that Steve's name is on every permit and Steve stands by every permit with his name on it.

Esposito said that he spoke with Town Counsel about this and he said that only the Building Inspector himself can sign a building permit.

9:00 PM As there was no further business before the Board, Roberge motioned, seconded by Berry to adjourn.

All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Laurie Brown

As Selectmen, if response below, is not sufficient and would like to meet with the inspector please ask to come in for a meeting. But below would be the response from the office.

Thank you for forwarding.

The Building Inspectors office as staffed believes turning around a response for inspection or permitting within 48 hours is the best it can facilitate with the amount of calls/permits at this time. Nor do we believe other towns of this size facilitate it any more timely. (Or even larger town with more staffing)

All phone calls are logged as coming in, with date and time received.

Our website states (and has for quite some time) permits could take up to 7-10 days, but the office tries to facilitate as soon as possible. Any inconvenience to a contractor, we apologize for, but with Mont Vernon being the size it is and the amount of inspections and permits that are on going at this time, the office is doing the best they can to facilitate all and with utmost importance on good communication. The office did not feel that after a response to Mr. Lehotenan's office staff on Tuesday morning, that a return phone call to him was warranted as well. The building inspectors office thankfully received input from Joan on Friday at 11:42 that the permits were dropped off. Having them permitted and stamped for pick-up within 3-5 working days is certainly well within reasonable response, we believe. Any questions or anything else, please let us know.

Thanks

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