

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes November 4, 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.

Lou Springer came before the Board to discuss the Cemetery budget.

Roberge asked him why the equipment line was up.

Springer explained that Mike Riccitelli, who has been digging the graves for years, has retired. He always had his own equipment and we may need to purchase some of those tools for ourselves.

Esposito asked if the Landscaping line was paid for with Cy Pres money and was told yes.

Berry asked if the Cemetery Trustees had come to a meeting of the minds with the Library Trustees regarding the \$14,000 in site work charges, and was told that they did.

Berry asked what next years' landscaping project is.

Springer replied that of that money is for gravel and excavating, and some tree work; dead branches.

Board reviewed and signed checks – manifest was not ready for signature.

Board reviewed minutes of 10/28/19.

Berry motioned, seconded by Roberge to accept the minutes as amended. All in favor.

Jess Pomeroy, Chair of the Garden and Beautification Committee, came before the Board to discuss the budget.

Esposito asked Pomeroy about the \$170 earmarked for the (3) Fire Station planters.

Pomeroy explained that the planters are there to prevent cars from driving through the Fire Station parking lot into the Town Hall parking lot. They need to look substantial. \$170 is what Penny Dixon spent out of her own pocket this year.

Roberge asked her if we could meet in the middle somewhere; \$1000 is a big increase in one year.

Pomeroy explained that it would cover what everyone spent out of their own pockets (\$500).

Berry agreed with Roberge that it is a huge increase all at once, and as Selectmen we are inclined to go half way.

Esposito said that he liked how everything looked this year and has no problem with the budget as is. She was asked about the Post Office as it is not a Town Building.

Pomeroy said that she was told that it was part of her responsibility and that the committee put in the garden on the side of the PO, and at the sign.

Pomeroy said that she could take the PO out of the plans.

Board settled on \$1250 for the Garden and Beautification Committee budget for 2020.

7:30 PM Library Trustees Cindy Raspiller, Jane King and Jill Weber came before the Board to present their wage and benefit study.

Raspiller says that they have never done such a study before and found out that the Daland Library is way behind in both hours and wages and benefits. She compared our stats to those of 18 surrounding towns, and wants the Board to consider the best interest of the Town and the longevity of the employees.

Roberge feel that neighboring libraries are not comparing apples to apples. You need to compare us to similar sized towns.

Weber says that we compare favorably in services to libraries much larger and with way more money.

Raspiller said that she looked at ranges for hours and wages and are not asking to be at the top of the range. We have pretty stellar employees that have been putting up with a 3% raise for years; we need to pay these employees for more of the hours they are already working and at an updated rate. This is something that the Town can do to keep these employees.

Berry remarked that these other towns do not pay 100% of the health insurance. That would put great pressure on the municipal budget.

Raspiller said the Trustees are not asking for that.

Berry said that they could offer the position with no health insurance, but that is just not good business.

Raspiller said they just hold their breath when they see an ad for another town offering way more hours and way more money. She remarked that she is embarrassed that she has been a Trustee for so long and not addressed this until now.

Roberge said that when she looks at the % increase proposed, she remembers last year when the Police Chief came in with a similar proposal and we tried to meet him half way. We may not get all the way this year. Had you come in and said that you wanted to phase this in over 3 years, it would be better for me. I can't get onboard based on the jump in both pay and hours.

Raspiller said that what she would like the Board to recognize is that this is her failure for not being on top of this sooner. It doesn't seem fair to have employees work so much more that they are getting paid for.

Esposito asked if they had a log of how much time is put in vs. what they get paid for.

Berry said that we all acknowledge that they should get paid for all the hours they work. We want to reward our good employees, but we don't have enough money to cover that and the wage increases.

Raspiller is confident she got great data from the State for a good comparison, however acknowledges that she does not have a handle on how they fit into the structure of the Town. She is asking that the Board really look at the caliber of the employees and the work that they are doing. She is afraid that if they brought in a plan to phase in the increases, it may not get funded in a succeeding year.

Roberge asked for a chart as to when they are scheduled to work and when they are actually working.

Berry stated that we don't want people working for free.

Esposito said that he knows that the summer programs take a lot of time and we are very fortunate in this Town to have almost zero turnover. Everyone likes to be here.

Raspiller said that some of the extra time allows them to go after grants to help support programming.

8:00 PM Patriotic Committee. Zoe Fimbel and Jay Wilson spoke to that budget. There is a large amount (\$4,000) in the Veterans Day/Monument line for the hedgerow, although they have applied to the Trustees of Trust Funds for that money, they have not heard back yet. If they get the money from the Trustees, they will reduce that line item by the \$4,000. There is also money in the Town Wide line to replace most of the telephone pole flags, and some of the poles have snapped also.

8:05 PM Fire Department. Chief Wilson and Ward Randy Wilson were in attendance to speak to the FD budget. Wilson pointed out that the overall budget is up \$115 from last year.

Roberge asked why the Forestry line is down, and was told that there was a grant included in that number last year. This year they are only buying 2 canvas backpacks.

Wilson also told the Board that they may hire a company to write a grant for the SCBA Air packs that will cost \$110,000 to \$130,000. This will not be until 2021 or 2022.

Esposito asked if we were going to need matching funds for that grant and was told yes. He then asked about turnout coats and was told that they don't buy them until a new firefighter has been active for one year.

Berry asked if the \$12,000 in this year's Repairs and Maintenance budget line for the fire station will be spent.

Wilson said yes, they are doing some maintenance to the outside of the station as we speak, the sprinkler pump test was just completed and the LED lights will be done this year.

Berry asked why they need another \$12,000 next year and was told that the inside of the station will be painted.

Wilson let the Board know that the Department will be submitting two warrant articles for this coming Town Meeting: 1) \$75,000 Addition to the Fire Truck Capital Reserve, and 2) Approx. \$630,000 for a new fire truck. If #2 passes, #1 will be withdrawn.

Berry asked if it is the same truck that they wanted last year and was told yes.

Esposito asked when they would get the truck if the warrant article is approved and was told 9 – 12 months. He then reminded Wilson that the overall budget is very tight this year.

8:15 PM Esposito relayed that the DPW ran into ledge while digging for the culvert at Carleton Pond. The Conservation Commission will have to come up with a different plan.

Wilson stated that the easiest way around the problem is to extend the overflow pipe from the swamp down toward the road across the driveway into the pipe. He said he would consult with DPW tomorrow.

Esposito asked if the pond really needs an aerator.

Wilson said yes; there needs to be a way to break up the layer of water that is deoxygenated.

Esposito asked if Eversource is ready to do the work there.

Wilson said he hoped it would be done within the next week and a half.

Berry asked how tall the pole is and was told 16 or 20 feet, right next to the picnic table. He then wanted to know if we will have to plug it into a timer on the pole and was told yes.

8:30 PM Esposito asked for a report from the Building Renovation Committee.

Roberge said that they had narrowed the field down to 2 firms. We have asked for a design build budget due to us by the 15th of November; we will meet with both firms on the 19th and have a recommendation at that time.

They are both well versed in Warrant articles and will have an "Up To" number for us.

Esposito feels that this building really needs to be fixed; we are not far from a big problem here.

Roberge said that we need a really good number from them with as much backup as possible.

Berry remarked that it is good that we have two companies to choose from that have both done this kind of work before.

Esposito asked if either needed any money up front and was told no.

8:45 PM Berry gave the Board an update on the MACC Budget meeting. The overall budget is up 3.48% to \$84,319. Included is a 3% COLA increase and a new line item called Longevity Pay, which is a bonus for how many years the employees have been with MACC. They will spend \$7250 to have an audit done by Plodzik & Sanderson to see exactly how much surplus they have to distribute back to the member towns. Because Milford has not been willing to fund any infrastructure, they have maintained a \$50,000 Emergency Repair line. They are decreasing it to \$40,000 this year.

9:00 PM Brown let the Board know that the Tax Collector, Sue Leger has found a candidate for the Deputy Tax Collector position; Megan Brown.

Berry motioned, seconded by Roberge to appoint Megan Brown as the Deputy Tax Collector for Mont Vernon. All in favor.

Esposito brought to the attention of the other Board members that the Town does, in fact, own a piece of property on Weston Hill Road that it took by tax deed some 25 years ago. He would like to discuss selling this piece, as it is a buildable lot of record. He would also like to discuss earmarking the proceeds to something special instead of letting it go into the general fund. A warrant article would be needed to do that.

Board reviewed a quote for some needed electrical work at the Transfer Station in the amount of \$1770.

Roberge asked if we could get this done this year, in this year's budget. Board agreed to do it this year.

Roberge asked if there had been any progress on Payne's property and the Board members were not sure.

9:10 PM As there was no further business before the Board, Roberge motioned, seconded by Berry to adjourn.
All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Laurie Brown