

## Selectmen's Meeting Minutes December 28, 2020

**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, wished everyone a Happy New Year and hoped for a better 2021.

Esposito referenced an email from Town Moderator, David Sturm regarding the need to have a meeting in order to plan for March's Town Meeting. It is scheduled for March 9, 2021 and Esposito does not want to postpone it. We will meet with David after the 1<sup>st</sup> of the year. The Town Clerk said that she has money leftover from her CARES grant that she thought expires December 31, 2020.

Berry asked Brown if the Town Clerk had gotten back to us to say the money expires now or later and was told no. He asked Brown to follow up with the Town Clerk, charge off labor for 2 policemen at the two elections, and use the rest for Town Meeting.

Esposito said that if it expires, we will have to add money to the 2021 budget to cover Town Meeting.

Roberge asked Brown to get a spreadsheet from Belinda to show what should be charged to her CARES grant.

Brown wasn't sure that Yeaton has been keeping track of that as closely as you would want it.

Berry said to make sure the police salaries for the elections were charged to that. Then remembered that the police salaries were all charged to the GOFERR grant that the Selectmen got.

Brown said that the September election would have been on the GOFERR worksheet, but the November General Election would not have been, so we can use 12 hours of pay for the CARES grant.

Esposito said that last week's minutes say that Yeaton thought the money expires at year end.

Esposito said that the State has given some guidelines for how we may have to have Town Meeting.

Berry said that the warrant articles need to be voted on on the same day as the election. One option is to put the warrant articles on the ballot.

Roberge asked if the Board would be looking for input from the town's people, and said that it will be a lot of work to make sure it withstands legal scrutiny.

Esposito said that we can't do it in person.

Berry said that we want to make this decision; the Selectmen and the Moderator – we don't want to bring any more voices into this.,

Roberge said that she wasn't suggesting a committee; just public input.

Berry said that it would be almost impossible on ZOOM – how would you count votes?

Esposito said that we have received permission from the homeowner to take down the trees on Harwood road and asked if it was already scheduled.

Brown believes it is scheduled for this week.

Esposito asked if the other Board members had looked over the telecommunications policy.

Roberge asked if we are calling out when or why it can be implemented.

Esposito said it was just a policy since the virus started. If you have changes or additions get them to Brown or the Board.

Berry agreed.

Roberge said that the verbiage is fine. It needs to have guidance on why the policy could be implemented.

Berry agreed that it should have one or two sentences of why we have the policy and when it goes into effect. We should draft something up and present it to Brown next week.

Esposito said that Berry sent an email regarding Steve O'Keefe asking about the fund balance retention being at 19.44% when the State recommends 17%.

Berry said O'Keefe wants to know why. Berry said that he doesn't know if O'Keefe knows that we bought back \$.69 this year. We wanted to err on the side of caution. The amount retained last year was 18.74%, and we didn't have a complete audit this year, with COVID. No one has ever asked this question before.

Esposito said we didn't know the effect on the economy and if people will be able to pay their taxes.

Roberge said that the Board had a whole discussion on this. I thought that the numbers were a little too high. We were also worried how COVID would affect tax collecting. I understand that 19.44% is a little higher than the recommended. We will readjust this next year when all the realities of this pandemic are apparent.

Esposito said that he is comfortable with it.

Berry said that the figures were not audited.

Roberge asked Brown to bring in the last 3 years of what % we stayed at and how we got there.

Esposito said that the previous year we bought back almost \$2.00 on the tax rate. Next year we should be able to buy back another substantial amount.

Roberge said it should be in the minutes as to how we got there.

Esposito said that Roberge is absolutely right, but that we have never taken minutes at that meeting. We will start next year.

The buy back is a Selectmen's responsibility; we are in a pandemic year. Our conversation was to get the Town to be a little less conservative.

Esposito said that he stands by the decision. We didn't believe it was in the Town's best interest to cut it way down in a COVID year.

Berry added that the retention of funds could be affected by our December tax collections.

This is a Selectmen responsibility; it is a pandemic year and I did not believe we would receive the same % of taxes that we did in July.

Esposito said that we did what we did because we thought it pertinent in a pandemic year.

Roberge said that we could have gone down to 17% but were worried about the pandemic year. She asked Brown to find out what the DRA had said about taking the Town rate any lower with relation to the School rate.

Esposito said that he never remembers the numbers being so high. Not the ratio, but the actual retained amount. It put a doubt in our minds that the numbers may not be accurate. We went from a total Town value of \$257 million to over \$300 million. That is a lot of money.

Esposito said that the Board has to have a non-public session regarding the office salaries and positions.

Roberge said after the 1<sup>st</sup> of the year.

Board agreed on Wednesday, January 6<sup>th</sup> at 7:00.

Board reviewed the minutes of the non-public meeting on 12/10/20 at 1:45. Berry motioned, seconded by Esposito to accept the non-public minutes of December 10, 2020 at 1:45 as written. Berry; yes, Esposito; yes, Roberge abstained.

Board reviewed the minutes of the non-public meeting on 12/10/20 at 7:00 PM. Berry motioned, seconded by Esposito to accept the non-public minutes of December 10, 2020 at 7:00 PM as written. Berry; yes, Esposito; yes, Roberge abstained.

Board reviewed the minutes of 12/21/20. Berry motioned, seconded by Roberge to accept the minutes of December 21, 2020 as amended. Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes.

Esposito asked Brown if she had heard anything about the Library RFP.

Brown said not yet.

Berry said that they probably won't have the numbers in time for this year's warrant.

Esposito said that the letters went out to CNP and Doug LePage last week.

Brown let the Board know that Don Senecal knew what the certified letter was about and did not pick it up. Gary LaPlante's letter did not come back in the mail, but he did not make contact with us.

Roberge said that the Board is just looking for some kind of feedback that they are moving forward.

Berry said that we need to figure out what to do with Senecal and LaPlante.

Roberge asked if we were going to wait until after the 1<sup>st</sup> of the year.

Roberge asked if Brown could check with New Boston and Peterborough as to who they use as Town Counsel, and ask Peter Moustakis if he is interested or not.

Esposito said that he thinks we should try Chris at Drescher and Dokmo.

Roberge said that, because he represents Milford and MACC, it may be a conflict of interest, also, I don't want to be 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> in line for service.

Berry said he agrees that we should not go with the same attorney as Milford. We need an opinion of where to go next with Senecal and LaPlante.

Esposito asked where we are with Dennis Dwire.

Brown said that the Fire Chief said that the apartment over the garage is vacant and that there are no safety violations in the main house.

Roberge said that Dwire has been instructed to make sure there are working CO Detectors and Smoke Detectors in the home. All the non-compliant gas piping has been removed and a permit to have Irving install all new piping is on the Building Inspector's desk. The eviction was taken care of.

Roberge wants to put on the agenda for next week to discuss the Selectmen's warrant articles. With the Fire Department going forward with their new truck, we are not being forward thinking on repairs to the Town Hall.

The Town Hall became one of the Seven to Save, and I would like to see a web-based storage system.

Berry said that the Board should have a discussion next Monday over what should be done with this building.

Esposito agreed.

Roberge asked Brown to get the amount of money we have in warrant articles for R & M of Town Buildings. The working conditions in the Town Hall are unacceptable.

We need to borrow \$1.9 million and get our plans together. You need money to get grants. We have to discuss many options.

Roberge recognizes that the Fire Department will keep coming in until they get their new truck. We need to do something in the Town Hall; from heating, ventilating, plumbing and electrical aspects, it all needs work.

Berry feels that if we get the outside done, we will never be able to do the inside. We can have a good discussion about this; the siding should be on the back burner.

Roberge said that DEW said that his numbers would still be good this year.

**8:35 PM** As there was no further business before the Board, Berry motioned seconded by Roberge to adjourn. All in favor.

11/10/21, 5:01 PM

Mont Vernon, New Hampshire - Official Town Website - Selectmen's Minutes 12/28/20

Respectfully submitted,  
Laurie Brown