

## **MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 3, 2022 SELECT BOARD SPECIAL MEETING AND PUBLIC HEARING ON THE TOWN WARRANT**

Meeting held in the Hutton Room at the Stratham Municipal Center

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Board Members Chair Mike Houghton, Vice Chair Joe Lovejoy and Allison Knab.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Town Administrator David Moore, Finance Administrator Christiane McAllister

At 7:00 pm Mr. Houghton opened the regular meeting. He then recognized Mr. Moore who gave a broad overview of the evening's meeting. State law requires we have a public hearing to review all moneyed items to be on the Warrant. Historically, Stratham reviews all the items on the Warrant which will be posted no later than February 21<sup>st</sup>.

Mr. Moore noted the deadline for Citizen's Petitions was February 1, 2022. No petitions that met the legislative criteria were received. The town election will be on Tuesday, March 8<sup>th</sup>. At that time, the public will elect officers and review zoning articles prepared by the Planning Board. Saturday, March 12<sup>th</sup> will be the business session to vote on the remaining articles on the warrant – 12 to 17.

Mr. Moore thanked the public for their patience with moving the election locations in order to accommodate social distancing in response to the pandemic. This March election will be held at Stratham Memorial School. Polls will be open on March 8<sup>th</sup> from 7:00 am – 7:00 pm. The business session will be at Cooperative Middle School on Saturday, March 12 beginning at 9:00 am.

Mr. Moore spoke about Article 12, the Operating Budget. The amount of funds to be raised and appropriated for the operating budget is \$8,050,185, which represents a 2.04% increase over last year. He reviewed the budget process schedule. The Budget Advisory Committee is appointed by the Moderator. Prior to town meeting, in early March, the Wiggin Memorial Library will hold a Voter Information Night.

Mr. Moore returned to the Operating Budget. This year the Board requested no more than a 3% increase in the Operating Budget, primarily due to the uncertain economic climate resulting from the pandemic. Focus is on maintaining staff and high quality services and planning for attrition in the organization and ensuring progress can be made on Town priorities. We received \$784,000 from American Rescue Plan Act funds. This allowed us to move forward with capital projects for which we would have otherwise had to raise money or deplete existing Capital Reserve Funds. Mr. Moore explained how much percentage goes to the County and to State and local education and to the Town. Stratham's portion is 17% of the overall taxes raised through the tax bill. The total budget is just over \$8 million. This is \$161,065 or 2.04% over last year. Mr. Moore referred to his presentation delineating the percentage of the taxes that are spent on each department. Average growth over the years since 2015 is 2.25% annual growth in the Operating Budget. Tax rate impact is estimated because we don't have final revenue numbers in for the year. Projection of the tax rate is the same as last years, \$3.15. Decreases in the budget

are attributed to restructuring the assessing function, a decrease in health insurance cost, a decrease in debt service, and a decrease in cost of the mosquito program. Increases include salary and wages, retirement system contribution increases (first year of new rates set by NHRS), and three elections. Mr. Moore explained the reasons for the salary increase. We are covering the full impact of new police officer added at last year's town meeting. We are also moving forward with funding the Land Use Project Coordinator position whose duties will include advancing Master Plan goals, following up on the Trail Management Advisory Committee's recommendations, moving forward with open space plan, and supporting the Planning function. We have until 2023 to commit to using the remainder of the Rescue Plan Act funds. So far we used it on culverts, the Municipal Center roof, and hazard pay for workers not included in the first round. In 2022 we plan to move forward with the salt shed restoration, online permitting software, and roadway paving. Mr. Moore discussed the CIP and explained how we use Capital Reserve Funds to set aside money for large future purchases. We don't need to make the typical investment in 2022 because we are using the ARPA funds.

Next Mr. Moore moved on to Articles 15 and 16 regarding the EMS Special Revenue Fund. Article 16 is for the replacement of ambulance #2. This will be 100% funded by the EMS Special Revenue Fund. He then went on to Article 17 – to raise the service connected Total Disability Tax Credit. There are currently approximately 15 veterans that would be able to take advantage of this credit. He then turned the meeting over to Mr. Houghton.

Mr. Houghton motioned to open the Public Hearing. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Houghton invited the public to make comments and ask questions. Hearing none, Mr. Houghton motioned to close the Public Hearing. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton motioned to take articles 12, 13, 14 as presented by the Town Administrator and put it on the Warrant and note as recommended. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Lovejoy motioned to move Article 15 and 16 involving purchase of an ambulance to the warrant as recommended. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Ms. Knab motioned to move Article 17 to the Warrant as recommended by the Select Board. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Houghton motioned to move Article 18 to the Warrant. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Houghton said that concludes the work of completing the Warrant. Mr. Houghton thanked the Town Administrator and Finance Administrator for their hard work. Mr. Moore recognized Ms. Bakie. Conversation ensued regarding the upcoming election. They discussed the logistics of safely accommodating all voters as the pandemic continues.

At 7:45 p.m., Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II (a) (Personnel). Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

At 8:45 p.m., the Board resumed the public session and Mr. Houghton moved to seal the minutes noting that failure to do so would render the proposed actions ineffective. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

At 8:46 p.m., Mr. Lovejoy moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard  
Recording Secretary