

MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 30, 2017 BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

MEMBER'S PRESENT: Board Members Bruno Federico, Michael Houghton, Joe Lovejoy and Town Administrator Paul Deschaine.

At 7:32 pm Chairman Federico opened the general meeting of the Board of Selectmen.

MINUTES

Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to approve the 10/23/17 minutes. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Town Administrator Paul Deschaine indicated that the current general fund balance was \$5,170,525.01.

ASSESSING

Town Assessor Andrea Lewy recommended three veteran's credits. Mr. Lovejoy motioned to approve the veteran's credits as recommended. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Ms. Lewy presented an Intent to Cut as part of the Stratham Hill Park project. Mr. Houghton made a motion to approve the Intent to Cut warrant for Fort Mountain Land & Timber in the amount of \$708.94. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Ms. Lewy reported a Land Use Change Tax for \$12,000 for Breslin Farms. This is the first of twenty. Ms. Lewy explained that construction is what triggers the tax. Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to authorize issuance of the Land Use Change Tax in the amount of \$12,000 for one of the lots at Breslin Farm. Mr. Federico seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Ms. Lewy stated she would like to contract with an appraiser regarding BMW. He would be validating the original report done by another consultant. BMW is appealing the original assessment. Currently, we need more data before we can go before the Board of Tax & Land Appeals. Mr. Lovejoy motioned to authorize the engagement of Cornell Consultants, LLC to handle the review of the abatement request with respect to the BMW property. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion which passed unanimously. The Selectmen signed the paperwork.

Lastly, Ms. Lewy explained that every year she does a ratio to see where our assessments are in the marketplace with sale prices. As part of that, the Department of Revenue does their own equalization process. Ms. Lewy presented a form from the Department of Revenue to release the equalization ratio which the Selectmen signed. There was discussion about the rising prices of homes in the area.

CODE ENFORCEMENT / BUILDING INSPECTOR

Code Enforcement Officer / Building Inspector Mark Morong presented the Board with a handout of his Department Report which includes new and ongoing construction. There are a few zoning issues detailed in the report that Mr. Morong brought to the Board's attention. He reported that Irving landscape issue is closed. Nissan and the Planning Board reached a compromise with conditions regarding the parking issue.

Mr. Morong said that he would like to hire a part-time special inspector. He would be working on a per diem basis. Mr. Morong gave the Board and Mr. Deschaine the proposed job description for their review. There was discussion regarding details such as insurance and salary. The Board will take the matter into consideration.

FIRE DEPT.

Fire Chief Matt Larrabee reported that the Fire Dept. has responded to 634 calls to date. He noted that parts of town still don't have power. Fire Prevention has been completed at all the schools.

Chief Larrabee requested the use of the Morgera Room for December 2nd for the Fire Dept. Christmas party and requested alcohol be allowed. Mr. Federico motioned to approve the request, including waiving the alcohol prohibition. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the request which passed unanimously.

Chief Larrabee reported that Jeff Denton is organizing the Lights for Lives contest. He is requesting the Board's approval to use the Fire Truck on Dec. 16th to do the judging for the Lights for Lives contest and to hold a silent auction during the open house on Dec. 17th as a fundraiser for Lights for Lives. Mr. Federico made a motion to approve the requests. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Next, Chief Larrabee's reported on the radios in the trucks. As had been discussed at previous Board meetings, given the upgrades to the Rockingham Dispatch system and the tremendous discount Motorola is offering, Chief Larrabee is requesting that the CIP radio money be used for this purpose. He has concerns regarding one of the ambulances and has formed a committee to review whether they should maintain or replace it. The radio would be swapped from one truck to the other. There was discussion about the CIP funds and the final cost. Chief Larrabee included a Command SUV, which we do not have, in the total. He strongly feels that we will need one in the future and wondered if a radio should be purchased in advance because of the discount being offered. The matter will be reviewed as it gets closer to the end of the discounted Motorola offer. Mr. Federico made a motion to upgrade the radios in all current vehicles listed in Chief Larrabee's report at the stated price of \$25,000. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Following up on outstanding EMS billing, Chief Larrabee noted that most of the outstanding balance is from non-residents. He has reached out to surrounding towns. It was discovered that

outstanding balances are not usually followed up on. He felt it might be a discussion for a later time.

The Department of Homeland Security awarded the Fire Department a grant of \$6,000 for EMS in a warm zone. Its purpose is to buy two sets of bullet-proof gear. He is working with the Seacoast Chiefs who've put together a standardized package and also with our Chief of Police.

Chief Larrabee is also working with Public Works Director Colin Lavery on combining the Highway and Fire Department's CIP, as they have the largest expenditures in terms of vehicles. They are coordinating so that their departments' needs don't conflict with one another. They are also working together regarding the new developments in town.

Chief Larrabee requested a copy of the General and Professional Liability Insurance. He needs it for the State Inspection. Mr. Deschaine said that he would get it to him.

Chief Larrabee apologized for missing the All Employee meeting. Mr. Federico said that a Fire Dept. member had suggested instituting a swearing in ceremony for new fire dept. members, as is done with the police. Chief Larrabee felt that was a good idea and will come up with guidelines.

NEW BUSINESS

Chairman of the Heritage Commission and also Chairman of the Demolition Review Committee Nathan Merrill came before the Board to discuss the old Town Hall. It is for sale and the Heritage Commission is concerned for its future. He recognized that there was a quorum of Heritage Commission members and as such, a joint meeting was called. Heritage Commission members in attendance were Becky Mitchell, Tammy Hathaway, Wally Stuart, Dave Canada, Mike Houghton and Nathan Merrill. Mr. Merrill had sent a letter to the Board and Mr. Deschaine detailing the historic significance of the building. He was notified this morning that the owner has signed an agreement with a buyer and an application for a demolition permit has been made. The Heritage Commission is asking for the Board's support with a preservation easement. It is unknown whether the new owner would be interested in this arrangement or not. Mr. Federico said that the Board had previously discussed the possibility of a preservation easement, but did not want to buy the building. Mr. Canada spoke strongly in favor of purchasing the building, saying it was a small cost for such a historically significant building. He advocated putting it to the Town for a vote at Town Meeting. A resident asked if the demolition could be held off until Town Meeting. Mr. Merrill doesn't know what, if anything, the new owner would be willing to agree to. He is before the Board tonight to see if they would be willing to pursue some options. Mr. Houghton commented that although it is an unfortunate situation, he cannot make an economic argument in favor of saving the building. However, he is open to letting the townspeople vote. Historical Society member Lucy Cushman noted the history of the building and wanted to be sure that the people of Stratham were aware that we might lose this historic building. She felt strongly that the decision should be made by the townspeople. She speculated on reuse for the building. Mr. Merrill said that he has been told that the current tenant will be allowed to stay in the building until the end of the year. Mr. Lovejoy noted that no one had shown interest in the building prior to this; why now? Mr. Merrill responded that they had been working with the current owner off and on regarding a preservation

easement for quite some time. Rebecca Mitchell cited examples of how they have been working for years to publicize their concern for the building. Mr. Merrill said they had tried being proactive by asking for money to be set aside in the CIP for situations as this. Mr. Federico was saddened that the owners didn't take advantage of the tax incentive to rehabilitate the property. Mr. Deschaine recalled that when the property was sold, it had no well, and an unknown septic system and little property with good soil to put a septic system and include the well radius. He reasoned that in order to make any use of the property, it would have to include the Parker House property. Mr. Merrill said there would need to be further discussions. Mr. Federico wished the Heritage Commission luck in working with the current and new owner of the property. Mr. Canada motioned to adjourn the Heritage Commission meeting. Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

State Representative Pat Abrami came before the Board to announce that there would be a veto override on Thursday regarding zoning boards. Some towns vote on all 5 zoning conditions as one and he wanted to see what Stratham's policy is. Mr. Federico said that in Stratham, we vote on each condition separately. The new bill is in alignment with what Stratham has been doing all along. In addition, Mr. Abrami said that he would do all he can to support installation of a traffic light at the Bunker Hill Ave / Portsmouth Ave intersection.

Mr. Deschaine continued the discussion about promoting the Bunker Hill Ave / Portsmouth Ave signalization project. He gave the Board a letter for their review that he would like distributed to the residents. Mr. Deschaine noted that a resident, Lisa Dean, has put in a great deal of effort promoting the project. Mr. Houghton made a motion to move forward with a letter to the residents urging them to reach out to NHDOT William Watson to solicit support for the Bunker Hill / Portsmouth Avenue signalization. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

MEETINGS

Mr. Federico reviewed meetings of the coming week and the past week. Mr. Lovejoy reported some concern the Conservation Commission had regarding the storage bin installation at the park. Mr. Federico mentioned that he thought the All Employee meeting went well and they would be following up on recommendations. Mr. Houghton attended the Pedestrian & Cyclist Advocacy Committee's Safe Routes to School meeting. He feels they have great enthusiasm, but need focus. He is hoping they can be steered in a more productive and results oriented direction. Mr. Deschaine attended a workshop where he learned that there needs to be a public hearing before we release performance bonds.

RESERVATIONS

Seacoast Rotary Club is doing work on behalf of Ritchie McFarland Children's Center and is requesting use of the Front Pavilion on November 4, 2017. Mr. Houghton motioned to approve the request and waive the fee. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Deschaine said that we may be closing on the tax deeded property this week. We will be deeding it back to the owner so that the bank may foreclose and then dispose of the property at their discretion. We will be getting the maximum return owed, per the statute.

Mr. Deschaine reported that Accounting Supervisor Valerie Kemp created a form for requests for use of unaccrued vacation time. He gave it to the Board for their feedback. Mr. Houghton suggested that it say "not to exceed forty hours for unaccrued time". Mr. Lovejoy wants to include a line where the applicant must state a reason for the request. Mr. Houghton said it should be stated that in order to qualify for use of unaccrued sick and/or vacation time you must utilize all accrued time first. Mr. Deschaine said that he will make the changes and bring it back for their approval.

Mr. Deschaine reported issues with his computer. It has been slowing down and crashing regularly. Information Technology Consultant Paul Wolf recommends replacing the machine. Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to acquire a replacement workstation for Mr. Deschaine utilizing CIP funds in the amount of approximately \$1,200.00. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Deschaine asked if he was authorized to proceed with the renewal of the health insurance plan for the coming year. Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to authorize the health insurance plans for 2018 and authorize Mr. Deschaine to execute all related documents. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Deschaine reported on storm damage and power outages throughout the town. The municipal sign was damaged. There was discussion regarding the materials used for the posts and the type of sign it might be replaced with. Mr. Deschaine will notify Public Works Director Colin Laverty to proceed with pricing granite posts, hold off on the message board and look into the lighting of the Police Station sign.

Regarding setting the tax rate, Mr. Deschaine is still waiting to hear from the DRA. Dept. of Education hadn't released the apportionment for the school district. Town Clerk/Tax Collector Joyce Charbonneau is hoping to get the tax bills out before she goes on vacation beginning November 7.

NEW BUSINESS, continued

Mr. Houghton made a motion to approve Colin Laverty's fireworks permit for 10/28/17. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Recommendations the employees made at the All Employee meeting were discussed. It was agreed that mileage reimbursement would be for all classes of employees under the same reimbursement policy, but adjusting the rate. They agreed that a supervisor would need to approve the request for reimbursement. Specifics of the policy were discussed. Mr. Houghton

made a motion to implement the increased mileage reimbursement policy as soon as possible. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Houghton suggested that we hold an all employee meeting no less than twice a year. He also suggested they address the pest control issue. Mr. Deschaine will ask Mr. Lavery about current services. It was determined that we need a comprehensive pest control management plan as opposed to dealing with issues as they arise.

Regarding introductions of new employees, Mr. Houghton suggested the hiring manager supply a quick bio and background summary of the new employee to Karen for distribution to all employees and the Board.

Various ways of videoing or televising the Board meetings were suggested by Mr. Deschaine. Mr. Federico suggested using the funds from the cable company to offset any cost. They will discuss further at a later time.

There was a great deal of discussion given to the start time of the Selectmen's meetings.

Mr. Lovejoy inquired as to the best way to find out what events are happening so that he may attend more of them as was brought up in the all employee meeting. Mr. Deschaine thought the best way would be to check the website.

At 10:39 pm Mr. Houghton made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Federico seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary