

## **MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 6, 2023 SELECT BOARD MEETING**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Board Members Chair Mike Houghton, Vice Chair Allison Knab; Joe Anderson

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

At 7:00 pm Mr. Houghton opened the meeting and asked for a motion on the minutes. Ms. Knab motioned approval of the October 16, 2023 minutes with one amendment. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton recognized Fire Chief Denton for his department report. Fire code enforcement is going well. Fire Inspector Jeff DiBartolomeo has been able to perform many inspection projects they hadn't been able to get to previously.

Chief Denton is proposing three changes affecting building requirements. The first is to mandate that every commercial building have a Knox box. This would allow firefighters easier access and cause less damage to property, in case they need to get into the building. The next would be to require all new commercial buildings over 2,500 sq. ft. to install a fully monitored fire alarm system. This would improve their response time. He has been working with Town Planner Mark Connors. Third, Chief Denton would like to create a standard fees for permits that the Town is not currently offering.

Chief Denton requested a fire inspection vehicle, perhaps a repurposed cruiser. Mr. DiBartolomeo been using the utility vehicle.

Chief Denton continued his report saying the pancake breakfast was a great success, with over 350 people attending. They raised over \$2,000 in donations, even though it wasn't a fundraising event. Lights 4 Lives is in its 10<sup>th</sup> year. This year they would like to give back to the town, perhaps with a fireworks display at the bonfire in January. He said they would like to continue the tradition of the Santa parade through town. Lights 4 Lives is a tremendous amount of work during a busy time of year. They are hoping to move it to October next year.

Recruiting efforts have been successful, with several new EMT and fire fighters onboarding.

Looking toward budget priorities for 2024, Chief Denton explained that in order to retain and attract staff, an increase in rates will be necessary. He will be recommending \$23/hour for dual certifications and \$20 for single, which is average for surrounding communities. He also recommends a stipend for officers who are currently running the department without compensation. He is also considering incentivizing staff with paid training or giving an annual stipend for training or responding to calls

Returning to the previous discussion, Mr. Moore noted that the fireworks display for the bonfire would require a permit that isn't yet submitted and clarified with the Board that they approved of

the planning and advertising for the event knowing the application will come. Chief Denton will coordinate with Mr. Hickey and the 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Fundraiser Committee.

Chief Denton requested a waiver of the alcohol prohibition for the department's holiday party on December 2<sup>nd</sup>. Ms. Knab motioned approval of waiving the alcohol restriction for the Fire Department event on December 2<sup>nd</sup>. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Houghton recognized Police Chief Anthony King for his quarterly report. The two new officers are in training and they are doing very well, including the Animal Control Officer, Jacob Hoag. He typically works Tues. and Thurs., mostly at SHP, but also patrolling the town. Outfitting of the new cruisers (admin and supervisor) has been delayed because of supply chain issues. Year 2 CALEA review will be the week of Thanksgiving. Sgt Doucette and Ms. Harrington have been doing a great job of getting up to speed, but it has been a lot of work. He has submitted the 2024 PD budget. He hopes to add a full-time, civilian, Community Service position that can assist in police operations – he doesn't anticipate this will impact the current budget significantly. Vehicle budget going up because of increase in costs of parts and maintenance. He has been working with Pastor Westley Conn in hopes of adding a volunteer position, police chaplain. This would be to address officer wellness.

Chief King presented on his three requests for action. Referring to a previous discussion, Chief King said the Tasers will be outdated soon. He had put the purchase on hold because of an ongoing lawsuit but has decided to proceed with an approach that maintains the current Tasers for longer. He is requesting three for the new officers and one for the part-timers with the cost coming from the golf donation fund. Mr. Anderson motioned to approve three XTP Tasers and associated cartridges at a cost of \$7,400 from the Police's Donations from the First Responder Goal Tournament Fund. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Next Chief King called attention to the Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs). Rockingham County went to a new provider, INC. As part of transition, our MDTs are not compatible with the new software making it necessary to upgrade our software. There is a grant from the Dept. of Highway Safety to which he would like to apply. It's a 75-25% grant match; approximately \$11,800, which could also come out of the golf donation fund. Mr. Anderson motioned to approve to submit to the NH Office of Highway Safety a 75-25% grant to cover 25% or \$11,800 with the match requirement coming from the donation fund. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The printers come with the computers as part of the grant. Ms. McAllister confirmed that that will be a reimbursement.

Lastly, Chief King addressed the Jammer device utilized to monitor traffic and speed. Currently, it is down. It is a useful device and he would like to purchase a second one. When we do, we get a free upgrade to the first one. Mr. Anderson motioned to expend \$5,345 from the traffic control CIP for the purchase of the Jammer speed monitoring devices. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

At 7:40pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II (a) to discuss personnel matters. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes

At 8:05 p.m. the public meeting resumed. Mr. Houghton moved to seal the minutes and Mr. Anderson seconded. All voted in favor.

#### NEW BUSINESS

The Board briefly discussed the Special Town Meeting and noted that all of the procedural steps of reporting to the passage to the PUC of the Community Power Plan and execution of documents with CCPNH were completed. Next step is outreach in January for required notices to customers and a public meeting to answer questions.

Mr. Houghton recognized Ms. McAllister who said that she received notification today that State Aid will provide an additional one time lump sum payment to the highway block grant aid. It will be considered unanticipated revenue. She expects we will receive approximately \$50,000 in mid to late November. This unanticipated revenue can be used for road improvement and is non-lapsing. A public hearing will be scheduled to accept the funds.

Mr. Houghton directed attention to the three CIP fund release requests. Mr. Moore said his recommended action for the Gifford Farm Barn northeast façade stabilization is to release up to \$14,000 in CIP funding for the northeast façade of the Gifford Farm Barn on Jack Rabbit Lane. Consults have been done in coordination with the Heritage Commission and cost estimates have been obtained from a qualified preservation contractor. This is pre-work prior to later work of painting and stabilizing. Ms. Knab motioned support for the release up to \$14,000 in CIP funds for the stabilization of the northeast façade of the Gifford Farm barn. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Moore requested the release of CIP funds for server upgrades as part of our conversion to a new IT contractor. Mr. Anderson motioned to release up to \$21,822 in CIP funds to replace the server in the Town offices and the Police Department. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

The last CIP release request Mr. Moore made was for MS4 permitting for professional services in an amount of up to \$23,500. These services would enable us to ensure compliance with more MS4 requirements. Brief discussion regarding how we are held accountable and the necessity for these services ensued. Funding would come from the Storm Water Environmental Permitting line item. Mr. Houghton motioned to make up to \$23,155 available for the funding of MS4 permitting for professional services. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Moore notified the Board that we have received the preliminary tax rate setting from the DRA. Ms. McAllister informed them that the Select Board approves the rate. She then submits it to DRA. Once it is reviewed by the DRA Director, we get back a finalized rate. Ms. McAllister said they are looking at a \$20.91 rate. She explained the options regarding the overlay amount. Ideally, we would collect as much in taxes as we have in abatements. The increase is primarily on the school side. They all agreed the fund balance looks good. We are where we projected we would be. Mr. Anderson expressed concern that the residents are unclear as to how their tax bill is calculated. Mr. Moore will put messaging in Town Meeting materials. They agreed to sign at \$3.15; a 2.6% increase in the rate over last year (2022).

Mr. Moore noted the Town did not have a policy to compensate a deputy Treasurer, which is now filled. After a brief discussion, Mr. Anderson motioned to establish a \$1,000 a year stipend for the Deputy Treasurer. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Moore called attention to Mr. Anderson who expressed support for the electronic screen that Mr. Connors had previously recommended. Ms. Knab asked about pricing. 75" was \$2,300. Mr. Moore has been working to upgrade our site for this tool and will come back with a comprehensive plan. Ms. Knab cautioned against rushing into a purchase. Mr. Houghton agreed, but felt the need to modernize and become more efficient.

Ms. McAllister has met with the department heads regarding their budgets. Ms. McAllister reviewed the personnel administration, payroll adjustment line. Ms. McAllister explained that that the line item includes the purchase of new voting counter machines, which should probably be in the CIP. The health care premium went up. Mr. Houghton asked about solid waste; Ms. McAllister said that has not been modified. Ms. McAllister said the budget is at a good baseline number. Ms. Knab asked if these numbers include the Fire and Police department requests. Ms. McAllister explained how each request would affect the budget. Mr. Moore asked how the Board would like to proceed with the schedule going forward. Mr. Houghton would like the Board to refine over the next several meetings, then be given to the Budget Advisory Committee. Mr. Houghton suggested Mr. Moore talk to the Moderator to form the group. Mr. Moore said they will likely receive a request a representative to serve on the School's Financial Advisory Committee.

#### ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Moore recognized those employees who have stepped up to fill the gaps in service. Ms. McAllister reported on the difficulty in hiring. Mr. Moore updated the Board on the progress in filling the vacancies.

Mr. Moore felt the Block 5 transition going well he has a customer satisfaction meeting next week and he has received positive feedback on the support received to date.

Referring to the goals worksheet, Mr. Moore would like to revisit it at a later meeting.

Mr. Moore discussed holding a new hire breakfast. The Board discussed their availability.

Mr. Houghton thanked Mr. Anderson for stepping in at the Veteran's Day ceremony.

#### RESERVATIONS

Ms. Knab motioned to support the SMS PTO holding their bonfire at Stratham Hill Park on January 6<sup>th</sup> for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade fundraiser in coordination with the Fire Dept. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Ms. Knab motioned support for Charlie Brown to use the Morgera Room on 11/25. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Anderson motioned to re-appoint Lucy Cushman and Joe Johnson as representatives to the Rockingham Planning Commission as recommended by the Planning Board for a two year term. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

At 9:08 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to go into a non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A3, II (a)(b) and (c). Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call: Houghton-yes; Knab-yes; Anderson-yes.

At 10:14 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to come out of the non-public session and seal the minutes noting failure to do so may render a proposed action ineffective. Ms. Knab seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

At 10: 14 pm Mr. Houghton motioned to adjourn. Mr. Anderson seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard  
Recording Secretary