

MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 12, 2018 BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

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

At 7:33 pm Chairman Federico opened the general meeting of the Board of Selectmen.

MINUTES

Mr. Houghton made a motion to approve the minutes of 2/5/18 as amended. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

TREASURER

Town Treasurer Deb Bronson stated the general fund balance is \$9,079,308.55.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Federico opened the public hearing on the 2018 Town Warrant. Articles 12 – 24 will be voted on March 16, 2018 at Town Meeting at 7:00 pm at the Stratham Memorial School, 39 Gifford Farm Road. Article 1 is always the election of Town Officers and 2 – 11 are the zoning ordinance changes that will be on the ballot. The Planning Board has already had their public hearing regarding that, so that is not the focus of tonight's meeting.

Article 12 to raise and appropriate \$6,861,959 to defray the general town charges for the ensuing year; Mr. Federico compared last year's Town Budget numbers to the proposed numbers. He noted that solid waste came in below what was budgeted. We have a new contract with them.

	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Executive Branch	187,000	205,000
Financial admin	440,000	487,000
Personnel admin	1,029,000	1,091,000 incl benefit pkg & taxes
General govt bldgs.	175,000	241,000
Police	1,060,000	1,124,000
Fire	277,000	313,000
Highway	830,096	943,550
Solid waste	817,000	768,825
Parks & Recreation	278,000	304,000
Library	<u>439,000</u>	<u>470,000</u>
Total proposed appropriation		\$6,861,959

Cantrece Forest wanted clarification on what was included in government buildings. Mr. Deschaine responded municipal center, Foss building, Bartlett-Cushman, all buildings not departmentally allocated.

Resident Nancy Hunter asked what was included in the Parks & Rec budget. Mr. Federico said the main budget drivers were seasonal employees and labor increases. Mr. Deschaine elaborated that there was a reallocation of personnel in 2 departments. The redistribution of responsibilities created a net increase in hours. Parks & Recreation Director Seth Hickey added that repairs to stage, fencing repair, soffits and roof repair, grounds maintenance at SHP were also included.

Ms. Hunter called for more transparency. Mr. Federico said the details will be in the Town Report.

A major driver of the total budget Mr. Deschaine explained is the addition of two proposed ½ year positions, HR director and plow driver. In addition, there has been a major adjustment to Police Dept. compensation plan. On the plus side, there's been a 6% decrease in health insurance cost which benefits both the Town and the employees. In the capital program, is a proposal for an additional truck. Highway will also propose a second truck to be leased.

Resident Mike Dane Stratham Heights, asked for more detail on the increase in the Police Budget. Major driver is personnel costs. Police Chief Scippa explained the importance of wages and benefits being competitive with surrounding towns. He also explained the value of retaining employees and the negative impact of training new people. His request for the increase was based on surveys of similar surrounding towns. Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to recommend Article 12. Mr. Federico seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Article 13 to raise and appropriate \$1,311,000 to implement the Capital Improvements Program. Mr. Deschaine explained the change in format was due to a DOR rule. Mr. Lovejoy added that there are sink holes at the Park that need to be remedied resulting in a significant increase in the CIP.

Ms. Hunter asked why we were spending \$20,000 for water/sewer studies. Mr. Lovejoy talked about the work the Route 108 Corridor Study Committee has been doing. The Committee will have a report to the residents in 2019. Mr. Deschaine explained that a major portion of their work involves financing for water/sewer with little taxpayer cost. Ms. Hunter said that at the last Town Meeting, it was voted down, so why are we still pursuing it. Mr. Dane noted some were for / some against, but funds were provided to study it further. Taking the CMS expansion project as an example, our town pays less because of the commercial development. In towns with less development the burden falls to the taxpayer. If we continue to shut down infrastructure projects, the residents will end up with a heavier tax burden. The crowd voiced agreement. Mr. Houghton made a motion to approve for the warrant Article 13 Capital Improvements Program in the amount of \$1,311,000. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Article 14 to raise and appropriate the sum of \$359,000 to the Capital Reserve Funds. Mr. Lovejoy noted that the largest line item for \$215,000 is for a plow truck to replace the current one which is costing the Town a significant amount of money in repairs. Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to recommend Article 14. Mr. Federico seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Article 15 to raise and appropriate \$150,000 to be added to the Heritage Preservation Fund. Mr. Federico noted that this was to obtain a preservation easement for the old town hall. The Board previously decided to support an easement instead of a purchase. Cantreice Forest wanted to know why it didn't say the money is to be used for a preservation easement. Mr. Federico

replied that the State requires specific wording. Mr. Deschaine further explained that no deal had been reached between the owner and the Heritage Commission, therefore, they could not be more specific in the Warrant Article. Chairman of the Heritage Commission Nate Merrill said they are close to finalizing a deal. If the Town doesn't support this article, the building will be torn down. He assured Ms. Forest that the money in the Heritage Fund would be spent wisely. Town resident Rachael Jefferson asked what the benefit was to the Town. Former Heritage Commission Chair Rebecca Mitchell replied that the vision statement of the Master Plan is that the Town wishes to retain its historical resources. This old town hall has intrinsic value because it is unique to Stratham. It also holds many memories for the residents. Resident Keri Vivathana is concerned about the money being spent on historic buildings. Ms. Mitchell replied that they hope to make apartments out of it which would make it a good investment. During the 2011 public charrette, the people said they valued the remaining historic buildings in the town center. They wanted to keep them, and develop around them. Ms. Jefferson asked if it would be affordable housing. Mr. Merrill said there are incentives for that, but we cannot force the owner. Going back to a previous comment, Mr. Merrill noted that the Bartlett Cushman house was originally initiated by the selectmen because of the land adjacent to the municipal center. The old town hall is for an easement purchase. It would remain in the owner's hands. Ms. Forest asked why we sold it in the first place. Mr. Merrill said that, ironically, at the meeting that voted to sell the town hall, they voted to establish the Heritage Commission. It was considered surplus property at the time, so it was decided to sell it. Times have changed and we value things differently now. Mr. Federico said that in 1987 the building was sold to raise funds for the municipal center. At that time, they also believed the buyer would maintain the property. Mr. Federico made a motion to recommend Article 15. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Article 16 to raise and appropriate \$25,000 for the Town Buildings and Grounds Maintenance Expendable Funds. This includes items such as roofs and septic systems. Ms. Forest asked if the money goes toward all the buildings that the town owns. Mr. Deschaine said yes, all town buildings are included in the trust. Mr. Federico made a motion to recommend Article 16. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Article 17 to authorize Keno games within Stratham. Funds from Keno games support all day kindergarten programs. The State is giving us a choice whether or not to allow it within our town. We may still receive funds even if it is voted down. Mr. Deschaine said there are 6 establishments that meet the requirements to sell Keno tickets. One expressed an interest. Ms. Vivathana noted that this is gambling. She didn't think the public was aware of what Keno is and asked that the wording on the ballot be changed. Mr. Deschaine said that the statutes maintain that we must use the exact wording, no deviation. Mr. Lovejoy said anyone may speak for or against it at Town Meeting. Mr. Houghton stated that it should, and will be, a public decision. Mr. Deschaine added that the statute says "if there is money", so if there are not enough Keno funds, the money per child may be reduced. Keno provides the revenue stream.

Article 18 to raise and appropriate \$20,000 from the EMS Special Revenue Fund. Fire Chief Larrabee clarified that Medicare/Medicaid system only makes payments to the transporting service, which is us. We have to reimburse ALS for their portion for Medicare/Medicaid patients only. Mr. Deschaine further explained that this is the annual appropriation request that must be done to expend the funds. Mr. Lovejoy motioned to recommend Article 18. Mr. Federico seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Article 19 to raise and appropriate \$300,000 from the EMS Special Revenue Fund to purchase a new ambulance. Chief Larrabee said one of the ambulances is 16 years old and its maintenance is increasing. In addition, the calls they must respond to are increasing yearly. Mr. Federico made a motion to recommend Article 19. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Article 20 to authorize withdrawal from the EMS Special Revenue Fund, the Fire Dept. Capital Reserve Fund and to accept a contribution from the Stratham Volunteer Fire Dept. Fair Trust to purchase replacement Self Contained Breathing Apparatus Equipment (SCBA). Mr. Federico made a motion to recommend Article 20. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Article 21 to raise and appropriate \$10,000 for the Accrued Benefits Liability Expendable Trust Fund. Mr. Federico explained this is to pay employees that are retiring their accrued sick and vacation time. Mr. Deschaine said there are 10 eligible employees and if they all retired it would cost \$119,000. We have \$73,000 in the trust. We must be prepared to meet our obligations. Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to recommend Article 21. Mr. Federico seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Article 22 to raise and appropriate \$35,000 to study and design a proposed skate park. Mr. Federico explained that a committee has been formed to investigate the logistics of building a skate park before going forward with building it. The Selectmen support the idea of a skate park and want to ensure it is done correctly. Ms. Hunter inquired how many people are interested in such a park. Mr. Federico said that there were 3 public hearings which were better attended than the meeting this evening. Ms. Hunter expressed concern about liability and potential criminal activities there. Mr. Federico said that as long as there was no charge for the use of the park, there would be no liability. She asked who would be doing the study. Mr. Houghton said a third party engineer who has not been determined would do the study. Ms. Vivathana said a local engineer would also be involved. Mr. Houghton said that the skate park group has amassed the largest contingency of supporters that have attended meetings than any other group that he's seen in his 10 years on the Planning Board. They are an energetic group that gave well thought out presentations. Before we commit to a large sum of money to build it, the Selectmen agreed that a professional study was needed to further evaluate the project. Ms. Hunter thinks there should be a warrant article and that the money shouldn't be hidden in the CIP. Mr. Federico said that, most likely, there would be a warrant article to vote for funds for the park. Mr. Michael Hunter asked what the estimated cost to build the park would be. \$300,000 is the proposed cost. Mr. Federico said there would be minimal maintenance in the future. Mr. Houghton reiterated this was to raise funds to investigate the viability of the park; if it proceeds, there would be a future warrant article. Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to recommend Article 22. Mr. Federico seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Article 23 Citizens petition to study the feasibility of development of offshore wind power. Mr. Deschaine added that the notice included additional language indicating that a 2014 task force recommended the feasibility study in the hopes that NH and ME will achieve 100% renewable energy sources by 2050. Jobs and revenue will be additional benefits. Ms. Jefferson asked why the Town is excluding the additional language. Mr. Deschaine replied that other towns don't have town meeting to voice their opinions. Mr. Houghton clarified that no money is involved. Ms. Hunter asked if all the NH towns are being asked. It was Mr. Deschaine's understanding

that Gov. Sununu would move it forward if the people wanted it. Mr. Houghton made a motion to put the additional language in and not make a recommendation. Mr. Federico seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Ms. Hunter asked if the Selectmen and Planning Board meetings could be televised. Mr. Lovejoy said everyone was welcome to attend every meeting. Mr. Federico explained that we'd need either a volunteer group or a paid group at significant expense to televise the meetings. Mr. Dane said that if televising the meetings becomes a requirement, then it would have to be a paid group to ensure it was done regularly. Ms. Forest suggested, with the impending hiring of an IT person, perhaps we could hire one that also has media experience. Ms. Hunter asked for more detail in the minutes. Mr. Dane suggested putting the audio on a Google drive for the residents to listen to. Mr. Houghton said that that would be looked into. Ms. Forest asked for more detailed agendas.

At 9:00 pm Mr. Federico made a motion to close the public hearing on the budget. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

FIRE

Fire Chief Matt Larrabee reported 97 calls to date. The SCBA grant has been submitted. From Feb. 24 – March 3 he will be out and Lt. Devonshire and Josh Crow will be filling in. EMS unpaid accounts for residents have been written off thru the end of 2017. Chief Larrabee handed the Board a list of Fire Officers and explained the nominating process.

PLANNING

Town Planner Tavis Austin reported the Planning Board approved all the zoning amendments to the 2018 warrant with the exception of the telecommunications facilities Article 19 which was revised and approved at a later meeting. Four lots were approved with conditions at 13 Stratham Lane. Discussion ensued about duplexes that had been turned into condominiums without proper PB approval. What the implications are for the Town and how to remedy it were briefly discussed. It was decided this topic required more in depth analysis at a later time. Regarding the Planning Dept. report tonight, Stratham Plaza is being required to record the appropriate documentation with the Town. Mr. Austin continued his report noting on the 7th is a preliminary consultation for a 4 lot subdivision at 12 Sandy Point Rd. Mr. Austin reviewed upcoming meetings he hopes to attend. He is continuing to work with Public Works Director Colin Laverty on the roads assessment. He reported that the PCAC received the grant they applied for. Regarding the Master Plan RFP, they received 4 proposals. Mr. Austin rated them and requested to call the top 2 or 3 for references. Mr. Houghton expressed interest in reading them. Mr. Austin and Mr. Deschaine, along with input from the Selectmen, will determine the top choice and bring forth a contract ready to be signed on the 26th.

Regarding the Copley issue, Mr. Houghton is adamant about following the regulations and not allowing one mistake to set a precedent. Mr. Austin noted that although some procedural changes have been implemented, there is still ambiguity in the permitting process. Mr. Deschaine clarified that Mr. Goddard's request was to revisit the decision; the request hadn't changed. Our practice has always been to issue a permit, as long as the work was bonded. Mr. Deschaine requests that the Board accept the bond as presented by Public Works Director Colin Laverty. Mr. Houghton suggested an in depth review/revision of the regulations for possible

future implementation. Mr. Houghton made a motion that they approve the Director of Public Works estimate for bonding for Copley Properties LLC, Barbara's Way, \$97,500. Mr. Austin asked if it could be extended to include acceptance of the instrument should it present itself. Mr. Federico seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

ADMINISTRATION

The banner that Colleen Lake has requested has tripled in cost and may not be ready in time. Mr. Houghton made a motion to obtain one banner at a cost of \$394 by Thursday. Mr. Federico seconded the motion. Mr. Lovejoy abstained from the vote.

There was a request from the PCAC to hand out a flyer describing their committee's objective at Town Meeting. Mr. Houghton motioned to approve the request. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Deschaine said he received an application from Tana Ream to be on the Board of Adjustment. Mr. Houghton made a motion to accept Tana Ream's application for the Zoning Board of Adjustment as an alternate. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Deschaine said that the Town Report is due to the printer Friday. He also said that inputting the Warrant data into the DRA portal was going well.

Mr. Lovejoy advised the Board that he may not be able to be present on election day. Because the statutes state that there must be two of them present, he questioned if he should find an alternate. Mr. Federico and Mr. Deschaine didn't think that was necessary.

At 10:12 pm Mr. Houghton made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary