

MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 13, 2017 BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

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

At 7:34 pm Chairman Federico opened the general meeting of the Board of Selectmen.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Mr. Lovejoy moved to approve the minutes of 11/6/17 as amended. Mr. Federico seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Town Treasurer Deb Bronson indicated that the current General Fund balance was \$3,476,457.85.

POLICE DEPT.

Police Chief John Scippa reported that the department's Tasers are at least 10 years old and are approaching their life's end. He would like to replace 9 of them at a cost of \$1,100 per unit. Taser is offering a discount program plus 5 years, no interest financing. Chief Scippa is requesting to set up a CIP to cover the cost over five years. Mr. Houghton and Mr. Lovejoy asked about the lifespan of the Tasers, the details of the contract and the necessity and wisdom of replacing them all at once. Mr. Deschaine asked if they were even necessary. Chief Scippa feels they are an excellent non-lethal device for stopping hostile situations quickly. Mr. Houghton recommended Chief Scippa develop a planned replacement policy based on the manufacturer's useful life recommendations so that it becomes integrated into the budgeting process.

Chief Scippa said that there was an arson case recently. Officer Janvrin worked with the Exeter Police Dept. to solve the case. Two adults and a juvenile were arrested. Stratham Police assisted Exeter Police on a case of stolen firearms. Stratham police recovered 3 of those along with other stolen property. The investigation continues.

Chief Scippa said that they did not have any spare batteries for the radios. It is important that each officer have an extra battery because when they are working longer shifts, the batteries wear out and the officers are unable to communicate. Chief Scippa mentioned that the radio for the motorcycle cost less than anticipated by approximately \$1,000. Mr. Houghton made a motion to authorize Chief Scippa to spend up to \$2,200 from the CIP Radio Fund to purchase extra batteries for Police Dept. radios. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

At 8:10 Mr. Federico made a motion to go into non-public session to discuss a Police Dept. personnel issue. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

At 8:30 Mr. Houghton made a motion to come out of the non-public session and seal the minutes. Mr. Federico seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

FIRE DEPT.

Fire Chief Matt Larrabee reported that the Fire Dept. has responded to 662 calls to date which is 90 calls more than last year at this point. They've also had 90 overlapping calls to date.

Chief Larrabee has been working with Public Works Director Colin Laverty to coordinate their equipment budgets. Mr. Houghton said he would like them both to come to a Selectmen meeting before budgets are due to review and discuss the numbers. Chief Larrabee discussed the need for planning 10 or 20 years ahead because of the large initial cost of replacement vehicles.. Chief Larrabee questioned the five year funding for the CIP. Mr. Deschaine explained funding of the Capital Reserve Funds and the CIP and noted a DRA statute. Mr. Houghton suggested having a planned replacement policy for the combined fleet resources of the Highway and Fire Departments. He'd also like them to anticipate additional needs their departments might encounter to manage the growing demands of the Town.

Chief Larrabee reported that they received a \$6,000 grant for EMS in a Warm Zone which provides bullet-proof vests for EMTs. He will get the details to Mr. Deschaine.

EMS Captain Peggy Crosby went to a presentation for EMS billing. She learned that Medicare will not be paying for an ambulance ride in the future if, after they review the claim, they determine it was not a necessity. We may see an impact regarding that. Mr. Houghton made a motion to write off uncollected receivable originating before 2015, to not send any residents to collections and the balance to collections with the provision of a proposed policy before sending the balance to collections. Mr. Federico seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Chief Larrabee will talk to collection agencies and report back with his findings.

Chief Larrabee formed a committee to review whether we should keep or replace ambulance A1. He is doing the same thing with the air packs. They have already resubmitted an application for the air packs grant. When the committee makes their recommendation, he will determine how to fund it.

NEW BUSINESS

Library Trustee Chair Lee Beauregard came before the Board to discuss how they could work with the Board to ensure the Library staff receives fair compensation. The salaries of most of the Library Staff have been brought up to the state average last year; some are still below average. With performance appraisals underway and budget meetings in the near future, he thought this would be a good time to see what data they could provide to the Board to support their endeavor. Mr. Federico spoke in support of Mr. Beauregard's position. Mr. Beauregard mentioned that they do a lot of fundraising so that they don't ask the Town for much money for budget increases. Library Director Lesley Kimball discussed the Library's operating budget. She stated that, in comparison to other Towns, our Library provides higher circulation, higher visits, and higher program attendance for less money. Mr. Houghton described how he believes appraisals should be tied to wages. Ms. Kimball talked about the performance appraisal process and said that she was hoping for more feedback from the Board on it. Mr. Beauregard gave a history of

the Library staff's compensation and what they've learned from past Budget Advisory meetings. Mr. Lovejoy reminded him that, although the Budget Advisory Committee provides them with good input, the final decisions rest with the Selectmen. He went on to talk about the value of retaining good staff. Ms. Kimball asked what the Board's preference was regarding procedure. Mr. Beauregard asked what the communication process was. He and Ms. Kimball were hoping that, going forward, the Board could provide more communication and insight as to the decision making process. Mr. Deschaine added that in past budget meetings, priority was given to material items, not salaries. Mr. Houghton recommended setting a salary policy and implementing a strategy to achieve the objectives of the policy. Once that is done, he reasoned, the budget could be allocated appropriately. Performance appraisals would identify individuals who demonstrate skills and behaviors that align with the core values and they would be compensated accordingly. Ms. Kimball agreed that this would be a more structured, predictable process. Mr. Houghton believes the compensation plan should be driven by our policy, not the Budget Advisory Committee. He went on to say that the information that the Trustees provided was useful and that he believes the residents value the service and staff at the Library.

MEETINGS

Mr. Federico reviewed the meetings of the coming week and the past week. Mr. Lovejoy attended the Heritage Commission meeting. He said discussions centered on the old Town Hall, the Bartlett-Cushman house and the proposed traffic signal at Bunker Hill Ave. Mr. Deschaine attended the Unitil Emergency & Response and Preparedness meeting where he obtained packets for each Department. Mr. Lovejoy reported that at the Rt 108 Corridor Study Committee meeting Stu Arnett reviewed the footprint of the TIF district. Mr. Deschaine said that prior to the Trustees of the Trust Fund meeting, their Chair approached him as to next steps regarding the Smyk property. Mr. Deschaine noted that legal counsel is reviewing the request. Costs, including maintenance and loss of taxes, and other issues regarding the property were discussed.

RESERVATIONS

Ed Murphy requested use of all 3 pavilions at Stratham Hill Park for the Boy Scouts Car Show on September 30, 2018. Mr. Lovejoy motioned to allow the request and waive the fee. Mr. Houghton seconded the request which passed unanimously.

ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Federico received a request from the Newfields selectmen to do a cost share regarding the streetlights over the bridge leading to Newmarket. The Board agreed to meet with them and a NH DOT engineer to discuss.

Next, the Board discussed a potential arrangement with Colleen Lake and her listing of the Bartlett-Cushman house. There was some confusion as to which company she was affiliated with – Bean Group or Brick & Barn. The Board was of the understanding that a more detailed proposal would be provided, but they have yet to receive it. Mr. Deschaine said that he's been contacted by someone who might want to rent the property and also by another realtor. Mr. Houghton felt strongly that some action be taken. Given the change in Ms. Lake's affiliation, the

Board is requesting the Brick & Barn's market reach and its ability to market this property. They discussed the Keller Williams proposal and possibly going back to them with a counter proposal.

The Heritage Commission has made suggestions regarding replacing the Gifford house door. In order to maintain the historic look, it is recommended that instead of replacing the door, perhaps weather-stripping might be used. Mr. Houghton suggested contacting a restoration expert with any cost beyond what was budgeted for the replacement door coming from the Heritage Fund. Both weather-stripping and door restoration will be looked into. Mr. Deschaine said that Mr. Hickey would likely get the project done before winter.

Mr. Deschaine brought to the Board's attention that they would need to think about appointing a representative to the newly created Seacoast Commission on Drinking Water formed as a response to House Bill 431. He has not received any formal invitation, but believes it will arrive soon. The Commission will review such things as seasonal and drought issues, mutual aid for firefighting, mutual aid agreements for emergency and replacement drinking water supplies, environmental threats to groundwater, and contaminants.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Deschaine reported that back taxes have been paid on the Depot Road property. Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to quit claim the deed back to the original owners so that the bank will have authority to foreclose. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

There was discussion regarding who to appoint to the Budget Advisory Committee.

At 10:43 pm Mr. Houghton made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Federico seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard
Recording Secretary