

## **MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 11, 2019 SELECT BOARD MEETING**

MEMBER'S PRESENT: Board Members Mike Houghton, Joe Lovejoy, Allison Knab and Town Administrator David Moore.

At 7:00 p.m. Mr. Houghton opened the public meeting of the Select Board.

### **MINUTES**

Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to approve the minutes of 1/28/19. Ms. Knab seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

### **TREASURER**

Town Treasurer Deb Bronson stated that the General Fund balance is \$8,760,162.07.

Mr. Moore presented a draft of the 2019 Warrant and gave a brief overview of the Articles. Beginning with Article 10, the Operating Budget, Mr. Moore noted a relatively flat budget over last year's budget. Reasons for the flat budget include decreased expenses with buildings & grounds, vacancies in positions during the first part of the year, reduction of maintenance projects and decreases in debt service as well as a premium holiday for workers compensation. There are some increases in the Fire Dept. and also with managing the solid waste responsibilities and a 2.5% COLA increase of salaries. Grants and interest contributed to the revenue.

Article 11 CIP. Mr. Moore indicated the Select Board sought a flat operational budget while meeting the Town's obligations to its infrastructure and systems. Investments will be made to technology, building upgrades at the Police Station, ongoing park improvements and the road reconstruction program.

Article 12 Appropriation of Funds to several Capital Reserve Funds. These are reserve funds to be allocated for future expenditures. There is a slight increase over last year as the Town looks toward needed Highway and Fire Dept. expenditures.

Article 13 Town Buildings and Grounds Maintenance Expendable Trust to fund costs related to building maintenance.

Article 14 Automated Curbside Collection Project. Our contract with Casella is expiring, prompting us to go to the new system. Currently, there is volatility in the marketplace. By moving to automated collection, we can proactively manage costs. Homes would receive recycling and trash containers. Although there will be an upfront cost, over time, the Town will see a savings immediately and see payoff of the investment in new containers in a 5 to 6 year period. The containers will not be purchased from Casella, but a third party.

Articles 15, 16 and 17 are related to Emergency Medical Services Special Revenue Fund. The Fund is a repository for the ambulance revenues. Disbursement requests are used for EMS training and equipment. Article 16 is for the purchase of a utility truck for the Department. Article 17 is for the purchase of a command vehicle.

Article 18, is placed by petition of the voters for a construction of a Skate Park at Steven's Park.

Article 19, Modifications of the Elderly Exemption from property tax as recommended by Town Assessor Andrea Lewy and seeks to update asset limits (increase) and amounts eligible (increase) of a home's value eligible for exemption from property tax. The last update to these levels were in 2007.

Article 21 Changing of polling hours for State and Town Elections. After studying the busiest voting times during the election, Town Clerk Joyce Charbonneau recommends changing the hours to better accommodate voters.

Mr. Houghton then opened the Public Hearing on the 2019 Warrant Articles.

He asked for discussion beginning with Article 10 the Operating Budget. Hearing none, he moved to Article 11 Capital Improvements. Resident Heidi Hansen asked about last years' expenditures. Deb Bronson noted a Community Center was in the budget last year but not this year. Mr. Moore clarified that the center was combined with other projects last year, but is separate this year. Resident Lester Cuff questioned the solar panel at the Police Station. Mr. Moore answered that the funds identified will enable to the Town to exercise its ability to buy the system on the room after six years. Bill Allen asked a question about variances in general to which Mr. Moore responded. Paul Deschaine offered additional explanation regarding the funds. Hearing no other comments, Mr. Houghton moved on to Article 12 Appropriation of Funds to various Capital Reserve Funds that the Town has historically and contributed to year after year. Hearing no comments, Mr. Houghton moved on to Article 13 Town Buildings and Grounds Maintenance Expendable Trust. Ms. Hansen asked if this was for a specific purpose. Mr. Lovejoy said no, it is for emergencies that might arise. Hearing no further comments, Mr. Houghton moved on to Article 14 Automated Curbside Collection Project to raise and appropriate \$365,000. Ms. Bronson asked if the amount covered the purchase of the totes. In response to a recycling question, Brian Groshon, Assistant General Manager at Casella explained the process. Chris West asked when the Town would see savings. Mr. Moore replied approximately 5 – 6 years, if not earlier. Mr. Lovejoy added that the totes have covers so trash will not be blowing around. They discussed the various sizes of the totes. Connie Dolan asked if it would reduce the use of plastic bags. Mr. Groshon explained that plastic bags cannot be recycled and should never be used to hold recyclables. He recommends plastic bags for holding trash for sanitary reasons. They discussed the size of the totes. Several residents felt it was important to let people know that the new process helps the environment. Mr. Deschaine noted the bins belong to the address, not the resident. He also noted the program has been implemented successfully in other towns. Also, he felt it was important to let the residents know the Town received a grant for \$32,000 to go towards the program. Hearing no further questions or comments, Mr. Houghton moved on to Article 15 to raise and appropriate from the EMS Special Reserve Fund for the Fire Dept. first responder training ALS service contract and an auto-load stretcher in the amount of \$48,000. Hearing no questions or comments, Mr. Houghton moved to Article 16 Purchase of a Utility Truck to replace a 12 year old Crown Victoria that was previously a police car to enable department personnel to have a vehicle to use for training, take to scenes, carry people and gear and be able to do it in a constructive and efficient way.

Regarding a question about the funding of the vehicle, it was explained the money comes from an ambulance revenue fund, not taxpayer money. Mr. Deschaine felt that the Fire Dept.'s acquisition of the two vehicles should be voted on at Town Meeting. They further discussed the use and need for the vehicles.

Mr. Houghton opened the discussion on Article 18, a warrant article placed by petition of the voters of Stratham to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$265,000 for the purpose of constructing a concrete recreational skate part facility at Steven's Park. Abutter to Steven's Park, Robert Law spoke about concerns he has with drainage, trespassers and decreased property values. There was a question if this was the full and final amount to be requested. Mr. Tallone explained that the requested money is for the construction; there will be fundraisers for landscaping. Mr. Tallone said there will be no lighting and maintenance should be less than \$1,000 per year. The cost per household is \$0.21 per thousand based on the median home assessment, \$354,500. Mr. Houghton added that a site plan review with the Planning Board indicated there may be future expenses related to parking, fencing, barrier gates, and drainage requirements. Although some of these items have been raised before, it's the intensification of use that would drive the implementation of them. Resident Jeanine Zeller didn't feel the additional items would be necessary. Joyce Charbonneau asked where the funds would come from if there was an unplanned issue with the skate park. Mr. Tallone explained the testing they've done thus far to avoid any issues. Lester Cuff was concerned about future use of the skate park. For example, could it be used by out-of-towners to hold a tournament? Would there be a fee charged? Parks & Recreation Director Seth Hickey will speak with Mr. Cuff in a separate meeting. Mr. Houghton clarified that the intended use of the park is for individual residents of the Town. It was noted that there will be no change to the Town's insurance policy because of the park.

Article 19, Modification of Elderly Exemption from Property Tax. Ms. Hansen asked for a comparison of the current and proposed exemptions to which Town Assessor Andrea Lewy responded. Ms. Hansen questioned if the amounts were enough to help the elderly residents. Ms. Lewy and Mr. Houghton explained that we are hoping to move forward and have the Town be on par with other communities in Rockingham County. They will continually review the criteria and request updates accordingly. Currently, there are approximately 41 residents that receive the exemption.

Article 21, Change of Polling Hours from 8am – 8pm to 7am – 7pm. Hearing no questions or comments, Mr. Houghton moved to Article 22.

Mr. Moore said the Trustees of the Trust Funds may have an article to be included in the Warrant to utilize proceeds associated with the trusts they manage for professional services in helping to manage the money. By law, in order for it to be on the Warrant, the subject must be raised at this Public Hearing. Mr. Moore said it is unlikely that it will come forward, but wanted it to be an option for the Trustees.

Mr. Houghton requested the Skate Park Committee speak to the group. Kerri Vivathana explained that last year the Town voted to allow \$35,000 for location / site design. She described the benefits a skate park provides for the youth including helping children learn

perseverance. Being outside, being active has both mental and physical benefits. It gives an alternative to team sports. It fosters socialization, not only among the children, but parents as well. Ms. Hansen questioned the amount of use the park would get. The committee members who utilize other towns' facilities said the well done parks are used a great deal. Ms. Vivathana continued to explain the Committee's vision for the park and the fundraising efforts. She reviewed the process the Committee went through for site selection. They are in the design phase now. Mr. Tallone said they are incorporating feedback from the community regarding features the park should have. Mr. Cuff was concerned children could be seriously hurt. Mr. Tallone said there would be requirements, such as a helmet, but argued that an injury could happen at any of the other parks or trails. It was noted these types of questions would likely be raised and discussed at Town Meeting.

Hearing no further comments or questions, Mr. Houghton closed the public hearing that will end the period of public input. The Board will deliberate and make their recommendations.

Article 10, Operating Budget. Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to approve Article 10. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to approve Article 11. Ms. Knab seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to approve Article 12. Ms. Knab seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to approve Article 13. Ms. Knab seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to approve Article 14. Ms. Knab seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to approve Article 15. Ms. Knab seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to approve Article 16. Ms. Knab seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to approve Article 17. Ms. Knab seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to not approve Article 18. Ms. Knab seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to approve Article 19. Ms. Knab seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to approve Article 20. Ms. Knab seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Houghton explained that although he is impressed by the Skate Park Committee's enthusiasm and personally supports the skate park, he has grave concerns. He doesn't think it's been thoroughly vetted and believes it will cost more money than they are requesting. Ms. Knab agreed, noting she also supports the project, but feels there's more work to be done before she can fully back it. Mr. Lovejoy also supports the project and encouraged the group. Mr. Tallone asked for direction. The Board suggested the Planning Board could offer the best assistance.

Following the discussion by the Select Board on the Warrant articles and the individual recommendations, the meeting paused where many members of the public departed. The Chair then moved to the next item, which was discussion of the Automated Curbside Collection Program. He invited Brian Groshon of Casella Waste Management to join the Board for its discussion. Two factors, the expiration of the Town's contract with Casella and a change in global markets, have prompted consideration of the automated curbside collection program. Mr. Groshon explained the changes that have taken place, especially in China, that effect recycling. In addition, the only plant in this area that recycles glass closed. These changes cause an increase in cost to the Town. Automated Curbside Collection will decrease the cost because it will permit collection at the curb with less labor and less time. He explained collecting the recycling every other week will help the Town see a return on their investment of the totes. Casella has a truck with automated capability. They discussed frequency of pickup, options for the size of the carts and possible alternatives. Condos may have a different size than the rest of the town. The recycling and trash will have different color covers so they can be easily distinguished. What gets recycled will not change. Mr. Groshon had previously discussed with Paul Deschaine and Colin Laverty the possibility of opening the Transfer Station every Saturday and one night during the week for articles that don't fit in the bin. Mr. Groshon explained the costs line by line. The possibility that some residents may want to purchase a second cart was discussed. Depending on how many residents take advantage of that, it may increase costs. Mr. Deschaine suggested making it an annual fee. It is more difficult for people to abuse this system. Providing pickup to the three condo communities that currently opt out of pickup was discussed. Mr. Groshon said he would be happy to go to Town Meeting to answer residents' questions if requested by the Board.

Regarding the Bartlett-Cushman House, Mr. Moore noted that an addendum was left out of the Purchase & Sale Agreement. Town Attorney Abby Karoutas suggested ratifying the vote. Mr. Houghton made a motion to ratify the vote from February 6, 2019 and authorize the Chair to sign the addendum. Ms. Knab seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Moore has made briefly addressed the issue of assessing the IT needs of the Fire Department and the potential for enfoldng the FD systems within the Town-wide IT system. He will report back in the future. This issue was raised by Chief Larrabee at the Budget Advisory Committee hearings in January.

The Rockingham Planning Commission and the Exeter Squamscott Local Advisory Committee requested placing signs at the town landing. Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to support the sign postings at the two recommended locations on existing signposts and to work with the Town Administrator.

We received a request from a realtor to put a temporary for sale sign on Town property. The reason for the request is that the property for sale doesn't have exposure to the public. Ms. Knab made a motion to authorize Mr. Moore to write a letter to the realtor to allow the sign with conditions Mr. Moore referenced in his set-up. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Moore has had an informal request by a developer to possibly erect a fence on what will be Town property. Collectively, the board responded negatively, as the fence would have neither a functional or aesthetic purpose.

Mr. Deschaine thanked the board for hosting his retirement party.

Mr. Moore recommended increasing the line of credit on the Town's credit cards from \$15,000 to \$20,000. They discussed current practices. Mr. Houghton made a motion to increase the credit line to \$20,000 and authorize the Town Administrator to work along with the Town's financial representative to complete the documentation. Ms. Knab seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

At 9:41 pm Ms. Knab motioned to go into a non-public session to discuss personnel matters. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously. At 10:01 pm Ms. Knab made a motion to come out of the non-public session and seal the minutes. Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

At 10:01 pm Mr. Houghton made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Knab seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard  
Recording Secretary