



BOARD OF SELECTMEN
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BOARD MEETING MINUTES
November 8, 2016

Selectmen Present: Susan Silverman, Nancy Carney, Chris Holman

Ms. Silverman called the meeting to order at 2 p.m.

PRIMARY:

***** APPROVE MINUTES**
- **October 24, 2016**

Ms. Carney made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Holman seconded. Ms. Carney - Yes, Mr. Holman - Yes, Ms. Silverman - Yes. Approved – 3-0

***** APPROVE MANIFESTS**

Ms. Carney made a motion to approve the manifests. Mr. Holman seconded. Ms. Carney - Yes, Mr. Holman - Yes, Ms. Silverman - Yes. Approved – 3-0

***** REVIEW SIGNATURE FOLDER** – The Selectmen reviewed and signed.

***** CONSTRUCTION PERMITS**

Map 6, Lot 45 – Mr. Holman made a motion to approve the permit for Map 6, Lot 45. Ms. Carney seconded. Ms. Carney - Yes, Mr. Holman - Yes, Ms. Silverman - Yes. Approved – 3-0

Map 7, Lot 28 – Ms. Carney made a motion to approve the permit for Map 7, Lot 28. Mr. Holman seconded. Ms. Carney - Yes, Mr. Holman - Yes, Ms. Silverman - Yes. Approved – 3-0

Map 4, Lot 48 – Mr. Holman made a motion to approve the permit for Map 4, Lot 48. Ms. Carney seconded. Ms. Carney - Yes, Mr. Holman - Yes, Ms. Silverman - Yes. Approved – 3-0

Map 9, Lot 15 – Mr. Holman made a motion to approve the permit for Map 9, Lot 15. Ms. Carney seconded. Ms. Carney - Yes, Mr. Holman - Yes, Ms. Silverman - Yes. Approved – 3-0

***** DISCUSS COLA INCREASE**

Ms. Favreau reported that Social Security was giving a .03% COLA increase. Ms. Favreau shared that the Selectmen approved a 1% increase last year. Ms. Silverman suggested giving 0 or 1%. Ms. Silverman asked how the budgets looked and shared CIP had gone through everything and the biggest expenses were the tower and the reassessment. Ms. Favreau shared they were fine with the reassessment as \$40,000 was usually budgeted for data collection. Ms. Favreau noted there was \$40,000 and this could be put in the regular budget for this year. Ms. Favreau doesn't feel we should do another Warrant Article. The operating budget was down 3%. Ms. Favreau shared that Capital Projects was 67,300 and \$401,000 was in the Expendable Trust Fund.

Ms. Silverman asked the Selectmen what they wanted to do. Mr. Holman thought that an increase had been given for the two years that he has been on the Board. Ms. Favreau research and determined that in 2014 – 0, 2015 – 2%, and 2016 – 1% was given. Mr. Holman shared that it helped those at the top of the wage scale. Ms. Favreau shared that most stayed the same. Mr. Holman stated it helped those that were maxed out. Mr. Holman noted that for the last 2 years, taxes went down and this

year they were going up. Mr. Holman mentioned putting aside. Ms. Favreau stated it was penalizing employees for the school portion going up. Ms. Favreau noted health insurance was going up. Mr. Holman asked what the employee contribution was. Single – up \$1.19 per week - \$100/year. Ms. Silverman thought the Selectmen should do a 1% COLA increase and it was a gesture and wouldn't cover the cost of that increase.

Ms. Silverman made a motion to approve a 1% COLA increase, effective April 1st. Ms. Carney seconded. Ms. Carney - Yes, Mr. Holman - Yes, Ms. Silverman - Yes. Approved – 3-0

Ms. Favreau noted the cost to the Town was approximately \$5,000. Mr. Holman felt it was giving an increase to those that weren't doing more work. Ms. Silverman stated that if the Selectmen don't want to give an increase, they could wait and do next year. Ms. Silverman shared that it was a gesture and for those that have invested time over the years working for the Town. They were an asset to the Town. Mr. Holman stated he was of the belief that the lack of changeover could be the bigger problem.

Ms. Silverman discussed Franklin Pierce and discussion was held on what a COLA increase means to employees.

Ms. Silverman discussed Ms. Favreau being the Town Administrator and taking on meeting with Department Heads on a quarterly basis or 2-3 times per year. Ms. Silverman asked if Ms. Favreau thought it would be helpful for her to take this on to make sure everyone was on the same page. All in the room hearing the same thing and it would help Department Heads to know to forward information on to Ms. Favreau. Ms. Silverman wasn't trying to make more work for Ms. Favreau but having a face and working with the Department Heads could be a positive thing.

DISCUSS TAX RATE

Ms. Carney shared that Mr. Thomas wouldn't sign the form Thursday evening because he didn't prepare it. Ms. Favreau shared that Lee-Ann Urquhart of the DRA got a one-time permission from her supervisor to prepare the MS-434 form for us and e-mailed it to us for signature. Ms. Silverman would like a letter sent to the Water District noting the deadline for their information to be submitted to the State.

Ms. Silverman noted that we have a preliminary tax rate. Ms. Favreau had done a work-up of the rate with and without a surplus: \$28.33 with no surplus, \$28.13 with \$100,000, \$27.94 with \$150,000, \$27.74 with \$200,000 and \$27.54 with \$250,000. Ms. Favreau noted that \$818,723 remained in the fund balance. Ms. Silverman asked if some of the fund balance wasn't liquid. Ms. Favreau shared the amount was cash on hand. Discussion was held on what amount of surplus should be used. Ms. Favreau shared that \$873,835 remained from last year. Ms. Silverman reviewed the tax breakdown. Ms. Favreau shared Richmond's tax rate went down and Win Wright and Phyllis Peterson had stated that Fitzwilliam's enrollment was up. Discussion was held on local towns that want to send their children to the Monadnock Regional School District. Mr. Holman suggested going with \$250,000. The Selectmen shared they should look at the pattern. Mr. Holman noted Ms. Silverman and Ms. Carney had done a good job over the years with the budget. Discussion was held on budgets, purchasing, lowering the tax rate, number of services, and going to \$200,000 would only be \$1.03 over last year. The increase was the school district. Mr. Holman mentioned Avitar's assessment was being done and if assessments were up the tax rate would be down. Ms. Silverman and Ms. Favreau both felt that using \$250,000 was a lot of money to use. Ms. Favreau stated it was too much money. Mr. Holman thought about not having the tax rate go up so high. Ms. Silverman wanted to soften it somewhat. Ms. Favreau shared that \$250,000 could go towards a large purchase for the Town and recommended using only \$200,000. Ms. Silverman shared that the increase was coming from the school and not the Town. The Selectmen agreed that assessments, getting properties back on the tax rolls, and new construction was good for the Town. Ms. Silverman doesn't think it's a good idea to use up the fund balance to cushion the tax rate and felt that if we don't go up a bit, the illusion was that taxpayers don't need to worry, when indeed they do. Ms. Carney would like something put in the newsletter – need to show the breakdown and go back 5 years to show the pattern. Ms. Carney shared that people come to Budget and Town meetings and feel it is the only thing they can control but they really need to attend the school budget meetings.

Mr. Holman shared what he found disturbing with the school budget. Mr. Holman noted that in Vermont all schools were made environmentally friendly and to look at what happened at George Emerson Elementary, they could have done something green. Ms. Carney explained what was done at George Emerson.

Ms. Silverman made a motion to use \$200,000 from the fund balance to offset the tax rate – setting to \$27.74. Ms. Silverman shared that this was unofficial and shouldn't be discussed. Mr. Holman seconded. Ms. Carney - Yes, Mr. Holman - Yes, Ms. Silverman - Yes. Approved – 3-0

The Selectmen agreed that a newsletter article should be done, once the tax rate has been approved. Ms. Favreau shared that it would be the January newsletter.

SIGN PERMIT APPLICATION

Map 32, Lot 38 – Mr. Holman made a motion to approve the sign permit for Map 32, Lot 38. Ms. Carney seconded. Ms. Carney - Yes, Mr. Holman - Yes, Ms. Silverman - Yes. Approved – 3-0

*** **REVIEW PERSONNEL POLICY CHANGE**

Ms. Silverman reviewed the current vacation request policy. Ms. Silverman thought that most people who were going to take more than 5 days should know in advance. The Selectmen discussed whether they needed 14 days in advance, consequences if not done, and enforcement of the policy. Ms. Silverman shared these were the Administrators. Mr. Holman would like the Land Use office included. Ms. Silverman shared they were looking at the key positions: Town Administrator, Chief of Police and the Road Agent. They can delegate but it would be useful for the Selectmen to know and if there was no enforcement – why do we approve. Mr. Holman stated it was just as important in the other office. Ms. Favreau shared there was a separate policy for employees. Ms. Silverman shared this was for anyone requesting more than 5 days off in advance. Ms. Silverman doesn't feel it was unreasonable. Discussion was held on what was needed in the policy, and a request received less than 14 days in advance - may or may not be approved. Ms. Favreau shared the change would also list the number of days.

Ms. Favreau reviewed the policy for employees. Ms. Carney suggested having a form that the Selectmen approve. The Selectmen agreed that 14 days in advance wasn't unreasonable. Ms. Favreau would do a memo with the policy change and the vacation request form. Discussion was held on whether the Town Clerk and Tax Collector should be included in the policy and the Selectmen agreed to take them out as they were protected by RSA and both have deputies.

Ms. Silverman asked that a memo be sent to all employees that are eligible for vacation and noted it would be best for Ms. Favreau to help the Selectmen write a letter to send out to each employee and Department Heads, indicating what the policy was and asking them to follow it. Ms. Silverman noted if violations of the policy come to their attention, they would need to deal with it. Mr. Holman stated it was most important from the standpoint of the Department Head - if there were activities that needed to be filled during that absence. Ms. Silverman suggested that as part of the form to ask how duties would be handled, if needed. Ms. Silverman stated 30 days was a lot and do the Selectmen want to look at 14 days as well. Ms. Carney and Ms. Silverman asked where the 30 days came from. Ms. Favreau stated she wasn't sure. Ms. Silverman thought that writing a letter to Department Heads was a better way to handle. Ms. Favreau suggested that once the Department Heads approve the vacation request, it needed to be forwarded to the Selectmen's Office. Mr. Holman stated he would expect the same thing from the Police Department, if someone was sick – we should be notified. Mr. Holman discussed his experience at a Library event.

The Selectmen asked Ms. Favreau and Ms. White to work on the vacation request form. The Selectmen agreed that having the employees sign a form that they have read and understand the policy changes, gives them something to enforce.

*** **REVIEW BTLA APPEAL**

Ms. Favreau shared this was a timber tax appeal and she needed to return the documents. Ms. Favreau asked the Selectmen if they wanted Charles Koch to represent them. Mr. Holman asked how Mr. Koch was in a court room environment and what his rate was. Ms. Silverman explained what happens during the hearing. Ms. Silverman shared that it would take approximately 2 months to reach a decision. Mr. Holman asked if we meet with Donna Hill, do we meet with Mr. Koch as well. Mr. Holman asked about the cost. Ms. Favreau stated Mr. Koch charged \$90 an hour. Ms. Favreau shared that Mr. Koch reviewed what Ms. Hill had submitted. Ms. Silverman suggested the Selectmen meet with Mr. Koch first as she was concerned with him saying that it seemed reasonable to him. Ms. Favreau shared that she had talked with Ms. Hill because she mentioned in her documents that the Selectmen didn't issue an abatement. Ms. Hill thought it was only for the cordwood and didn't realize the grade was reduced. Ms. Favreau shared with Ms. Hill the lowest that it would go down was 50% and Ms. Hill would be fine with that. Ms. Favreau would have to redo the worksheet to come up with the amount. Mr. Holman asked what the cost for the Town would be versus giving an abatement at 50%. Ms. Favreau shared what the difference would be per species of wood and noted she would need to redo the worksheet. The Selectmen reviewed Ms. Hill's application. Ms. Favreau shared the Town has a 30 day deadline in which to respond. Ms. Carney questioned if we would end up paying more or doing the abatement. Mr. Holman stated we were almost at the point to give the abatement and asked if Mr. Koch was aware of this. Ms. Favreau would have a discussion with Mr. Koch to determine what his recommendation would be and we would need something to back up his recommendation. Mr. Holman asked to find out Mr. Koch's rate and determine if he would be comfortable going to Court.

*** **REVIEW BUDGETS**

- **Highway & Transfer Station**
- **Supervisors of Checklist**
- **Town Clerk**
- **Tax Collector**

The Selectmen reviewed and discussed the following budgets:

Ms. Favreau shared that the budget Mr. Cuomo submitted was before he had made cuts and the final approved budget was \$430,607 and if you take the lease payment of \$19,000 out – his budget actually went up. Ms. Favreau shared that Mr. Cuomo usually comes back in and make cuts, as well as prepayments.

Ms. Carney shared that things were down because we don't have 5 elections.

Ms. Carney reported that the Library Trustees came back in to meet with the Budget Committee as they had talked with Terry Knowles. The Selectmen were blamed again for the wage scale. Ms. Favreau shared that they constantly say salaries were up because of the Selectmen. Ms. Carney shared they have increased their hours and it wasn't a change in salary but the fact that they have had additional hours.

***** DISCUSS GENERAL GOVERNMENT BUILDING CIP**

Ms. Favreau shared the elevator was inspected and didn't pass. The Inspector said it drifts when going down. Ms. Favreau has a call into the elevator company but they are so busy that they are not even able to schedule a time to look at it. Ms. Favreau called another company and they no longer service this brand of elevator. It was thought to be a valve issue, which was a major cost. Ms. Silverman asked Ms. Favreau to schedule an assessment of the repair and get an estimate on the cost to replace. Mr. Holman shared it was important especially if there were less people to fix it.

Mr. Holman asked if it didn't pass – can't officially use it. Ms. Favreau shared the Inspector shut the elevator down. Mr. Holman asked about having meetings upstairs. Ms. Carney shared that if there are meetings, they would need to be held downstairs. Ms. Favreau shared the repair needed to be done by the time of the Town meeting and she had relayed that information to the elevator company. Discussion was held on having a monitor on the first floor. The Selectmen agreed they needed to look at all options. Ms. Favreau would call and get a ball park figure for replacement. Mr. Holman mentioned that he sat next to someone from L-Chip – there might be grants available as it is a historical building.

Mr. Holman asked if the Town Hall painting would be done this year or would they wait until next year. Ms. Favreau shared it was only the back, they were doing a side a year. Ms. Silverman asked for it to be submitted to CIP. Ms. Favreau shared next year would be a good year to do as Dennis Wright would have a lift for work that he was doing on the Church and it would cost us less to do at the same time. Ms. Silverman asked to submit it to CIP for this year or next.

***** DISPOSAL OF GARAGE DOOR AND OPENER**

Ms. Favreau shared that Mr. Cuomo had someone that was interested in the old garage door from Meadowood. The Selectmen agreed to charge \$50.

***** NON-PUBLIC SESSION – RSA 91-A:3 II(c)**

At 3:32 p.m. Ms. Silverman made a motion to go into non-public session under RSA 91-A:3 II(c). Ms. Carney seconded and the motion passed 3-0. Roll Call vote: Ms. Carney - Yes, Mr. Holman - Yes, Ms. Silverman - Yes.

At 3:33 p.m. Ms. Silverman made a motion to leave non-public session and seal the minutes as disclosure would adversely affect the reputation of the person other than a member of the board. Ms. Carney seconded and the motion passed 3-0. Roll Call vote: Ms. Carney - Yes, Mr. Holman - Yes, Ms. Silverman - Yes.

OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Favreau had sent the Fire Wards a memo requesting them to schedule a time to meet with the Selectmen.

Ms. Silverman shared that the Elliot Institute had amended their membership policy to allow that 3 people from Fitzwilliam could serve or 1 could be from Cheshire County. Ms. Silverman noted that Denise Nolan had agreed to serve. Ms. Favreau shared that Bill Davis mentioned that their records indicated that Carolyn Edwards had been appointed as a member. Ms. Favreau asked if Ms. Edwards was interested would the Selectmen appoint her. Ms. Silverman shared that it needed to be someone that Mr. Davis could work with.

Mr. Holman asked if someone would be hired to handle welfare assistance. Mr. Holman was concerned with Ms. Favreau handling that in her role as the Town Administrator. Ms. Silverman shared that the Town Administrator has served in that role before. Mr. Holman shared that he had read through all of the rules and if someone would go back were we leaving ourselves open. Mr. Holman noted we have rules for Jaffrey but didn't see where the Selectmen had approved. Ms. Favreau stated that if it started getting busy she would contact Mary Drew to see if she was open to coming back. Mr. Holman stated he felt there was a backlog of things that administratively needed to be taken care of. Ms. Silverman noted this wasn't the kind of position that you could advertise in the paper. Ms. Favreau shared that town's use Welfare Officer's working in another town. Mr. Holman suggested calling the Keene Shelter. Ms. Favreau would asked Heidi Wood, who Richmond used as their Welfare Officer.

Ms. Favreau requested vacation on Thursday. The Selectmen approved.

ON-GOING BUSINESS

Ms. Silverman made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:38 p.m. Ms. Carney seconded and the motion passed. 3-0

Submitted by:

Sheryl White
Secretary to the Board of Selectmen

Susan Silverman, Chairman

Nancy Carney, Vice Chairman

Chris Holman
Board of Selectmen