



Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes

March 13, 2024

The meeting started at 5:00 p.m. with Marybeth Quill, Karl Pruter and Bob Hamilton present. Marybeth motioned to enter non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-B, seconded by Karl, and the motion passed 3-0.

Marybeth re-opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Marybeth Quill, Chair, Karl Pruter, Vice Chair, Bob Hamilton, Selectman, Lori Rautiola, Town Administrator, & Members of the public

Marybeth motioned to seal the non-public session, until six months from March 13, 2024, pursuant to RSA 91-B. Bob seconded the motion, and the motion passed 3-0.

Selectmen's Announcements: Town Election Results from March 12, 2024. Karl announced that the budget passed. Bob announced that there were two contested races, Doug Hoyt won Cemetery Trustee and Tom Coneys won as Selectmen. Congratulations were given by the board. Karl Pruter thanked Mary Beth for running and taking the time as a full time student and then nurse, Bob agreed and said that he appreciates it as well. Bob announced that the Jaffrey-Rindge Cooperative School District will be holding their 2025 deliberative session in February, please attend this meeting. Bob announced that Maple Sugar weekend is March 16-17 and to please support the local maple sugar houses by buying your maple syrup and maple products here in Rindge.

Consent Agenda: Payroll & Accounts Payable for 3.7.2024, 3.14.2024 and Meeting Minutes for 2.28.2024. Marybeth made a motion to accept the consent agenda as written. Karl seconded the motion and it passed 3-0

Citizens Forum: Judy Unger-Clark made a comment that the Jaffrey-Rindge School Board has been awarded as school board of the year in New Hampshire.

Old Business:

ARPA Updates: Discussion on the balance. Lori Rautiola, Laurie May, and Rick Donovan had met to discuss. Copies of the spreadsheet were given to the board. Lori stated that they will be reporting on April 1st for the year ending 2023 and there was only one invoice from the Fire Department Water System that they did not have on hand that Rick will be getting. After a review of the numbers, the remaining balance for the ARPA Funds was found to be \$89,305.37. The amount includes the SCBA's. Karl stated that there were two items listed that have not been expended. First is a fire department shelter canopy that was previously approved by the board and Rick is planning on purchasing. Second, a replacement for the brush truck replacement which was not approved so was left on the list and not deducted. The funds need to be obligated by the end of 2024. Other projects and line items were discussed that were overall under budget from last year. The brush truck replacement and a DPW well project were discussed but will not be covered by the current funds that are available. Mary Beth stated that she would prefer to underspend the funds instead of overspend the account.

Public Hearing:

Unanticipated Revenue for the NH Moose Plates: Lori stated that the town received their first check for \$10,000 for the Moose Plates grant program, the town had to seclude that to one portion of the LCHIP Grant and the Meeting House Oversight Committee decided to put that directly towards the horse sheds which will cost about \$20,000 for the painting. Lori requested a motion to accept the revenue in the amount of \$10,000. Lori clarified that there will be \$10,000 more awarded from the Moose Plates grant program but it cannot be received until after the project is complete and her and Mike are working to get the RFP completed for the Meeting House and horse sheds and they should be putting it out to bid by the beginning of April and they are hoping to start as early as June. Marybeth made a motion to accept the unanticipated revenue in the amount of \$10,000 from the Moose Plates Grant Program as pursuant to RSA-31:95b. The motion was seconded by Karl and passed 3-0.

New Business:

Donation from the Rindge Historical Society:

A discussion was had among the board regarding the donation. Mary Beth states that she discussed this with Laurie and she does not remember it being brought up and Bob states that he remembers there was money that was mentioned at a meeting but that was it. Karl stated that he had brought it up at meeting and he believes Karla McCloud had brought it up at one point and that they had talked about a possible TV for the selectmen's room at some point and they had been offered a donation from the Rindge Historical Society up to \$1000 for the TV and possible equipment that could supplement the TV. A purchase was made through the town of a 75-inch TV. Lori stated that Karla had asked for a purchase to be made for the TV and the historical society would then reimburse the money. Mary Beth stated that this should have been brought before the entire board and approved by the board as a purchase before the purchase took place. Karl stated that he would take responsibility for pushing the purchase forward and he personally guarantees that the money will be there. Karl explained that in terms of the TV being a grant he moved forward with that because they wanted to find out how much it would cost and that he got ahead of himself and apologizes for the purchase. Bob stated that the board had not approved of a TV being placed in the selectmen's room and that the board had not agreed that the selectmen's room needed a TV. Karl stated that it had been discussed and Mary Beth agreed but re-stated that it was not agreed upon by the board.

Karla stated that the historical society voted to donate a TV in memory of Amy Raymond for the Selectmen's Room so if they do not want it for the selectmen's room then it needs to be revisited, and that Amy Raymond was a valued member of the community. Bob stated that the thought of the donation is greatly appreciated but they should have discussed and decided beforehand as a board. Bob stated that they will have to make a decision under Unanticipated Revenue RSA-31:95b acceptance for the TV that was donated. He stated that the process was ultimately done backwards, and the donation should have been brought forward to the board to accept or reject the donation and then have the historical society donate the TV based upon the approved location and size. Mary Beth stated that there is a process that should be in place and that is in place that should be followed. Bob asks Karla and Karl that the historical society should bring this to the board for acceptance.

Karl stated that they will revisit this and have a presentation of the proposal and where the TV would go. The 75-inch TV that has been already purchased will fit in the proposed corner with some inches to spare. Karl explained that the reasoning for the 75-inch TV versus a smaller one was so that documents that are being presented can be read from the other side of the room, the 75-inch TV was only marginally more expensive compared to the 65-inch TV. Bob stated that a discussion for the necessity of a TV needs to happen as the town has been able to project presentations beforehand when others bring in projectors. Karl stated that the use of a TV for presentations is becoming more ubiquitous due to the ability to have different connections and have people be present remotely.

There was further discussion about an alternative site for the TV and the advisability of live streaming. Further detail given below:

Jim Qualey asked about the return policy of the TV which Karl responded to, saying that it would not be an issue. Deb Qualey asked whether the TV would be used to record or livestream meetings to attend remotely. Karl stated that if it is agreed to by the board that it is possible to livestream and recordings would be posted to the website. Deb Qualey questioned the position of the potential camera and her concerns of facing the audience. Karl pointed out that there are multiple locations that cameras could go and said that the Jaffrey Fire Station has a very simple but effective set up so that they can record the meetings which opens the meetings up to the wider public so that people can see. Deb Qualey said that some people may not want their face broadcasted because once it is out there it cannot be taken back, so she has concerns about privacy issues.

Mary Beth brings up the cost of livestreaming and concerns with how expensive it will be and that there has never been a consensus among the board on having anything streamed. Mary Beth also reiterates her concerns with privacy and restates that the board has never agreed to a TV in the selectmen's room or livestreaming meetings. Karl responds stating that the proposal does not include livestreaming or video. Roni Hamilton addresses Mary Beth and thanks her for everything that she said and that she agrees with her stance. Roni then states that she understands that the donation was for the selectmen's room but at the Recreation Department there have been various meetings, including ones for the Conservation Commission, Planning Board, and Board of Selectmen, and she believes that the TV would be more beneficial there and would be used by the kids as well so the Recreation Center is by far the place for the TV to go, not here at the Town Office. Mary Beth then states that she agrees and thinks that Dan Bemis would agree as well because there are after-school programs and school vacation programs that she is sure that the Recreation Department would appreciate it and could still be used by many boards. Bob states that they could also do presentations at that location. Mary Beth then states that they can always change their venue whenever they want to and many more people could utilize the TV there.

Judy Unger-Clark stated that pandemic has taught us that being able to access public events remotely is important, and says that the perfect example in this area is the school board because they post their minutes and video of the meeting to their webpage. She then states that as for worrying about your face and personnel being publicized that there is no limitation legally in public places to record and that with the ARPA funds and the TV that has been donated that there is the financial ability in the selectmen's room for open access for anyone to see a meeting being held if the board chooses to have it as a live broadcast. Judy states that it is a very important thing for any person like the elderly or those do not like to drive at night to have the access. Judy then states that it is a lovely thing to have this donation, especially in the name of Amy Raymond, and that it is an important thing to have in the selectmen's room.

Phyllis McKoon brought up her concerns with legality and the potential need for signed consent forms. Kelen Geiger brought up her concerns of the additional costs of the TV and wanting to know the costs of setup for livestreaming and/or recording. Kelen also states that she believes it would be much better at the Recreation Center because it could be used there if there were any big meetings and it would be great for the kids. Mary Beth states that she believes more people could utilize the donation at the Recreation Center and that donations are wonderful, especially in memory of others, but they always have to look at what the next step is and who has to supply the money for the next step. Karl then states that the money for the next step has been supplied because the TV was well under the \$1000 donation. He then states that they have priced out cameras and have talked to people who have priced good cameras for the room and where they would want them or if they want them so extra auxiliary equipment is already covered. Mary Beth states that checking into whether the TV can be returned and what the return policy is. Karl said that he guarantees the funds.

Roni Hamilton then stated that multiple times in the past the topic of livestreaming and/or recording has been brought up and has been rejected because people want their privacy. She then states that we have minutes and we currently record the sound for the meeting and anyone can come in to the office with a flash drive and have a copy of the recording. She also explains that just because Jaffrey and New Ipswich have cameras does not mean that Rindge has to as well. Judy Unger-

Clark then states that as a photographer she is well aware that for public photography, anyone that is plainly visible from a public space may be photographed and the right to photograph is protected under the first amendment which is the law. Mary Beth then agrees with her but counters that just because it is legal does not mean that the residents of Rindge want that and that Town Hall is their building. Judy Unger-Clark then states that they may be jumping to far ahead. Mary Beth agrees with her and says that it is a discussion on it. Jim Qualey then states that it is a matter of state law that for a public meeting anyone is welcome to the meeting and has a right to record the meeting and take notes however they wish, it does not mean the town has to do it but the public can.

Karla then states that at Candidates Night several people who talked about greater visibility and the way that the school board has their meetings visible to everybody and she thought this was a wonderful way to honor Amy because she was the secretary for the Selectmen and was in this building. Amy Raymond was also the town historian and supervisor of the checklist, and worked for Town Hall for decades and was associated with the selectmen which was the reasoning for having the TV in the selectmen's room.

Bob then made one final point that the schoolboard recording their meetings could be due to the fact that they have had public hearings at the school in Jaffrey and then locked the doors to the building and people were unable to get into the building for the public hearing. Bob states that Karl, Mary Beth, Tom Coneys, and Roberta Oeser were all not able to get into the meeting on time.

Welfare - Social Agency Support Recommendations:

Mary Drew addresses the board and provides them a spreadsheet of the trends starting from 2018 of what was requested and what was funded. She states that typically, for the past 5 or 6 years or so that it has been funded around 50% across the board last year (2023) except for the smaller agencies. This is not a request for more money but to have the board go over the requests for the year. The agencies cannot come up with an identifier of the people that are served in Rindge, and she wasn't looking for an identifier but she did want to know the formula of how they come up with the number for the request that they are saying they provide for services to the town, and she challenges that. Mary Drew explains that most municipalities that she is aware of support the majority of the non-profits that she has listed except for the ones that are specific to Jaffrey or Rindge. It has been historical that municipalities support these agencies and is a part of the agencies fundraising and sustainability plans to seek funding from different towns. She states that she does not know of any town that pays 100% of the requests from the five towns she had done welfare for.

Mary Drew points out that if the agency knows that a municipality is not supporting them they may put the applications coming from that town to the bottom of the list. Mary Beth expresses her concern with this and why they would want to support agencies that are supposed to be charitable and helping others but are potentially committing extortion. Mary Drew then clarifies that she has never seen this take place and she has not done this when she was working with an agency but she has heard it happens, so there is a potential of this happening. She then provides an explanation that no matter what the town is on the hook either way for helping people that cannot afford to put fuel in their tank, pay an electric bill, get behind on their rent, or have mental health or substance abuse issues that they cannot afford a therapist for. Bob then asks of the approximately 6,500 residents how many people or households request aide from Mary. Mary responds that on average there are about 28 households a year that request aide which is down significantly because in the past the average was around 55 households a year with many of them requesting aide more than once.

Bob then asks Mary whether the 10 charities that the town supports or partially supports provide adequate services for the people of Rindge. Mary responds that Monadnock Family Services (MFS) is a particularly important service because they help with mental health and substance abuse issues which strongly affects every day functioning and they are one of the only ones that supports this area. Lori then asks Mary how much she would recommend this year to support the agencies. Mary stated that she would recommend to fund everyone at 50% because there are only 16 agencies and about \$30,000 a year in requests, which is the same recommendation as last year percentage wise. There was an increase in the dollar amount for some of the requests due to budget increases and revenue decreases compared to previous years.

Mary Beth addresses Mary that for all these places that she wants the town to support with the \$16,810 that has been allotted and they guarantee they will all serve at least some portion of our population but we do not know exactly how many for many of the agencies and some of them will report to the town and some of them will not report to the town. Mary states that they typically list in their letters a breakdown of the number of the residents that were served is given and their request is not aligned with the number of people they served in the previous year but is aligned for per person of the town's population. Mary then states that she is able to get a good idea of where she sends or refers people to when they apply. Bob states that it would be great if there was more accountability on the reporting from the agencies on how many people they serve. Mary Beth then adds that knowing what the services are that they provide to those people would be appreciated as well.

Further discussion of potential presentation in 2024 by the funded social agencies:

Lori states that many towns require that the agencies come in and give a presentation before budget season. Mary Beth then adds that this has been discussed before and she believes that would be a great idea to implement moving forward so that people in town can see the breakdown and see who we are supporting because this is the townspeople's money and we should be able to ask questions and get answers to how their money is being spent. Lori states that many towns even put all the social agencies on a warrant article so that it is more transparent to the voters on where the money is going. Mary Beth states that the board and the budget advisory committee (BAC) could get together with the public for more transparency. Mary then states that the process would be first submitting an application then sitting in front of the budget committee to answer questions, the BAC would then come to a decision, they would then go in front of the board of selectmen and they would then make a decision, and then they would present to the Town Meeting and that Jaffrey received some complaints on this process so they adopted Peterborough's process.

Mary Beth stated that moving forward something needs to be adopted by the town in order to move forward with these agencies and they should justify the money they are asking for. Bob states that between the BAC and Select Board it should be about a 5 to 10 minute presentation. Mary Drew states that it is typically a 5 minute presentation and 5 minutes for questions. Lori then states that September would be a good month to have the agencies come present because the town usually receives the letters through August and September. Mary recommends looking into Peterborough's process. Mary states that they do not go in front of the budget committee in Jaffrey anymore but in front of a separate committee that consists of two budget people, one select person, a public member, and a business person and she is unsure whether it is a public meeting. Mary suggests to the board to draft a letter that she could present to the agencies requesting the formula for how they are coming up with the request because she was unable to receive that information and the board may be able to pull more weight. Lori asks the board whether everyone is in agreement with how Mary designates the money and Bob states that it is already in the budget for this coming year so needs to be dispersed but for the following year a presentation and a small committee of people to figure out numbers so that it is all set beforehand.

Abatements:

Map 17 Lot 21 (84 Lachance Drive) – Avatar, our contracted assessing firm, was in line with the current assessment and has denied the abatement request so Bob recommended to go along with Avatar's decision. Bob made a motion to deny the abatement for Map 17 Lot 21, Mary Beth seconded the motion, and the motion passed 3-0.

Map 6 Lot 81-8 (44 Butternut Lane) – filed for an abatement because the square footage of the home was measured incorrectly on the assessment so Avatar went out and took the square footage of the living area and found that their measurements were less than assessed area so they diminished the value of the property by \$29,700. Bob made a motion to grant the abatement of reducing the assessment of the property by \$29,700, Karl seconded the motion, and the motion passed 3-0.

Informational Items, Communications and Updates:

Power Committee Meeting: Bob made an announcement that the Power Committee met on Friday, March 8th to review

the goals that the selectmen had for them and as a recap of the Zoom meeting with the Community Power Coalition of NH, Dan Bissex and himself attended via Zoom and received answers on how to get on to the program if you wish. CPCNH offers to Cheshire County residents that they can all be members but the trouble was figuring out how to become a member but he now has the answer. To become a member you go to nhenergy.com - go to pick an energy provider - choose community power coalition of NH if you wish – under the dropdown for municipality you check off Cheshire County – and sign up from there. This is voluntary and available to every resident in Cheshire County now. We have been waiting to see what the rates would turn out to be and CPCNH offers a rate that is a miniscule amount lower than the rate Eversource offers, there is one other company that offers a lower rate. All of these options are available. The bottom line was that the committee has not come to a consensus of whether we should force people to opt in or out and currently the public has the option to do either. Their thought was they want to better inform the public of how to enroll in the program and decide the best process to do so.

Car Registration Notification: Bob states that from his understanding that the public is being notified of needing their car registration renewed only via their email and it is being sent from an outside source (eb2gov) and is not from the town clerk's email address so the email goes into spam/junk which means many residents do not know if their registrations are lapsing. Bob recommends that we should continue to send letters to Rindge residents via US Mail to notify them that their car registration is about to expire because the date varies and is not always on the owner's birthday month.

Lori thanks Mary Beth for her service to the town.

The meeting was adjourned by Mary Beth at 7:27 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Victoria Stenersen
Executive Secretary