



BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MEETING MINUTES  
December 16, 2020

CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Chair, Roberta Oeser, called the meeting to order via Zoom in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04 on December 16, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. Roll call vote: Roberta Oeser, Chair, Bob Hamilton and Karl Pruter, Selectmen  
Also present: Sara Gravell, Town Administrator, Laurie May, Finance Director, Lori Rautiola, Executive Secretary, Members of the Community

GENERAL BUSINESS

**Selectmen's Announcements:** Bob stated Roberta Oeser received the Citizen of the year Award and it was well deserved. Roberta thanked Bob and stated the Town's employees have done an amazing job this year with COVID. Roberta announced the senior dinner was great, there was a plentiful amount of volunteers to deliver the meals to the senior residents and all enjoyed it.

**Citizen's Forum:** Holly Koski noted people were asking on her Life in Rindge Facebook Page about the cemetery being gated. Roberta noted the cemeteries are always closed at dusk. Chief Anair added the cemeteries are not plowed or maintained during the winter months when snow is on the ground.

**Consent Agenda - Approval of:**

- Minutes 12/2/2020,
- Payroll 12/10/2020, 12/17/2020
- Accounts Payable 12/10/2020, 12/17/2020

Karl made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Bob seconded the motion with one condition: to withhold the check to the County until the TANS funds are available. The motion passed unanimously. Roll call vote approved 3-0.

Roberta noted the closing documents for the TANS application have been completed. Karl made a motion to approve the TANS Application closing documents. Bob seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Roll call vote 3-0.

Roberta mentioned the Board will close the Town Office early on Christmas and New Year's Eve and the transfer station will close at 3 p.m. on those days. Karl made a Motion to close early on Christmas and New Year's Eve. Bob seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Roll call vote Approved 3-0

#### **Public Hearing:**

Roberta opened the public hearing at 6:15 p.m. Roberta stated the hearing was to accept unanticipated revenue in the amount of \$2, 017, associated with the 2021 Volunteer Fire Assistance Funds for Forests and Lands (VFA). The Town would be responsible for a 50% match. This grant will provide forestry equipment and gear that will assist with fire suppression. Chief Donovan stated the grant is available each year and the Department is looking to replace some of the old hoses and adapters. This will allow Rindge and surrounding towns to be able to connect to the same equipment no matter which town responds to the mutual aid call, they will be able to connect with the same connections and equipment.

Roberta questioned if the 50% match was included in the Department's budget. Rick stated it was in the budget, however, this was one of the items on the wish list he was hoping would be covered by the unanticipated revenue. Bob asked if the volunteer time is counted towards the 50% match. Rick stated it was not and Ron Osimo's volunteer time will go under the FEMA grant. Roberta opened the hearing to the public. Tom Coneys had his hand up but could not comment due to technical difficulties. Roberta closed the public hearing. Bob made a motion to accept the unanticipated revenue in the amount of \$2,017.00 under RSA 31:95 B and RSA 21: P 43. Roberta seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Roll call vote 3-0.

#### **Old Business:**

Code Enforcement Updates: Sara stated a letter was drafted for the Sunridge Drive Camper permit and will be mailed out soon. Bob noted the feather flag near DTS Tire was still up and asked Sara to draft a letter to inform them of the second violation. The Board unanimously agreed to send a second letter to inform the owner of the violation.

#### **New Business:**

State Police MOU: Chief Dan Anair had a Memorandum of Understanding with the State Police that needed a signature from the Board. The MOU would be set in place so that in the event of the Department being short staffed, due to Covid sickness and quarantine, they can call upon the State Police as a backup. Bob thanked Chief Anair for the taking the time and adding the pre-cautionary measures to ensure the safety of the Town. Bob made a motion to approve the MOU with the amended dates. Karl seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Roll call vote 3-0.

Intent to Cut: an intent to cut for Map 9/17 has been submitted. Karl made a motion to approve the intent to cut on map 9-17. Bob seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Roll call vote 3-0.

Delinquent dog licenses: Roberta noted the Town Clerk spent a couple hundred dollars on postage for dog licensing. Due to Covid and people having a rough year financially and not being able to enter public places, Roberta suggested the Board waive the late charges associated with the dog licenses. The dog owners must still pay the license fee for 2020, however, the Town Clerk is asking people to pay when they come into register their dogs for 2021. Bob added the State mandates the Town to collect dog licenses and due to Covid people have not been able to bring their dogs to the vet; adding, the State

should be taking the burden, not putting the burden on the Towns. Roberta also noted due to Covid, the Town could not have the rabies clinic which is when many residents get their dogs licensed. Bob made a motion to relinquish the fines for 2020 dog licenses and requested that people pay the fee next year when there is an availability for licensing. Karl seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Roll Call vote 3-0.

Tax Payment Plan: Roberta stated the owners of Map 6 Lot 54/1-3 have requested a continuation on the payment plan and have agreed to have it paid in full within the next couple of months. Bob made a motion to approve the payment plan for Map 6 Lot 54/1-3. Karl seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Budget Advisory Committee Recommendations: Chairman, Phil Motta stated the Committee spent a lot of time with the budget; adding they agreed to hold the budget at a 3% increase of what it was prior, plus the Consolidated Bond payment which brought the budget total to \$4,484,250,.

The Committee's recommendations were as follows: Fund the ninth officer for the Police Department within the budget. Cut the request for increased hours for the Planning Board (\$11,000). It was noted the highway paving line increase seemed rather significant. The Committee would like to cut \$43,000 from that line. Phil mentioned the Committee liked the idea of having the line item for "gravel roads" so people can see how much money goes into the gravel roads, however they agreed on a \$7,000 figure. The Committee would like to get 1% back from the Fire Department bottom line budget and to see the Police Department make some purchases with the money left over this year in order to save money and not include it in the 2021 budget.

Phil stated on behalf of the Committee, due to the rising increase of wages and benefits the Committee requests in the future the Board thoroughly and thoughtfully considers the impact over time when a Department request is made taking a part time position to a full time position. The Committee's goal is to put forth a budget that is reasonable and one the voters will pass. Their concern is if the budget is too high, the voters will turn it down. Karl stated these are good concerns and need to be addressed individually. Bob mentioned if we do not reduce the budget and the voters turn it down, it will be up to the Selectmen and Department heads to make the cuts. Bob added the town is clearly over budget on the recommendations.

Roberta stated the total increase in the budget is \$260,000, of which \$208,000 is benefits and wages which includes the additional ninth officer. Three major increases that are out of the Board's control are the health insurance increasing to over \$32,000, retirement up to \$54,000 and the additional ninth Police officer would cost about \$60,000. Without the bond payment for consolidated, the operating budget has an increase of just \$51,000. Roberta stated the request for the cut to the pavement line is at odds with the Capital Improvement Plan. The CIP plan is to increase paving line each year by \$50,000 which has only been done the last two years. Roberta noted it is hard to find a couple hundred thousand dollars to cut out of a budget when the operating budget has only increased by \$50,000. Roberta added this year's budget is very tough, especially with the consolidated bond payment and increased property values, however, we cannot cut \$100,000 from the budget when all but \$50,000 is out of our control.

Fire Chief Rick Donovan concurred stating we are going through tough times, however, the Fire Department has held the budget almost flat for the past few years and has awarded the Town with several grants. He continued stating the Department has done a tremendous job keeping cost down and

keeping up with today's technology. Chief Donovan stated he was unhappy with the request to cut the Department's budget; adding, for the amount of money the Fire Department has brought the Town in grants it is miniscule to ask for a 1% budget cut especially when the Department's call volume is up at 800 calls per year. Roberta concurred with Chief Donovan, adding it was obscene to ask our Fire Department to fund the additional police officer.

Chief Donovan stated with respect to the Board members and Committee members, operating costs are up and we are in the middle of a pandemic, however, this does not reduce the Police and Fire Departments budgets, in fact, they will increase. The Chief continued stating the calls are not going away and to take money away from the budgets is the wrong thing to do. He stated he would like the Select Board and BAC to stand up and educate and inform the voters with a statement letting them know there are increased costs, however, the amount of money we have received back this year (\$147,000) that went towards salaries that was already budgeted in July, was a great amount of unanticipated revenue. We should let the voters know there is some off set revenues coming back to the town in 2021 as well.

Tom Coneys stated even the default budget will be a large budget due to the consolidated bond. Tom added the Committee is on the same page as the Select Board and added it is going to be a tough year. Phil Motta agreed that all the Department's requests were not frivolous.

There was discussion on the added hours for the Planning Board secretary and Town Clerk Deputy. Holly Koski stated in years past the Planning Board's budget has been over \$100,000, and having Kirk Stenerson as a part time director has saved the Town a substantial amount of money. With the planning secretary's absence due to illness, the Department suffered overwhelmingly and work was not completed and still has not been able to catch up on things that are very important to functionality of the Town. Holly stated it was ridiculous to ask the Planning Department to cut the \$11,000 from such a low budget already, especially since we have saved so much money having Kirk as the Director. Karl noted it was his understanding the additional hours would be temporary until Kim gets up to speed on the Planning Secretary roll.

Library Director, Donna Stratiff thanked everyone for working so hard on the budget and supported Police Chief Anair's thoughts adding, she understood the need for the additional officer due to the lack of manpower. Donna continued stating the rising healthcare costs and retirement are going to continue to deteriorate the funds the Town has. The costs take up such a large portion of the operating budgets and it seems the problem will continue to get worse. Donna mentioned it will not be an easy decision. Everyone agreed.

Tom Coneys stated the Committee was very concerned with the budget going to default and the impact it would have on the departments. Tom stated he was on board with Chief Anair and Chief Donovan but a default budget would not be good. Tom stated he did not like making cuts and questioned if it would it be a possibility to cut a small chunk of the trainings line from the Fire budget since Covid is still around for at least another 6 months. Rick responded he would take a closer look at the training line.

Roberta noted at the Dec. 15<sup>th</sup> meeting the Board agreed to dispense the unanticipated revenue funds to purchase the CAD system upgrade for the Police Department, funds for new simulation guns, and funds for new servers for Police and Fire. The Board also agreed to fund a new webpage for the Town.

Cheryl McCabe Charron asked for clarification on the Fire Department trainings. Chief Donovan explained the cost of training is \$1,100-\$1,600. This does not pay for the hours spent at training sessions. The Town pays for the hours spent at training and in return the new trainees commit to work for the Town for one year. He explained the process to bring certified employees on and the total (between \$20-30,000) to get them certified. The Department needs to manage the cost of the trainings and be able to balance the trainings and maintain an adequate staff. Karl noted the salaries are hard to control and supported the trainings and mentioned it is critical to keep up with the roster.

Bob stated as Ex Officio on the BAC, the Committee was in support of all the Department requests. He noted residents are not happy with their assessments and tax bills increasing this year, adding he was concerned with the budget going to a default budget. He continued stating the Town cannot keep cutting the operating budget, and unfortunately as an unpleasant alternative, the wages, benefits and salaries would need to be cut. Bob continued stating he was nervous of where the state of the Town will be if they cannot get a budget passed. Roberta agreed, adding the budget does cover the needs of the Town without a surplus.

**Informational Items/Communications & Updates:** Sara noted the latest consolidated update has been posted and Wellington Bridge project is out to bid. Karl added Consolidated is in the testing process.

Roberta mentioned she spoke with the moderator, Charlie Eicher, and the Deliberative Session will be held in public as usual with the option to ZOOM, however, in order to vote at the Deliberative residents will need to be present to check in with the Supervisors of the Checklist. The Deliberative Session will be held on January 30<sup>th</sup> at 9 am at Rindge Memorial School.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Rautiola  
Executive Secretary