



**BOARD OF SELECTMEN/BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE
JOINT SESSION
MEETING MINUTES**

Present: Roberta Oeser, Chair, Bob Hamilton and Karl Pruter, Selectmen, Sara Gravell, Town Administrator, Laurie May, Finance Director, Lori Rautiola, Executive Secretary, Members of the Community

CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Chair, Roberta Oeser called the meeting to order via Zoom on November 18, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Selectmen's Announcements: Roberta announced the Board would be following Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04 until further notice.

Citizen's Forum: Jeff Dickler thanked the Board for staying updated with the accelerating COVID rate. He encouraged the Board to pressure the Planning Board to do the same. Jeff recommends the Town invest in some better technology for the virtual zoom meetings for better clarity. Jeff also strongly urged the Board to support universal health care during their budget session.

Holly Koski stated she could not access Avitar from the website. Roberta noted there has been some software glitches and explained the Board was aware of.

Consent Agenda - Approval of:

- Minutes 11/04/2020
- Payroll 11/19/2020
- Accounts Payable 11/19/2020

Karl made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Roberta seconded the motion and it passed with one abstention. 2-0-1.

Code Enforcement Complaints: Sara stated letters have been sent out to the businesses regarding feather flags and a letter to the new owner regarding the need for a sign permit. She also noted a certified letter was sent to 8 Sunset Dr. regarding the waiver for tax deed.

Roberta reported a large commercial cord wood operation on Robbins Road, she stated this was not an allowed use. Tandem log trucks were witnessed bringing grapple loads of wood onto the property. Roberta suggested Bob and Karl take a drive by. Bob suggested Sara send a letter to inform them of the violation of operating a business in a residential area.

Roberta also mentioned a notice from the Zoning Board regarding the solar array on Thomas Road. The notice stated the owner had prior approval for the solar array but all that had approval was an electrical permit with a site plan for the array which showed it being 50 feet from the Road. Building Inspector Rick Donovan added he did approve the electrical permit and according to the permit the array was supposed to be installed 50 feet from the road. He conducted a site visit and it looks like the structure is within the 50 foot setback to the road. It was noted a memo to the Zoning Board should be sent to clarify that no town approval was ever granted.

New Business: Roberta stated the board had reviewed the paperwork on a new copy machine for the Selectmen's Office. Roberta made a motion to allow Sara to move forward with a new Ricoh copier from PIF Technologies. Bob seconded the motion and it passed 3-0.

Roberta noted the Tax Collector's Office is in need of a new laptop. Carol needs a second station to log into as there is no second desktop for the deputy. There are funds left in this year's IT budget. The Board agreed to purchase another laptop and Sara will purchase the laptop.

Roberta announced tax bills will be sent out by the first of December. Laurie May received a TANS engagement letter. Karl made a motion to allow Sara to sign the application on behalf of the Board. Bob seconded the motion and it passed 3-0. Roberta also reported KRT has finalized the new assessments after consultations and should have a total by the 19th of November, then the process can start with filing the MS-1 and getting the tax bills out.

Joint Session with the Budget Advisory Committee

Ambulance Budget: Chief Rick Donovan noted there was an increase of \$1,000 which brought the total to \$41,000. Tom questioned, since the service is shared between Jaffrey and Rindge, how many more calls Jaffrey had versus Rindge. Rick responded he did not have to most recent data but Jaffrey usually has 10-15% more calls for service than Rindge.

Mutual Aid: Rick spoke with Chief Sangermano and was informed there would be a 5% increase due to health insurance and retirement increases as well as adding an IT person which brought the total budget to \$68,370.

Fire Department: Chief Rick Donovan noted the contract service line increased due to the purchase of the defibrillator last year and the need for the service contract this year. The other \$500 increase was fire extinguishers for the town buildings. The total increase for operating went from \$5,266 to \$8738. Bob asked if the operating budget could be reduced by 1%. Rick responded it was possible, adding it may be possible to decrease the line providing there will be some unanticipated revenue from FEMA for items such the new hydraulic tools and the radios. If the Board will allow some of the unanticipated revenue to be used within this line, he stated he could work to bring the operating budget down. Roberta noted the Board would have a better understanding of what is left in unanticipated funds in December. David asked if the contract for the defibrillators would be an annual fee and Rick responded it would be.

Emergency Management: Chief Donovan stated there were a couple of increases within this budget due to COVID and the pandemic continuing into 2021. There is an increase in employee overtime wages from \$1,000 to \$2,000 and a slight increase for telephones. Rick stated the town is required to have a dedicated line straight to Concord for emergencies and the cost has increased to \$525. The copy machine went up about \$100, and the shared portion for the AFG supplement grant for medical supplies was \$569, which if unanticipated funds could be used the line could drop to \$5,800. Rick stated in his opinion the amount of work Emergency Management does, grant for grant, the money should be used for that purpose of what the grant was for. Dan Whitney mentioned the call member's line at \$61,000 but noticed there is \$65,000 back in the budget for 2021. Rick pointed out that is a good question and explained that due to the backfilling due to COVID he has found that they have been able to better manage the time and could bring those numbers back slightly.

Tom questioned the training activity line, and whether it would significantly increase. Rick noted the Department was not able to do much in person training due to COVID, which is the reason the numbers are so low. He continued stating the same applies for the medical evaluation; adding, occupational health costs have gone up 75%. The Department switched to a mobile service and saved thousands. Phil Motta questioned the protective clothing line and whether the Department anticipated the need for new protective clothing this year. Rick responded they did anticipate spending that this year.

Rick noted in regards to Dan Whitney's prior question the expenditure for calls is showing some of the stipends for first responders from the grant for COVID. He continued stating they would have a better understating when the grants come in. Laurie May noted the COVID stipends for call members are listed under the EMD but the wages for the full time employees were listed under the Fire Department.

Town Clerk Budget: Town Clerk, Lauralei Knight noted an increase for the deputy position. The position is currently scheduled for 10 hours a week at \$15 per hour. She requested an increase to 16 hours a week. This would allow the hours to be spread out throughout the year and to utilize them to make sure there is adequate help with Elections and other times when the deputy is needed. Bob asked for clarification on the five hours a week with a wage increase in April. Roberta seemed to remember it was a 16 hour a week position for the deputy a few years ago. There was discussion on the hours for the deputy position as well as the Tax Collector Deputy position. There was a brief discussion of the Tax Collector position becoming a part time position after Carol retired. Roberta noted that would have to go before the tax payers on the warrant.

Lauralei also noted to allow for an increase in the election budget to cover the purge of the Supervisor's Checklist. Lastly she mentioned the Town Clerk office space and the need to reconfigure in order to create a better working area and meet the state requirements for Town Clerk's Offices. The reconfiguration would also allow people more room to social distance in the lobby. She continued stating if there was not enough money in this year's budget to cover the cost of the renovation, she is requesting it be put into the 2021 budget.

Conservation Budget: David Drouin stated a couple lines were moved around, however, the budget would remain level at \$4,086. The only minor increase was a \$.50 wage increase for the Conservation Clerk.

Zoning Board of Adjustment: No members present for this Board. Roberta noted the Board of Adjustment had an issue with advertising due to the need to re-post certain ads.

Planning Board: Roberta noted the Planning Board has asked for an increase in the wages to keep Susan working in the office as long as she is able to. Holly Koski noted the Planning Office needs Susan to catch up on the work that was not done when she was out ill. She added Kim is also in the office and is helping get things back in order and continuing to train with Susan. There was discussion on the increase request. It was noted to check with the Planning Director, Kirk Stenerson on the bottom line.

Informational Updates:

Sara updated the Board that Hoyle and Tanner should have the documents prepared soon so the Wellington bridge work can be sent out to bid.

Roberta asked Fire Chief Donovan for an update on the increasing COVID numbers. Chief Donovan noted numbers are increasing. He stated he was frustrated with the lack of cooperation from the Rindge part of the School District. He has asked that he is notified of any new cases and the administration stated they cannot give him any information due to HIPPA rules. Chief Donovan disagreed with that statement, adding there was currently 19 cases in Rindge, however, the numbers are not accurate. He mentioned a request came in to put the # of cases on the COVID sign at the transfer station. The numbers continue to fluctuate.

Chief Donovan explained the Governor's mandate for NH residents who travel outside of New England, adding there are two options: Upon traveling outside of New England the person shall quarantine for 7 days and take a test within that time frame before returning to work. Upon a negative test one can return to work/public. The other option is to quarantine for 14 days upon your return, no test. All the information is on nh.gov. Rick continued stating once the numbers reach 24 positive cases, he would consider the town to be a "high risk" area. Rick stated he was not in support of closing the public buildings but modifications may need to be implemented to keep the community safe. Roberta agreed stating every Department is vital to keep the town functioning and cannot afford to have people out sick.

David Graham thanked Chief Donovan and questioned the tree lighting ceremony that is scheduled for Dec. 4th. Chief Donovan stated as long as the number of cases stay within a manageable range the town should be able to have the tree lighting. Social distancing and mask guidelines will need to be followed.

Lauralei questioned if family is visiting from Florida would they need to quarantine. Rick stated the Governor is not going to regulate what people do within their households and it is the responsibility of the people that are welcoming these people inside their homes. Lauralei asked what the peak number of cases in town would have to reach before the Town Offices are closed. Rick stated he is monitoring the numbers closely and his goal is to protect the residents and employees of this town, adding more restrictions may need to go in place but we need to remain open to meet the needs of our residents and maintain a local government.

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Rautiola
Executive Secretary