



**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES
January 13, 2021**

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 January 13, 2021 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:

Citizen's Forum: There was no public comment.

Consent Agenda - Approval of:

- Minutes 12/15/2020
- Payroll 1/14/2021
- Accounts Payable 1/14/2021
- Colonial Green Sign permit
- Intent to cut – Map 1/11-8

Karl made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Bob seconded the motion and it passed by roll call vote 3-0.

Old Business:

Code Enforcement Complaints:

There was a brief discussion on the Code Enforcement/Zoning Officer position and combining it with the Health Officer. Bob made a motion to post the position with the new job description. Karl seconded the motion and it passed by roll call vote 3-0.

New Business:

There was a brief discussion on the dedication page for the Town report. Roberta mentioned dedicating the report to the Town Employees for all their hard work this year, especially with the uncertain circumstances Covid has brought. Karl concurred. Bob recommended Rick Sirvint. There was no decision made.

Budget Hearing

Bob asked the Zoom callers to announce their names for the meeting. Roberta stated Bob had a number for the budget at the last meeting and Roberta had agreed, however, the Department requests are necessary and reasonable and to cut \$100,000+ out of the operating budget is not feasible when their budgets are bare bones as is. There was discussion on adding the 9th Police Officer and whether it should be on a warrant article or added to the budget. Most of the increases were due to rising costs for health insurance and retirement which the Board cannot control. If the 9th officer goes on the warrant article and the Board cuts \$43,000 from paving and \$800 from Fire, the budget would be about \$100,000 over default and \$140,000 over what the Budget Advisory Committee had recommended.

Cheryl McCabe Charron questioned if the Board took the BAC recommendations for the \$17,000 cut to the Planning Board's budget and Roberta noted \$5,200 was cut from the contracted services line. Phil Motta questioned if the Board cut the \$11,000 in wages as they also recommended. Roberta noted the Planning Board is already on a "shoe string" budget, and the Board felt the \$11,000 in wages was needed. Phil also mentioned the BAC had suggested cutting some from the gravel roads line, adding it was difficult to find cuts when the majority of the increase was not within their control. Karl concurred. Phil stated the Committee did not want to put such a large number to voters as he feared the budget would go to default.

Tom Coneys questioned if the Police Chief was comfortable having the 9th officer on the ballot as a warrant article. Chief Anair stated he was. Tom added, the BAC had the recommendation to have the 9th officer in the budget because they felt it was very important and having it on the warrant is risky. Tom continued stating the BAC made several recommendations to the Board and he did not see many being taken. He spoke about the road materials spent for the highway budget and his recommendation was to cut \$40,000+ from the paving. Roberta noted the CIP's recommendation was to continue to put \$50,000 each year aside for roads. Roberta also mentioned the Town now gets less money from the State Highway Block grant.

Tom recalled at the last meeting he suggested the Fire Chief cut his training line by \$50,000. He stated his opinion was the trainings will not take place due to Covid, adding, the Committee will most likely not support the budget since the BAC recommendations have not been taken. Roberta stated the Town cannot cut money from other departments to fund the 9th officer and it is the Town's liability to certify and train our firefighters.

Chief Donovan stated the training are increasing this year and the Department has three firefighters and two EMT's that did not get the training in due to Covid. The Town, however, is still obligated to pay them for the time in class and new members still need to be certified. Rick stated he will not take on the liability of not training them and not paying them per the policy for the commitment that has already been made, adding a \$50,000 cut to the training would severely hurt the Department.

Cheryl McCabe Sharon questioned the hours for the Deputy Town Clerk position. Roberta noted the Department's wages were down from last year. She also mentioned the hours for that position had previously been shifted to the Tax Collector due to the former Deputy Tax Collector leaving so the hours would be shifted back to the Town Clerk.

Dan Whitney commented on the ninth officer and that is should not be on as a warrant article because it would be too risky. Roberta noted the Board has not made a decision at this point whether it would be included in the budget or on as a warrant article. Sharon Rasku agreed with Tom Coneys and Dan Whitney that the officer should be in the budget. Phil Motta noted cutting the fire training was not a recommendation from the BAC. Tom stated it was a suggestion to help reduce the budget.

Bob noted the budget needs to be trimmed back, adding he had not received any Department head proposals for a default budget. Bob suggested placing the ninth officer on as a warrant article. Karl noted, when considering the BAC recommendations to keep the 9th officer in the budget, this would put the budget at \$150,000 over the default and he liked the recommendation to get the budget down under \$100,000 by cutting from the paving. Phil noted the BAC had recommended \$4,484,250 which was 3% plus the bond payment. He would like to work to get the numbers to be no more than \$100,000 over the default, continuing if the budget is too high, the voters will not pass it and that will hurt all departments. Chief Anair stated he understood the concerns with the 9th officer going on as a warrant article and was willing to take the risk. Cheryl stated she supported Chief Anair's decision.

Roberta noted the default budget including the Consolidated bond payment (which is reimbursed) is \$4,426,029. The proposed budget at this time is \$4,627,246 with the 9th officer and no cuts to the budget. Bob made a motion to recommend the budget at \$4,500,000. Karl seconded the motion and it passed by roll call vote 3-0. Tom Coneys questioned if this figure included the 9th officer. Bob responded it was not. The 9th officer will go on as a warrant article. Roberta closed the public hearing at 7:33 p.m.

New Business: Daniel and Mathew were present on the Zoom call with Home Town Hero's Banners Program. The program is a nonprofit program where residents can purchase a banner in honor of their home town heroes and display it on utility poles near the center of Town. If the Board approves, the banners will be hung in May and taken down in November. The program does not cost any money to the Town. The only requirement needed from the Town is to pull the

permit with Eversource in order to hang the banners on the utility poles and for the Town to give the company permission to operate their business. Bob stated it was a great program. Bob made a motion to allow Home Town Heroes banners to be mounted on the utility poles and to allow a permit to be submitted to Eversource for use of the poles and brackets. Karl seconded the motion and it passed by roll call vote 3-0. Holly Koski mentioned there was a good response on Facebook regarding the program.

Informational Items/Communications & Updates: Sara noted the design of the new website was coming along nicely and the bids for the Wellington Bridge project closed on January 15th. Bob thanked Sara for her efforts with the bridge project.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Rautiola
Executive Secretary