

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes
Monday, November 23, 2020

At the Selectmen's meeting held on Monday, November 23, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. the Selectmen participated via Zoom:

Stanley Holz is at his home in South Carolina, maintaining social distancing.

Peter Corey is at his home in Whitefield, maintaining social distancing.

Shawn White is at his home in Whitefield, maintaining social distancing.

Chairman Holz called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Old Business: Employee Health Insurance

Peter Corey said he thought it would be worth going with the higher deductible insurance plan if Judy is amenable to the additional administrative work that might occur if we accept the risk for the increased deductible. Peter thinks we will save money in the end. The employee will cover the higher co-pays. Shawn said we can try it, and he is just concerned about losing employees when people look to leave to go to other towns. The Board agreed to switch to the higher deductible plan, ABSOS \$25/50 3K Deductible. The employee contribution will remain the same.

Budgets:

Recreation Department:

Melissa Farrow said she went over the budget with Judy. She is afraid to cut a lot of things if we can go back to normal. She would like to pick up where we left off. She did cut the funding for the senior recreation program, \$4,500. With what we are facing, don't see that opening back up anytime soon. We took that out of the budget. That was the only cut we could see that was feasible. The recreation revenues are down as well, and the budget spent to date is at \$35,442 so expenses are down as well. The Board thanked her for holding the line. If things don't work out like we hope, then it will not be spent and come back in the general fund. Melissa said since the mandate for masks from the Governor came out, she has enforced that with kids and staff. Everyone is wearing masks while they are in the program inside and outside unless they can clearly social distance.

Fire-Rescue

John Ross, Jr.

Only increase is in salary line items because we are updating coverage for next year. His total budget increase is \$16,460, a 5.49% increase. John said the increase for salaries is to cover

increased calls and 24/7 coverage for the year. We rely on people coming in to a call and that is not happening. He has to find someone to be on call. Revenues as of last week for the ambulance was: \$111,061 and \$15,000 for the Dalton town appropriation.

Peter asked what we are going to charge Dalton next year, assuming they are still going to use us. There should be some increase, 5% or something. John Ross said that they have helped us out on quite a few calls. He can run some numbers for us. He doesn't think the increase would be merited. They come over and help us when we are short-handed. He is suggesting we leave it as is.

Warrant article for a new power cot power load stretcher system. It will require less lifting. Cost is \$42,000 for a power load power stretcher. We need to replace the stretcher anyways. The Board said that he can explain it at town meeting and let the folks decide.

Ambulance capital reserve--doesn't have the money to buy this year. It was suggested he might want to bump it up to \$30,000 instead of \$20,000. The other capital reserve appropriations would be the same as 2020: Fire Department Equipment Replacement \$40,000; Emergency Services Building Capital Reserve \$20,000.

We need a line item under safety for dispatch. We are probably looking at \$30,000 for that. We had initial quotes from Grafton to switch over the middle of next year. We thought \$30,000 to put in for next year. That will be regular line item under Safety for dispatch services. At town meeting it has to be explained before it is questioned. It has been a free service for 40 years, and it had an expiration date. Working on it for at least 15 years. Stanley is concerned when people see that in the line item. Hope to have an explanation before it is pre-judged. Ed and John have done a lot of work on this. It will be a line item under the Safety under Public Safety. Shawn said it is a lot less than what he was anticipating it to be.

Health Officer position looking to increase that to \$4,000 from \$2,000. The reason being his time with the health officer has quadrupled. Following up with septic issues with the planning board and the COVID issues, foster home inspections, which he charges for. If these positions separate, no one is going to do it for \$2,000. Peter doesn't disagree. As a general comment, one of the things we ought to think about is increasing or adding fees in cases where the costs are incurred by specific users and the septic users are a good example of that. Just some thoughts. When we keep adding costs, we also need to consider the revenue side of things. We can recoup the costs through the user fees. We currently charge \$50 for the septic fees. Don't want to place additional burden on the taxpayers who are not affected by these septic permits. You can't expect them to do all the work and not pay them for it. He is bombarded by items to do. The increase is justified and we may want to consider an increase in the septic fees.

Police Department - Edward Samson

His increase is the salary line items. It has been discussed for a number of years to have a step increase plan. In the past there has been no set scale. We have been researching the area for salaries and the Chief's association has put out a study. We used similar departments and that is where he came up with the numbers for the pay scale. He has stayed on the middle side for 2021 budget. Shawn recommended the sliding scale step program. Retirement has increased as well as of July 1, 2021.

Special Detail line item is \$13,000 currently that comes out of the budget. Ed would propose looking at creating a revolving fund pays for itself and the profit the money would be built up in there used for safety purchases. Allows that item to pay for itself and frees up an additional \$15,000 to \$16,000. The only other line we discussed is cutting some money from the gasoline line item. Ed's concern is if gas prices increase again we could be right back at the \$10,000 mark. Think all the other line items are where they should be.

Peter Corey suggested in the spirit of doing something, reduce the fuel line. Shawn said the employees have a step plan and that is the increase in the police department. There has to be something to show them what they are looking at. Ed spent a lot of time with this, as Shawn did with the other departments. It used as comparison with other towns--he actually went on the conservative side. Stanley has no problem with the step program. Peter: Look at the revenues, are there opportunities to increase those somewhat? Obviously, you are not going to make a lot. Can we look at increasing the parking fees? Can we charge for fingerprinting? It is something we need to do. Shawn asked about services for VIN verification. Chief Samson said that he has not heard of charging people for that. That is a service the community wants. As expenses increase, we will have to increase the fee schedules to make it more equal.

Ed said he also would like an article to replace the police cruiser. We put in \$25,000 this year and would propose a purchase of \$50,000 in 2021.

Correspondence from the Coos County Commissioner's Office was received in reference to the newly established Coos Broadband Committee. They are asking each Selectboard in the county to appoint a local person to serve on the committee and to be the liaison back to each town. The Board agreed that we would like to participate, and Peter Corey agreed to serve as Whitefield's representative.

Catalina Celentano the Community Relations Specialist with Eversource for the Northern Region of New Hampshire reached out to see if the Town had any issues with removing the large trees at the Whitefield substation, which are very overgrown and are in a deteriorated condition. The Board said they had no problem with the tree removal.

A motion was made by Peter Corey to approve the Selectmen Meeting minutes of November 9, 2020 with a change on the second page, 4th paragraph to modify the sentence to read as follows: Peter Corey said on behalf of the Selectboard, WE would like to express OUR appreciation to all

the poll workers. The motion was seconded by Shawn White. Roll Call Vote: White: Yes; Holz: Yes; Corey: Yes. All in favor, 3-0. Motion passes.

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.