

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 25, 2021

At the Selectmen's meeting held on Monday, October 25, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. the following people were in attendance: John Tholl, Shawn White, and Peter Corey.

Others in attendance: John Ross, Jr., Fire Chief, Scott Burns, Senator Erin Hennessey, Rob Scott, Sally Maroon, Rick Wright, Richard Harris, Sondra Brekke, Barbara Pinkham, Katy Kopp.

Chair Corey called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Old Business:

Fireworks Ordinance

Shawn White said we had our public hearing on October 4th, and when we went through the ordinance at the hearing, there were some things brought up at the hearing that we needed to have changed. We removed the purchase and storage restrictions. The time frame was removed, and will be filled in by the Fire Chief or his designee when the permit is issued. The 50-foot limit was removed. It was verified that it is a one-time use permit. The Fire Chief or designee can put in the dates and times when the permit is issued. Katy Kopp asked about the 50-foot limit. Shawn said we removed the 50-feet from a property line so it would not be done in dangerous areas. Sondra Brekke asked about permits for the 4th of July holiday. Shawn said you will still have to get the permit.

John Tholl made a motion to adopt the Permissible Fireworks Ordinance as amended. Shawn White seconded the motion. All in favor, 3-0. Motion passes to adopt the Permissible Fireworks Ordinance as amended.

Shawn said Richard Harris is here tonight, and he was at the last meeting about the After-the-Fact penalty he was assessed. Shawn said that he is uncomfortable with Dick being assessed the \$500 fine. Shawn said when he was the Public Works Director, Mr. Harris always came to Shawn to be sure he got permission before he did anything. Shawn said he looks at this like the trailers that are brought to other people's property. Shawn said the fine is too steep, and he feels uncomfortable with assessing the \$500 fine. John said he was at the planning board meeting when they discussed this with the town attorney. If it is taken to someone else's property, it doesn't fall under a structure. If it is your container on your property and it is rented then it has to have a permit. That is the town attorney opinion. Mr. Harris said the way the code is written has some faults. John said if it is on his property and he is renting it out and he owns it, it becomes a structure. If you take it to someone else's property it is not a structure. Dick said he has three businesses on that property, Dick's Mobile Home Park, Dick's Truck Sales, and Dick's Self Storage. He has a contract for it to be there from one business to another, and if what John

is saying is true then anybody who brings in a storage unit to someone else's property for rental is automatically issued an after the fact penalty, unless it has a permit. Shawn thinks that Dick did not know that, but we have to follow that going forward. Dick said if he leases it from one business to another business as a legal business no different who does it, it is leased property. Shawn said it is piece of property on his land that he is renting out for someone else to use. It is not like it is being stored there. Peter Corey asked Scott Burns, Chairman of the Planning Board, to add his comments. Scott said that Dick brought them in. It is not in his master plan as stock and trade when they asked him about it. He told the PB it was for stock and trade. He changed his tune at the next meeting and now they are for stock and trade and rental at the property. Scott said it is not in Dick's master plan to have those conex boxes brought in. Peter said he is going to take the advice of the attorney and what she recommends, and Peter is going to uphold the \$500 penalty. Dick has been to the planning board enough times and he could have asked the PB before bringing those in. Dick said he didn't need a permit to bring them in. John said based on the town attorney's advice, he has to support the fine. The \$500 after the fact penalty stands. If Dick wishes to appeal it further there is a process to go through that Mr. Harris will have to determine how to do.

Senator Erin Hennessey - State Senator for District 1, which covers Thornton to Pittsburg

Senator Hennessey said she is going around to the towns in her district, and wanted to briefly review the property tax savings in the New Hampshire budget:

County Property Tax:

--Increased funding to county nursing homes - \$29.1 million

School District Property Tax:

--Building Aid for new school construction projects - \$30 million

--Relief Funding Plan targeted to districts in need - \$35 million

--Reduction in Statewide Property Tax (2023) - \$100 million

Local Property Tax:

--State aid for local road and bridge projects - \$83.25 million

--State aid grants for water projects - \$15.6 million

--Increase in Meals & Rooms Tax Revenue Sharing - \$50+million

(Whitefield would be looking at an increase of \$41,457 in 2022.)

--86% decrease in Firefighter 1 Training

--72% decrease in Firefighter 2 Training

Senator Hennessey said the house has filed all of their bills for 2022. Over 800 of them. Senate is finishing up on their bills Wednesday is deadline. She said they are looking to add additional targeted school funding for school districts with low property values. This will be a better targeted aid formula that Whitefield will realize extra funding for. She has been working on a variety of issues, i.e. search and rescue, elk, child care, etc.

She said she has been working with governor's office on the federal funds the state has received, similar to the ARPA funds the town has received. They are looking to give back to the local communities a matching 90/10 grant, up to \$50,000 to each town which could possibly be used for emergency equipment related to COVID. GOFFER will have to define what the guidelines of the program will be. Prior purchases may qualify, but we have to wait and see what GOFFER comes up with for the look-back period.

Chair Corey asked if those monies are going to be available before the end of this fiscal year? The Fire Chief has a plan for some equipment, but we want to be comfortable that the money will come back to us before the end of the year. Senator Hennessey said it should be available before the end of the year. We are just waiting for GOFERR to release and send out the guidelines to all the town. Every town will be eligible for \$50,000. The Town will need to come up with 10% of the cost and the state would come up with 90%.

Peter said another issue we struggle with is we are continuously sued by the utilities company over their assessment values of utility infrastructure. The state did pass something to determine a value with the distribution of the utility. Whitefield has a significant amount of transmission infrastructure, 10 miles of major high voltage lines, the sub-station, and part of the coos loop. It costs us thousands of dollars to fight the utility companies. If the legislature could come to terms with a methodology for standardized generation and transmission assessments like they did for distribution, it would be very helpful. Erin said she is not on the Science & Tech Committee, but will look into with Troy who is on that committee. Erin said it is her understanding that the utility companies want to value the transmission and generation assets at book value with depreciation taken out. It is still a money generating asset for them. Erin said this method may not be in the town's favor. Peter said we go through it every year. Erin said she will follow-up on that and see if someone is filing something for that.

The Board thanked Senator Hennessey for coming to the meeting.

Rob Scott from WMRHS said he is here in his role as Director of Facilities. He said they budget \$7,000 a year for their sewer bill. He said they did discover an error in the software calculation of their bill, but their first bill was \$6,200 and the next bill was \$7,200. Rob said they have concerns with how they are being metered. They have a pump room by the student parking lot. The meter is recording what is going in, and you can say that is what is going down the sewer line. Rob has had some conversations with Fred Ingerson. That line also feeds the sprinkler system which needs to be fully tested during the year, and they have to drain the entire system, which amounts to tens of thousands of gallons of water every time they do it and that does not go into the sewer system. They also have the farm that has drip irrigation to the greenhouses and does not go into the sewer system. They want to approach the town to see if they would allow us to meter those two areas so they would know what is not going into the sewer system. The town would use the meter reading off the high flow meter and deduct the water to those other two locations. He said for a comparison the high school used 860,000 gallons of water and the

elementary school has used 23,000 gallons. Rob said the elementary school does not have a full sprinkler system. Fred thought it was the right step, but the Board of Selectmen would need to approve it. Rob said that they would pay for the meters and be sure it is a meter approved by the town. They would put a meter on the feed for the sprinkler system and on the water line to the barn and the barn feeds the greenhouses. Peter said conceptually he doesn't have a problem with it. Peter said he would like to find out if it is a common practice in other towns, but it seems to make sense. The school would have to be responsible for the cost of the meters, installation and maintenance. Shawn asked if the high flow meter tracks what is coming in from the town system, and Rob said it did. Barbara Pinkham asked about savings to the school district, and Rob said he feels it would be a substantial savings. Peter said we will look into it, and we will work with our Public Works Director and Fred to see what they recommend and see what other towns are doing. We will get back to Rob.

The Board discussed scheduling a date for a public hearing for the application for the Community Revitalization Tax Relief Program (RSA 79-E) received from Robert Wisnouckas for the Allard Block at 8 King Square. The Board said if Robert is not the owner of the property, we can't proceed with the application. If he purchased the property from Mr. Wyman, he should have a deed to that property. Judy will follow-up with Robert.

The Board will hold a public hearing on November 15, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. for the purpose of considering amending all existing pole licenses to include language regarding taxation pursuant to RSA 72:23 and acknowledging the licensee's statutory obligation to move the licensed poles, conduit, and equipment upon order of the Town. Someone from George Sansoucy's office will attend the hearing via conference call.

The Board reviewed the 2022 rates from Health Trust. The health insurance premiums for 2022 will show a decrease of 8.1%. The Town is also receiving a FY2021 Health Trust Return of Surplus in the amount of \$15,518.96, which will be applied to the December, 2021 health insurance invoice.

Budgets:

WEDC – Katy Kopp

Katy said for 2021 due to COVID and in deference for the taxpayers, they only asked for \$2000 in their budget. They usually ask for \$5000. They didn't have any projects planned for 2021. For 2022, they are going to ask again for \$5000. Katy said that she hopes Biff will give Robert a deed to the Allard Block project. People are excited about the Allard Block renovations. Katy said that WEDC is looking at many grants for new businesses. She said the \$2000 covers their legal, filing fees, and decorating the common.

Peter explained that at this point we take the input of the departments and make a final decision once we receive all the department requests and review them before the public budget hearing.

Cemetery – Barbara Pinkham

Barbara said that the cemetery is not asking for any increase, \$32,000. They are functioning relatively well with their appropriation. Barbara said she has done quite a bit of studying since 2015. The magic % seems to be that we were paying 2/3 of our annual budget to mowing, water, and electricity. In 2019, when we got the \$2,000 increase, we were not having a lot of money left to deal with the cemeteries. That increase gave them 1/3 of their budget to work on projects. Barbara put together a table tracking this, and she said they continue to inch up again. It went from 67% in 2019 to 62.5% in 2020, and 64.4% in 2021. The mowing has gone up, and if gas stays high we are going to be hit with a substantial increase for next year. Water rates have hit us, as it has hit everybody. Electricity is the smallest. Not asking for any more money for 2022. In planning for the future, what is the best way the board sees someone like the cemetery moving forward—is it better for them to ask for a smaller to medium request every two to three years or something a little larger every five years? Barbara is wondering what would better. Barbara said they would never ask for any huge things. She said they did get \$5,000 added to their budget as a one-time item this year to get a survey completed. Barbara said she thinks they could back off significantly from asking for taxpayer support for the cemeteries if we could keep the money they get from the sale of lots. They sold 9 lots this year (150 x9). Peter asked how would they pay for the annual maintenance--\$1,350 would not be anywhere near enough. Barbara said to clarify they just wouldn't come back to increases. Barbara said Lisbon earmark a % of their sales to cemetery maintenance. Shawn said he would rather see it as a capital reserve account Barbara said she feels they could hold the cemetery budget level if they could get the money from the proceeds of the cemetery lot sales. Judy will do some research to see how this is handled and the steps to adopt this if we decide to go this route.

Barbara said the survey has not been done. Hard time getting the job done. As it stands now, they have until 12/31 then they lose the money. We have only paid the deposit \$1600. Barbara said Rob said it has been become a more complicated deed process. Barbara is concerned the job might not be done by the end of the year. Peter said he will follow-up with Rob and the surveyor. Barbara said the budget breakout is: \$27,000 is the mowing, water, and electricity for the cemeteries. \$5,000 was added for the cemetery sexton work. Barbara said that has worked out well with the sexton.

Planning Board – Scott Burns

Scott said their 2022 request is the same as it is for 2021, \$22,332. Scott said that they have taken in about \$10,500 in revenue this year. So far they have processed 100 permits, mergers, change of use, site plans. Payroll was the big increase last year. It has worked out well with the extra person assisting with the planning board paper work and processing.

The Board signed the Intent to Cut Wood for Map 233/Lot 35 – Colby Road – Rexford

A motion was made by John Tholl to approve the Selectmen's Meeting Minutes of October 4, 2021. The motion was seconded by Shawn White. All in favor, 3-0. Motion passes.

The meeting adjourned at 7:23 p.m.