

## Selectmen's Meeting Minutes

Monday, November 8, 2021

At the Selectmen's meeting held on Monday, November 8, 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; Ed Samson, Police Chief; Courtney Vashaw, Rick Vashaw, Melissa Farrow, Judy Gessner, Rob Larson, DPW Director, Katy Kopp, Tamara Reilly, Catherine Atwood, Dave & Louise Glover, Sondra Brekke, Tom Ladd

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Old Business:

Rob Larson – Metal Roof on the Fire Station:

Rob said he has the narrative for the solar grant request, and it would behoove the town to spend money to do the roof on the fire station. That roof is 43 years old, and the expected life span is 50 years. Rob said he has one proposal and that is for a 75-year roof. Rob said he feels we need to replace the roof before we do the solar installation. It will strengthen our commitment to the project. Rob said he would propose that we go with DG Roofing, Inc. for \$66,228. Rob said that they were the only ones to respond to his calls for a quote. Shawn White asked if it was in the newspaper, and Rob said he has been making calls. Rob said we had an engineering study and we are replacing metal with metal. This is a seamless roof. Peter suggested that Rob contact North Country Council and look into applying for a CDBG community facilities grant. The Board felt we follow the procurement policy which states: A competitive procurement process must be followed if the procurement of goods or services involves expenditures of more than \$10,000. All RFPs and invitations to bid notices shall be posted on the Town website, posted at the Town Office, and published at least one week in a local newspaper. John said we should try to get competitive bids.

Budgets:

Library

Courtney Vashaw, Librarian said as part of designing the budget Rob Larson, DPW Director and the library board have talked about the need for a stewardship plan for the library to be sure the building exists another 100 years. There is currently no plan for it. The library does not have a facilities manager, and Courtney said that is outside of her scope, and the trustees help to govern the board. Courtney said it was her father's job, Rick Vashaw, for the 30 years he was on the library board. Whenever there was a problem, Sandy would call Rick for assistance, but it is not

really a good way of doing business. Courtney said that they have this unwritten situation where the library exterior is taken care by the town and the interior is taken care of by the library board. She said that is concerning if they have trouble with their water, electrical, heating, and she is not equipped to do that. She said when Shawn Hartnett pulled out those steps, there were holes all over the foundation which had to be repaired. That could have led to the issue with the water in the basement. Bricks had not been repointed. Still have significant problems in the building. Courtney talked to Rob that the DPW should steward the facility inside and out and with the major operating systems of the plant. We want to be sure that safety code is met, and that we have a strategic plan to be sure that maintenance needs are taken care of. Courtney said that Sandy and herself have done their best. Issues left unaddressed for decades, and we are realizing them. Courtney said she does not know if it will affect the bottom line of anyone's budget. They need to have something in place with a clear chain to follow of who to contact. Courtney would like that addressed before we move forward. Rob said he would approach this that his position would be a facilities management or budget management over-seer, but the highway, water, and sewer employees are not the contractors or the laborers. Whoever does the work would be outside contractors. We are not equipped to deal with 100-year old buildings, and we would bring in experts to see where the deficiencies are. Shawn said when he was DPW Director he was responsible for all town buildings, including the library. If Courtney and Rob can work something out, that would be fine. Courtney is wondering if there should be something in writing for perpetuity. It could be written into the duty description for the public works director. Rob thinks it may already be in there. Rob said that town has recently had an asset management program done, which the town has paid for the water and sewer departments. It is time to buy the software package, and it would include the library so she would have that available through the software. We would have all the data available in that asset management program. It would keep it moving forward. Peter said he doesn't think there is a new document needed to quantify this. Shawn said we have our regular contractors we use. Rob said if we set it up in a format so it is available so we would know when it is done, etc. Courtney said that there needs to be plan, and Rob replied that strategic planning is part of the package.

Tom Ladd said as a state library consultant, the common practice would be a simple memorandum of understanding written between the Board of Selectmen and the Library Trustees. Just to express that in a document that both boards are blessing this arrangement. Peter asked if anybody has access to a document that we could use? Tom and Courtney will get together and work on this document. Courtney said she has done a lot of research on this, and it is different in all towns. We have a beautiful facility and want to keep it that way.

The 2002 budget request for the library is \$48,825, a \$2000 increase. For the past three years there has not been any increase. The increase will be for programming. It is specifically for the summer program. The library has done a lot of good things with a strong partnership with the recreation department. Still want to do grant writing, but that is not guaranteed. We want to keep the caliber to what we have been able to do in 2019 and 2021 but we can't do it on \$1500

and we can't hit up the business all the time. Courtney said the programming included staffing as well. Writing a Tillotson Grant for technology. Try to be creative with shifting line items. Are we locked in on fuel prices? We have budgeted generously for the fuel. There is concern about rising fuel prices, and if we have enough budgeted for fuel. Rob said he has an agreement with Stiles, but they won't lock us in at a price. The library has used Stiles. Fuel used to be \$5700, and they have lowered it to \$4500 in 2021. Rob said he would recommend increasing the fuel line item with what he is seeing. Peter said we are not making any decisions on this tonight. We take all the input from the departments and look at the budget as a whole before we finalize anything. If they want to do some more research on the fuel, and then just let us know. Rob's suggestion is to bump it back up. Courtney is going to look at the annual usage. She will get back to us, but she is thinking it will go back to the \$5700. Shawn said he feels if the increase is for the summer program, he would rather it see it budgeted in the recreation program budget. Shawn said if it is payroll, then reflect it in payroll. Courtney said recreation hosted the programs. The library would send the staff, and the public was allowed to come too. It was co-hosted by both organizations. The library did the leg work in providing the staffing. Melissa said she had increased her summer program expenses by \$1000. Shawn said if it is for payroll then put it in payroll. If it is for program supplies, then maybe it should be in the recreation program supplies line item. Courtney wants to be sure the kids who don't go to the summer program will be allowed to attend. It is a collaborative effort. Melissa said she can add \$500 to the recreation budget.

Peter asked about the money on deposit for special programs. Courtney said that is if we can't pay for it out of our budget then we use the specified funds. She is running her payroll budget as close to the bone as possible. The grant money they got for the summer program will go to replenish the payroll. The donations do the same things with their supply line.

Peter asked about the endowment funds, or funds donated to the library for particular programs. Courtney said we are never going to get all the funds we need from the town. The summer program costs were \$6,000. We have \$2500 left in the Jonna Robinson fund. When that is gone, it is gone. Have funds we drain from when we need them, and then they are gone. Peter just wanted to understand how these funds worked. Courtneys said that they do grant writing, and they do get donations. They ask the taxpayers for a 1/3 of what it costs to run the library. She wants to be able to have similar programs that we have had this past year. She said she will update her budget and get it to Judy.

Courtney said she wanted to clarify the town's position on the little free pantry. Courtney said that she was able to verify that there is not going to be a food bank in town until February. Peter said the position of the board, and he had the conversation with Katy Kopp, that the food pantry is a great, charitable idea, but it is not really in line with the mission of the library and not part of what libraries do. Peter's recommendation is that the trustees have a conversation about the pantry. The Board of Selectmen does not run the library. The library trustees do. The pantry is a great idea, but it has created friction and we have received numerous complaints asking why is

the library doing food distribution, and the second problem is we have some individuals who live off the food out of the pantry. It has created issues when people read the Coos County Democrat and names appear and the Board felt it was prudent to reach out to ask the trustees to give serious consideration whether that effort should be continued or whether it should be done by another entity. It is not really a library function, and it is on town property. A recommendation may be to see if Tri-County CAP could take it over. They have a lot of space at their location on Jefferson Road. We just don't need the friction at the municipal level for a charitable function. Peter made an appeal to Katie and asked her to have a conversation with the library trustees about the issues we are experiencing with the pantry and consider relocating or discontinuing it. That is the position of the Board of Selectmen. Shawn said since he has been a selectman, this seems to be the item he has been contacted the most about. People feel it is a great thing and a good idea, but they are also seeing what is going on in the area where they live with people staying the in the area, hanging around. Shawn said it creates a liability we take on as a town. Shawn said he feels it would be great if it can be transferred to Tri-County CAP or a church. We don't want to get rid of community help, but is it in the best of the town to find someone else to take it over.

Courtney said she was hired to bring the library into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If you look at any library mission and purpose, that has changed and expanded in the last 30 years. Their mission is to connect people to live their best possible lives. It doesn't have to be food, but it is connecting people to resources. It is part of Courtney's job. Courtney said this has not been the easiest for her to do either. She feels it is part of her job to help people access the resources they need. Courtney thought it was just to be about books, but 50% of her time spent is doing social services type work, helping people who don't know how to use cell phone, irs.gov, everything from helping people access technology and finding help for people to pay for their fuel. It is resource gathering when they come for help and some kind of answers. She never expected to be in the food distribution process. She can't tell us the amount of need in the past 6 months she sees. She knows the complaints we receiving for people who can't be respectful. Most people are respectful. Peter said we are not saying what you are doing is a bad thing. If you want to continue that, please work with a social services organization who does this kind of work. Courtney said that Ed Shanshala of Ammonoosuc Community Health Services is looking at possibilities. ACHS is the sponsor of the food pantry in Warren. Looking at possibilities. Churches are capped out and overwhelmed. Courtney said she sees how desperately it is needed. She would love the help in trying to relocate the pantry. If anyone has connections somewhere else, i.e. churches you attend or social services agencies. Peter said that nobody is denying a need, but it is not an appropriate location at the library. Peter said it is up to Courtney or the trustees to decide whatever they feel is the right mission for this food pantry that they created and advocated for. The Board is telling them the issues we are having, and we don't think it is the appropriate location. We don't want to wait months and months for that to occur.

Peter said this is a town issue and a liability for the town, and we want to be relieved of that liability. We can't stop a charitable organization from doing that charitable function.

We are asking the trustees to sit down and have a conversation about this. Is this really an appropriation function for the library? It would relieve the town staff of a lot of heart ache. Good for you for wanting to do good things for people who are suffering food insecurity. We can't be all things to everybody.

Louise Glover said that she has lived on Maple Street since 2003 and the area has had problems long before the food pantry ever came to the library lot. Not going to avoid having homeless. She doesn't see these things are going to go away if the food pantry goes away. Not new problems. We are supposed to be friendly town.

Peter said don't misconstrue what we are saying as an edict against homeless. Every community has it. They run the gamut, down on their luck, drugs, alcohol. Should the library be in the business of a social service organization? Peter said we don't want to go on all night about this, and we have provided the library trustees with our stand on it.

John Tholl said that the food pantry puts a large liability on the town. The town could be sued for a number of things that go on in the pantry. Courtney said they are protected by Good Samaritan Laws. John is afraid that something could happen where the town is going to incur liability or costs because somebody has done something in conjunction with the pantry.

Peter said that we will let the library trustees discuss this amongst themselves.

#### Budget: Recreation Department

Melissa said she put in a proposal for a \$5000 increase. Biggest increase is \$3000 for recreation department salaries. Melissa said that she is trying to retain help rather than having a revolving door. She feels paying their crew a little bit more is justifiable. They are not even at a pay level that some of other towns are. Melissa said that they have a good crew and wants to be able to up their wages as needed to be able to keep them. Hoping \$3000 would be enough. Melissa said she tries to step back in the winter months. Bussing rates going up. Not sure the \$1000 increase is enough. WW Berry Transportation is very expensive, but they are our only option. She had proposed an \$1000 increase in summer program expenses, but she said she can add another \$500 onto that for the library program. She hopes to be able to do community day again this year. The revenues to date for recreation is \$35,960. The board said they understand the need for the salary increases.

#### Budget: Fire-Rescue

John presented two quotes for the Locality Equipment Purchase Program funded through the American Rescue Plan. One quote is for rescue gear for \$28,682.50 and the other quote is for a new power lift stretcher for the ambulance, same make as the one we currently have for

\$21,267.69 for a total of \$49,950.19. Each town will be eligible for a grant up to \$50,000, and a 10% match by the town is required. Judy and John will research the requirements for the program so we can proceed.

John reviewed his proposed 2022 budget. He said he feels that a Certified Firefighter should get at least what they get at Dunkin Donuts. He increased the salary line item to \$25,000. Fire Chief Ross gave his 2021 payroll structure and 2022 proposed payroll structure to the Board. He said just because the pay goes up, it does not mean we will have a full staff. He said his 2022 budget request is \$350,095, an \$31,165 increase from 2021.

Peter asked what are we going to charge Dalton next year? We have not gone up the past couple of years, and it has stayed at \$15,000. Peter thinks it should be at least \$20,000 or more. Peter said we are maintaining a tremendous infrastructure. John said maybe \$17,500. John said they assist us a lot on calls. He can get numbers for us if we want. 95% of the times we go over there we do transport so we get the money for that. The Board is ok with \$17,500.

Other Safety is increasing from \$34,085 to \$39,530, which is an increase of \$5000 for Public Safety Communications. This is the money we pay Grafton County for our dispatching services, which started in July of this year.

The health budget is increasing from \$5,806 to \$6,345. John said that he needs a deputy health officer and they are mandated to do training so that is what the increase is for.

Warrant articles:

Capital Reserve appropriations: \$40,000 for the Fire Department Equipment Capital Reserve Fund and \$20,000 for the Emergency Services Building Capital Reverse Fund. He is also going to do the warrant article for the purchase of a new ambulance. The cost is \$253,642, but the Board had approved spending \$50,727 from the fire department equipment capital reserve fund for the chassis. We do have \$110,000 in the ambulance capital reserve fund to go towards the purchase.

Budget - Police Department

Ed reviewed his 2022 budget request. Radio and communications line had 2375 going to dues to Lancaster but we are not using that anymore so he got it down for 1000 to use for replacement of equipment. Biggest increase is police retirement. Ed said for salaries we implemented the pay scale which is great. Asking to increase that pay scale by 1 ½% for 6 the full-time employees and three of them are for steps: Davis, Cunningham, Hodgdon.

Ed said we are in a good place with staff. Implementing what we did last year was good and we need to maintain that. Doing that to the pay scale will benefit in the long run. The 2022 budget for the police department is \$646,651, an increase of \$17,057.

Shawn White made a motion to approve the Selectmen's Meeting Minutes of October 25, 2021. The motion was seconded by John Tholl. All in favor, 3-0. Motion passes.

Rob discussed with the board purchasing software for the asset management so we can get this information in the hands of the crew in the highway, water and sewer departments. Shawn used to use Web DPW, and Rob has looked into some other companies as well. Rob said he would like to go with IAMGIS. It is a \$7,000 one-time start up and they customize the maps and do web base training. Rob said those funds are eligible through the ARPA funds because it is facilities and infrastructure maintenance. Rob said after the initial start-up costs it is \$5500 for unlimited access for unlimited users. The other users are comparable with the start-up cost. Shawn said he would like to look into it further. He said the town already has a GIS program and as long as the data is inputted that should work for us. Rob said the current program is not user friendly. Shawn would like to do some more research before we make a decision. Shawn asked Rob to see if IAMGIS would do a presentation to the board. Rob said he will check with them and schedule something.

The Board discussed the scholarships for recreation activities with Melissa.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.