

## Selectmen's Meeting Minutes

Monday, September 13, 2021

At the Selectmen's meeting held on Monday, September 13, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. the following people were in attendance: Peter Corey, Shawn White, and John Tholl.

Chairman Corey called the Meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Others in attendance: Rob Larson, PW Director, John Ross, Jr., Fire Chief, Courtney Vashaw, Librarian, Robert Loiacono, Richard Harris, Scott Burns, Ed Betz, Brian Gosselin of Brian's Autobody, Melissa Elander, Tom Ladd, Frank Gee, and Lynn Gee.

### Pledge of Allegiance

Public Hearing – Town's Solar Upgrade Project for the Town Hall, Fire Station, and Library and the USDA grant application.

Chairperson Corey called the Public Hearing to order at 6:30 p.m. This hearing is to consider a USDA grant application for a solar array installation for the town hall, fire station and the library. All we are doing tonight is giving the town the authority to pursue the USDA grant application and provide an opportunity for public input. We are not setting anything in stone. Additional funds that may be needed will probably come from funding at next year's town meeting. This public hearing is a requirement to submit the application to USDA.

The project will cost approximately \$158,000. The solar array will save approximately \$8,000 in the first year and is projected to save over \$230,000 over the next 30 years. The Town will own the solar array. The average maintenance costs over the life of the system are expected to average less than \$1,000 per year. This is mainly to ensure proper operation of the system by the solar developer, and contingency funds in the event that a repair is required. Chairperson Corey said based on his experience he feels it will be far less than \$1,000.

From June, 2020 to June, 2021, the town spent \$11,608 for electricity at the Town Hall, Fire Station, and Library. The solar arrays will be hooked up behind the electric meter at all three buildings. This means that when the panels are producing electricity it will go to offset electricity use. Any excess power produced above the current needs will go into the Eversource power grid, and the Town will receive a credit for the excess energy. The Eversource credit is 100% of the energy supply rate, 100% of the transmission rate, and 25% of the distribution rate multiplied by the amount of electricity exported to the grid in that month. Based on actual changes in recent years, savings are expected to be on the order of 8 to 12 cents per KWH. Not all of our electric bill is for the electricity.

If Whitefield does not install solar, the town will pay roughly \$327,000 to Eversource over the next 25 years assuming a 1% increase in the electricity rate each year. Solar is an investment that will save money rather than pay Eversource for the next 25 years.

The grant we are pursuing is through USDA Rural Development, and it is for 55% of the project cost. Typical grant amounts are \$30,000 to \$50,000. We don't know what the grant amount will be until we are actually awarded the grant. There is potential we could get far in excess because of the ARPA funds flowing out of Washington. It is a good time to be applying. There may also be a small grant through the PUC. Peter said for his residential array he got a \$1,000 rebate.

The solar arrays on the roofs of the Town Hall, Fire Station, and Library will produce nearly 100% of the electricity used by those three buildings. The solar array is a combined 73 kW and will generate 74,000 kilowatt hours of electricity per year, which is enough to offset nearly 100% of the electricity used at the Town Hall, Fire Station, and Library.

All the roofs have been certified by a structural engineer and deemed structurally sound to support the addition of solar arrays. We are still getting an assessment of the fire station roof to see if the roof should be replaced before we proceed. We have time to do this before the project commences. The library will be a ballasted installation. The panels will be placed on the south facing roof of the Fire Station and Town Hall, and on the roof of the library addition.

We have done a project review with the Division of Historical Resources, and they found "No Adverse Effect: to the library. We have already obtained three quotes. There are a couple different styles to consider. The solar installers will do the paperwork to register the panels with the utility for the renewable energy credit broker. Chairperson Corey said that there is software to monitor the daily output, which possibly could be linked to the town's web site.

Chairperson Corey introduced Melissa Elander who works for Clean Energy NH, a non-profit, funded by the Tillotson Fund. She works with communities on energy efficiency and renewable projects. She assists towns and schools with going out and finding what is available for funding for energy efficiency and renewable projects and assists in obtaining the money and assists with getting contractors.

Melissa said that the amount of the grant is 55% of the project costs, which would be \$87,133

Tom Ladd asked about reflection problems that have been caused by the installation of solar panels. John said they do make non-glare, non-reflective panels. Peter said the reflectivity of the panels has been refined over the years.

Ed Betz stated that Eversource has been trying to get a rate increase for the past two to three years. He commended the BOS and town staff for pursuing this solar grant application. Ed said he feels it is very important. He suggested looking into something to be done at the transfer station, which consumes a lot of energy. We were looking at doing something at the old capped

landfill and also at the treatment plant lagoons. Peter said we have been waiting for the state's regulatory process. The Governor passed the law to increase the number of MW that could be done through net metering. Had that been in place 3 years ago, we would have had solar at the transfer station and been able to generate income and offset the electricity costs.

Courtney Vashaw asked about a timeline.

Melissa said the applications are due December 13<sup>th</sup>. We are hoping to have it in a little earlier. USDA says they award in April, but this year it wasn't until June, so somewhere between April to June for the award. Once we are notified, we have three years to use the fund. There may be a warrant article for the 2022 town meeting.

Could the ARPA funds be used for solar? Melissa said they can be. She just checked into that with the GOFERR. They spoke of the loss of revenue category, and that governments have leverage to the extent of the lost revenue. Peter said showing the reduction in revenue is the challenge. She said the funds can be used for solar projects if you can document the lost revenue.

Shawn White made a motion that we pursue the USDA grant fund application. John Tholl seconded the motion. All in favor, 3-0. Motion passes.

Chairperson Corey closed the public hearing at 6:47 p.m.

Chairperson Corey opened the next public hearing at 6:47 p.m. pursuant to NH RSA 31:95-b, Section III and RSA 91:A-2 to discuss the acceptance and expenditure of \$231,649 in unanticipated revenues from the American Rescue Plan of 2021 (ARPA)/Local Fiscal Recovery Funds.

Peter said we are collecting information, and not making any decisions tonight. We have time to carefully consider how to spend the funds.

According to the US Treasury, we may use these funds to:

--**Support public health expenditures:** For example, funding COVID-19 mitigation efforts, medical expenses, behavioral healthcare, and certain public health and safety staff.

--**Address negative economic impacts caused by the public health emergency,** including economic harms to workers, households, small businesses, impacted industries, and the public sector.

--**Replace lost public sector revenue,** using this funding to provide government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue experienced due to the pandemic

--**Provide premium pay for essential workers,** offering additional support to those who have and will bear the greatest health risks because of their service in critical infrastructure sectors

--**Invest in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure,** making necessary investments to

improve access to clean drinking water, support vital wastewater and stormwater infrastructure, and to expand access to broadband internet

We did have a loss of revenue in the recreation department revenue, and that is about the only place we lost revenue.

Tonight we are collecting information, and we have received input previously from people.

John Ross, Jr., Fire Chief, says he has a request from Fire/EMS for \$21,570 to purchase PPE, coats and pants to be used on calls. This set up is good for accidents and during extrication. This can be used on all EMS calls, accidents, and wildland fires.

Courtney Vashaw, Librarian, said she did originally put in a request for expanded staffing in the amount of \$21,000 to get us to 40 open hours a week. Mostly to be open as a public health resource. The library is a public space that could be used a heating space or cool spot. Over the course of the pandemic, tons of people are needing the internet. We were able to get a grant to expand the internet to the parking lot. People can sit around the periphery of the parking lot. Would like to be able to expand the library hours.

Bob Loiacono said he submitted a letter. One suggestion he had was to have the Selectboard, Planning Board, and Zoning Board meetings be broadcast over the internet at any time. Bob said people are reluctant to come to public meetings with the pandemic. He did an informal poll, which supported this. He said he feels an investment of \$1000 to \$2000 would cover the cost to do this. Bob said he had suggested fixing up the municipal parking lots, but that does not appear to fall under the guidelines.

Shawn White said when he ran for the selectmen this was one of the issues he wanted addressed was to have the meetings available for anyone who wanted to participate. We had Zoom meetings for a few months, and there was almost zero participation. Shawn said he doesn't mind spending the money, but it is frustrating when the people who complain do not participate. Bob Loiacono said he went to all the zoom meetings, and he usually doesn't come here to in-person meetings. With the owl system, you don't have to be here and you can watch it anytime for eternity. You can watch it at your convenience. Bob said anyone can upload to YouTube. Courtney said she is applying for a grant to get the Meeting Owl equipment. Tom Ladd said he has watched Lancaster Selectboard meetings a few days after the meetings. Tom was curious if the state legislature would pursue continuing to allow remote participation. It does require having someone taking the responsibility to set it up and operate the equipment. Peter said that we already have an overburdened office staff.

Peter said one thought and suggestion he has is to provide the salary premium for the workers in the Recreation Department who had to deal with the Covid restrictions, which was not easy for them. We have also been considering potential infrastructure projects, and Union Street is a project we have been discussing as well.

Shawn White made a motion to accept the \$231,649 in unanticipated revenues from the American Rescue Plan Act. John Tholl seconded the motion. All in favor, 3-0. Motion passes.

Chairperson Corey closed the public hearing at 6:59 p.m.

Brian Gosselin Brian's Autobody attended the meeting. He would like to see what it would entail to get water and sewer back into the building at 87 Brown Street. He said he has been there a while and it has been difficult to operate his business without water and sewer. What would it entail and what would the costs be? Peter said that Brian reached out to him to talk about this situation at Brown Street. Brian is in a tough spot. He is running a business and bringing economic activity to town. He has an unwilling landlord. Would the board consider in this circumstance, if Brian would be responsible for those connection fees and for the water and sewer bills would we allow him to hook on? Shawn said the problem is when someone doesn't pay, we have the ability to lien the property for non-payment. We would not have that ability in his case. Rob Larson said he wouldn't recommend going down this road. He suggests that the Board reach out to our legal counsel for advice on this. If Mr. Abbott doesn't authorize this, then we have encroached on his rights as the owner of the property. Shawn said he would ask for a first payment deposit so there would be something to cover if a bill was not paid. John said he doesn't have a problem if we can protect the town from liability. Rob said the ordinance specially says at the owner's expense. We should reach out to Christine to see if it can be done. The Board asked Brian if he wanted to pursue this further? He asked about the costs. The fees to hook up are \$1000 each and the installation cost of installing the lines. He said he is all for doing whatever he can do. He would like an estimate of what it is going to entail and cost. Rob and Fred can go meet with him and his contractor to review what needs to be done and see if it is even feasible. Rob verified that the current sewer system doesn't work that goes in the other side of the building. Rob also verified that he cannot use the large pipe that is located there as a conduit to run the water line through. Brian and Rob can get together and go over what needs to be done and meet with a contractor to get an estimate of the cost. Meanwhile, we will check with the town attorney to see what the town's liability would be in this situation. Peter said it is the town's ordinance, so we could make a special exception. The concern is are we doing something on someone's property that we don't have the right to do.

Ordinances:

The Town will hold a Public Hearing on October 4<sup>th</sup> to review the proposed Permissible Fireworks Ordinance.

Tom Ladd asked about the other two ordinances. The board decided after consulting with the town attorney that we are not going forward with a junk ordinance or the Disorderly Actions Ordinance.

The Board signed the quote from Central Paving to pave Kimball Hill.

Rob said that Linda Trudeau of Elm Street had a problem with the sewer backing up into her home. It was determined after having Schofield run a camera down the line that her line was mistakenly capped off by Park Construction during the water project. It has been reconnected, and she is requesting a rebate because she couldn't use the sewer for that quarterly sewer billing cycle. Rob said the rebate would be for \$40.16. Rob said the Town covered the cost of the Schofield bill, but it will be reimbursed through the water project.

Shawn White made a motion to abate \$40.16 of Linda Trudeau's sewer bill. The motion was seconded by John Tholl. All in favor, 3-0. Motion passes.

Rob said as we continue to finalize the wastewater facility, part of the contingency plan is to upgrade and renovate the pump station at Brown Street. It is in poor condition. The two transfer motors are in horrible condition. We need to redo the wiring in the channel system for the motors because it keeps disconnecting. The cost for the pump station is \$58,000. Rob said he has \$30,000 in the street sewer and maintenance account and he is asking permission for the \$28,000 to come from the reserve account for the sewer treatment plant. This will allow us to expend the rest of the grant money to finalize this project, including the building, level switches, pumps. Grease gets caught up there and the floats don't work. Shawn said we should look at getting cameras in those systems. The Board is good with this, as that pump station needs upgrading.

The Board decided to have a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony at the treatment plant on Wednesday, October 13<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am. The board will dedicate this facility in honor of William Robinson. We will reach out to Bill's family to let them know. We will also get all the parties involved with the sewer treatment plant upgrade invited as well.

Frank and Lynn Gee who live at 64 Pine Street came in about their neighbor putting up a fence and then adding a piece on to the fence that blocks the windows on that side of their house. The board said the neighbors did get a permit from the planning board to add an extension on their fence. It was suggested they reach out to the planning board. They said that the neighbors also burn at their property and leave it unattended. The Board suggested that they contact the Fire Chief.

Intent to Cut – Old East Road – Map 204/Lot 16 – The board had some questions before they sign this Intent to Cut. Judy will reach out to the timber tax people at DRA.

Shawn White made a motion to approve the Selectmen's Meeting Minutes of September 23, 2021 and September 30, 2021. The motion was seconded by John Tholl. All in favor, 3-0. Motion passes.

Dick Harris asked about when the dumping at the treatment plant will start. Rob said we are waiting on the hoses to arrive to do this. Dick said it will be a savings to the town when it is operational. Rob said it will be by appointment only. We have to keep the system balanced.

Shawn White made a motion to enter non-public session pursuant to NH RSA 91-A:3 II(e) and (l) at 7:35 p.m. The motion was seconded by John Tholl. All in favor, 3-0. Motion passes.

The Board adjourned from non-public session at 7:49 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 7:49 p.m.