

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes
Monday, January 23, 2023

At the Selectmen's Meeting held on Monday, January 23, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. the following Board members were in attendance: Shawn White, John Tholl, and Abbey Querrard participated via conference call.

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

Abbey Querrard led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The following people were in attendance: Robert Larson, Public Works Director; John Ross, Jr., Fire Chief, Scott Burns, Melissa Elander of Clean Energy NH; Suzy Colt, Courtney Vashaw, Katy Kopp, Judy Gessner, Cathy Atwood, Jeanne Burdette, Sondra Brekke, Scott Black

Old Business:

DPW Director Robert Larson & Melissa Elander, Clean Energy NH

Rob and Melissa attended the meeting to discuss the solar project that was approved at last year's town meeting.

Melissa presented a project overview. We applied to USDA for a community facilities grant for solar arrays for the town hall, the fire station, and the library. The town hall's current electrical load is 34,541 kilowatt hours a year. The 24.5-kilowatt array is expected to produce 26,000 kilowatt hours a year. It is not a 100% offset, but approximately 75% offset. When we were working on putting this together, Peter Corey had requested all black panels. A structural engineer has confirmed the roof is sound and can support the solar arrays.

The library's current electrical load is 5,563 kilowatt hours a year. The 10.8-kilowatt array will generate 10,000 kilowatt hours per year. This will generate more electricity than what is needed for the library so the credit for the excess generation can be assigned to another electrical account. The array will be installed at around a 10-degree angle, a low angle ballasted. A structural engineer confirmed that the roof of the addition can support the array.

The fire station is the third building included in USDA grant. The fire station's current electrical load is 34,117 kilowatt hours a year. The 20.4-kilowatt array will generate 22,000 kilowatt hours per year, so again not a 100% offset, about 75%. This will be all black panels as well. The roof must be replaced at the fire station because it is the original roof, and cannot support the weight of the arrays. The roof can support the weight but the metal roofing is old and needs to be replaced. The solar panels will last for many years so a new roof should be done before they are installed. The structural engineer also approved this roof.

We applied for the USDA grant and heard in September that we were awarded \$87,000 for the solar projects. We had hoped to hear in the spring of last year of the grant award. The original

roof replacement proposal we received last year was \$71,000. We were looking at a total project cost of \$229,551, which was what was requested in the warrant article and approved by the voters. The amount included a small \$5,000 contingency, and had we known back then what we know now we should have included a lot more. We are a grant shortfall of \$39,253. Melissa has been working NH Charitable Foundation to raise the \$39,253 in additional grant funds for the solar projects. It should not be difficult to do that, and it will meet the requirements of the warrant article.

Rob and Melissa worked on updating the costs of the project and reached out to the solar developers. Melissa said she is seeing 10-25% increase in costs for solar projects. Rob put out another request for proposals for the roofing replacement. He only got one quote that came in at \$120,000, which includes insulation. The updated project costs are now:

Roof Proposal:	\$120,000
Solar Project:	\$158,888
Total:	\$278,000

Melissa said her next step is to work the NH Charitable Foundation to raise the \$39,253 and see about adding more in case costs continue to increase. The town needs to start meeting with USDA directly and start having conversations about the allocation of funds. If the town wants to move forward, there are a couple of ways to do it:

The USDA funds come in last. The town pays their share first and then USDA funding comes in. The Town may be able to move forward with the Town Hall and Library before the additional \$39,253 is raised. The project could be structured so that the USDA funds only come into play for the Fire Station roof replacement and the Fire station solar array. USDA has approved a phased approach. We have three years to use the funds from USDA then you get another additional two years after that. It doesn't make much sense to wait too much longer with the price increases we have seen.

Melissa said she would like the Selectboard to approve assigning Rob to be the point person with USDA and get the funds allocated and then come back to the Board to be able to move forward. She will move forward with the NH Charitable funding as well.

Shawn said that we did tell the voters that if we didn't get the grant that we would not move forward so we need to be sure that is addressed. The Board doesn't have a problem with allowing Rob to be the point person. Before we go to much further, we need to check with the Town Attorney that we can get that full grant to move forward with anything the way the grant was written. The board is all set with Melissa reaching out to NH Charitable Foundation and USDA.

Rob said the problem with the roofing replacement is contractors are already booked out three years. They don't want to commit to prices that far out, but we are seeing prices almost doubling.

Rob has been talking to a broker about electrical costs and rates, and we sent him all the accounts for the town. We would not be able to include the town office, library and fire station because you can't do net metering on a third-party brokerage. We can have the other accounts on their rate. The Board said it is fine to look into buildings that are not included in the net metering and then get back to the Board.

Rob said he would like to start exploring putting up a new metal building at the transfer station for storage. We need to store our recyclables so they don't get wet. If we only send a partial load, then we have to pay. We only get paid when it is a full load. Currently we don't have enough storage to make a full load. We can't have mixed loads of recyclables. We cost the town \$11,000 to recycle. Rob thinks we can get that figure down to \$2,000 to \$5,000. There is a trailer for tires. The trailer Bob Stiles donated is rotted out on the bottom. We had a couple trailers purchased for paper, but we have 3 sets of paper, i.e. mixed, cardboard and type paper. We have to separate those. Any one of those in with another is considered a mixed load, and then it costs us money to ship it. They bill us to separate those loads. Rather than have mixed bales, if we could separate it ourselves it would save us money. Rob is thinking of a warrant article to raise the funds for this metal building. Abbey has some information on the building they have at the VFW. Shawn said he doesn't see it happening this year. We are not really looking to add to this year's budget for another warrant article. Shawn said look into the rental until so we can get by and NRRA does some container grants which can be something we can look into. Rob said he is looking down the road for this. The Board doesn't want to add any more warrant articles this year. OK to rent a container for \$125 a month if it can save him money. The Board is ok with Rob renting the container and maybe looking into to repairing the floor in the trailer.

Whitefield Public Library - CDBG Grant Administration/ARPA Funds/2023 Budget

Katy Kopp said Beth Anderson is not feeling well tonight, and the Library Trustees are asking Courtney to speak tonight. Shawn said the last time they were here when he was trying to talk Courtney shushed him. As the governing body, we didn't take kindly to that and Shawn wanted to say that she should be respectful of that. We try to give everyone an opportunity to speak. Courtney said she did not realize that she did that.

The Board said we got feedback in reference to the ARPA funds. The standard allowance can be changed in the next reporting cycle due on April 30, 2023. Our contact at NHMA said they cannot approve or disapprove of any project in our community, but the revenue loss category is the most flexible in its allowances of eligible uses and allows for capital and facility improvements. Treasury suggests that these funds supplement the budget, rather than supplant, to get ahead, using funds for one-time expenses so not to create future spikes in the operating budget. It appears the ARPA funds would be used towards library building repairs.

Courtney said she spoke with Michelle-Moren Gray at North Country Council, and they would be willing to do the CDBG grant administration at a rate of half of what NCIC was proposing. Michelle's recommendation was with the funds we have we are not going to get architectural renderings architectural, but you would get the study and that could be used to get another grant for architectural renderings when the time comes. Courtney said she met with CDFA about the funding that they have coming, and no one is biting for municipal infrastructure and they are willing to work with us on that if we want to pursue it. We want to try to meet our timelines and get our phases and be in line to apply for the next phase. There was \$500 included in the grant for administration. North Country Council is saying up to \$3,000 for grant administration so we are short \$2,500. The library has a \$2,500 match, but they would like to use that for the study so we have as much as we can to put towards the study. Could that \$2,500 come out of the \$20,000 the library is requesting from ARPA for facilities improvements?

Courtney said they would like to be able to use the downstairs, and it is totally unusable at this time. Shawn said when the addition was put in and we had some quotes for the basement and the quotes were way out there. We would like to be able to have another egress. We don't have to pay for the study. Basically, we want to make the plan, and maybe something will happen downstairs or maybe it won't. We would like to have something in place that says this is what you need to do to take care of mold, egress issue, life safety inspection issues, handicapped accessibility. Anyone in a motorized chair can't function in the library. Shawn said we were able to do the addition because we had to have it ADA compliant. Courtney said the difference is between nominal compliance and functional compliance. We are nominal compliant but not able to functionally get around. Difficult for people to get around. The doors open out into the wheelchair. Would like to be able to get in and out of both floors of that building safely. It doesn't really benefit anyone the way it is. It is just storage downstairs now. It is really moldy down there, and you can't put anything down on the floor. Have to run a dehumidifier all the time. Ed Betz had said you should consider a heat pump for that space, but that is a significant cost. We want to eliminate some of the humidity and moisture in that space. Thought they resolved the moisture issue when they did the addition, and it is not really keeping up. Shawn said there was a lot of water there. Courtney said it doesn't create for a healthy building, and hopefully we can end up with a better space and add more public programming space and allow us to have a healthy building.

Shawn said the Board would like to see the list they have of what needs to be done for repairs and get that stuff done. John Ross said he thinks you have to be careful of grants paying for grants. Courtney said she feels the grant administration is an acceptable use of the ARPA funds because it is pertaining to facilities improvements and repairs. The Board said we still do not have a list of what they need for the \$20,000 repairs. Rob and Courtney said they sent it, but we don't seem to have received it so they will send it again. Shawn said do not spend anything or do anything until the Board reviews the list.

Finalize Budget

Courtney said the library really want to make the \$65,000 work. Shawn said he tries to think outside the box, and he has not discussed this with the other board members. He suggested that Courtney, Melissa, the Recreation Director, and the Board get together to discuss the possibility of the library taking over the after-school program. Courtney said the biggest dilemma is the space issue. They have definitely learned this year that the conference room is not very big. The logistics of how the library is set up and the sound carries through the whole building with 15-20 kids in the library when someone is there trying to read or use the computers may create some issues. It is certainly something that can be discussed and considered.

Courtney asked if the town could absorb the heating and electricity costs of the library under the general buildings budget of the town. This would help with them making the \$65,000 work. They are thinking \$8,000 for fuel and \$3,500 for electric. The Town could eliminate the \$10,000 appropriation to the library building repairs capital reserve fund this year.

Shawn said the board has been vilified that we are the bad people. Shawn said there are so many departments here. Everyone wants to have additional staffing—a full-time chief, additional help for the DPW, Water, and Transfer Station. We don't have the funds, and we tell them no repeatedly. The Board knows that the library has stepped up and is doing good things for the community. Grants are good, but when they dry up what are we going to do? School gets these grants to put teachers on then the grants dry up then the taxpayers pay for it. Right now in these times, discussed as a board, it is hard and we couldn't approve such a large increase in the library budget. People are coming and saying they can't pay their taxes, water and sewer. When the tax bills go out next year, the school rate is projected to go up almost \$3.00 per thousand. Courtney said her family is crushed by this as well. Everything they do at the library is meant to save people money. Their job is help people save everywhere they can. Whitefield has had a lifetime of not having full time library services, and it is not that Whitefield doesn't need them. We certainly do need them. There is a dire need for social services and no budget to do it. We can't ask the town office to bring on a social worker and we can't afford it, but we can wrap it into what the library does. Shawn asked how many libraries are doing what you are doing? Courtney said what libraries do now and have done in the past has changed drastically. Courtney said her skill set is grant writing, which has allowed her to do more with a lot less, but that is something she takes a lot of pride in. She works for the community, and is trying so hard to work for the town when it really needs it. She said they are not asking for a \$300,000 budget like Littleton. She thinks the \$65,000 can work for this year, if the town will take over the heat and electric costs. Sondra said she has been to other local libraries and recently in New Jersey, where they do a lot of social programs. More libraries are becoming not just a book place. They are becoming the heart of the community. The townspeople deserve this service.

The Board agreed to add the \$8,000 for library fuel and \$3,500 for library electricity to the town's building budgets for this year. The library line item will remain at \$65,000. The \$10,000 appropriation to the library capital reserve account will be eliminated this year.

New Business:

Junk Yard License Renewal – Richard Harris

The Board approved the junk yard license renewal for Richard Harris on Old East Road.

Do we need to meet next Monday, January 30th?

No meeting, Monday, January 30, 2023. The Budget Hearing will be held on Monday, February 13, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

Approve Selectmen's Meeting Minutes of January 9, 2023

A motion was made by John Tholl to approve the minutes of the January 9, 2023 Selectmen's Meeting. The motion was seconded by Abbey Querrard. The 1/9/23 minutes should reflect that Shawn White was amending the minutes of December 12, 2022 not December 19, 2022. Roll Call Vote: Tholl: Yes; White: Yes; Querrard: Yes. Motion passes.

A motion was made by John Tholl to amend the minutes of the December 12, 2022 to include the amendment Shawn made at the January 9, 2023 meeting that was mistakenly stated to be for the December 19, 2022 Selectmen's Meeting. The motion was seconded by Shawn White. Roll Call Vote: Tholl: Yes; White: Yes; Querrard: Yes. Motion passes.

Suzy Colt said congratulations on the library deal. It was good to work it out.

A motion was made by John Tholl to enter non-public session at 7:37 p.m. pursuant to NH RSA 91-A:3, II (b) and (l). The motion was seconded by Shawn White. Roll call vote: Querrard: Yes; White: Yes; Tholl: Yes. Motion passes, 3-0. The board entered non-public session at 7:37 p.m.

The Board adjourned from non-public session at 7:58 p.m.

A motion was made by Abbey Querrard and seconded by John Tholl to seal the non-public session meeting minutes pursuant to NH RSA 91-A:3 II (b) because it is determined that divulgence of this information likely would render a proposed action ineffective until the litigation is resolved. Roll call vote to seal the minutes: Querrard: Yes; White: Yes; Tholl: Yes. Motion passes, 3-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.