

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MINUTES MAY 15, 2019
APPROVED

SB Members Present: Alison S. Manugian, Vice Chair; John R. Giger, Clerk; Joshua A. Degen, Member; Rebecca H. Pine, Member

Also Present: Mark W. Haddad, Town Manager; Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant

Ms. Manugian called the meeting to order at 7:00pm and reviewed the agenda.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Pine announced that the Interfaith Council was showing a movie at Lawrence Academy the following night at 7pm.

Mr. Giger said that plantings and paths would be planted and constructed behind the Boutwell House that weekend adding that volunteers were welcomed. Mr. Degen said that he was a site coordinator for this project.

Ms. Manugian said that Mr. Pease had resigned from the Select Board and thanked him for his tremendous service to the community and wished him the best. She encouraged everyone to get out and vote on Tuesday.

Ms. Manugian read the attached statement on the investigation report.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Mr. Haddad said that the Board had ratified his appointment of Leah Pierce as a Communications Officer for the Groton Police and Fire Departments. He said that Ms. Pierce had a change in her personal circumstances and needed to revert to a relief dispatcher, creating a full-time vacancy on the Department. He said that the Police Chief had gone back to the previous candidates and had recommended that he appoint the next candidate in line to a full-time position. Mr. Haddad said that at the Chief's request, he had appointed John Weix as a Communications Officer for the Town and respectfully requested that the Board consider ratifying the appointment.

Ms. Pine moved to ratify the appointment of the Town Manager of John Weix as a Communications Office for the Town. Mr. Giger seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Mr. Haddad said that at their last meeting he advised the Board that Verizon decided that it no longer wanted to maintain the fiber optic lines that connect the various Town buildings to the studio at the High School for broadcasting. He said that they wanted to go to a so-called PEGNet system and install new equipment in their various buildings that will allow for broadcasting over the internet. He said he provided the Board with a proposed Memorandum of Understanding with Verizon that would be attached to their current license agreement adding it was negotiated by the himself and the Cable Committee. He said that the Board requested additional information concerning signal degradation and whether or not Verizon would consider leaving the current system in place for a period of time until such time as we see how the new system is functioning. He provided the Board with the following responses to the Board's questions from Verizon:

In terms of degradation of bandwidth at the Middle School and High School using the PEGNet architecture, Verizon cannot guarantee throughput, as the content would be running on the Town's IP network, and throughput across those points would be governed by many factors, including the size of the pipe itself. A session of broadcast on the PEGNet architecture will consume about 6 Meg of bandwidth; when a session is not running (encoder is off), no bandwidth is used. Again, as Groton will be running PEGNet sessions across its architecture/pipes, Verizon would have no say or guarantee on the throughput of that pipe, other than -- as above -- notifying you that a PEGNet session will usually use 6 Meg of that pipe.

In a sense, Groton is running dual networks today, as some of your content is going across the fiber auxiliary links and some across the encoder/decoder that Verizon provided as a trial for Groton's use. That should provide a sense of the PEGNet's performance. Verizon does not want to run dual systems, although once the PEGNet equipment is

fully deployed and installed, we would be willing to leave the fiber auxiliary link structure in place for 60 days, after which we would dismantle it.

Mr. Chiasson explained what the current configuration was and what the proposed PEGNeT changes were going to be and the pros and cons of them. Mr. Haddad said that broadcasting live would not be an issue at the schools because most things were done off hours. Mr. Haddad said he hoped this addressed the Board's concerns and would authorize him to sign the MOU. Mr. Giger said that he was thrilled with the explanation that had been provided.

Ms. Manugian asked for a motion to allow the Town Manager to sign the MOU as presented. Mr. Degen made the motion. Mr. Giger seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Mr. Haddad asked the Board to ratify his appointment of Michael Tonelli as the Park Ranger. Ms. Pine asked what the position was. The position's responsibilities were explained.

Ms. Pine made a motion to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Michael Tonelli as the Park Ranger. Mr. Giger seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Mr. Haddad said that they had been advised that on March 12, 2019 sections of the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers were officially designated as part of the National Wild & Scenic Rivers System. He said that the current Study Committee was in the process of transitioning into a "Stewardship Council" to implement the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Stewardship Plan approved at last year's Town Meeting. Mr. Haddad said that Mr. Al Futterman had requested that the Board appoint their current representatives, member Stacey Chilcoat and Alternate Member Nadia Madden to the Stewardship Council. He respectfully requested that the Board consider making these appointments.

Ms. Pine moved that they appoint member Stacey Chilcoat and Alternate Member Nadia Madden to the Stewardship Council for the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Stewardship Council. Mr. Giger seconded the motion.

Ms. Pine read a certificate the NRWA presented to the Town for its work on the Wild and Scenic Rivers Designation process.

The motion carried unanimously.

5. *Mr. Giger moved to appoint Cynthia Thompson to the Cultural Council with a term to end June 30, 2023. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.*
6. Mr. Haddad said that when the Board appointed Brooks and DeRensis as Town Counsel last July, they made the appointment for one year, with a term to expire on June 30, 2019. He said that he added this to the agenda to discuss with the Board whether or not they wanted to continue with them as Town Counsel or seek new Counsel. He said he was bringing this to the Board early because if they decided to make a change, they would need some time to do so. Mr. Haddad said that they would not need to issue an RFP to procure Town Counsel Services. He said that local jurisdictions' agreements with vendors for supplies and services, including agreements to buy, rent, lease, lease-purchase, or otherwise acquire supplies or services, were subject to Chapter 30B. He said that the law also contained a list of specific contracts that were exempt from all Chapter 30B requirements, specifically, contracts with labor relations representatives, lawyers, or certified public accountants were exempt from the requirements of Chapter 30B according to Chapter 30B, §1(b)(15). He said that since they had just issued an RFP for Legal Services last year, the Board may determine that another RFP is not necessary and could look at the applicants from last year to determine if they wanted to move in a different direction.

Mr. Haddad said that they had spent \$117K on legal services with \$85K of that being paid to Brooks and DeRensis to date with another \$35K to KP Law for labor plus another \$18K that the Cons Con had spent to date on land

purchases with Brooks and DeRensis. Mr. Haddad said that was a 400% increase year over year. Mr. Haddad said that the Cons Com was not happy with the responses they had received on land issues, the Board of Assessors was not happy with the legal advice they had received from them along with the Sewer Commission. Mr. Haddad asked the Board for their thoughts.

Ms. Manugian said it would be helpful to have the financials and the feedback from the other Boards. Mr. Degen asked how much they would be needing to finish out the rest of the year. Mr. Haddad said that they needed \$40K to complete the year. Mr. Degen asked for a 3 year or so actual comparison to compare apples to apples. Mr. Giger said that they couldn't just look at the dollars being spent. He said that it was useful to look at how many hours were billed. He said he would also like to hear from department heads about their concerns. Ms. Pine agreed with Mr. Giger adding she was surprised that this was brought forward. Ms. Manugian said that she would be hesitant to do anything without talking to Brooks DeRensis first.

Brooks and DeRensis Attorney Kim Salliant said that prior counsel had no file or discovery on a litigation case adding they had to recreate the chronology. Mr. Haddad said he would put this on the agenda for an upcoming meeting once all the information was pulled together.

7. Mr. Haddad reviewed the third quarter financials. He said that motor vehicle excise tax was still a concern of his when reviewing the third quarter review. He said that the first commitment was smaller than it had been adding that people were not buying as many new cars as in previous years. He said that they had also not been collecting as much in building permit fees. He said that they were up on the local meals tax which was great news. He said he did not anticipate any overages in the police and fire budgets thanks to the strong budgeting of the Chiefs.

Mr. Giger said that he was not surprised with the motor vehicle excise tax. He said that Mr. Haddad had been very cautious about this since the beginning adding they had decent warnings about this. Mr. Giger said that a concern had been raised about their regional dispatch grant and how it had not been visible in their reports. Mr. Giger said that it was not shown because it was a reimbursable grant. He said that this was now noted as a footnote on this spreadsheet. Mr. Degen asked why they budgeted so much for dispatch wages when they had only spent 38% on wages thus far. Mr. Haddad provided reasons why this was the case.

Mr. Haddad thanked Ms. Dufresne for her hard work and efforts tracking all this information.

8. Mr. Haddad provided the Board with an update on their goals. Mr. Haddad talked about a grant he had applied for through the MRPC to help them with their application for Green Communities. Mr. Haddad said that the Tri-Board met on Monday and thought it was a productive meeting. He said that they were building 3 years' worth of budgets and thought it has going to be very helpful moving forward.
9. Mr. Haddad said that the budgets were being developed for the next FY by the Accounting Department now that Town Meeting had concluded.

Mr. Haddad said that the 24/7 Fire Department was not something that was going to happen overnight. He said that they were currently recruiting for 2 new personnel, they needed to open the union contract to add for 24/7 coverage and needed to send some to the academy. He said that they anticipated going 24/7 in the fall. Mr. Giger asked for a timeline of events to be produced.

Mr. Haddad said that the major capital purchase was a \$650K fire pumper. He said that they were finalizing the specs on the equipment and would anticipate having the new fire truck a year from now. Mr. Haddad said that they were ready to award the contract on the DPW building should it pass next Tuesday. He said that they were meeting with the Financial Advisors next Thursday should the debt exclusions pass at the ballot. He said that the DOR was notified and appropriate paperwork filed for the local rooms tax that would be collected started July 1, 2019.

Mr. Haddad said that Mr. Easom wanted to serve as the project manager on the Prescott Sprinkler System project. He said that Mr. Easom had reached out to the architect and it was necessary that specs be developed for the system. He said that they were going to ask the CPC for permission to use money to do that.

Mr. Haddad said that Representative Harrington and Senator Kennedy had been notified by certified return receipt of the Olivia Way land swap and the request for additional liquor licenses. Mr. Haddad said that all zoning and bylaw issues had been sent to the Attorney General for approval by the Town Clerk.

Mr. Haddad provided the Board with a copy of the current line item transfers that he would be bringing back to a future meeting in July.

10. Mr. Haddad provided the Board with a proposed summer meeting schedule.

11. Mr. Haddad respectfully requested vacation time from May 27, 2019 through June 3, 2019. He said he would be out of the office a total of 5 days (1 holiday and 4 vacation days). He said that during his absence and pursuant to Section 4-4(b) of the Groton Charter, he had appointed Michael Bouchard as Acting Town Manager.

Mr. Degen moved that the accept the Town Manager request for vacation time from May 27, 2019 through June 2, 2019. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Haddad said that Mr. Giger had brought forward a proposal to limit Select Board meetings to 10:30pm. Mr. Haddad said that he would propose ending the meetings at 10pm like Town Meeting. Ms. Manugian said that if they had a practice where they were here late often it would make sense but she didn't think it was an issue. Mr. Giger said he was flexible on the time but thought that they were not able to make the best decisions after working issues for 6 hours. He said that they needed to think about the employees and those that work that needed to get up the next day. He said that they needed to organize themselves better to use their time better. He said that he thought there needed to be something there. He said that they had it in place for Town Meeting as well as other Town's and something they needed to think about.

ON-GOING ISSUES LIST

A. Mr. Haddad said that the Senior Center construction was going very well and talked about a grant that was before the state committees right now. He said that Lawrence Academy had given the Town a donation to purchase fitness equipment of \$15K.

F. Mr. Haddad said that they had a great meeting last night with their OPM for the Flo Ro project. He said that if everything went according to plan, the would be bringing this back to the Town Meeting of April 2021.

MINUTES

Mr. Degen moved to approve the meeting minutes of April 8, 2019. Mr. Giger seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:14pm.

Approved: _____
John Giger, Clerk

_____ respectfully submitted:
Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant

Date Approved: 6/3/19