

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JANUARY 27, 2020
APPROVED**

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

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

Mr. Degen called the meeting to order at 7:00pm and reviewed the agenda.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Degen said that Al Wyatt passed away last week. He said that he had the pleasure of knowing Mr. Wyatt for 20 years and worked with him on Williams Barn. He said that Mr. Wyatt was quite a craftsman. He said that the Town will miss Mr. Wyatt and provided the calling hours details.

Mr. Haddad said that the CPC was holding their public hearing this evening and because of that he had rescheduled the joint meeting to discuss the future of CPA for next Monday, February 3rd.

Mr. Haddad provided the details of an upcoming Trust Fund Lecture being Sunday, February 9th from 2-4pm at the Groton Center. He said that this was being co-sponsored by the Groton Garden Club and the Nashua River Watershed,

Ms. Manugian arrived at 7:04pm.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Mr. Haddad said that Mr. Cunningham had been working very hard over many years on the Squannacook River Rail Trail. Mr. Cunningham said that the project was all permitted and work had begun on it. He said that they used trails grants to fund this through DCR, along with private donations, and were applying again this year for a grant through DCR. Ms. Pine asked if Squannacook Greenways was a non-profit. Mr. Cunningham said that it was a 501(c)3. Mr. Degen said he applauded all the work Mr. Cunningham had done on this project. Mr. Degen said he whole headedly supported this. Ms. Manugian asked if this would be used for construction and if there was enough money to complete this project. Mr. Cunningham said that it would be used for construction adding that they could apply for grants once a year and would continue to apply where it was a multi-year project. Ms. Manugian asked who would provide the upkeep. Mr. Cunningham said that the non-profit would and directed people to visit their website for information on the project.

Mr. Degen moved that the Select Board authorize the Chair to sign the letter of support for the Squannacook Greenways DCR trails grant application. Ms. Pine seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

PRESENTATION ON AVAILABLE PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS

Mr. Greeno said that he provided a similar presentation every fall at the Center for anyone interested. Mr. Greeno said he was going to briefly give a description of each exemption available. Mr. Greeno explained what the difference was between an abatement and an exemption.

- He said that there was a disabled veterans property tax exemption of up to \$800, which was double what was allowed by the state because of a local option the Town had adopted. Mr. Haddad said that that was voted on at town meeting every year.
- Mr. Greeno said that a surviving spouse, minor child of a deceased parent or elderly person could also apply for an exemption under 17D. He said that this exemption was \$350, that it did not have an annual income limit but limited how much you had in the bank.
- Mr. Greeno said that there was a senior exemption that had an annual income limit. He said that this exemption was for \$1000.

Mr. Haddad asked how many applications they received yearly and what amount of money that translated into. Mr. Greeno said that they received about 150 applications yearly which translated into \$25K in exemptions which was paid out of the overlay.

- Mr. Greeno said that their largest exemption was the CPA exemption. He said that there was an income limit and age restriction. Mr. Greeno said that they probably received 60 applications for these yearly.
- Mr. Greeno said that there was a n exemption for blind persons adding that the exemption was for \$1000.
- Mr. Greeno said that they had a property tax deferral which was helpful to seniors to keep them in their house. He said that a lien was placed on the home so that the Town received their property tax payment upon sale of the home at 8% simple interest. Mr. Degen said that this was for those without mortgages. Mr. Greeno said that they could have a mortgage but needed permission from the bank.

Mr. Pine asked about the surcharge being proposed by the Water Commission and if there had been discussions about this. Mr. Greeno said that he had a brief discussion about this with the Treasurer today about how to handle this adding discussions were preliminary at this point.

Ms. Manugian asked about the senior work off program. Mr. Greeno said that they took a maximum of 28 applicants adding there was no income or asset limits set. He said that they confirm what their federal tax return and bank account statements were for the individuals and if they had more than 28 applicants, they would take the neediest first. Mr. Greeno said that they received a \$700 exemption at \$12.75/hour.

Mr. Greeno welcomed anyone with questions to come into the Town Hall to the Assessor's Office to understand the exemptions and the processes.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT - CONT.

2. Mr. Haddad said that he amended the Committee Vacancy Policy as discussed at their last meeting and reviewed the changes. Ms. Pine suggested changing the word representative of the Board to designee of the Board to keep consistency.

Ms. Pine moved to adopt the Committee Vacancy Policy as presented with the change of representative to designee with a policy date of January 27, 2020. Mr. Degen seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Mr. Haddad said that it was that time of year for the annual Taste of Nashoba sponsored by the Nashoba Chamber of Commerce. He respectfully requested that the Board approve a one day all alcohol license for the event to be held on Tuesday, March 24, 2020 from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Lawrence Academy.

Mr. Degen made the motion. Mr. Giger seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Mr. Degen moved to ratify the following election worker appointments of the Town Manager: Emily Navetta, Virginia Reinap, Michael LaTerz, and Carrie Bolton. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Mr. Haddad explained that it was time to look at the 2nd quarter financial report. He said that local room occupancy tax and meals tax was coming in right where they anticipated. He said that he was very concerned about licenses and permits. He said that they were \$33K behind where they were last year. He said that the number of permits was relatively the same but the values were much less. Ms. Manugian asked if there could be a column added that showed the previous FY actuals. Ms. Dufresne said that that would change the intent of this spreadsheet but could do what the Board requested. She said that if they received the entire workbook, they would see that information in the tabs at the bottom of the page. Mr. Haddad said that he would work with Ms. Dufresne and send the Board the entire workbook instead of printing out the current quarter. Mr. Degen asked if Dunstable could be billed quarterly for dispatch services instead of annually. Ms. Dufresne said that they could do that.

Mr. Haddad said that expenditures were trending at about the same rate as last year. There was a discussion about snow and ice and if there was a separate line item.

6. Mr. Haddad reviewed the Board's goals as part of a quarterly update. Ms. Pine asked for the next 3 months of meetings to be provided to the Board as often as possible. Ms. Manugian said she wasn't sure what purpose that would serve. Mr. Haddad said he would try his best to keep the Board updated.

Mr. Degen said he wanted to see goal #4 stay adding their discussions about public safety needs had not been completed as far as he was concerned especially with Indian Hill coming on in the future.

Mr. Haddad said that the first step in discussing the future of the CPA would be next week in a joint meeting with the CPC. He said after that they could decide if it would be helpful to have someone into a meeting from the State to discuss this further.

7. Mr. Haddad recommended that the Board hold off until the next quarter to do an Executive Session minute review adding they had only had one Executive Session meeting since the last review. The Board agreed.
8. Mr. Haddad said he thought Saturday's budget meeting went very well adding that the Department Heads had done a great job. He added that he thought the Finance Committee and Select Board had some excellent questions. He said that the next meeting would be on Saturday, February 8th at 8:30am between the Finance Committee and Select Board. Mr. Haddad talked about his idea to pay the sewer debt off in one payment but that there was one more payment than he thought. He said he would continue to work on this.

ON-GOING ISSUES

A: Mr. Haddad provided the Board with a detail sheet of the final accounting for the Senior Center construction. He said that the project was \$40K under the Town Meeting appropriation. He said that they bonded \$80K less than authorized also. He said he would like to come back to them next year and ask that the remaining unspent money be used to pay down the bond premium which was a good thing for the tax payers. Mr. Degen asked if there were additional gifts. Mr. Haddad said that they collected \$100K in gifts which would be used to pay down debt in future years.

D: Mr. Haddad said that the first MS4 permit public hearing would be held on February 4th.

G: Mr. Haddad said that the Florence Roche Building Committee would be discussing a report to the MSBA tomorrow night which would include what their plans were. He said that this was an important milestone and would allow them to begin digging into their options.

H: Mr. Haddad said that the Library Roof was in punch list phase and was nearly completed.

I: Mr. Haddad said that tomorrow would be the final building construction meeting for the DPW garage. He said that the Highway Department should be able to move in at the end of the week into the old building. He said that that new building would be able to be occupied in mid-March once the generator was installed.

LIAISON REPORTS

Ms. Pine said that the non-profit council was meeting on Friday, January 31st.

MINUTES

Mr. Degen moved to accept the regular session meeting minutes of January 13, 2020 as presented. Ms. Pine seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35pm.

Approved: _____
John Reilly, Clerk

_____ respectfully submitted:
Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant

Date Approved: 2/3/20