

Minutes of the Board of Selectmen Meeting

This meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 6:03PM on Tuesday, February 21, 2023 in the Town Offices. Jason Petraitis, John Tripp, and Brooke Canada were present.

Fire Chief Joe Holway and Highway Superintendent Jason Benoit were in to discuss the cost of renovations at the Highway barn, Fire station, and the old Huck's building. Joe introduced Jeff from Tecton (designer) and Tony from Colliers (OPM). Joe said they worked hard to hit their target numbers and came close, some things are up for discussion and we could reduce the price.

Jeff passed out handouts with breakdowns of the pricing for each building. He prepared drawings for the Fire Station and received information from Joe about the old highway barn, Jeff scanned through the estimates provided but did not do a design for the building. Jeff pointed out Hazardous Materials abatement, he said there is some suspicious looking materials, \$100,000.00 could be too high, or too low. Site contamination abatement-Jeff hasn't done any testing but guarantees there is oil and gas in the soil, this would affect us if we do any excavation work. Joe Holway said we'd only need to excavate if we build an extra building. Jeff said he's trying to protect the Town. The total amount needed for renovations at the Fire Station and Highway is 5.5million dollars.

Jeff reviewed the estimates for Huck's building (new Highway), he explained he received estimates from Jason Benoit. Jeff did not include Hazardous materials abatement; he walked through the building and didn't see anything concerning. He budgeted \$250,000 for site contamination, Joe Holway said this would only be triggered if we dig. The estimate for Huck's is 1.5million dollars.

Jeff has some concerns, he made notes and adjustments to the quotes he received, some made no mention of prevailing wage. He also has concerns about the back corner of the Highway building, is it deteriorating, this is not a 50-year solution. Joe said the roof is good, Jeff said lateral bracing is needed for the front portion of the building.

Jason Benoit passed out a sheet with updated numbers for Huck's, a kitchen/break room needs to be added to the quote. Jeff said that Jason Benoit needs to get drawings/plans of the Huck's building, there's been no official design or engineering tests.

Jeff said it would be 7 million dollars altogether. Joe Holway said there is a contingency included and we could drop items off the quote, but he felt it better to include everything needed. Jeff said both quotes include metal outbuildings.

Shiela LeBlanc asked about drawings, how can we borrow funds without drawings or plans? Joe said it Town votes it through the plans would get drawn up afterwards. Mr. Petraitis asked if we could get drawings before the Special Town Meeting. Jeff said he's only got drawings for the Fire station. Mr. Petraitis said people will want to see the drawings.

Tara Hayes said this is a huge amount of money, Mr. Tripp said it was much higher than he thought it would be. Joe noted this is overestimated.

Tony from Colliers explained that Jeff and him work together a lot. Tony breaks the specs down into line items and creates a time line of when money will need to be spent. He said he's been seeing bids come in higher than estimated. He said there's a lot of big projects right now and it's hard to get bidders for these small, difficult projects. Tony suggested asking for 8.5 million dollars and said we wouldn't need

more than that. Tony said if we can't start anything until May the cost will increase. That will however give time for testing, and we need designs in place to get real numbers. He said we were under contract with Colliers for the new Fire Department proposal, but there was language that we could extend the contract by mutual agreement, so we won't need to solicit a new OPM. State law says that any project over 1.5 million dollars must have an OPM.

Tony explained the OPM helps with bidding, insurances, bonds, etc. and during construction they function as a clerk of the works to oversee construction. The clerk doesn't need to be full time, Tony suggested two or three half days a week would cover it.

Joe Holway said that Highway and Fire have been put off of capital plan for 10 years, he said this is the time to do it because of tax drop offs.

Joe explained the benefits of this and cost savings he sees, it's better than paying 12 million for a new fire station alone. These numbers are high to protect the Town.

Mr. Petraitis agreed that the cost of the just the new fire station dwarfs these numbers, but it's up to the Town to vote on this one way or the other, we still need to show them something.

Shiela LeBlanc said that when we voted for the sewer department upgrade we already had plans, and we'll need plans before we can borrow the money. Joe said if this gets voted in then some of those monies will pay for the designs.

Shiela said we have drawings for the Fire Station, but what about old highway barn and Huck's building. Mr. Tripp asked why you need drawings for Hucks, Shiela said we need the specs, Mr. Petraitis agreed that people will need to see it. Joe said he's got friends that can help with that. Mr. Tripp said we wouldn't need OPM for Huck's because it's under 1.5-million-dollar threshold. Mr. Petraitis said we're talking about what we need to show the voters, what are they getting. Jason Benoit said he provided a simple summary but no drawings. Jeff said he can get drawings done by March 8 for \$3,600.00. Mr. Petraitis wondered how to fund it. Shiela suggested asking Finance Committee to fund it out of the Reserve Fund. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to request the funds from Finance Committee. So voted.

Joe said there's legislature for Fire etc. and we need to follow procurement laws. Joe asked Jeff the cost for drawings, Jeff said a few thousand for simple graphics.

Tara Hayes asked about computer equipment. Darrin Anderson explained the last computer they bought was with a grant and their computers keep crashing. Tara asked if we're not doing the outbuildings, can we get rid of the cost for possible site contamination. Jeff said if there's no digging.

Shiela confirmed with Jeff that after the vote, before the project starts, we will have full drawings of each building, Jeff said yes.

Mrs. Canada asked if the numbers could change-Jeff said you could cut scope, ask for more money, or do a full study first and then vote for the funds.

Shiela told Joe he needs to figure out how much this will cost per tax payer.

Joe asked about taking the outbuildings off the project, Mr. Petraitis said the Board needs to discuss it. Tony said it could be bid as an add/alternate and the price would be broken out.

Jason Benoit brought up purchasing a tractor/mower (over rail mower to cut brush along side of road and sidewalks). He said he'd have a quote by tomorrow but he thinks it'll be around \$200,000.00. Ashley explained that this purchase is a separate article, not to be funded with the same vote as the renovations.

Jim Nyberg provided handouts to show the bids that came in. He explained the cost of the project has increased, but we will still have a 9.8 million dollar grant from USDA. Jim said we could rebid the project, but we would then be subject to BABA (Build America, Buy America) and that would increase the cost. Jim is pursuing additional grants and funding options such as low-interest loan. We still need to fund the project fully before any of these grants or loans can be obtained. Jim said we could also phase the project, but it would end up costing more money for designs and re-bidding. He said we would end up spending more, and the state (DEP) might not approve it. Mr. Petraitis asked Jim what he would phase, Jim said he could move headworks and septage receiving to the second phase, and he could look at other items to move. Mr. Petraitis said he wouldn't be practical to split the project into more than 2 phases. Jim said he could try to make it fit into the 13.1million dollars we originally voted, but they would end up with shortages on important equipment.

Shiela LeBlanc asked if everything to meet DEP requirements is the 22-million-dollar cost, Jim said yes. Shiela asked if there was any "fluff" that could be taken out. Jim said there's no fluff, and they've already taken out clarifiers which was a 1.7-million-dollar quote.

Mr. Petraitis asked if DEP said we can't phase the project. Jim said it would be a fight, the mandate is effective April 1, 2024, if we've made enough progress, they won't fine us.

Mr. Tripp asked about the bids, Jim said we had 4 bidders, all came within \$500,000.00 of each other. The low bidder was Methuen, Mr. Tripp asked if Jim knows them, Jim said they scored well and they've done these type projects before.

Shiela asked about certain numbers on the spreadsheet and reasons for increase of cost. Jim said there was contingency costs, two contracts, ESDC does our bidding, on site engineer and protects our interest. He explained some prices are based on a percentage of the job cost, and some prices increase because the cost of everything has increased since 2019.

Mr. Tripp asked what this will cost each taxpayer, Jim said it depends, there are 8 different financial options. Shiela asked what the cost per taxpayer was when the cost was 13.1 million. Jim said at the time he didn't know how much grant funding he would receive so he didn't do the numbers.

Shiela asked what would happen if this gets voted down. Jim said they'd need to redesign the project. Mr. Tripp asked what DEP would do, Jim said he would tell them the town voted no and ask them to provide assistance. Mrs. Canada asked if we'd get fined, Jim said not if we're working toward the new requirements. Mrs. Canada asked if the town voted no, would we get fined. Jim wasn't sure but thought we would.

Tara asked if we could split up the cost and put some on the Sewer users, what would those amounts be. Jim provided a handout and said there are many options.

Jim said we want to underfund this just a bit, as USDA takes town monies first, if this project comes in under budget that cost would be deducted from the grant, not from the town-funds. Jim said he's going to continue looking for more grants. Shiela asked if we could go back to USDA for additional funds, Jim said only for the bid alternates, which are not included in the 22 million cost estimate. Jim said if we put 7 million over 40 years on the sewer users that would be a 60% increase in cost to the users. Mr. Petraitis asked if there was a way to help relief sewer users. Jim said there is a sewer relief program, we applied 2 years ago and got a small amount of money. We could apply again and use the funds to offset sewer rates or pay down debt.

Tara Hayes was in to discuss opting out of Vote By Mail, Mrs. Canada asked her to explain. Tara said it would only apply to municipal elections, she has to have a hearing at a Board of Selectmen meeting, she will explain but the Board votes. Tara said it costs a lot of money for very little return, she still offers early voting and absentee voting.

Tara is also proposing a bylaw change-to accept to give the Town Clerk additional compensation to become certified, it would only be \$1,000 annually and would be part of her budget.

Tara would like to change the Playground Committee to appointed vs. elected and combine with Town Beach to create a Parks and Recreation Committee with 5 members. Brandon Avery has already shown interest in serving on this. Brandon said there would be more grant availability. Shiela wondered why it would be appointed vs. elected. Tara said she's in favor of an elected board, but with an appointed board it's easier to hold them accountable.

Tara said that Michelle Thayer, only member of the Town Beach committee, wants to create a survey for North Brookfield residents regarding the beach. Mr. Petraitis said we need to think about the beach, there's no agreement in place with East Brookfield (Ashley explained Town Counsel's explanation on the previous agreement not being null and void).

Tara said that Brandon has been going through maps in the Town Offices basement, she priced out flat file cabinets, about \$1200 for four of them. Shiela asked what the maps are of, Brandon said roads, water works, and other historical information.

Tara said she wants to change the official posting place to window AND website.

Tara explained that one of our constables moved out of town. Currently we are electing 3 at a time, but it should be a rotating schedule. Mr. Petraitis said Tara may need to check with the Secretary of State and check on that.

Tara said she presented the voting clickers to ARPA, they're considering it. It's a one-time cost, no annual fee, and cost about \$30/each to replace if broken or misplaced.

Tara said the ZBA wants a revolving account for fees and hearings.

Tara asked what she should say to Michelle about the surveys, Ashley asked if they were free to produce and share. Mr. Petraitis said we would discuss the beach issues another night. Mrs. Canada said we should meet with East Brookfield, Ashley said that we have, several times, Mr. Petraitis said they are difficult to work with.

Tara said changing the Playground committee would be a town meeting vote and then a ballot vote.

Brandon Avery said that someone is turning town property on Donovan Road into a private wood lot, he believes it's a resident on Fullam Hill Road. Ashley asked if conservation was aware, Brandon said yes and that they can send him a letter. Mr. Petraitis said he would speak with Chief Smith about the issue.

Financial:

Reserve Fund requests: \$4,485.60 for Library Director Salary, Shiela explained they increased the pay from \$18 to \$24 dollars an hour and funded two weeks of training.

\$6,0000 to Police Salary for Chris Donais vacation pay when he retired. Shiela explained that no one accounted for that.

\$4027.50 to Board of Health to purchase trash bags-Shiela said this line item is underfunded annually.

\$5954.11 to Fire for vehicle repair. Mr. Tripp asked how much money has been put into this car. Shiela said that Joe Holway was told by Lamoureaux that the vehicle should last another 2-3 years. Mr. Tripp doesn't want to see money dumped into a vehicle that's not worth it.

Mrs. Canada moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to approve all Finance Committee Reserve requests as written. So voted.

Mr. Petraitis said the newer cruiser could be traded in for \$2,500.00, or they can keep it as a backup vehicle. The other cruiser is going to become the ACO vehicle.

Mr. Tripp asked about the Crown Vics, Mr. Petraitis wondered if we could auction it off. Shiela suggested putting the extra cruiser out to bid.

Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to not trade in the cruiser. So voted.

Mass Cultural Council: Mrs. Canada moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to sign the grant contract. So voted.

Placing a lien on a liquor license-Ashley was asked by a vendor if the Town would place a lien on a liquor license for non-payment. Mr. Petraitis is going to contact the license holder directly before we decide on the lien.

Mr. Petraitis wondered if we could sell the storage units to the Rail Trail and have NBRR get the rent money. Ashley will research and contact Town Counsel.

Reimburse John Tripp for money spent at Town Park: Mrs. Canada moved, and Mr. Petraitis seconded, a motion to reimburse John money for electrical work done at the little park. Mr. Petraitis said he's ok with paying, but John needs to talk to the Board before he spends money.

Annual Town Report: Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to approve the Town Report cover picture and dedicate it to Anne Janette. So voted.

Mr. Tripp noted it will cost \$15,000 to do a rubber roof Bates Observatory.

There being no further business, at 8:30PM Mrs. Canada moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to adjourn. So voted.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ashley Barre