

Minutes of the Board of Selectmen Meeting

This meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 6:00PM on Tuesday, November 14, 2023 in the Town Offices. Jason Petraitis, John Tripp, and Brooke Canada present.

Mr. Petraitis read that Highway is looking to post a job to replace an employee that is retiring in December. Mr. Petraitis said the new employee can't start at the top of the pay scale and we'll address the pay when we get there. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to approve the job posting and hiring process to replace the retiring employee. Discussion: Mr. Tripp said we should make it clear this employee won't get the same pay rate as the retiree. Mr. Petraitis said the newest hire, Andrew, came in at Todd's rate. Mr. Tripp said he was more qualified, Mr. Petraitis said not necessarily, he had less experience. Mr. Petraitis also noted that Andrew was hired when Mr. Petraitis was out of town. Mrs. Canada said she asked about the pay when Andrew was hired. Mr. Petraitis said even if the pay is not part of the motion that can be monitored. Mr. Tripp asked if the job description includes pay rate, Ashley said not necessarily. All in favor: aye. So voted.

Meet with Finance Committee to go over STM articles: Ashley explained that Town Counsel let her know that a bylaw change is not needed to hire a Town Administrator. Just a vote at town meeting authorizing the Board of Selectmen to appoint a Town Administrator will work, and she will be provided the language for this article. Mr. Petraitis read through the articles. No comments on Articles 1 & 2. Mr. Tripp asked how much Free Cash is available, Ashley said none and explained all free cash will be used to repay stabilization, opioid settlement, and group health insurance, although we are still short about \$76,000.00 to repay stabilization. Chet asked the balance of stabilization, which is about a million dollars. Capital Stabilization is low and we need to make next year's Fire Truck payment out of it. No comments on Articles 3 & 4. Article 5 regarding recall petitions-Mr. Tripp asked how many absences would from meeting would trigger a recall. Mr. Petraitis said there is a rule, but for an appointed committee you could make a policy. For example, send a letter stating after 5 absences you will be removed from the committee. Mrs. Canada asked why this article is on the warrant, Ashley said it helps with clarifying the reasons for a recall petition. Joe Trentacosta asked if we've had any frivolous recall petitions, Ashley said none that were successful. Article 6-Ashley explained that the proposed change in date for the Annual Town Meeting will save time, as we don't have the budget ready for the beginning of May. Article 7 is to makeup the deficit (rescinding money from the school). Article 8 is for funds for repairs needed on the HVAC system at the library. They will be meeting with ARPA prior to Town meeting so hopefully that will cover the cost. Mrs. Canada questioned waiting on purchasing a second pump, Mr. Tripp wasn't sure about that. Article 10-still waiting on Town Counsel for wording on Town Administrator vote. Article 11-Fire Dept vehicle repair (transferring funds from weekend salary). Joe Trentacosta said they started the year off with \$13,000.00, ending October 31st they've only got \$4,500.00 left for weekend shift, if you take \$1,800.00 for the vehicle repairs there won't be enough left. Mr. Petraitis said we need to seriously consider what to do next year as we're starting \$600,000 in the red. We may have to consider eliminating weekend shifts at the Fire Department. He also stated that previous Fire Chiefs used outdated/old cruisers or their own personal vehicles. Although it's great that Chief Holway and Deputy Chief Anderson have their own cruisers, if they continue to need repair, they will need to share a vehicle or use personal vehicles. We're also paying to register and insure these cruisers. Mr. Petraitis said the Police have a cruiser they use to go to court. He said we used to have money, but now we're struggling financially so we may need to cut vehicles. Kathy said that Joe Holway has been pleading his case to Finance Committee, stating the importance of the cruiser. Mr. Petraitis said he understands but the

bottom line is the bottom line. We have to come up with \$600,000.00, level funding will not get us there. Chet said it's not a bad idea to make each department justify their vehicles. Kathy asked how many departments have town vehicles. The Board thought it was 5 departments. The school has a vehicle they use to plow, which Highway fixed and it doesn't leave school property. Chet questioned the transfer station paying someone to plow. Mr. Petraitis said highway could do it, Chet said they tried that once and it didn't work out. Chet asked how important it is to plow the station immediately after snow. Mr. Tripp said the contractor plows before the station opens, not during or immediately after a storm. Mr. Petraitis agreed we should send a letter to all departments asking for justification for their vehicles, and then ask them to meet with Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen, we need to tell them we'll be making cuts. Mrs. Canada asked when our last financial audit happened, Mr. Petraitis said it's done yearly. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to send a letter to the departments with vehicles asking them for justification. So voted.

Discussion on Article 11 continued: Chet questioned if the weekend shift started when we were promised money from Green Gold, Mr. Petraitis said he was pretty sure that was the case. Mr. Tripp said if he has money in his vehicle repair account to pay for it out of there. Mr. Petraitis said Joe Holway needs to know now that we're running out of money. Kathy said Joe Holway met with Finance Committee and didn't mention needing more money for the repairs. Mr. Petraitis said he was told by Joe that there was some money in the account, but not enough to cover these repairs. Kathy said Finance Committee got a different story. Mr. Petraitis said they should let this article stand, then move on to deal with weekends and cruisers.

Fee Schedule-will look at it again in two weeks. Ashley will email the fees to Joe Trentacosta.

Collector and Clerk job posting: Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to post both positions. So voted.

Chapter 90 reimbursement: Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to sign a Chapter 90 reimbursement request for \$235,622.00. So voted. Mr. Petraitis that in future the name(s) of the project(s) should be included with the request.

Spending Request-Highway: Plow/Light Kit assembly. Mr. Tripp explained highway is adding a plow and light kit to a basin truck in order to have another plow truck. The equipment they are working with is aging, but Scott is manufacturing a plow kit. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to approve the request to spend \$400.00 on a plow/light kit. Discussion: Mrs. Canada asked if they had the money in their budget, Ashley said she was told they do. Mr. Tripp said they are trying to limp along vehicles, as a new truck would be about \$300,000.00. All in favor: Aye.

Mrs. Canada stated she wanted to bring up the Pride Event and leave personal opinions out of it, she wants to see how to handle the situation legally. Mrs. Canada motioned to consult Town Counsel on this. Based on last year there's not a lot of choice legally. Mr. Petraitis said he understands. Last year they voted no, this year there was no "second." They can't discuss the issue, and can't force people to vote against their conscious. Mrs. Canada said she wants to leave that aside, Mr. Petraitis said he won't. Mrs. Canada is worried about discrimination, Mr. Petraitis said he'd like to see them put up a tent, Mrs. Canada referenced the Parks and Recreation policy and said if a tent is required it would need to be required for all events. Mr. Petraitis disagreed, Mrs. Canada said that is discrimination. Mr. Petraitis said if the Board votes no, they can be sued, but its fine if she wants to ask Town Counsel. Mrs. Canada said

she wants something in writing from Town Counsel. Mr. Tripp said we asked them last year, and they were wrong. Mrs. Canada questioned how they were wrong. Mr. Petraitis said he won't vote for it, but they can still host the event, but if Mrs. Canada wants to ask if we don't vote or entertain it what would happen, that is ok. There was a brief discussion on opinion vs law, many people talking at once (inaudible). Mr. Petraitis said that Mrs. Canada could draft a letter to Town Counsel and Ashley can send it.

At 6:52PM Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to adjourn. So voted.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ashley Barre