



NORTHFIELD BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

Minutes of the meeting of February 4, 2021

Present: Selectman Kevin Waldron, Selectman Scott Haskins

Also Present: Town Administrator Ken Robichaud, Interim Public Works Director Justin Bernier, and Police Chief John Raffaely. Residents attending this meeting in person were Jon Cilley, Michael Murphy and Walter Hall.

Zoom Attendance: Selectman Glen Brown

Selectmen Waldron opened the meeting for the Selectmen's work session at 4 pm.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Selectmen Waldron.

- **Police Department Update**

The Police Chief stated that he hit a deer with his cruiser on Monday and the adjuster had been out to see him. The Chief stated that his vehicle sustained front end damage. The vehicle is being repaired and the deer has not been found.

The Chief told the Selectmen that the six new portable radios have come in they have been programmed and handed out to the officers. The disposition of the old radios will be discussed at another meeting.

- **Public Works Update**

Interim Public Works Director Justin Bernier informed the Selectmen that the DPW garage now has hot water. Director Bernier replaced the old six gallon hot water heater with another replacement water heater and everything fit in perfectly, with no adjustments to any of the plumbing was needed.

Selectmen Waldron asked the Chief if he has the cruisers undercoated with a rustproofing material. The Chief stated no he does not.

Director Bernier told the Selectmen that two residents on Shaker Road had an issue with snow around their mailbox; Director Bernier told the Selectmen that this has nothing to do with the Town's snow removal; it is between the two neighbors and not the Town.

Also discussed were no new applicants for the open positions in the DPW. The Town Administrator suggested that he put in a new ad with some redefining wording that may have some attraction to applicants. They will attempt this to see if it helps. Director Bernier asked if the Selectmen would reconsider reviewing the applicants that have already been considered. Selectmen Brown and Selectmen Waldron stated that we already reviewed these and it probably would not reveal any other outcome. It was decided to reword the advertisement for the Police Department and the DPW to see if that would help.

- **Administration Update**

The Town Administrator asked if the Selectmen would like to review the closing of Town Hall due to storms. Selectmen Waldron stated that we should have a process to close Town Hall that we can follow. Should this be a written policy or just an understanding of how to proceed when a storm hits the Town. The Selectmen discussed many options on how to proceed. It was decided to have the T/A come up with something for next meeting. Selectmen Waldron stated that if and when the Selectmen close Town Hall for any reason the employees of Town Hall will get paid for the hours that they miss. The Selectmen were all in agreement with that statement.

Director Bernier asked if a storm precludes Casella from picking up trash that day, how and when the residents get notified. The T/A explained that this past storm which occurred on Tuesday, Casella called the Town Hall on Monday afternoon and said that they were pushing off trash collection to Wednesday. We notified residents who have signed up for town hall notifications; we also put it on the website as well as Facebook and put a notice up on the door of the Town Clerks office.

Director Bernier said that there were a lot of trash cans out by the road on Tuesday night which hampered snow removal, trash and trash cans were too close to the road. It is an education process and we could put out information on how and where to leave trash cans throughout the winter months. Also discussed was coming up with a text message that we can send out with our new website for this issue. We will try and work that out.

The T/A asked if the Selectmen would like to hold a Candidates Night for residents to come out to ask questions of the people who are running for the open position of Selectmen. Discussed was the logistics on how this would work. It was left up to Selectmen Haskins to put this together with the help of the T/A and the Asst. T/A.

The Town Clerks Salary was brought up for discussion. When the Selectmen reviewed the budget for 2021, the Town Clerk had added to her salary a 3% increase to the budget. The Selectmen during budget discussions removed it and wanted to have it as a warrant article. There was a short discussion on the Merit Pool, but because the Town Clerk is elected and no one reviews her job performance, it was decided that the merit pool was not the best place to give this raise from. This is how the warrant article came to be.

Next topic for discussion was CAI topographical mapping service that the Selectmen and the Budget Committee had been discussing. CAI had offered the town a five year plan to update and install this mapping software program. It was asked at the Budget Committee if the town would save any money moving from a five year plan to a three year plan. CAI sent back a three year proposal, by combining years 1-2, combine years 3-4, and then pay year 5 in year 3. In doing this the town would save \$11,000.00. Combining years 1&2 would increase the payment from \$25,000 to 50,000 saving \$5,000.00. The Selectmen agreed that this was a good way to proceed.

The T/A stated that last week there was discussion on a sign down at Pines Park and that the letters needed to be changed. The T/A stated that he went down to Pines Park with the Asst. T/A and explained that the sign was not the Towns sign but NEDC property and that we should not be using it. The only reason we were using it was because the Asst. T/A is part of NEDC. The sign has very heavy doors and it is difficult to use and if someone was to get hurt changing the sign I'm not sure how that would be covered. The T/A said that they removed the letters from one side of the sign as the other side was locked and they could not get the door opened.

Town meeting came up for discussion. The Chief went down to measure Southwick School gymnasium area as a possible place to hold Town Meeting as opposed to the Pines. Southwick School is bigger and would be a possible meeting place. The T/A stated that he has reached out to Bob Berry several times but has not received a response back. It was decided to reach out to the Superintendent and to the School Board Chairman in hopes of using this as a meeting venue. The Selectmen will keep the date of Town Meeting on March 13th, 2021.

The T/A told the Selectmen that the State Inspector for boilers and furnaces arrived for an inspection of our boiler and hot water heaters. It was noted that we need to replace the Pressure Valve on the boiler for town hall and we need to install a small set of stairs that provides access to the boiler. The Police Chief stated that he needed a Pressure Valve for his hot water heater at the PD. The DPW had no issues at the Garage. Discussion ensued on who can make repairs to town equipment, we have Selectmen who can do this work but in the past it was frowned upon.

Selectman Brown stated that it would make sense for any Selectmen to perform work if it saves the Town money. The tax payers expect the Town to receive the best services for the lowest cost. Two of the current Selectmen have the experience to perform services that would save the Town money and it is quality service on top of that. It makes no sense to pay more for something and maybe not get the best quality. We should revisit this again, as we may have overreacted and foolish when we made this policy.

Selectman Waldron brought up the fact that most of the work that we have done here is not that difficult to do. The work that I have done for the Town, I have never charged the Town the retail rate.

Selectman Haskins says that he sees both sides to the issue. I myself give a lot to the Town, I volunteer for many boards and committees and I would love to help out here as well, but people would look at the negative side to this, and say that the Selectmen are being sneaky and gave themselves the work.

Selectmen Waldron instructed the T/A to get someone in to do the work and it's too bad that we have to spend the retail cost of the repair.

The T/A informed the Selectmen of the overall outcome of the 2021 budget reviews. The difference between the Selectmen budget request and the Budget Committees recommendation is as follows-

Selectmen request- \$3,564,117.00
Budget Committee-\$3,608,652.00

Selectmen's budget was \$37,535.00 lower than the Budget Committees 2021 budget recommendation. The 2021 budget is proposed at \$104,773.00 over the 2020 budget. The Selectmen's 2021 budget request is \$56,739.00 over the 2020 actual budget.

The Selectmen discussed the Budget Committee and the sometimes disconnect between Selectmen and the Budget Committee. It's difficult for a committee to sit and go over a budget if the members don't understand how the Town operates. The Selectmen discussed how useful a budget committee can be and how it sometimes is not useful. There was discussion on how eliminating the budget committee would work.

Selectmen Brown complimented the Town Administrator on a letter that was sent out to a resident on an issue that had occurred at the Town Hall.

Also; Selectman Brown brought up the petitioned warrant article submitted by resident Jason Gerhard who received signatures from 26 registered voters on asking the Selectmen to contact the IRS and answer three (3) questions. The discussion was that it was a petitioned article so by that in itself must be put on the warrant.

Waldron/Haskins motioned to accept the minutes of January 19, 2021 as corrected, all in favor. Motion passed.

Waldron/Haskins motioned to accept the minutes of January 26, 2021 as corrected, all in favor. Motion passed.

- **Other Business**

Selectman Waldron recessed the meeting at 5:58 pm.

Selectman Waldron resumed the Selectmen's meeting at 6:30 pm in a joint public hearing with the Budget Committee for budget and warrant approvals.

Vice-Chairman Kaitlyn Lounsbury assumed the role of Chairman for this meeting as Chairman Corliss was not in attendance and called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

Budget Committee Member Randall stated for the record that the italicized words after each article is not what the committee has voted on yet, he knows it is a "proposed" set of articles; he would like to make it clear that the committee has not voted on them.

Chairman K. Lounsbury acknowledges Mr. Randall's statement for the record.

K. Lounsbury states that she would like to review the budget and begin with the Information Technology portion. Software upgrades line where CAI Technologies map overlay system is located. Discussion revolved around a total for a 5 year plan at \$110,000. If the town entered into a 3 year payment plan there would be a savings of \$9,000. Or the total amount for the project would be \$101,000. The Committee opted to fund this project at the 3 year plan and budgeted the 1st year at \$50,000.00.

The Committee left the CAI discussion and moved to review the minutes on last week's meeting with a motion from Waldron/Randall to approve the minutes as presented, all in favor motion passed.

Discussion went back to Information Technology budget and discussed moving the budget along to a vote.

Randall/O'Hara motioned to approve an additional \$25,000 for map upgrades from CAI technologies, to the Software Upgrade line to an amount of \$56,072. All in favor, motion passed.

Randall/Bartlett motioned to accept the bottom line budget amount of \$97,772.00 for Information Technology, all in favor, motion passed.

Discussion moved back to the public hearing on the budget and warrant articles. Waldron suggested that the committee review items that they would like to revisit. The committee decided to open up the hearing for public comment.

Kaitlyn Lounsbury opened up the public portion of the meeting to the public at 6:42 pm.

Resident Mike Murphy commented and asked questions on the tree cutting amount in the budget and how many trees are being removed.

Selectman Waldron and Selectman Haskins spoke to this question that \$32,500.00 has been put in the budget for removing about 40 trees at Pines Park. The Selectmen have received a report from an arborist on the condition of the White Pine trees at the Park. The trees in question are a safety hazard to the community, as they stand. The health of the trees is in decline and is in very poor condition. Each storm more and more limbs fall to the ground. The largest concerns with the trees are trunk decay or main stem decay, woodpecker damage, and dead leaders. The Selectmen have a grave concern for the children that spend time under the canopy of trees, and do not wish to see anyone harmed or more so, have a fatality from trees that we have been warned about for some time. There are a significant number of hazardous (dead) branches in the trees of the park, with branches of 2 inches in diameter or more. The Selectmen have a responsibility to remove or mitigate the hazard and this is why we have set aside this money. Mr. Murphy feels that a logger would go in and tell the town what is of value and what junk wood is left.

K. Lounsbury commented that the trees have gone beyond their age and value and therefore may not be of any value at this point. Discussion ensued on trees falling on the Police Department or on the Pines which would be bad as well. Selectmen Waldron discussed after the cutting there would be revitalization plan to redo that area. Selectmen Haskins updated the committee on the open space committee which two years ago looked at Pines Park and removing the trees was discussed back then as well.

Jon Cilley commented on the notes in the budget this year he stated that it was very helpful in reviewing the lines in the budget and identifying what is in the budget line.

K. Lounsbury closed the public hearing portion of the budget at 7:09 pm.

C. Bartlett motioned to reduce the \$32,500 in the tree limbing line in the DPW budget to \$16,500. No second. Motion fails.

Randall/O'Hara motioned to approve \$3,633,652.00 as the bottom line of the 2021 budget as recommended by the Budget Committee, vote of 5-1, motion passed.

The Budget Committee moved into the Warrant Article review.

Article 2 was read aloud, Randall/Bartlett motioned to recommend acceptance of article 2 by the Budget Committee as presented, all in favor, motion passed.

Article 3 was read aloud, Randall/Boudreau motioned to recommend acceptance of article 3 by the Budget Committee as presented, discussion on what roads were being done in 2021 was had, C. Bartlett asked if the Town should take a hiatus on doing the roads, because we have an Interim DPW Director, and are short staffed, Selectman Waldron stated that we are not short staffed and contractors perform the actual road work and not our DPW personnel, vote of 5-1, motion passed.

Article 4 was read aloud, Randall/O'Hara motioned to recommend acceptance of article 4 by the Budget Committee as presented, with discussion from C. Bartlett who questioned why this is a 2 year lapsing budget line and the others are 1 year which coincide with the annual budget. It was discovered that by NH State law this is highway construction and it is allowed to lapse in 2 years instead of 1 year, vote of 5-1, with Bartlett in the minority, motion passed.

Article 5 was read aloud, Randall/Boudreau motioned to recommend acceptance of article 5 by the Budget Committee as presented, Selectmen Waldron stated to the Committee that this is probably the last year that this amount will be requested as the cost of municipal equipment has increased over time and we are behind the times, all in favor, motion passed.

Article 6 was read aloud, Randall/Boudreau motioned to recommend acceptance of article 6 by the Budget Committee as presented. C. Bartlett asked what DPW equipment are we buying, a backhoe was the answer. All in favor, motion passed.

Article 7 was read aloud, O'Hara/Boudreau motioned to recommend acceptance of article 7 by the Budget Committee as presented, all in favor, motion passed.

Article 8 was read aloud, Randall/Bartlett motioned to recommend acceptance of article 8 by the Budget Committee as presented, all in favor, motion passed.

Article 9 was read aloud, Bartlett/Randall motioned to recommend acceptance of article 9 by the Budget Committee as presented, all in favor, motion passed.

Article 10 was read aloud, Randall/O'Hara motioned to recommend acceptance of article 10 by the Budget Committee as presented, all in favor, motion passed.

Article 11 was read aloud, Waldron/Boudreau motioned to recommend acceptance of article 11 by the Budget Committee as presented, 5-1, motion passed.

Article 12 was read aloud, Waldron/O'Hara motioned to recommend acceptance of article 12 by the Budget Committee as presented, 4-2, motion passed.

Article 13 was read aloud, O'Hara/Randall motioned to recommend acceptance of article 13 by the Budget Committee as presented, all in favor, motion passed.

Article 14 was read aloud, Randall/O'Hara motioned to recommend acceptance of article 14 by the Budget Committee as presented, Selectman Waldron stated that this is the operating budget and not the gross budget all in favor, motion passed.

Article 15 was read aloud, Bartlett/Lounsbury motioned to recommend acceptance of article 15 by the Budget Committee as presented, discussion ensued on this petitioned warrant article and if the committee has to accept or not accept a petitioned warrant article. A vote of 0-6 to recommend this article for acceptance, motion failed.

Randall/Boudreau motioned to adjourn the Budget Committee meeting, all in favor, motion passed.

Selectman Waldron opened the public hearing for the Selectmen review on warrant articles at 8:23 pm.

Jon Cilley made a statement about the discussion of the author of the petitioned warrant article, that the Boards should be careful not to openly discuss opinions of others not in attendance, due to NH RSA 91-A.

Waldron/Haskins motioned to submit the warrant articles as presented to Town meeting in its entirety. All in favor, motion passed.

Selectmen Waldron closed the public hearing portion of the meeting at 8:30 pm.

Other Business:

Town Meeting date and time was discussed and if the Selectmen were going to move the date. Selectman Waldron stated that at this point we are not moving the date or time; we are trying to move the venue to Southwick School, which has more space.

Committee Member Randall requested that the Selectmen review the budget sooner than later next year so that the Budget Committee is not rushing to get the budget done by a certain date.

The T/A updated the Selectmen on the Emergency Management Center update for the emergency generator here at Town Hall and at the Pines Center. Selectman Haskins spoke about the sparse internet access at the Pines Community Center and was this addressed at the EMC meeting. It was discussed at the last meeting on the cost of upgrading the internet speed at the Pines.

No other business to come before the Selectmen, the meeting adjourned at 8:43 pm.

Minutes Recorded by T/A Ken Robichaud

Minutes approved on February 16, 2021.