

**Town of Boscawen
Select Board
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, December 15, 2022 at 6:00 PM**

In Attendance: Lorrie Carey, Matt Burdick, Kate Merrill, Katie Phelps, Kearsten O'Brien, Kellee Easler & Dean Hollins

Guests: Henry Herndon - Community Power, Edward Cherian & Joe Haas

Roll Call: completed and guests introduced.

Chairwoman Carey opened the public meeting at 6:00 P.M.

Chairwoman Lorrie Carey noted grammatical changes to the 12.01.22 and 12.08.22 minutes.

Selectman Matt Burdick motioned to approve the Consent Agenda as amended. Seconded by Chairwoman Carey All in favor. None opposed.

Scheduled Guests & Hearings: Mr. Henry Herndon, Consultant from the Community Power Coalition of NH, presented a PowerPoint on what community power is. Community Power is an opportunity for cities and towns to take control of their community wide electricity, procurements, and cost. Over the past years, a number of communities across the state have been working on getting these programs ready to launch. Mr. Herndon said there are not community power programs running yet but the first wave is set to launch in April or May of 2023. The Community Power programs would need to be approved by Town Meeting and the Select Board. Towns can implement a program with a new default electricity provider, an alternative to utility companies. Mr. Herndon noted a link to RSA 53-E, relative to aggregation of electric customers by Municipalities and Counties. Customers can switch back to utility default supply or take service from a competitive supplier. Community Power programs must be paid for out of revenues received from participating customers. Currently, 27 towns and cities in NH have joined the Community Power Coalition. The Coalition is a community-governed not-for-profit Joint Power Agency. The Town can appoint a representative to the Board of Directors of the Coalition. The membership represents over 100,000 electric customers, significant volume of electricity and significant revenues associated. The Coalition will accrue any remaining balance into the coalitions reserve fund controlled on behalf of all member communities. Mr. Herndon noted the NH Professional Services team that members can contact about the Community Power programs. Most of the firms are working under deferred compensation models. They will not be paid until the first wave launches and revenue starts to flow. They will be paid back for their investments over a three-year period. Mr. Herndon reviewed the process to authorize community power. If the Town of Boscawen is interested in joining the coalition, the Select Board would need to sign the Joint Power Agreement and appoint primary and alternate representatives. Towns are able to join community power without the membership. They would need to establish a Community Power Committee responsible for developing a Community Power Plan. Mr. Herndon noted the committee would get guidance and resources for planning. The Town Meeting approval would authorize the Select Board to consider options and contract for services

with the service provider. There would be contracts and cost sharing agreements if the town joined the coalition. Mr. Herndon said they are anticipating \$80 million in reserves. Mr. Herndon reviewed the Joint Powers Agreement. The financial liabilities and obligations of the Agency are firewalled from municipal general funds. Joining provides access to expertise and resources at no cost. Mr. Herndon noted Article XVI was amended. It requires every Towns governing body to approve it. Mr. Ed Cherian, Chair of Energy Committee, recommended that the Town of Boscawen become part of the Coalition and sign the Joint Power Agreement, subject to legal review. The Energy Committee would use it as an opportunity to save money for residents. Mr. Cherian noted the Energy Committee would be willing to work on planning and public outreach at public hearings and meetings. Residents and businesses in town would have the ability to opt-out if they choose. Mr. Cherian said they would educate people on the advantages.

Chairwoman Carey motioned to approve the Joint Power Agreement subject to review from legal for the Community Power Coalition of NH, subject to RSA 53:E. Seconded by Selectman Burdick. All in favor. None opposed.

Selectman Burdick motioned to preliminarily approve Mr. Ed Cherian as a representative of the Electric Aggregation Committee. Seconded by Chairwoman Carey. All in favor. None opposed.

Department Head Updates: Public Works Director Dean Hollins presented the 2023 Public Works budget. There were increases in position lines due to 6% COLA, step increases, merit, longevity, and longevity corrections. The utilities line increased 77% based on Unitil's estimate. The road and resurfacing line decreased 26% because he will be utilizing the Highway Block Grant aid for roads and bridges. He would like to offset some of the paving expenses with the grant. Streetlights increased 77% due to Unitil. The gas line stayed the same, but it may adjust before year end. PWD Hollins noted they are waiting on a diesel fuel pump which will include \$3,500 for repairs for gas pumps and new service covers. Under Sanitation, there were position line increases due to 6% COLA, step increases and a longevity correction. There was also a position change from 18 hrs to 22 hrs. Overtime was increased to cover raises and longevity. Tipping fees increased from \$74.70 to \$85 a ton. There will be a \$5 increase every year moving forward. Under other sanitation, the Sewer Agreement increased 79% per the Sewer Rate Study and the Underwood Engineers recommendation. The engineering services line decreased, and it will be used for routine maintenance. Overall, the budget increased 7% or \$70,926.

Selectman Burdick motioned to preliminarily approve the 2023 Public Works budget. Seconded by Chairwoman Carey. All in favor. None opposed.

Finance Director Kate Merrill presented the 2023 Personnel Budget. She noted the budget was affected by decisions made in other budgets. The Human Resources Director position increased due to 6% COLA and 4% merit. The HR Assistant position increased due to 6% COLA, 2% merit and full year budgeting for the position. Health Insurance for Retirees increased due to rates but this line did not go up as much as expected because a retiree dropped off the Town's plan. Employee Health Insurance increased due to an 11.7% rate increase with Health Trust and plan changes. Employee contribution went up from 5% to 10%. Last year the town received a health surplus return of almost \$34,000 that was applied to the 2022 budget and it was not

received for 2023. Employee Dental insurance was added to the budget. Life insurance and Social Security increased due to increase in total employee salaries, COLA, step increases and new positions. Unemployment and workers comp insurance was lower than last year but this year there are no payment holidays. Medicare and retirement increased based on salary increases. Background checks and driving records were added into the budget. Driving records are estimated cost \$450 annually and \$300 estimated for background checks. Short term and long-term disability increased due to salary increases. Vacation buyouts increased due to salary increases. FD Merrill budgeted an extra \$2,000 under the misc. line to budget another Holiday Party for staff. Overall, the Personnel budget increased 24%. Selectman Burdick asked about the Dental Plan for retirees. FD Merrill clarified the budget does not include retirees as they are billed directly by HealthTrust. If they enrolled, retirees will be billed directly. Chairwoman Carey noted to encourage insurance buyouts and expedient use of insurance to decrease the budget costs.

Selectman Burdick motioned to preliminarily approve the 2023 Personnel Budget. Seconded by Chairwoman Carey. All in favor. None opposed.

FD Merrill presented the 2023 Master Budget. The Board needs to decide on the Beautification Budget. Last year, \$750 was budgeted and \$22.75 was spent. TA Phelps noted there should be an additional \$500 expense under Beautification. Discussion ensued. The Select Board also needs to approve the Debt Service budget. FD Merrill stated they don't anticipate using the Tax Anticipation Notes (TAN) in 2022. Chairwoman Carey noted FD Merrill hand delivered the check to Merrimack County so that it would be on time and not have to use TAN money. FD Merrill said there are two school payments due and the mortgage company should be paying soon so that should cover expenses for the remainder of the year without the use of the TAN. She spoke to DRA, and they recommended budgeting for TAN interest even if the Town does not anticipate the need for a TAN. The Select Board recommended an advisory amount of \$2,000 for TAN interest. The Select Board recommended an advisory amount of \$500 for the Beautification budget. TA Phelps noted the Other General Government line is budgeted for the Commercial St Exhibit. FD Merrill clarified that for Old Home Day Fireworks, \$7,000 is funded by taxes and \$3,000 is fundraised by OHD. The Board requested all estimated revenues for 2023 in order to review revenues and vote at next week's meeting how they want to proceed with the working budget. FD Merrill will request the revenues and bring the working budget back next week. The Board deferred the warrant until next week so all members can vote.

Planning and Community Development Director Kellee Easler presented the Invest NH Grant for signature.

Selectman Burdick motioned to approve Town Administrator Katie Phelps to sign the Invest NH Municipal Planning and Zoning Grant. Seconded by Chairwoman Carey. All in favor. None opposed.

PCD Director Easler gave an update on the Planning and Community Development Department. Due to weather, there will be no inspections tomorrow. Employees will work from home. PCD Director Easler noted two calendar corrections. Economic Development Committee will meet January 3, 2023 at 5:30pm. Energy Committee will meet January 17, 2023 at 5:30pm.

Deputy Planning and Community Development Director Kearsten O'Brien presented an abatement in the amount of \$4,820 for Map 81B, Lot 30. The current owner was billed for the sale of the mobile home park. Avitar Associates suggested doing an abatement and approving a supplemental tax warrant.

Chairwoman Carey motioned to approve Town Clerk Nicole Hoyt to abate \$4,820 for Larry and Cindy Merchant, 1 Elizabeth Dr for property located at Map 81B, Lot 30 due to wrong owner being billed. Seconded by Selectman Burdick. All in favor. None opposed.

Deputy PCD Director O'Brien presented the Supplemental Tax Warrant for Map 81B, Lot 30 in the amount of \$4,820.

Chairwoman Carey motioned to approve Town Clerk Nicole Hoyt to collect \$4,820 with interest at 8% per annum on all sums not paid 30 days after bills are mailed. Further order to remit all monies collected to the Town Treasurer as provided in RSA 41:29 Section 6. Seconded by Selectman Burdick. All in favor. None opposed.

Deputy PCD Director O'Brien presented a Timber Warrant in the amount of \$10,220.66 for Map 94, Lots 38 and 40.

Selectman Burdick motioned to approve Timber Warrant 22.049.01T, Map 94, Lots 38 and 40 in the amount of \$10,220.66. Seconded by Chairwoman Carey. All in favor. None opposed.

TA Phelps presented an update regarding the Supervisors of the Checklist on behalf of Town Clerk Nicole Hoyt. There was a vacancy due to Pamela Hardy's resignation. The position shall be filled within 45 days by appointment made by the remaining supervisors. If supervisors fail to fill the vacancy within 45 days, the moderator makes the appointment.

TA Phelps recommended closing the office tomorrow due to inclement weather conditions. She asked for the Board's feedback. The Select Board agreed that the office will be closed, and employees will work remote, if able.

TA Phelps will be researching more information about Bond Counsel. There is a warrant article to authorize advancing Sewer Projects 3 and 4 which would require a bond. Bond Counsel wouldn't be paid until the Town receives the involved funds. TA Phelps will update the Board with her findings.

Deputy PCD Director O'Brien presented the finalized elderly exemption amounts recommendation for Board approval. The recommendation is for ages 65-74 to increase to \$32,000, 75-79 to \$48,000 and 80+ to \$64,000. Furthermore, individual's net income cannot exceed \$30,000 for single and \$40,000 for married with \$75,000 in assets.

Selectman Burdick motioned to approve the Assessing Department's recommendation on the elderly exemption which will adjust the current amounts to reflect increases. Seconded by Chairwoman Carey.

Selectman Burdick motioned to approve putting the Elderly Exemption update on the warrant. Seconded by Chairwoman Carey. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairwoman Carey opened the meeting to Public Comment.

Mr. Joe Haas, seasonal resident on Tote Rd, gave an update on the Taxes and Assessing Standards Board. He referred to the latest Claremont case. The State Representatives are supposed to put in a bill to file an abatement application for the prior year's taxes. Mr. Haas stated there should be a SAT book available for residents. He asked the Board to staple the decision of the case to the SAT book before the March 1st deadline. The Select Board concurred.

Mr. Haas discussed the cost of living increase adjustment. He suggested giving employees bonuses so when the person reaches 10 years, they get \$100. Under RSA 275:43 I (a) it states if you work as an employee, you can claim that \$100. Mr. Haas asked if the town has a civil leave plan. FD Merrill will review the employee handbook. No further discussion.

Chairwoman Carey motioned to enter a nonpublic session at 7:43 pm under RSA 91-A:3 II (a). Seconded by Selectman Burdick. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairwoman Carey motioned to close a nonpublic session at 7:48 pm under RSA 91-A:3 II (a). Seconded by Selectman Burdick. All in favor. None opposed.

Public meeting reopened at 7:48pm.

Selectman Burdick motioned to seal the nonpublic minutes for 1 year under RSA 91-A:3 II (a). Seconded by Chairwoman Carey. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairwoman Carey motioned to enter a nonpublic session at 7:49pm under RSA 91-A:3 II (a). Seconded by Selectman Burdick. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairwoman Carey motioned to close a nonpublic session at 7:58pm under RSA 91-A:3 II (a). Seconded by Selectman Burdick. All in favor. None opposed.

Public meeting reopened at 7:58pm.

Selectman Burdick motioned to seal the nonpublic minutes for 1 year under RSA 91-A:3 II (a). Seconded by Chairwoman Carey. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairwoman Carey motioned to enter a nonpublic session at 8:01pm under RSA 91-A:3 II (l). Seconded by Selectman Dickey. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairwoman Carey motioned to close a nonpublic session at 8:06pm under RSA 91-A:3 II (l). Seconded by Selectman Burdick. All in favor. None opposed.

Public meeting reopened at 8:06pm.

Selectman Burdick motioned to seal the nonpublic minutes for 1 year under RSA 91-A:3 II (l). Seconded by Chairwoman Carey. All in favor. None opposed.

Next Meeting: Thursday, December 22, 2022 at 6:00 PM.

Chairwoman Carey motioned to adjourn at 8:08pm. Seconded by Selectman Burdick. All in favor. None Opposed.

Respectfully submitted by Hannah Gardner