

**Town of Boscawen
Select Board
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, March 23, 2023 at 6:00 PM**

In Attendance: Lorrie Carey, Matt Burdick, Katie Phelps, Kearsten O'Brien, Nicole Hoyt, Kevin Wyman, Tim Kenney & Sarah Gerlack

Guests: John Keegan, Bill Bevans & Loren Martin

Roll Call: completed and guests introduced.

Chairwoman Carey called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Consent Agenda Items:

- P&L, Balance Sheet, Check Manifest & Payroll
- Minutes for Approval – 3/16/23
- Community Services Job Description Update

Chairwoman Carey noted grammatical changes to the 3/16/23 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. John Keegan, Chair of the Agricultural Commission, asked the Select Board for authorization under RSA 648-44:G, to establish a Boscawen Agricultural Fund. The purpose of the fund is to: *'Support agricultural signage, prioritize improvements to the Community Garden, carry out shared projects with other committees or commissions related to agriculture. Furthermore, support all things agriculture.'*

Chairwoman Carey suggested reorganizing the purpose statement to strengthen the primary purpose which is to support all things agriculture. Town Administrator Katie Phelps will send Chairwoman Carey's suggestions to Mr. Keegan.

Selectman Burdick motioned to authorize the Town Treasurer to open an Agricultural Fund on behalf of the Agricultural Commission. Furthermore, it is a restricted account for the purposes of supporting agriculture as defined in the statement written by the Agricultural Commission. Seconded by Chairwoman Carey. All in favor. None opposed.

Department Head Updates: Deputy Planning and Community Development Director Kearsten O'Brien presented a bond release for approval. Last summer on Corn Hill Road they required a bond for an intent to cut, to ensure the new paved roads didn't get damaged. The cuts are now complete and a cancellation notice was sent for the bond. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien noted Public Works Director Dean Hollins had no issues with the cancellation and confirmed the road is in good condition.

Selectman Burdick motioned to accept the cancellation notice from Hopkinton Forestry and Land Clearing for Bond 107653775, for the use of Corn Hill Road in Boscawen. Seconded by Chairwoman Carey. All in favor. None opposed.

Town Clerk Nicole Hoyt gave an update on liens and deeds. The last day to pay 2022 tax bills before they went to lien was Thursday, March 23rd. It was also the last day to pay 2020 liens which now go to deed. Town Clerk Hoyt noted there will be a non-public session to discuss four properties on the impending deed list. As of now, the total unpaid taxes for all warrants in town is \$263,335.22. A current use warrant dating back to 2018 is still outstanding and cannot be liened because it wasn't done within the 16-to-22-month period. Legal suggested a civil action if the town wanted to fight the outstanding balance. The other option is to wait for the owner to sell. Chairwoman Carey asked how they missed the deadline. Town Clerk Hoyt noted that Supplemental warrants can come through at various times of the year. Town Clerk Hoyt said it is easy for the year to get missed if it was in the middle of the year or if it was liening time and it wasn't due yet. They have been discussing how to keep track of the supplemental warrants moving forward. Deputy Tax Collector Sarah Gerlack noted that the owners received several delinquent notices and never responded. The original bill was \$450 and now it is \$773. The owners cannot sell the property until the current-use tax is paid. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien clarified that the lot was subdivided off and was contingent with the sale of property. The buyer was aware that they would incur the land-use change tax.

Chief Kevin Wyman announced his retirement from the Boscawen Police Department. His last day will be on April 16th. Lieutenant Jason Killary will be the Acting Chief until a new Chief is hired. Chief Wyman will help with the transition of information and contacts. There is another officer in the process of moving to another Police Department. Chairwoman Carey asked if the officer's decision was influenced by salary changes. Chief Wyman stated the officer was happy working in Boscawen, but compensation is more competitive elsewhere. Discussion ensued. There will be 4 officers in the department. Additionally, there is 1 officer at the academy and another on medical leave. Chairwoman Carey recommended creating a transitional spreadsheet to keep track of the vacant positions needing to be filled. Finance Director Kate Merrill noted the job description for the Chief's position was updated in September. She sent an internal posting to the Board for review. They would like to post it tonight with an application deadline of April 4th. Interviews will start after applications are reviewed. Chief Wyman suggested a 7-day in-house posting so current employees have the opportunity to apply, if interested. The deadline for in-house applications will be next Friday, March 31st. TA Phelps asked if Chiefs from other towns would be involved in the interview process. Chief Wyman will reach out to other Chiefs for their availability.

Town Clerk Hoyt gave an update on the Tax Collector's department. On March 22nd, they attended the new tax collector workshop at the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA). There was a combination of 50 new collectors, deputies, and assistant collectors.

FD Merrill gave an update on the Finance and HR department. They have been cleaning up files and putting destruction dates on everything. FD Merrill said there were personnel nonpublic minutes that needed to be reviewed by the Board to unseal or keep sealed. CS Director Gerlack asked if there was a way to keep personnel nonpublics sealed for current employee files. FD

Merrill noted it would be determined in the nonpublic with recommendations. Discussion ensued. FD Merrill said they discussed making a tracking sheet related to nonpublic sessions that would be tied to the employee file but not in it so it can be referenced. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien asked the Board, as the recording secretary, to review the minutes with Human Resources Director Merrill and come back to the Board with suggestions.

Selectman Burdick motioned to authorize Assistant to the Administrator Kearsten O'Brien and Human Resources Director Kate Merrill to review the nonpublic minutes and bring forward suggestions to seal or unseal. Seconded by Chairwoman Carey. All in favor. None opposed.

Deputy PCD Director O'Brien noted there will be a virtual RSA 91-A training to discuss governmental records, meetings and 'non-meetings'. It will be held on April 19th from 9am to 1pm in the board room. Town Clerk Hoyt will be attending a RSA 91-A training next week with Mr. Stephen Buckley. She will send the presentation to Deputy PCD Director O'Brien for more information.

FD Merrill gave Select Board members informational packets for town meeting. She highlighted the key points to stress when discussing at town meeting. Chairwoman Carey asked about retiree funding. The state began funding at 40% and then reduced it to 0%. Last year, they funded 7.5% of retirement. This year, they decided not to fund cities and towns and instead make a lump-sum payment to the retirement account. FD Merrill said last year they didn't budget for the funding because it was a one-time return. It showed up as a revenue. It was not budgeted for this year either. FD Merrill noted it is only applicable to police, fire, and teachers.

Chairwoman Carey opened public comment.

Ms. Loren Martin asked if there was a procedure in place for if the budget gets defeated at Town Meeting. She was concerned with not having a default budget. TA Phelps said they would stay until they have a budget. There is no default budget. Discussion ensued.

Chairwoman Carey reviewed the Town Meeting schedule for Saturday, March 25th. It will start at 9am at the Boscawen Elementary School. TA Phelps will discuss the financials for the bond article. Chairwoman Carey will talk about the operating budget, solar exemptions, the change of purpose of the municipal buildings capital reserve, establishing a contingency fund, CASA, and Red Cross. She noted Facilities Director Gary Moore provided information on the cost to the town to maintain vacant buildings. Chief Kenney will provide information on contributions to Capital Reserves for a fire truck and fire station. He clarified that the funding would be used to update the current fire station. They want to make modifications and replace current fixtures such as the windows. Chairwoman Carey suggested highlighting what the town currently has saved for the purchase, what the goal is and when the purchase will occur. It is important that residents understand what they are paying for. Selectman Burdick will discuss the King St. Improvement Capital Reserve, the Parks and Recreation CRF, veterans and elderly credits, cemetery lots, the purpose of the fire station, the transfer of interest in Boscawen Town Hall, completing the Town Hall Assessment study, the Torrent Station, the 1913 library, the CAP program, the historical building, and Article 20, to acquire or sell land and buildings. Ms.

Barbara Randall will talk about the motor vehicle registration fee. Chairwoman Carey reviewed the value of exemptions. The exemption is taken off the assessed value of the home. There are \$145,000 in elderly exemptions on 5 houses for 80-years or older. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien noted with a reevaluation and the cost of living increase in Social Security, it is important for the town to revisit the elderly exemption. Chairwoman Carey asked about religious exemptions. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien noted there are different religious exemptions, so they are working on categorizing them. Veteran credits have remained stagnant over the past two years. They only saw an increase the first year when they increased the credit. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien noted elderly exemptions are hard to qualify for. The biggest increase over the past few years has been solar exemptions. It is continuing to increase. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien will put together a report on the amount of pending building permits they have for solar exemptions. They are up to \$742,000 in solar exemptions. April 15th is the last day to apply for solar, veterans and elderly exemptions for the 2023 tax year. Applications submitted after April 15th will be applied to the 2024 tax year.

Chairwoman Carey noted net metering for municipalities passed so there will be more flexibility with Community Power. TA Phelps said they have requested data from Unitil, Eversource and Liberty Utilities for the Community Power project. They have 30-days to provide information. The plan is to have Community Power on the 2024 warrant. Residents will have the choice to opt-in or out.

Chairwoman Carey motioned to enter a nonpublic session at 6:55pm under RSA 91-A:3 II (c). Seconded by Selectman Burdick. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairwoman Carey motioned to close a nonpublic session at 7:01pm under RSA 91-A:3 II (c). Seconded by Selectman Burdick. All in favor. None opposed.

Public meeting reopened at 7:01pm.

Chairwoman Carey motioned to enter a nonpublic session at 7:02pm under RSA 91-A:3 II (c). Seconded by Selectman Burdick. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairwoman Carey motioned to close a nonpublic session at 7:24pm under RSA 91-A:3 II (c). Seconded by Selectman Burdick. All in favor. None opposed.

Public meeting reopened at 7:24pm.

Selectman Burdick motioned to waive deeding Map 83 Lot 88 Sublot T12 and Map 79 Lot 94 Sublot T6b. Seconded by Chairwoman Carey. All in favor. None opposed.

Selectman Burdick motioned to deed Map 183D Lot 29 and Map 183D Lot 34 Sublot T5. Seconded by Chairwoman Carey. All in favor. None opposed.

Next Meeting: Thursday, March 30, 2023, at 6:00 PM.

Selectman Burdick motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Chairwoman Carey. All in favor. None Opposed.

Respectfully submitted by Hannah Gardner