

**Town of Boscawen
Select Board
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, December 28, 2023, at 6:00 PM**

In Attendance: Matt Burdick, Lorrie Carey, Bill Bevans, Katie Phelps, Kate Merrill, Kellee Easler, Nicole Hoyt, Kearsten O'Brien, Dean Hollins, Tim Kenney & Gary Moore

Guests: Joshua Crawford & Rose Fife

Roll Call: completed and guests introduced.

Chairman Matt Burdick called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Consent Agenda Items:

- P&L, Balance Sheet, Check Manifest & Payroll
- Nonpublic/Public Minutes for Approval—12/21/23
- Code Enforcement Officer 1 Sign & Swear In
- Report from Exec Councilor Warmington
- Fire Chief Employment Contract
- Employee Vacation Request
- PUC Request—Boscawen Community Power (Info)
- PUC Acknowledgement Letter 12.27.23 (Info)

Selectwoman Lorrie Carey noted grammatical changes to the 12.21.23 public minutes.

Selectwoman Carey motioned to approve the Consent Agenda as amended. Seconded by Selectman Bill Bevans. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Scheduled Guests and Hearings: *Public Hearing—Unanticipated Revenue:*

Chairman Burdick read the public notice into record: *The Town of Boscawen will hold a Public Hearing on Thursday, December 28, 2023, at 6:00pm in the 4th floor meeting room at the Boscawen Municipal Complex, 116 North Main Street, Boscawen, NH 03303 to take public testimony regarding the receipt of unanticipated revenue. The Town received a one-time State of New Hampshire bridge payment in the amount of \$15,233.08. House Bill 2 states that the payment can be used for maintenance, construction, and reconstruction of municipality owned bridges. Additionally, the Town received a one-time highway payment in the amount of \$23,886.25. House Bill 2 states that the payment can be used for maintenance, construction and reconstruction of Class IV and V highways. These payments create unanticipated revenue in excess of \$10,000 and the need for a public hearing according to the provisions of RSA 31:95-b per order of the Select Board.*

Chairman Burdick opened the public hearing at 6:06 PM.

SB FM 12.28.23

Joshua Crawford, 22 Corn Hill Road—Mr. Crawford was in favor of accepting the funds from the NH Department of Transportation (DOT) to help Boscawen maintain its municipally owned bridges in the manner that Public Works Director Dean Hollins deemed fit.

Chairman Burdick closed the public hearing at 6:08 PM with no further comment.

Selectwoman Carey motioned to accept the NH bridge payment in the amount of \$15,233.08 and the highway payment in the amount of \$23,886.25 from the State of NH DOT. Seconded by Selectman Bevans. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Code Enforcement— Chairman Burdick appointed and swore in Ms. Rose Fife as a Code Enforcement Officer for the Town of Boscawen. All Select Board members signed the appointment letter.

Department Head Updates: Town Administrator Katie Phelps presented multiple encumbrances for board approval.

Under the provisions of RSA 32:7, I, I, Chairman Burdick motion to encumber funds from account number 4140620 - TC Election Costs for \$2,000 for the purpose of purchasing an election machine. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Under the provisions of RSA 32:7, I, I, Chairman Burdick motion to encumber funds from account number 4191572 - Office Equipment & Service Agreements for \$1,924 for the purpose of offsetting the cost of half of the service agreement with Twin Rivers for 2024. Seconded by Selectman Bevans. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Under the provisions of RSA 32:7, I, I, Chairman Burdick motion to encumber funds from account number 4191555 – Regulation Ordinance Updates for \$1,000 for the purpose of offsetting the cost of the Central NH Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC) Land Development Regulations (LDRs) and Zoning Ordinance (ZO) Master Plan agreement for 2024. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Under the provisions of RSA 32:7, I, I, Chairman Burdick motion to encumber funds from account number 4651000 - LU Economic Development for \$750 for the purpose of offsetting the cost of the Central NH Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC) Land Development Regulations (LDRs) and Zoning Ordinance (ZO) Master Plan agreement for 2024. Seconded by Selectman Bevans. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Under the provisions of RSA 32:7, I, I, Chairman Burdick motion to encumber funds from account number 4324436 - SW Equipment Maintenance for \$4,913 for the purpose of relining the baler in 2024. Seconded by Selectman Bevans. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Under the provisions of RSA 32:7, I, I, Chairman Burdick motion to encumber funds from account number 4312610 - HW Road Oil for \$15,750 for the purpose of road resurfacing in 2024. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Planning and Community Development Director Kellee Easler presented the 2024 Planning and Community Development budget. Under the Assessing section, the first three lines were staff positions. PCD Director Easler explained that they were restructuring the office and the Assessing Assistant and Assessing Clerk positions have changed. The salary increases include 3% COLA and step increases. The Software line increased 4% based on actuals. The Public Data Hosting line increased 3% based on actuals. Under Planning and Community Development, the PCD Clerk position increased \$8,569. PCD Easler recommended increasing the hours of the position from 18 hours to 26.5 hours. The PCD Coordinator, position reflected a 20% increase. FD Merrill noted the increase was a transfer of money from the Parks and Recreation program and the Executive budget. Some was offset in revenue transfers from the Building Inspection account. Discussion ensued on the structure of the Parks and Rec program budget. FD Merrill suggested the Parks and Recreation Coordinator position should be a stipend position in the Parks and Recreation budget. Selectwoman Carey suggested including it into the Parks and Rec Director line. Discussion ensued. The Land Use (LU) Telephone line decreased \$1,238. LU Dues went up \$142 due to a 3% increase with Central NH Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC). The LU Regulation Ordinance Updates line increased \$3,500. PCD Director Easler noted \$1,000 was encumbered from 2023. It will cost \$2,500 for LDRs and Zoning Ordinances, and \$3,000 for the Master Plan prep for Commercial Street and King St. improvements. LU Meetings and Travel decreased \$400, and the Office Equipment and Service Agreements decreased \$1,650. The Energy Committee requested a \$1,000 budget, a total increase of \$500 due to the increase in mailings for public notices. The Agricultural Commission budget stayed the same, but they may revisit changes next year. In reference to the Ag Comm budget, Selectman Bevans recommended cutting the Community Garden line and Physical Improvement line from their budget because the town no longer receives income from the Community Garden. The Ag Commission has a separate revolving fund with \$1,200 for the community garden. He felt that the Ag Commission should fund themselves. FD Merrill clarified that the revolving fund was a general Ag Commission account that currently only received income from the Community Garden. Discussion ensued. Selectwoman Carey suggested leaving the Administration line at \$500 for their memberships but cutting the budget lines for Community Garden and Physical Improvements based on the actuals for 2023. Selectman Bevans suggested a total of \$600 for their budget, based on actuals. Discussion ensued. TA Phelps suggested one Administration line for \$600 in lieu of separating it into three. All concurred. The Conservation Commission budget had no changes. Discussion ensued. Selectwoman Carey suggested reducing the Dues and Fees line by \$600, for a total budget of \$100. She suggested eliminating the public education line because they can pay through the Forestry account. Chairman Burdick suggested eliminating the Supplies/Miscellaneous line. Chairman Burdick suggested a \$100 budget for the contracted services line and mapping and research. The total budget would be \$500. All concurred. The Economic Development budget was proposed at \$3,750, a total increase of \$1,500. They encumbered \$750 into 2024 and the increase would cover postage and supplies. Under the

Health Department section, the Health Officer position showed a large increase due to the position change and the percentage is reflected in another budget. FD Merrill noted the position line actually decreased 4%. Discussion ensued. Meetings and Travel increased by \$200 for required 2024 meetings. PCD Director Easler did not include a budget for Health Remediation. Last year they spent \$32,600.56 after a special meeting due to the septic issue. She asked the Select Board, as members of the Board of Health, if they wanted to add it to the budget or go to a special town meeting in the future, if needed. The Board decided to not include a budget and if needed, they will take the funds out of contingency. TA Phelps suggested removing the \$100 in office supplies as the Executive budget could absorb the cost. FD Merrill noted the bottom line showing a 4.8% increase reflects the net after offsetting what was reimbursed by Building Inspector's revolving fund for salaries. PCD Director Easler will make updates to the PCD Budget and present it again next week.

Under the provisions of RSA 32:10(e), Chairman Burdick motioned to transfer \$3,117.44 from account #4155121 PA Employee Health Insurance to the following accounts: Account #4191111: P&C Deputy Director - \$1,246.98, Account #4152114 - Assessing Assistant - \$1,246.98, and Account #4411115 - Deputy Health Officer - \$155.87 for the purpose of covering the unanticipated cost of separation pay for an employee who put in their notice. Seconded by Selectman Bevans. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

FD Merrill presented donations for the Backpack Program for approval.

Chairman Burdick motioned to approve the anonymous donation of \$2,500 for the Human Services Backpack Program. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairman Burdick motioned to approve the donation of \$500 from Bevans Fire Alarm Company for the Human Services Backpack Program. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairman Burdick motioned to approve the donation of \$100 from Dunbarton Family Dental Care for the Human Services Backpack Program. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairman Burdick motioned to approve the donation of \$1,000 from Aranco Oil Company for the Human Services Backpack Program. Seconded by Selectman Bevans. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairman Burdick motioned to approve the donation of \$250 from Mabel and Charlie Niebling for the Human Services Backpack Program. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairman Burdick motioned to approve the donation of \$50 from John and Sue Porter for the Human Services Backpack Program. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairman Burdick motioned to approve the donation of \$100 from Todd and Katie Phelps for the Human Services Backpack Program. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

FD Merrill noted that the public hearing for the Merrimack Valley School District budget will be on Tuesday, January 23rd, with a snow date of Thursday, January 25th. The Board set preliminary dates of Thursday, January 18th for the budget meeting and Thursday, February 1st for the public hearing. FD Merrill mentioned they reached out to the Advisory Budget Committee members to get their feedback on having a second meeting. Three members felt it was necessary to have a second meeting. One voted no. Discussion ensued. FD Merrill will propose to the Advisory Budget Committee a meeting for Thursday, January 18th at 6PM and the second one for Thursday, January 25th following the expedited Select Board meeting at 5:30 PM. The public hearing will be held on February 1st at 6PM. Town Clerk Hoyt noted that the Primary Election will also be held on Tuesday, January 23rd. Discussion ensued. Selectwoman Carey suggested sending an email from the Select Board to the School Board stating their concern about holding the public budget hearing on the same day as the primary elections for the United States of America. TA Phelps will draft an email to the Superintendent.

Selectwoman Carey motioned to approve holding the first Advisory Budget Committee meeting on January 18th after an expedited Select Board Meeting at 6:00pm and the second meeting on January 25th at 6:00pm after a Select Board Meeting to start at 5:30pm with a public hearing on February 1st after an expedited Select Board Meeting at 6:00pm. Seconded Chairman Burdick. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

FD Merrill presented the 2024 preliminary Personnel Budget. Line 4155110: HR Director increased \$493 due to 3% COLA and the wage step increase. FD Merrill noted she received a letter of resignation from HR Assistant Crystal Tilton, effective January 12. The budget line will be reduced by the wage step increase. Line 4155120: Health Insurance increased \$4,448 due to an increase in retiree health insurance rates increasing. FD Merrill said there would be a decrease in the budget line next year due to a new plan for retirees. Line 4155121: Employee Health Insurance increased \$18,404. The department heads reviewed insurance plans and made changes during open enrollment. FD Merrill deducted \$14,200 out of the line due to the 3 positions open. The 3 positions were budgeted for family plans starting coverage in March. FD Merrill noted the line would have increased \$93,190 if they didn't make plan changes. Line 4155122: Drug Testing/CDL Inquiries was increased \$200 based on actuals. Employee Dental Insurance increased \$4,920 because the plan increased 4.7%. Line 4155124: Health Reimbursement Account was a new line budgeted for \$11,500. The Board approved and discussed phasing it out for 2024 (\$500), 2025 (\$250), and 2026 (\$0) to help employees transition to the new plan. Life insurance decreased by \$907 because the life rate decreased from \$0.18 to \$0.16 per \$1,000 benefit. Social Security increased \$3,866 based on salary increases. Unemployment insurance and Workers Compensation were based on Primex's rates for 2024. The town will not be

receiving payment holidays for 2024. Medicare increased \$487 based on salary increases. The retirement line decreased \$36,452 based on salaries. There were staff changes that effected the decrease and the full year NHRS rate lowered. The policies and procedures line was eliminated, and the legal counsel line will be utilized when necessary. The background checks and driving records decreased by \$250. FD Merrill recommended the Board consider changing the requirements for background checks and driving records to be obtained upon hire. It would be employees responsibility to notify employer of any changes. Discussion ensued. All concurred with the change. Under short-term/long-term disability, the LTD rates changed from \$0.33 to \$0.28 per \$100 of covered monthly payroll and STD rates changed from \$0.40 to \$0.46 for each \$10 weekly benefit per month. The total increase for the line was \$3,875. The Vacation buyout line was decreased by \$12 based on salaries budgeted for 4 department heads. Personnel software increased \$40 based on the quote received for 2024. Longevity Bonuses was a new line per the wage schedule approved by the Board. It was budgeted for \$2,000 based on two employees longevity. The miscellaneous line was reduced by \$200 based on actuals. The overall budget for Personnel Administration was an increase of \$16,153 (1.5%). Discussion ensued. FD Merrill will update the budget to only reflect dollar changes. The notes section will reflect the overall percentage increase or decrease.

Facilities Director Gary Moore gave an update on the generator project. On December 20th, the grant went before the Governor & Council and was approved to increase grant funding to \$75,000. FD Moore noted the total cost of the project was \$143,037 (\$138,070: contractor and \$12,500: engineering). They already made a payment to Yeaton Engineering for \$10,750. The total amount due was \$132,620. With the grant money, the total cost the town would pay would be \$71,685. The town already approved \$49,750. Finance Director Merrill asked for clarification on where to take the difference of \$21,935 from to pay the balance of the generator.

Selectwoman Carey motioned to approve taking \$21,935 from the Municipal Buildings Capital Reserve Fund to pay for the remaining generator costs. Seconded by Chairman Burdick. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Public Works Director Dean Hollins gave an update on the Public Works department. They recycled around 95% of their tires. PWD Hollins found a welder in town, Jim Sarcione, for the relining of the baler.

Selectwoman Carey asked for a listing of the number of grants and total amount of funding that each department has. FD Merrill will work on a list.

TA Phelps presented the Sewer Project 3 and 4 Original Loan Agreement (OLA) from the State of New Hampshire Water Pollution Control Revolving Loan Fund Program. The agreement is for \$6,500,000 in principal with \$1,625,000 or 25% of the total disbursements in principal forgiveness. The interest rate applicable to the note will be 2.8%. The OLA was signed by TA Phelps and Select Board Chairman Burdick.

TA Phelps noted that the Boscawen Community Power Electric Aggregation Plan has been submitted to the Public Utilities Commission for review, along with local suppliers to town.

TA Phelps presented the 2024 Draft Warrant to review and discuss. The town officers information was pending and will be filed in January. There was no plan approved for the Torrent Station or 1913 Library at this point. TA Phelps said the NH Preservation Alliance will meet in January to discuss the 1913 Library and their recommendation for historic preservation for the sale. Ms. Christie Goodhue has not reached out regarding the Torrent Station but that should happen soon. Selectwoman Carey reached out to the Boscawen Historical Society to begin the process of writing the nomination for the state historic register for the Torrent Station. Selectwoman Carey will submit it once completed. The deadline for petitioned warrant articles is the second week of February. Discussion ensued. TA Phelps asked for recollection of Article 10, amendment #9 proposed by the Select Board to revert the authority to accept roads as town-maintained roads from the Select Board back to the Town Meeting in accordance with the provisions of NHRSA 674:40-A. PCD Director Easler noted that it was discussed at the September 21st meeting but there was no motion made by the Board.

Chairman Burdick motioned to approve amendment #9 in Article 10 as proposed by the Boscawen Select Board to revert the authority to accept roads as town-maintained roads from the Select Board back to the Town Meeting in accordance with the provisions of NHRSA 674:40-A and placing it on the warrant. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairman Burdick opened public comment at 7:25 PM.

Mr. Josh Crawford asked the Board if they picked their favorite town flag design. Chairman Burdick will email his favorite flag design.

Chairman Burdick closed public comment at 7:26PM.

Non-Public Sessions:

Chairman Burdick motioned to enter non-public under RSA 91-A:3 II (c) at 7:28PM. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairman Burdick motioned to exit non-public under RSA 91-A:3 II (c) at 8:01PM. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

There were no motions made in the non-public.

Selectman Bevans motioned to enter non-public under RSA 91-A:3 II (c) at 8:02PM. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Selectman Bevans motioned to exit non-public under RSA 91-A:3 II (c) at 9:58PM. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Selectman Bevans motioned to seal the nonpublic minutes under RSA 91-A:3 II (c) as it could affect adversely the reputation of any person other than a member of the board. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Next Meeting: Thursday, January 4, 2024, at 6:00 PM.

Selectman Bevans motioned to adjourn at 10:00PM. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None Opposed.

Respectfully submitted by Hannah Gardner