

**Town of Boscawen**  
**Select Board**  
Final Minutes  
Thursday October 29, 2020 at 6:00pm

In attendance: Ed Cherian, Lorrie Carey, Paul Dickey, Alan Hardy, Katie Phelps, Kellee Easler, Tama Tillman, Gary Tillman, Dean Hollins, Kevin Wyman, Kearsten O'Brien, Barbara Randall, Mark Varney, and Haley Dilts-Brown, Sarah Gerlack.

This meeting is being held under a Declaration of Emergency by the Governor and by the Board. Under RSA 91-A: 2, III (b) the requirement of a physical quorum is waived and this meeting is being held entirely remotely, and is being recorded.

**Selectwoman Carey made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Selectman Dickey seconded. All in favor.**

**6:01 PM Chairman Cherian re-opened the Public Hearing for a receipt of unanticipated revenue for the GOFFER Grant in the amount of \$95,698.00.**

**6:02 PM Chairman Cherian closed the Public Hearing due to no public comment.**

Selectwoman Carey asked if additional information came forward to receive the money. Town Administrator Hardy updated the Select Board on the information he received from the Auditors and Town Counsel. The procedure would be to acknowledge the accounts that were reimbursed and that money would be added to the budget by account. The suggestion from the Auditors would be to acknowledge the accounts that were reimbursed, and the money would be added to the budget by account. There are also funds this year that were not reimbursements and were not dedicated. Those funds are strictly at the discretion of the board after receiving input. Town Administrator Hardy said we do not have the option of making an appropriation at this point. The action of putting the funds into the Capital Reserves without the action of Town Meeting is not possible. There has to be an appropriation. Selectwoman Carey asked if it would be possible to take some of the unassigned balance at the end of the year and appropriate it towards a specific item or expenses for next year. Town Administrator Hardy said it is his understanding that they cannot do that it requires the action of a legislative body to appropriate funds.

**Selectwoman Carey motioned to accept the GOFFER Funds to be allocated to the General Funds. Seconded by Selectman Dickey. All in favor.**

Planning and Community Development Director introduced Mark Stetson with Avitar Associates to explain the process of the Sales Ratio. Mr. Stetson said it is a status report of where the Town's assessments are with respect to the market. The assessments by state law are brought to the market value once every five years. The real estate market in Boscawen is inching up the ratio of assessments to sales is telling you what the level of assessments are with respect to those sales. As a result of the evaluation the goal is to bring the assessment to one hundred percent of the market value. The reasons that the ratio is important is because the State uses the ratio to determine what the Town's equalized evaluation. The equalized evaluation will determine the Town's share of county tax for the following year. This can also help the State distribute State aid.

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**Department Head Updates:**

Police Chief Kevin Wyman updated the Select Board on Gate Night. The Police Department will be going around the area passing out candy this year.

Planning and Community Development Director Kellee Easler presented a report of wood for Map 79 Lot 69 operation number 20.49.06. She also explained to the Select Board that when it comes to timber and gravel taxes the interest rate stays at eighteen percent.

Finance Director Katie Phelps presented the Select Board with checks for acceptance. On the eighth of October Finance Director Phelps informed the Select Board they would be receiving FEMA funds in the amount of \$11,776.17. The amount of \$11,776.17 was actually the amount that was submitted to FEMA. The town has been reimbursed by FEMA up to 75% in the amount of \$8,832.13.

**Selectwoman Carey motioned to accept the FEMA payment of \$8,832.13. Seconded by Selectman Dickey. All in favor.**

Finance Director Phelps said the Town also received a check from Concord Rotary in the amount of \$3,000.

**Chairman Cherian motioned to accept the generous donation from the Concord Rotary of \$3,000. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. All in favor.**

Town Administrator Hardy asked if the Select Board would like to earmark the \$3,000 donation.

**Selectwoman Carey motioned to earmark the donation of \$3,000 to the rotary project. Seconded by Selectman Dickey. All in favor.**

Finance Director Phelps updated the Select Board that she had reached out to Mike Campo to get an idea of what his figure was going to be for the 2021 budget. Mr. Campo informed Finance Director Phelps that the Town was up for engagement. The Select Board needs to decide if they would like to continue with Plodzick and Sanderson for a one year or three year term. The cost for the audit will be \$14,525 which, is an increase of \$525 over this year. This is the first increase they have given the Town since 2012. Selectwoman Carey asked if they went with the three year contract if the payment would stay the same over the years. Finance Director Phelps said yes. Chairman Cherian asked if they did a one year or three year engagement. Town Administrator Hardy said his recollection was that they did one year contract.

**Selectman Dickey motioned to have a three year contract with Plodzick and Sanderson. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. All in favor.**

Emergency Management Director Mark Varney updated the Select Board on the current COVID

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increases. There are 131 new cases as of today. There are 4 new deaths all associated with long term care facilities. Merrimack County added nineteen new cases. Boscawen is up to six active cases and totaling the Town up to eighteen new cases. The three current red zone counties are Merrimack, Hillsborough, and Rockingham. The Governor made it effective Saturday that all restaurants asks for peoples numbers and names to contact them in case of any recent exposures in the restaurants. The Town is in good shape as far as PPE goes. EMD Varney has been working with Town Clerk on how to keep the Elections safe for the Town's people on Tuesday.

**New Business:**

Finance Director Phelps informed the Select Board that the Social Security Administration put out that the 2021 COLA will be 1.3%. Chairman Cherian said although he likes the idea of COLA, he believes that Merit raises work just as well and focuses on the employees who are putting in the hard work and extra time. In the end he is fine with choosing either Merit or COLA. Selectman Dickey said he likes the idea of COLA because it creates a fairness across the board for employees. Selectwoman Carey liked the idea of both COLA and Merit, it allows for a cost of living increase for all employees and allows for Merit to be given to employees whom have gone above and beyond. Public Works Director Dean Hollins asked if they were to install a Merit system would there be scale to determine the percentage for the raise. Chairman Cherian said they would have to create a scaling system to make the determinations. Selectwoman Carey asked Finance Director Phelps to provide figures for COLA raises off of the 1.3%, 2%, and 3% to give the Select Board an idea of what the rate of pay would increase by.

Finance Director Phelps spoke with staff about Paid Time Off to get feedback on the current method of vacation and sick time. Employees felt as though the PTO should stay the same and create equal vacation time across the board. Chairman Cherian said it was not in the interest of the Select Board to make employees feel as though the Select Board was going to be taking time away from them. Selectman Dickey agreed with Chairman Cherian and should leave the PTO the same. Selectwoman Carey asked Finance Director Phelps is she had any feedback. Finance Director Phelps said the Select Board should listen to the employees and put off the PTO discussion at this time. She would also recommend that we amend the employee manual, because when it was last revised in 2019 there was an error in the vacation portion. When the Town hired new employees and changed some employees over to salary it entitled them to more vacation time which, created animosity among some employees.

Finance Director Phelps requested that the Select Board amend the employee manual from exempt employees to Department Heads for anyone hired after January 1, 2021. Department Heads should make individual requests to the Select Board to fix the inequalities with their current employee's vacation time going forward. Selectman Dickey said he noticed that the manual has a 90-Day probation period before receiving time off. Some municipalities have a six month period before a new employees can receive time off. Selectman Dickey asked the Select Board if that is something they would like to consider increasing to six months. Chairman Cherian said that is a long period of time without allowing an individual to take a day off. Selectman Dickey said that is true but it is also something that the hiring manager can

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work out with the employee if the employee were to need a day off. Selectman Dickey said he is okay with leaving it the 90-days, it was just an idea he wanted to bring to the Select Board. Finance Director Phelps said they will be opening the employee manual for another revision with a group that consists of employees and Department Heads. After revisions are made she will present them to the Select Board.

Finance Director Phelps gave the Select Board multiple options for different Health Insurance contributions. Chairman Cherian is in favor of option four which lowers premiums for two persons and family plans, and also has the single plans contributing. The Town would cover 95% of a single plan and 85% of the two person and family plan. He said it comes in close to the current cost they have for next year. Finance Director Phelps asked the Select Board if they would be willing to hear feedback from employees and Department Heads. Selectwoman Carey said that would be great and wanted to give the Select Board an idea of what the School District does for their employees. (The rates referred to are HMO Plans) Currently for Teachers they pay 90% for a single plan, 86% for a two person plan, and 80% for a family plan. For the staff they pay 97% for a single plan, 92% for a two person plan, and 85% for a family plan.

Public Works Director Hollins said when speaking with his employees they were for either option one or four. Option one the town would cover 95%. Police Chief Wyman spoke with the Police Department and they were also in favor of option one. Planning and Community Director Easler said after speaking with her staff they are in favor of option one. The biggest reason many people come to work for the Town is because of the great benefits. Deputy Town Clerk Haley Dilts- Brown said with choosing option one it allows for employees to retain a little more in their paychecks which would be nice. Deputy Tax Collector Sarah Gerlack agreed with Deputy Town Clerk Dilts-Brown. Town Administrator Hardy said currently the plan now is weighted to benefit the single plan rather than the two person and the family plans. It comes down to what the Town can afford but the comment that Planning and Community Development Director Easler made should weigh heavily in the decision.

Finance Director Phelps said another thing to consider is if they would like to continue with the buyout plans for individuals who do not take the insurance. Currently they are paying out \$5,994.66. Chairman Cherian said he believes they should keep the buyout system because it is still a cost savings due to those employees not taking the insurance. Selectman Dickey agreed with Chairman Cherian. Selectwoman Carey asked if the Town offers dental insurance. Finance Director Phelps said we do not have dental. The dental plan is a very high deductible and the waiting period is outrageous. At one point the Town did try to get dental but the participation was not where it needed to be to be eligible for the plan. Selectman Dickey asked if the Town offered a flex spending account. Finance Director Phelps said yes. Selectman Dickey said what he is hearing is the employees are wanting option one, and he believes there is a way to find the funds to cover the costs. He understands it's a more expensive plan but it is a plan that will benefit and satisfy the employees. Selectwoman Carey agreed with Selectman Dickey from the oral and written feedback the employees would like and benefit from option one of the 95% coverage. Chairman Cherian agrees that option one would truly benefit the employees and the current plan right now is high for a family and two person plan for a public sector.

**Selectman Dickey motioned to accept option one of the 95% coverage by the Town. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. All in favor.**

Chairman Cherian asked the Select Board if they would be willing to go back to formal meetings and stopping the work sessions for a while with the up and coming budget season. All members were in favor.

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**Motion made by Chairman Cherian to adjourn. Seconded by Selectman Dickey. All in favor.**

Respectfully submitted by Kearsten O'Brien