

Town of Farmington
Board of Selectmen – Public Meeting Minutes
Monday, November 10 2014
Selectmen's Chambers
356 Main Street

Farmington Board of Selectmen
Monday, November 10, 2014

Members Present:

Matt Scruton, Chairman
Charlie King
Paula Proulx
Brian St. Onge
Arthur Capello

Others Present:

Town Administrator Keith Trefethen
Town Clerk/Tax Collector Kathy Seaver
Cons. Comm. Chairman Dave Connolly
Waste Management Account Manager
Peter Lachapelle

1. Call to Order:

Chairman Scruton called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.
Pledge of Allegiance

2. Approval of Minutes:

October 27, 2014 - Public meeting minutes -

Motion: (Capello, second Proulx) to approve the minutes as submitted passed 5-0.

October 27, 2014 - Non-public meeting minutes - Motion: (Proulx, second Capello) to approve the minutes for non-public sessions A, B, and C as submitted passed 5-0.

3. Public Comment:

Ten Rod Road resident Michael Morin approached the board to request that the highway department grade the dirt roads in town once more before winter sets in. Morin said he discussed the issue with Public Works Director Dale Sprague who told him it was "not on his radar". Morin suggested that additional road maintenance now would save time and money in the spring. Town Administrator Keith Trefethen said that weather permitting, the department plans to maintain the dirt roads one more time before there is a hard freeze in the area.

Resident Mary Barron said that in honor of Veterans' Day she wished to express her thanks and appreciation to all veterans for their service. Chairman Scruton said the board shares her sentiments.

4. Huppe Signing Conservation:

Conservation Commission Chair Dave Connolly told Selectmen that a second easement to the Huppe property, known as Berrybrook Farm, has been reviewed by all parties involved and is ready to be signed. He said the document had been reviewed by the town's attorney and that some minor wording changes were made, but no major changes to the agreement were needed. Following the board's signatures, the closing would take place on Wednesday Connolly said.

Motion: (Capello, second King) to sign the easement passed 5-0.

Selectmen signed the easement, posed for photos with the Huppes and thanked all involved for their efforts. Trefethen also asked Selectmen to sign new copies of the easement granted to the 500 Boys and Girls Club as the documents signed at the last meeting could not be found.

5. Recommendation Transfer Station Disposal Proposal:

Selectmen continued their discussion about the waste removal contract that began at their last meeting. Waste Management Account Manager Peter Lachapelle returned to the board to answer any further questions. Discussion included costs related to swapping or storing containers, options for multi-year

contracts, fixed cost increases for multi-year contracts and transport costs. Lachapelle also told the board the company is considering a future plan called blended value which would structure costs based on the value of items (higher quality recyclables versus trash) in each load. He said the company could also determine how the town is now doing with the quality of recyclables currently collected. He added that if the company decided to begin the plan in the middle of a five-year contract, the town may be able to re-negotiate the contract to be included in the blended value plan. Trefethen urged the board to take advantage of the lower transport costs and enter into the five-year contract with the company. Selectman Capello said he did not favor committing the town to a long-term obligation.

Motion: (King, second St. Onge) to approve entering into a five-year contract for waste removal with Waste Management passed 4-1 (Scruton, Proulx, St. Onge, King-yes, Capello-no).

6. Application for Class VI Road Building Approval:

Chairman Scruton announced that he recused himself from the board because he is related to the applicant. Barrington resident John Huckins came before the board seeking permission to build a home on property located on Haywagon Road which is a Class VI road. Discussion included grade, slope and curb cut issues at the site. Huckins said RSA 674:41 allows Selectmen to grant permission to erect buildings on a Class VI road. Selectman King said the state law allows Selectmen to make a decision following review and comment by the Planning Board and noted that Huckins' proposal had not been reviewed by that board. Motion: (King, second Capello) to send Huckins' request to the Planning Board for review and comment passed 4-0-1 (King, St. Onge, Proulx, Capello-yes, Scruton-abstained). Huckins said he would attempt to get on the agenda for the next Planning Board meeting scheduled for Nov. 18. Chairman Scruton returned to the board.

7. Tax Rate Setting:

T.A. Trefethen gave a brief analysis of the factors affecting setting the tax rate and explained the process is somewhat reversed. The tax rate for this year is based on last year's rate plus the spending approved at the last town meeting. This year, the town has experienced an almost \$35 million reduction in value as a result of the revaluation update. The town is now considered to be at 100% valuation and the adjusted tax rate is \$23.09 instead of the actual rate which is \$21.00 per \$1,000 assessed property value. The addition of the approved budget and warrant article spending results in a preliminary tax rate of \$24.93 as suggested by DRA (Dept. of Revenue Administration). Selectmen could choose to lower the rate by using a portion of the funds in the fund balance to "buy down" the tax rate he said. Selectman King said that since the funds in the fund balance are taxpayer money collected and not used, it is reasonable to use those funds to reduce taxes. Selectman Capello suggested another way to return funds to taxpayers is to purchase capital fund items so that taxpayers get the use and benefits of those items right away instead of 10 years from now. Chairman Scruton then asked for public comment. Stephanie VanderBoot said that Middleton students will be leaving Farmington next year and the town may be looking at a big tax increase then as the School Board tries to make the necessary adjustments. Mary Barron asked if there are encumbered funds that were not spent and if there is any expenses that could be postponed. She later asked if the \$24 tax rate includes the funds returned by the School District. Chairman Scruton said the preliminary rate does include the \$1 million returned from the school district budget. Selectmen then discussed what percentage of funds should be retained in the fund balance. Trefethen said the fund balance currently totals \$1.2 million and added that DRA recommends towns retain eight to 10 percent of their budgets in the fund balance. Selectman King suggested spending \$250,000 to offset taxes, leaving eight percent of the budget in the fund balance. Trefethen cautioned the board to keep the balance at closer to 10 percent of available funds.

Motion: (King, second Proulx) to use \$250,000 from the fund balance to set the tax rate at \$24.36 passed 4-1 (Scruton, King, St. Onge, Proulx-yes, Capello-no).

Motion: (King, second Proulx) to authorize the Town Administrator to sign the overlay sheet passed 5-0.

8. Recommendation on Audit Services:

Trefethen provided a memo regarding the proposal from the audit firm Roberts & Greene, PLLC of Concord, NH for audit service next year. The proposed cost is the same as the previous year. He recommended the board accept the proposal with the caveat that the town request new proposals for audit service next year. Selectmen also discussed that although the town has internal controls, the controls are not in writing and have not been adopted by Selectmen.

Motion: (Capello, second St. Onge) to approve the proposal to spend \$15,854 for audit services for fiscal year 2015 and to go out to bid for audit services next year passed 5-0.

9. Review of Health Packages and Recommendation:

Trefethen said he compared quotes and health care plans for town employees between the Health Trust of Concord, NH and School Care, of Manchester, NH. The current provider, Health Trust, has recently notified the town that a 1.1 percent cost increase is planned for next year. After reviewing both company's proposals, he found the products offer similar coverage with School Care being about \$34,000 less. Recently, the town received a notice from Health Trust regarding funding to be returned as a result of a return of surplus. If the town continues to be a member of Health Trust through January, a return of \$55,607 is expected. When the return is subtracted from the overall premium, the cost is reduced to \$564,779 which is a savings of \$20,742.

Motion: (Capello) to switch to School Care based on the \$20,000 savings died to lack of a second. (Selectman Capello based his motion on Trefethen's summary which mistakenly stated the savings would come from the School Care plan). Motion: (King, second Capello) to remain with Health Trust based on the quote and savings passed 5-0.

10. Discussion and Decision on Requesting SB2 at Annual Town Meeting:

Trefethen said he did not find a speaker to speak to the board regarding the alternate form of town meeting as requested by the board at a previous meeting. He provided informational materials from the Municipal Association and state law to assist Selectmen in deciding whether to move forward in placing the question on the warrant at the next town meeting. Discussion included increasing voter turnout at town meeting, method of adoption, how to educate residents and market the official ballot form of town meeting. Motion: (Capello) to not put SB2 on the ballot died for lack of a second. Motion: (King, second Proulx) to table the issue to the next meeting to allow the Town Administrator time to determine the time frame needed and get a speaker passed 4-1. (Scruton, King, Proulx, St. Onge-yes, Capello-no).

11. Appointments: None

12. Board Membership Changes and Appointments:

Chairman Scruton announced that he is resigning from the board at the end of the next board meeting on Nov. 24. Scruton said he has purchased a farm in Rochester and will no longer be a Farmington resident so he must step down from the board. Trefethen asked if Selectmen plan to fill the vacancy due to Scruton's resignation. Members decided to table the issue until the next meeting to allow time for public input and determine how to proceed.

13. Any Further Business:

Selectmen asked when preliminary budget information would be available for review. Trefethen said he would provide complete budget sheets with explanations at the next meeting.

14. MOTION: (King, second Capello) to enter non-public session 91 A:3 II (d) passed 5-0 @ 8:30PM (Scruton-King-Proulx-St. Onge-Capello-yes)

MOTION: (King, second Scruton) to adjourn passed 5-0 @ 8:56PM (Scruton-King-Proulx-St. Onge-Capello-yes).

The Board discussed with the Town Clerk properties that may be deeded to the town after review. It appears the town has properties that have homes upon them and the town needs to take steps to insure and secure.

15.MOTION:(King,second Proulx)to enter non-public session 91 A:3 II (c) passed 5-0 @ 8:59PM(Scruton-King-Proulx-St.Onge-Capello-yes).

MOTION:(King,second Proulx)to adjourn passed 5-0 @9:35PM(Scruton-King-Proulx-St.Onge-Capello-yes).

MOTION:(King,second Proulx)to seal the minutes passed 5-0.

16.MOTION:(Capello,second Proulx)to table Non Public Session Item #16" passed 5-0.

17.MOTION:(St.Onge,second King)to adjourn passed 5-0 @ 9:38PM

Respectively submitted,

Kathleen Magoon

Recording Secretary