

Town of Farmington
Board of Selectmen Public Meeting Minutes
Monday, November 6, 2017

Board Members Present:

Paula Proulx, Chairman
Neil Johnson, Vice Chairman
Jim Horgan
Charlie King
Ann Titus

Others Present:

Town Administrator Arthur Capello
Police Chief Jay Drury

1). Call to Order:

Chairman Proulx called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

2). Pledge of Allegiance:

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

3). Public Input: Police Chief Jay Drury came forward to publically thank Crowley's Variety, Honey Dew Donuts, South Main Pizza and Subway for their contributions to the community. He said with their help they were able to go door-to-door and provide coffee and donuts for residents stuck in their homes without power for several days and provide meals at the "warming center" on Wednesday night at the Public Safety Building.

He said 32 people attended the dinner and enjoyed a hot meal, charged their electronic devices, filled containers with water and socialized with residents and staff. Leftovers went home with some of the attendees for a second meal the next day and some were brought to a family who could not make it to the center that night he said.

Chief Drury and Mr. Capello shared the credit for the idea to open the Public Safety Building to help residents.

Chief Drury said they checked on the welfare of residents in about 100 homes and kept Eversource updated on which areas were still without power.

He thanked the Farmington Fire Dept. and DPW for their assistance with barricades for road closures, downed trees and answering calls for assistance.

The Chief said he plans to do this again should the need arise but added he hoped it would be a long time before they need to do it again.

Selectmen signed Certificates of Appreciation for the participating businesses and the Chief said he planned to deliver them the next day.

Mr. Capello said some private citizens donated money to help offset costs for the dinner (paper plates, plastic utensils, water, food for the kids, etc.) and wished to remain anonymous.

Chief Drury said it was a great to see the community pulling together and neighbors helping neighbors.

Chairman Proulx asked if the Police Dept. keeps a list of people that may need an occasional welfare check due to illness or disability as was done in past years.

Chief Drury said they do not have such a list at this time and encouraged anyone wanting to set up a welfare check for someone to contact the dept. He said they had considered setting up a system where someone on the list would call the station to check in and if the person did not check in they would receive a welfare call from the station. If there was no response to the call someone would respond to the home and conduct an in-person welfare check. He said he was not sure the project would be successful in Farmington depending on the size of the list.

Ms. Proulx suggested it could work if volunteers stepped forward to help.

Mr. Horgan asked if anything was learned in handling some issues with Eversource to prevent those issues from happening again.

Chief Drury said he has developed a good relationship with a company representative and that notifying Eversource about the locations of continuing outages may have helped mitigate some of the issues. He commended the power company for their efforts in resolving a tough situation during one of the largest power outages in state history.

Mr. Capello added that his contact with NH Co-op told him that a number of personnel are still in Puerto Rico assisting them with their power outages following the hurricane. So there was a shortage of help here until crews from out of state arrived to assist with the restoration he said.

4). Review of Minutes:

October 30, 2017- Public Minutes- No errors or omissions

Motion: (Johnson, second Titus) to accept the minutes as written passed 5-0.

Non-Public Sessions A-C – No errors or omissions

Motion: (Johnson, second Titus) to accept the minutes of Non-Public Sessions A-C as written passed 5-0.

Mr. Capello asked if Non-Public Session C should be unsealed and if the board should begin holding public discussions on the issue as similar negotiations have been held in public.

Consensus of the board was to keep the minutes of Non-Public Session C sealed until the matter is resolved.

5). Wage Study Update:

Mr. Capello said he has not received any new responses for the wage study at this time.

6). Town Administrator's Business:

A). Insurance Rates- Mr. Capello said the insurance rates for the 2018 Workers' Compensation Program went up 10% (from \$108,421 in 2017 to \$119,267 for 2018) because the Town's MOD rate (increase or decrease applied to the premium determined by the number of losses incurred over a five year period) has increased. In 2017 the Town's MOD rate was 1.53 and has been adjusted to 1.68 for 2018 he said.

He said he expects that the high year for claims in 2012 will come off the Town rate next year. In some cases if the claim has not been settled the case may be open for years to come and certain injury cases would remain open for as long as the claimant is alive. The insurer then sets a number to carry the yearly cost forward he said.

Mr. Capello said one of the key things the depts. have been working on is to get injuries or incidents filed no matter how minor to document it in case of a future claim and to avoid a fine from the Dept. of Labor for failure to report the injury.

Ms. Proulx asked if there was a program that the Town was working with to try to decrease injury incidents and claims. She said there may be some places where risks could be alleviated.

Mr. Capello said the Town is in the process of coordinating the paperwork and the necessary training required for a program called Primex Golden. He said he is reviewing the list of claims and looking for repetitive incidents such as a lot of slips, trips or falls and requesting additional training sessions to reduce the number of those incidents. He added the DPW plow crew will attend plow training through Primex.

Ms. Proulx asked about the Temporary Alternative Duty (TAD) which is intended to provide temporary alternative work for employees on light duty due to an injury.

Mr. Capello said the program was adopted last year and it is used “religiously” in Town.

Ms. Proulx then asked about the process to reduce unemployment compensation claims such as requesting a resignation letter or form for a voluntary resignation by an employee.

Mr. Capello said this has been done with the most recent employee resignations and includes a statement saying they will not file for unemployment.

Mr. Johnson said he liked the idea of developing a resignation form containing a reason for the resignation and is signed by the employee that would limit the potential for them to come back to the Town and make an unemployment compensation claim.

Mr. Capello said he will see if Primex has a resignation form that could be used by the Town.

Ms. Proulx said the more tools Primex can give the Town that can be implemented the better off the Town will be.

Mr. Capello said the unemployment compensation rate went down 40.1% from \$8,483 in 2017 to \$5,081 for 2018 which he said is a result of improving documentation of voluntary resignations that can be used to dispute unemployment claims.

Selectmen decided to continue the discussion about the details of some of the claims in non-public session.

B). Rochester PILOT- The board reviewed copies of the updated assessed value of the Rochester owned watershed properties in Farmington compiled by Assessor Chad Roberge of Avitar Associates.

Mr. Capello said following last week’s board meeting, Mr. Roberge reviewed the information provided by the City of Rochester but did not significantly change the values of the properties from his previous assessment. He asked the board what the next step should be.

In a memo to the board Mr. Roberge wrote that his revised property values calculate to a new sum of \$1,003,400 down from his original assessment of \$1,071,400. He said that his associate, Gary Roberge valued the property at \$1,017,000.

Ms. Proulx asked about the cause for the difference in the Assessors' valuations.

Mr. Capello speculated it may be due to the formula used by each Assessor and added that for assessing purposes it would not be considered as much of a difference between the 2 amounts.

Mr. King said the percentage change in the amounts was very small and asked if the dam infrastructure is included in the assessment.

Mr. Capello said he did not think the dam was included in the property assessment.

Mr. King said if the dam was privately owned it would be assessed as infrastructure and should be part of the assessment.

Mr. Johnson asked if Rochester has supplied the Town with a copy of their PILOT agreement with the Town of Barrington as offered at the last meeting.

Mr. Capello said the PILOT agreement was provided to the Assessing Clerk and will be included in the board's next meeting packets. He noted that the Rochester Assessor stated they just realized the need for a PILOT within the last few years but this is inaccurate as the Barrington PILOT has been in effect for about 5 or 6 years.

Mr. King suggested that maybe the City officials knew they had other land in Current Use and forgot they had land in Farmington.

Ms. Proulx said that is why she said she wouldn't embarrass them by asking them how long they knew the land was not eligible for Current Use but that the inference was there that it was a lot longer than "a couple of years".

Mr. Johnson said the Town of Barrington also uses Avitar for assessing and said the information available about the lots owned by Rochester in Barrington was limited to the notes on the tax cards posted on the Avitar website. He asked if the Farmington Assessing Dept. could contact Barrington to see how they assessed their reservoir properties.

Ms. Proulx said it would be helpful to the board to have an idea of what such a PILOT consists of and then make a decision as to if that is what the board will do in this situation.

Mr. King said typically they enter into a PILOT agreement when it is mutually beneficial to both sides to do so. He said he did not know if it would be mutually beneficial in this situation as Rochester owns land in Farmington and Farmington bears the burden and the costs to police the property, maintain the roads and gets no benefit from the water resources.

He suggested there could be a PILOT based on shared resources but he did not know if the City would be inclined to agree to that proposal. He said he did not see a reason to enter a PILOT agreement as of yet and that he first wanted to make sure the assessed value was based on solid numbers that would stand up to a challenge at the Bureau of Land Tax Appeals if needed.

Ms. Proulx asked if the board has enough information to decide if they want to enter into a PILOT agreement with Rochester.

Mr. Capello asked what information the board is looking for.

Mr. King suggested Rochester should make a compelling case in writing for the board to consider and that so far he is not convinced.

Mr. Capello said the City officials did not discuss a PILOT agreement at the previous board meeting and spoke more about the assessment of the properties. He said that Rochester may never agree on the assessment and that the board should go with the assessed value that the Town's Assessor says is a solid number that he can defend.

Mr. Capello said he would get a copy of the Barrington/Rochester PILOT agreement; ask the Town Assessor if the dam is included in the assessment of the Rochester owned properties in Farmington and to request information from Barrington about how they determined the value of the watershed properties in their town.

Mr. Johnson suggested that he also request information from any other municipalities that have Rochester owned watershed properties in their towns.

Mr. King said that basically a PILOT agreement would allow Rochester to abate their taxes on the property down to below what a resident would pay if they owned the land.

Mr. Johnson added then Farmington residents would not only be paying their own taxes but would also be subsidizing Rochester's tax bills.

C). Veteran's Day- Mr. Capello informed residents that because Veterans' Day (Nov. 11) falls on a Saturday this year the Town offices would be closed on Friday, Nov. 10. The Town policy manual states that when a holiday falls on Saturday it is observed on Friday and when a holiday falls on Sunday it is observed on Monday.

Mr. Johnson asked if the Transfer Station will be closed on Friday and open on Saturday.

Mr. Capello said that is correct.

D). RFQ for Dover, NH- The board received copies of the Request for Qualifications used by the City of Dover to identify qualified and interested developers for the development of a City owned waterfront property. He asked if the board if there were items in the RFQ the board would like to use to prepare a RFQ for the former Fire Station property.

Mr. King suggested Mr. Capello use the general outline of the Dover RFQ as a template for the Farmington RFQ but to boil it down to about 5 or 6 pages.

Mr. Johnson suggested that all future RFQ's include the minimum submission requirements so that the board could compare "apples to apples" when reviewing submissions.

E). Women's Club- Mr. Capello said he received a note from the Women's Club thanking the board for allowing them to use the 2nd floor of the Municipal Office Building for meeting space.

F). County Tax Bill- Mr. Capello said he received a letter from the Strafford County Commissioners stating that the board acknowledges the Town must send the County \$1,218,716 for the 2017 tax assessment for Farmington. He said the payment is due by December 17 by law and asked the board to sign the acknowledgement letter written for the board by the Commission.

G). DES Update- Mr. Capello told the board that the NH Dept. of Environmental Services is updating their files and that because Ms. Proulx is the Board Chair she is now the owner of the public water system in Town. He asked the board to authorize her to sign as the owner of the system.

Motion: (Johnson, second King) to authorize Chairman Proulx to sign as the owner of the Town's public water system passed unanimously.

H). Resignation- Mr. Capello said he received a letter of resignation as a Planning Board Alternate from Matt Stormann because he is moving out of state.

Motion: (Horgan, second Titus) to accept the resignation of Matt Stormann as an Alternate to the Planning Board passed 5-0.

I). Planned Power Outage- Mr. Capello said he was notified by Eversource of a planned power outage for maintenance and repair of equipment in the downtown area on Wednesday, Nov. 8 from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

7). Additional Board Business-

A). Christmas Tree- Mr. King asked if a tree has been found for the downtown Christmas tree. Mr. Capello said he believed a tree is being donated by the Farmington Preservation and Improvements Organization to the Town.

B). Tax Rate- Ms. Proulx asked if the tax rate was set and if Mr. Capello had developed a statement to be released to the public about how the rate was determined.

Mr. Capello said the tax rate has been set and that he is working on the statement. He said a color coded chart depicting the breakdown of the total tax rate has been posted throughout the Municipal Building.

Ms. Proulx said she would like to see the statement released as soon as possible and preferably before the tax bills go out. She also suggested the charts be posted at eye level and that the title "Town of Farmington 2017 Tax Rate" be made bolder to catch the eye of passers-by.

C). American Flags- Ms. Proulx asked if the flags have been retrieved from the downtown area. Mr. Capello said he asked the DPW to take down the flags from the poles but he did not know if the task has been completed.

D). Watch Out for Leaning Trees- Mr. Horgan advised drivers traveling on the wooded roads on the west side of Route 11 to be on the lookout for leaning trees damaged in the recent storm.

He expressed concern about drivers coming down the roads in the dark or at a high rate of speed running into unseen hazards on the roadways.

Mr. Capello said most of the remaining damaged trees are on private property and he expected the electric companies would re-evaluate the situation with winter coming soon.

8). Next Meeting: Monday, Nov. 20, 2017. There will be no meeting on Nov. 13, 2017.

9). Non-Public Session A:

Motion: (King, second Titus) to enter non-public session under RSA 91-A: 3 II (c) Reputation passed 5-0 by a roll call vote (Proulx, Johnson, Horgan, King, Titus-yes) at 6:50 p.m.

Motion: (Johnson, second Titus) to come out of non-public session passed 5-0 at 7:25 p.m.

Motion: (Johnson, second Titus) to seal the minutes passed 5-0.

10). Adjournment:

Motion: (Johnson, second Titus) to adjourn the meeting passed 5-0 at 7:25 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Kathleen Magoon

Recording Secretary

Paula Proulx, Chairman

Neil Johnson, Vice Chairman

Jim Horgan

Charlie King

Ann Titus