

TOWN OF FRANCESTOWN

OFFICE OF SELECTMEN

27 MAIN STREET • P.O. BOX 5

FRANCESTOWN, NEW HAMPSHIRE 03043-0005

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES BUDGET & BOND HEARING

February 11, 2014

Selectmen Present: Chair Betsy Hardwick, Scott Carbee, and Abigail Arnold

Staff Present: Town Administrator Michael Branley, Road Agent Gary Paige, George Morgan Jr. Jason St. Cyr , Donna Noonan and Police Chief Steve Bell

Also present: Tom Anderson, Becky Moul, Betty Behrsing, Judie Miller, Lisa Bourbeau, Nick Wilder, Janet Quilty, Maureen von Rosenvinge, Steve Griffin, Mike Tartalis, Lindsey Aereci from the Ledger Transcript, Jan Hicks, Larry Ames, BJ Carbee, Kitty Houghton, Jeff Tarr, Warren Kiblin, Henry Kunhardt, Abby Dawson, Kris & Lisa Stewart, Linda Kunhardt, Polly Freese, Elizabeth Lavalley, Elly Miles McAuley, Guy Tolman, Sarah & Charlie Pyle, Brad Howell, John Arnold, Carol & Stewart Brock, Dennis Orsi, Matthew Lee, Lawrie Barr, and others unknown to the minute taker.

CALL TO ORDER: Betsy called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Betsy gave an overview of how the hearing would be conducted and asked Mike to go through the list of warrant articles. A presentation handout, draft warrant and overall budget review sheet were provided for everyone.

Mike stated that tax rate estimates are being provided for comparison to last year but the Town will be undergoing a reassessment so property values and thus the tax rate will be changing in 2014. Mike said the Town has been fortunate to receive some one-time unexpected revenues that are being applied to selected warrant articles to fund some additional projects without increasing the tax rate.

Mike went through the warrant articles as follows and asked that questions be asked after each article is discussed:

Articles 1-8 will be voted on the ballot with article one being the voting for officers and article two through eight being proposed zoning ordinance amendments.

Article 9 will be the first one voted on at Town Meeting by a ballot vote requiring a 2/3rds majority and is \$350,000 for a bond for the Town Hall. This amount represents approximately 1/3 of the total project cost with the remainder coming from grants, donations and other funds

and the current plan is that the bond would not be issued if those other funding sources did not come though. The timeframe of the project is to begin in 2015 and because of that there would be no tax impact in 2014. The Board is currently looking at a 10-year term, which would have a potential tax rate impact in the first year of \$.23 per thousand.

Maureen von Rosenvinge, Chairman of the Heritage Commission asked if anyone had questions. She handed out an overview of the Town Hall project, including what has been completed and what is being proposed to be done in the future. Maureen stated the project is at a point that any major changes made going forward will trigger some mandatory life safety and ADA compliance improvements. Maureen explained the LCHIP grant and stated we are hoping to receive \$400,000 from the grant and the Town has a much better chance if matching funds are available for the project. Elizabeth Lavallee asked what the \$350,000 will do for the Town Hall and Maureen answered the Town Hall would be able to be open year round with a heating system, permanent plumbing, hot water, full ADA compliance, life safety codes, a LULA lift, and structurally sound building with the second floor being untouched. Matthew Lee asked what the purpose of the building will be and Maureen answered the purpose is community such as meetings, social functions, Labor Day, exercise groups, recreation functions and plays. A resident asked for more clarification on not exercising the bond if other funds are not acquired. Maureen explained that if any grants were not able to be secured and not enough donations came in to fund the rest of the project, then the bond would not be taken out. Maureen said this warrant article will give evidence to LCHIP that the Town supports the project. Elizabeth Lavallee asked with all of the issues with the Town bridges would we be needing a bond for those in the future and Scott answered that the Town has a plan in place with the State Bridge Aid. Henry said there are 15 Town bridges with 9 on the red list and 4 have a place on State Bridge Aid through which the state pays 80% of the project. There was a discussion regarding affordability of the project with other infrastructure needs and the wording of the article.

The Board of Selectmen closed the public hearing for the Bond.

Article 10 – Mike stated this is a petitioned article with no appropriation therefore there would not be any discussion on it at this time.

Article 11 – Town operating budget of \$1,592,670 this is a decrease of \$38,000 from the budget passed in 2013, but that is misleading because the amount passed included an amendment of \$70,000 for the temporary bridge on 2nd NH Turnpike and \$14,000 for general assistance. Comparing it to the budget the Selectmen recommended in 2013 it is a \$45,000 increase, just under 3%. Mike noted the major increases and decreases as follows:

- Increase to Executive of \$1,000 to make our assessment cards available online and \$1,500 to increase part-time staff hours
- Increase to Elections related to more elections in 2014
- Increase to Legal of expense of \$25,000 for litigation with PSNH and Fairpoint of their assessed values. Mike explained what could happen to their assessed values if we did not litigate, costing roughly \$50,000 per year in tax payments.
- Increase to Personnel Administration for NH Retirement costs of \$3,500, part-time wage increases of \$3,500, and decrease for health insurance and worker's comp insurance premiums

- Decrease to Planning of \$3,000 because we have moved the Master Plan from the operating budget into a Capital Reserve Fund.
- Increase to General Government Buildings of \$6,000 for Maintenance Personnel and miscellaneous building expense lines.
- Increase to Police of \$5,000 for more patrol hours and administrative hours. A resident asked if the increase was for salary increases or for additional patrols and Mike answered more part-time hours and administrative help 2-4 hours per week. Chief Bell said they would like to fill in some gaps when there is no one patrolling.
- Increase to the Ambulance Contract of \$3,000 with Peterborough. This is close to our 2012 payment.
- Increase to Reseal of \$5,000 to improve the asphalt maintenance program which includes sand sealing
- Decrease to bridges in the amount of \$70,000 which was the temporary bridge from the 2013 budget and left in \$3,500 for possible hauling costs to return the borrowed beams to the State
- Decrease to Solid Waste of \$4,000 because this is an off year of not having household hazardous waste day and \$9,000 because a new recycling and hauling contract was negotiated
- Decrease to Welfare of \$29,000 for increases made in 2013.
- Increase to Library of \$1,500 for additional staff hours during the summer reading program
- Decrease in Debt Service of \$2,500 for the conservation bond and an increase of \$7,000 for the 2nd NH Turnpike Bridge project so the project can hopefully be completed in one year.

Becky asked if crime has gone up in the past year and Chief Bell answered that it has not gone up or down but has stabilized.

John Thalhauser asked why legal expenses are going up so much and Mike explained the cause is legal action between the Town and PSNH and Fairpoint regarding their assessed values. A discussion continued regarding the lawsuits and the reasoning for being involved versus just going with the values they are proposing they should be assessed at. Mike confirmed we are in a pool with other Towns for the lawsuit to try to minimize expenses.

Mike said overall the budget is a decrease from the 2013 budget of \$38,000, the net revenues are looking to be approximately level and the tax rate impact for Article 11 is \$5.54 per thousand using the current assessed values.

Article 12 – Planning Board’s recommended contributions to the Capital Reserve Funds totaling \$477,200 and is broken out to several different funds with \$365,000 from taxation and \$112,200 from undesignated fund surplus and the approximate tax rate impact is \$1.71 per thousand.

Becky Moul asked if we had previously purchased a generator for the Police Station and Mike answered no, we are hoping to this year.

Article 13 – Funds several building projects and equipment upgrades. The projects included in this article are:

- Resurfacing of the faces of the town clock
- Repairs to the exterior of Town Hall
- Replacement of the furnaces at the Fire Station which are original to the building
- Exterior repairs to the Fire Station
- Upgrades to the Town alarm system
- Generator for the Town Hall Annex
- File server for the Town Offices

Mike said this article is funded by the undesignated fund surplus and has no tax impact.

Article 14 – Mike stated this is to replace the bridge on Scoby Road over Scoby inlet. This bridge is on the Red List and in 2013 the weight limit was reduced and the Town was advised the condition is continuing to deteriorate and may lead to another reduction or closure. This article is funded by a withdrawal from reserve funds and has no tax impact. Mike read a section of the last bridge inspection. Gary explained why he felt this bridge could be done by the Highway Department instead of waiting for State Bridge Aid. The Town feels this bridge would not last long enough to be replaced through the Bridge Aid Program.

Abby Dawson asked what type of bridge would be installed and Gary answered that a Request for Proposals would go out and he has seen some timber frame structures used in neighboring towns that seem to be an economical short span structure.

Janet Quilty asked if the Highway Department would be working 4 or 5 days a week this summer to complete the project and Mike stated he didn't feel that was relevant. Gary stated he hoped 4 days as they would be assisting the selected contractor. Lawrie Barr asked and Mike confirmed that on either schedule they would be working 40 hours at their regular pay.

Ben Haubrich asked if it mattered that it is the Scoby outlet and not inlet and the Board agreed they would revise the article.

Abigail stated she wanted to clarify that the Highway Department, like many towns in the area, work summer hours which are four ten hour days a week versus five eight hour days.

A resident asked what the life span of a timber bridge would be and Gary answered 40 to 60 years.

Becky asked for input on why it is stated the Budget Committee does not recommend Article 13 and Charlie answered there were mixed feelings were some supported it in principal but didn't necessarily support the projects being proposed.

Article 15 – Mike stated this is to purchase a one-ton dump truck to replace the one-ton pick-up that is a 2004 and was purchased in 2007. The new vehicle has comparable miles per gallon and operating costs and it has additional capabilities because of its higher gross weight. Mike said the current dump truck has 135,000 miles on it. This is funded by the withdrawal of reserve

funds and has no tax impact. Gary said this pick-up was scheduled to be replaced in 2012. Mike said the vehicle may be traded in or kept for use by the transfer station, building inspector and/or the new maintenance personnel. There was a discussion regarding the funding of the capital reserve fund and whether or not to keep the current pick-up truck. Gary explained why the new dump truck would benefit the town better than the current pick-up.

Lisa Stewart asked if the new truck would be a turbo diesel or a gas one-ton and if the \$70,000 includes the sander and plow package and Gary answered that his investigation is showing not to go with the turbo diesel, but is still looking at all options and it does include the plow and sander.

Article 16 – Mike stated this is to purchase a police cruiser to replace the 2009 Crown Victoria with over 91,000 miles. This is funded by the withdrawal of a reserve fund and has no direct tax impact. The proposed vehicle is a Ford Interceptor utility and it includes all the police upgrades necessary.

Abby Dawson asked what the expected life is on the new cruiser and Chief Bell said we are replacing after approximately 6 years old and 100,000 miles.

Article 17 - Mike stated this article is to conduct a statistical update of all property in town. By state law we are required to update values every 5 years. This is funded by the withdrawal of a reserve fund and has no direct tax impact.

Article 18 – Mike stated this is for \$17,200 for the treatment of invasive milfoil in Scoby Pond using both herbicide and DASH and is funded by the acceptance of a state grant in the amount of \$6,808, \$5,280 from taxation and \$4,932 from undesignated fund surplus. The approximate tax rate impact is \$0.02 per thousand. Brad Howell from the Scoby Pond Association spoke to the success of the past treatments. There was a discussion on whether both the herbicide and the DASH program was needed or was just the treatment enough. There was also a discussion on the long-range milfoil treatment plan.

Article 19 – Mike stated this is for \$2,500 for milfoil prevention on Pleasant Pond. The approximate tax rate impact is \$0.01 per thousand.

Article 20 – Mike stated this seeks to create an expendable trust fund with the Selectmen as agents to expend for the Town's Master Plan and to place \$10,000 in the fund. Prior funding has been in the operating budget as smaller funds and have lapsed to the fund balance. State law recommends the master plan be updated every 5 to 10 years and ours is approaching 20 years old. Becky Moul asked how much would need to be put into this fund each year and Mike answered once we have estimates, we will have a better idea how much to put in each year for further updates.

Article 21 – Mike stated this is for the purchase of a traffic monitoring device for the Police Department and would provide data on the numbers and speeds of vehicles where it is set-up. This is funded ½ by taxation and ½ by a grant with the approximate tax rate impact of \$.01 per thousand. Becky asked what the maintenance costs would be and Steve answered it would be like servicing radar equipment. John Thalhauser asked if you could borrow or rent a device like

this instead and Chief Bell answered no. Becky asked the Budget Committee to speak on the article. Charlie said he felt it was an expense that did not need to be spent this year. Abby Dawson said in trying to keep the budget down, it did not seem to be a priority. There was more discussion on whether this was important or not.

Article 22 – Mike stated this seeks to move \$2,200 from undesignated fund surplus to cemetery maintenance trust and represents ½ of the income from the sale of cemetery lots in 2013, with the other half going into the cemetery capital reserve fund and has no direct tax rate impact. There was a discussion regarding an iron fence in cemetery 2.

Article 23 – Mike stated this is an article to rescind past articles regarding purchasing policies and would require the Board of Selectmen to adopt a purchasing policy and the Town is currently working on a draft based on town practices and other towns to provide clarification and it would allow the Selectmen to periodically review and make changes in general when needed. Betty asked if the draft policy could be available to view before voting on this article and Mike answered yes and he planned to have it on an upcoming Board of Selectmen meeting agenda for them to discuss.

Article 24 - Mike stated this is a petitioned warrant article with no appropriation.

Mike stated the approximate Town tax rate impact of everything is \$7.29 per thousand which is the same that the Board set the 2013 rate at.

The Board of Selectmen closed the public hearing for the Budget.

The Board discussed salt expenditure and agreed to talk again closer to Town Meeting.

Scott made a motion to approve the warrant with an amendment to Article 14 changing Scoby Inlet to Scoby Outlet, seconded by Betsy. All in favor.

The Board signed the Warrant and the MS6 form.

NEXT BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING: Monday February 17th at 6:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT: Betsy adjourned the meeting at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Wendy Brien-Baker