

**MINUTES OF SELECTMAN'S MEETING
TOWN OF GORHAM
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2017 6:00 PM
TOWN HALL CONFERENCE ROOM**

Gorham Selectman present: Grace LaPierre, Terry Oliver, Patrick Lefebvre

Also present: Robin Frost, Town Manager; Denise Vallee; Chief PJ Cyr; Jeff Stewart; Kirstan Knowlton, Berlin Daily Sun; Michael Waddell; Liz Jackson; Richard McClure; Glen Eastman; Bob Demers; Sue Demers; Adam White; Judy LeBlanc; Diane Bouthot; Doug Gralenski

1. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chairman LaPierre at 5:59 pm.

2. Appointments:

a) Chief PJ Cyr – Gorham/Berlin Police/Dispatch Consolidation – Chief Cyr advised that he met with Chief Morency and Deputy Chief Buteau at the Berlin Police Department in reference to the possibility of combining police and/or dispatch services between the towns. Chief Morency agreed that they could make it work, but they will need cooperation on all sides, and they will need to know specifically what the town is looking for in services. Chief Cyr advised the Board that they need to consider what kind of coverage they want for the town, what sort of control the Board will have over services provided by Berlin, what they would do with walk-in calls, and if they would want a substation in Gorham. Chief Cyr proposed that before they move forward, there needs to be a buy-in from the townspeople, so that they have a voice in whether or not they continue with the department here or send the services to Berlin. Diane Bouthot suggested that there are two different questions here, and they should be posed as such. One being whether dispatch should be consolidated, and the other being the consolidation of police services. Mike Waddell mentioned that how the question is worded will make a difference in the discussion and vote. It was suggested that the question be worded that we will explore the possibility. Rich McClure stated that taxpayers will want to know numbers before making a decision as to how much it would cost to consolidate with Berlin, and how much it would save. TM Frost advised that they will not have numbers before the town meeting. McClure stated that there are numbers for the services provided to Milan, and those should be available. Cyr stated that this was discussed at the meeting, but that since Gorham has more commercial area, a larger population, and more tourism, it would be a different service than what Milan receives. Selectman Lefebvre advised that they need to know if the taxpayers are interested in combining services before hours are wasted researching it if they are not. Glen Eastman suggested that there could be a second meeting for the public after the town has more information. It was decided that two separate questions, one for dispatch and one for police, will be included at the town meeting to explore the idea of combining services.

3. New Business:

a) Economic Development Position – TM Frost advised that they are looking to add \$8-10,000 to the budget for Economic Development, which was suggested by Selectman Lefebvre. Chairman LaPierre asked if this would coincide with the First Impressions Program. TM Frost advised that the First Impressions Program takes a look at the town and suggests improvements and grants that can be applied for. Judy LeBlanc asked if there could be an Economic Development Committee with volunteers, rather than a paid position. TM Frost advised that this has been tried and did not work well in the past. Frost stated that it is not a bad idea to pull people together, but that someone needs to be in charge of it in order for things to get done. Denise Vallee stated that the last time this was tried, they were able to put together a brochure, but this was only distributed outside of Gorham. Mike Waddell suggested

that what makes a committee like this work is having the right personalities to work together and move it forward, that you need to find the right people. Glen Eastman mentioned that hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent on Economic Development in this area, and the last \$300,000 spent proved nothing. Eastman advised that if you don't give someone enough money for advertising and travel, it will not work. Eastman suggested working with already established groups, such as the Coos County Economic Development Council, or NCIC. Eastman stated that he was opposed to hiring an individual for the town, as we should be using our existing assets. Selectman Lefebvre stated that it has worked well in Berlin, as they have filled all the BIDPA buildings. Eastman countered with the fact that there is a highly paid Boston outfit that has been trying to fill just one building in Gorham with no success. Chairman LaPierre agreed that contacting NCIC would be a good idea. Mike Waddell and Judy LeBlanc both agreed that the town needs to reach out to them rather than waiting for them to contact us. Liz Jackson asked if there is less tax collected on vacant buildings than ones that are occupied. Mike Waddell replied that even though the taxes do not go down just because a building is vacant, over time the condition of the building deteriorates and is worth less, which would impact the value taxed. Sue Demers said that the population in town is declining, and that new people do not want to move here due to the high tax rate. Chairman LaPierre advised that the Board would contact NCIC and the Coos County Economic Development Council to see if they can offer any guidance.

b) Recreation Department Truck - Jeff Stewart advised that he spoke with Buddy Holmes, who contacted NH DOT surplus to see if anything was available, and they did not have anything worth purchasing. Stewart advised that Jeff Tennis from the Water Department advised him that they may be purchasing a new truck this year, and could sell the 2006 truck they now have to him for about \$5,000. Stewart stated that Francis at the Town Garage looked at it and said it would need about \$4000 of body work, for a total of just under \$10,000. Sue Demers stated that the whole town is talking about the truck and many feel strongly that it is not needed. Demers asked why the Recreation Department needed a truck when the town garage has a whole fleet that are available to plow. Stewart said that it would be used mainly for summer maintenance. Bob Demers stated that Fred Corrigan was already working half-time for the Recreation Department and has a truck from the town garage. Stewart advised that there would be no cost to the taxpayers, as it would be coming out of the Revolving Fund. Sue Demers responded that it still costs the taxpayers money whether coming from the Revolving Fund or not. Chairman LaPierre advised that the Board had already given Stewart permission last year to purchase a vehicle for the Recreation Department and she feels that they need to follow through on that commitment. Selectman Lefebvre advised that Stewart currently uses his own vehicle for Recreation Department purposes, as does the part-time summer employee. Lefebvre stated that even if a truck is not purchased for the department, they should be reimbursed for the use of their vehicles by the town, and that the town assumes some of the liability for the use of those vehicles. **On a motion by Chairman LaPierre, seconded by Selectman Oliver, the Board voted 2-1, with a nay vote from Selectman Lefebvre, to allow the purchase of a used truck from the Water Department for the Recreation Department.**

c) Recreation Revolving Fund – Chairman LaPierre read the warrant article submitted by Mike Waddell requesting a change in the allowable revenue and expenditures in the Recreation Revolving Fund. The Warrant Article reads “To see if the Town will vote to restrict the revenues deposited into the Recreation Revolving Fund to gifts and donations; Moose Tour receipts; Medallion Opera House gifts, donations, and receipts; and bus trip revenue. And further to restrict the expenditures from the Recreation Revolving Fund to Moose Tour and Medallion Opera House expenditures, bus purchases and repairs, and for purposes designated by any gifts and donations.” LaPierre asked why a 2/3 majority was required and TM Frost advised that is due to the fact that they are changing the purpose of a

Special Revenue Fund. Frost advised that they have contacted an attorney, and will most likely hear back from them tomorrow to confirm if the 2/3 majority is needed. Mike Waddell advised that the only alteration from the Budget Committee before the article was submitted was to add the fuel and repair costs for the buses to the Revolving Fund. Sue Demers suggested that the cost for the insurance should also be included, and TM Frost advised that the cost was not much. Frost will get figures on insurance for the Budget Committee tomorrow night. Selectman Lefebvre stated that he felt the changes were not complete, but it was agreed that the warrant article this year was a good start and adjustments could be made next year if needed. Selectman Lefebvre asked if the change will increase the operating budget and was advised it would. Selectman Lefebvre also asked if the increase in the operating budget or the revenues added back to the general fund were higher, and was advised the increase to the budget was more than the revenues. Doug Gralenski advised that the changes requested were a measure to make the expenditures for the Recreation Department more transparent. **The Board voted unanimously to support the Warrant Article to make changes to the Recreation Revolving Fund.**

d) Dispatch Equipment CRF – Chief Cyr gave a brief summary of the CRF request for the Dispatch Equipment, citing that the radio system the department currently has will no longer be serviced by Motorola by 2020. The estimate of the cost to replace the system is \$323,985. In order to be able to purchase the radio in 2021, the town would need to save \$76,500 per year. Mike Waddell advised that the Budget Committee felt that it made sense to be sure the money was available if needed. Waddell stated that even if the town decides to combine services with Berlin, there would be a cost involved to upgrade equipment for that as well. Cyr advised that he would also be getting another estimate and would also be contacting Troop E about the equipment they will be getting rid of that may be compatible and could be used for parts if needed, to extend the life of the current system. Selectman Lefebvre asked if the town could recoup some of the cost from the other communities that use our dispatch services. Chief Cyr advised that they currently contribute \$1200 per year toward the cost of maintaining the repeater. He stated that the contracts would have to be amended to include it. It was asked how the other towns are charged for dispatch services, and it was explained that the cost per call is based on the budgeted expenses, and multiplied by the average number of calls they had over the last three years. Diane Bouthot mentioned that the cost to replace the equipment will not be the same in four years as it is now, and suggested putting in more than the \$76,500 per year. **On a motion by Chairman LaPierre, seconded by Selectman Oliver, the Board voted unanimously to request \$76,500 be added to the Dispatch Equipment CRF.**

e) 2017 Budget Recommendations – The Board reviewed the articles for consideration on the 2017 Town Warrant. **With the exception of the Ambulance CRF, the Board voted unanimously to accept all of the articles.** On the Ambulance CRF, Chairman LaPierre and Selectman Oliver voted for the appropriation, and Selectman Lefebvre voted against it.

F) Housing Standards/New Construction Property Tax Exemption – The proposed Housing Standards article reads, “To see if the Town will vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 48-A Housing Standards in an effort to ensure that all dwellings in the Town of Gorham are kept fit for human habitation and allows the municipality to establish an ordinance to enforce the standard under the provisions of 48-A:3,II.” Selectman Lefebvre asked if there would be an increased cost for enforcement. TM Frost advised it would not cost much more. **On a motion by Chairman LaPierre, seconded by Selectman Oliver, the Board voted unanimously to accept the Housing Standards Article.**

TM Frost read the proposed New Construction Property Tax Exemption article, “To see if the Town will vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 72:76 Commercial and Industrial Construction Exemption to allow a new construction property tax exemption for commercial uses. The exemption shall apply only to

municipal and local school property taxes assessed by the municipality and shall exclude state education property taxes and county taxes. The exemption shall be as follows: 10% for the first year, 25% for the second year, 50% for the third year, 75% for the fourth year, and 90% for the fifth year. Subsequent years will be assessed at the full rate. This schedule will be applied to all projects submitting a property application during the exemption period which will remain in effect for a period of five years from adoption.” Mike Waddell asked who would have the authority to grant the exemption and was advised it would be the Board of Selectman. Selectman Lefebvre asked if they would still be responsible for the cost of the land and TM Frost advised they would still pay the full amount on the land and any existing buildings. **On a motion by Selectman Lefebvre, seconded by Selectman Oliver, the Board voted unanimously to accept the New Construction Property Tax Exemption Article.**

g) Assessing Proposals – TM Frost advised two proposals were received, one from KRT, which is our current vendor, in the amount of \$44,000, and one from Brett Purvis and Associates for \$29,400. TM Frost advised that she would recommend accepting the proposal from KRT, as the other proposal did not include the sales analysis for the statistical update. TM Frost gave copies of the proposals to the Board to review. Selectman Lefebvre asked Frost to contact Purvis and Associates to see if they could provide a cost for the same services that KRT will provide.

4. Old Business/Updates:

a) Fairpoint Poles in Cascade – TM Frost advised that they are working on the poles. Selectman Lefebvre advised that Eversource has moved their wires to the new poles.

b) Public Works Building – TM Frost advised that she will check with Buddy Holmes to see if the heating system has been fixed.

c) Eversource Dam/Dike Update – TM Frost advised there are no updates.

d) Munce Properties – TM Frost advised that the letters have gone out to the former owners and mortgagors giving them the opportunity to repurchase the properties. They have 30 days in which to do this, but the town cannot sell the properties for 90 days after deeding.

e) Trails Committee – TM Frost advised that the newly formed Trails Committee met today. There are 12 members: Pat Lefebvre, Joel Fortier, Liz Jackson, Conrad Clefos, Reuben Rajala, Ray Bergeron, Brian Ruel, Jason Hunter, Roger Pelletier, PJ Cyr, Dan Clark, and Audrey Albert. If any other people are needed as advisors, they could be asked to attend meetings. Liz Jackson stated that they are hoping to have a committee that is not lopsided, and are hoping to be sure everyone is represented. They will be working to be sure that the community is kept informed of what is going on and the minutes will be available on the town’s website. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 13.

f) UNH Cooperative Extension – First Impressions Program – TM Frost advised that the applications will be available for the town to fill out on February 15.

g) Stony Brook Roads Project – TM Frost advised that they are still working on this. Chief Cyr advised that the town has the road sign spelled correctly, but that the state road sign spells it “Stoney Brook”. Adam White advised that he could take care of this. It was also mentioned that there are two streets named White Birch in town, which should not happen due to 911 requirements. One is White Birch Acres, and the other is White Birch Lane. TM Frost advised that since one of the roads is a private road owned by John Losier, it could only be suggested to him that the name be changed.

h) Spring Road Project Update – TM Frost advised that there is no answer from DOT yet. Frost advised that the letter has been sent to Heather Dunkerley about the matching funds for the additional \$47,000 needed. Mike Waddell asked about the project and what happens if they are only able to do a portion of it due to funding. TM Frost assured Waddell that the project would not be started until they had the funds to complete it. Waddell then asked what the Board would do if they did not receive the additional funds, if they would put off the project or have another plan. Selectman Lefebvre stated that they can't make a decision yet, without an answer from DOT. Waddell advised that they would have the ability to withdraw the additional money needed from the Capital Reserve Funds, which is why he objects to the \$100,000 in the Road Fund, as there is no comprehensive plan in place.

i) Rec Department Focus Group Update – Jeff Stewart advised that only a few people attended the meeting, but there were several others interested that were unable to be there. There were many ideas discussed about building use and charging fees for use of the building, building access, and classes and activities that could be offered for youth and adults. Stewart advised that Jennie Roberge is working on a survey with her statistics class to find out what the youth are interested in, and he will be in touch with her about the results.

5. Public Comment:

Chief Cyr suggested a Capital Improvement Plan Committee for the town. Sue Demers asked if there was a Master Plan, and TM Frost advised it was currently being worked on. Frost advised that there needs to be an updated Master Plan before there is a Capital Improvement Plan.

6. Other Business:

a) Town Manager's Update – TM Frost advised that she has sent an email to Virtual Town and School's about recording the meetings.

b) Selectmen's Updates – Selectman Lefebvre asked if Mike Chabot was all set with the Exchange Street sign until spring and TM Frost advised that she has spoken with him and he is.

Selectman Lefebvre asked is there has been any response from the mill about the sign or deeding the property in Cascade Flats. TM Frost advised she has had no response to emails or calls.

Chairman LaPierre asked about the article in the paper about a new information center in Gorham. TM Frost advised that she has no idea where they plan to put it.

Chairman LaPierre also advised that the Easter Seals committee send a thank you to the town for helping to make their weekend a success. They said they had 300-325 people attend, it was their 45th anniversary, and they raised \$113,388.16.

c) Approval of Minutes (January 23, 2017) - On a motion by Chairman LaPierre, seconded by Selectman Lefebvre, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of January 23, 2017 as prepared.

d) Sign Manifest; Abatements and Exemptions (if necessary) –

There were no abatements.

7. Non-public Session: RSA 91-A:3, IIa

On a motion by Chairman LaPierre, seconded by Selectman Oliver, the Board unanimously voted by roll call to move to non-public session at 8:17 pm. Lefebvre – Aye, Oliver - Aye, LaPierre – Aye.

On a motion by Selectman Oliver, seconded by Selectman Lefebvre, the Board voted unanimously by roll call to come out of non-public session at 8:40 pm. Lefebvre – Aye, Oliver – Aye, LaPierre - Aye.

8. Adjournment: On a motion by Chairman LaPierre, seconded by Selectman Lefebvre, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 pm.

REVIEWED AND APPROVED:

Grace LaPierre

Terry Oliver

Patrick Lefebvre