

**MINUTES OF SELECTMAN'S MEETING
TOWN OF GORHAM
MONDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2016 6:00 PM
TOWN HALL CONFERENCE ROOM**

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

Also present: Robin Frost, Town Manager; Kirstan Knowlton, Berlin Daily Sun; Chief PJ Cyr; Michael Waddell; Paul Robitaille; Dave Potter.

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

2. Appointments:

There were no appointments scheduled.

3. New Business:

a) Trash Pickup on Private Property – A question was raised at the last meeting about trash pickup on private property, mainly in the trailer parks. TM Frost advised that it is something we have always done. Frost advised that other than the liability of being on private property, there is no other compelling reason to either continue to pick it up or not. She stated that some towns require trailer parks to have dumpsters, and the town picks up the trash from the dumpster. Frost advised that she has emailed City Manager Wheeler in Berlin to see how they handle it, but has not heard back. Frost will also check with Lancaster to see what they do.

b) Exposed Cellar Hole on Main Street – TM Frost advised that John Scarinza is working on contacting the property owner, but has not had a response yet.

c) Engineering Proposals – Stony Brook Area Roads – Proposals were received from Horizons, HEB, CMA, and Hoyle,Tanner. The lowest bid was from Horizons at \$37,000 through bidding, \$65,000 with complete oversight of project, and \$54,000 with part-time oversight of project. The next lowest bid was from CMA for \$39,750 through bidding. CMA also suggested that there may be other ways for the town to do it to save money. The Board asked if AoT and Wetland Permitting was included and TM Frost advised they were not included in any of the proposals, but should not be required. The Board tabled the proposals for now, until everyone has had a chance to read through them.

d) Preliminary Tax Rate – The preliminary tax rate set by the state was up from last year. TM Frost gave the Board members several different alternatives for using money from the fund balance and the overlay. TM Frost advised that she has reviewed the revenues for the town and they are good, nothing has been underestimated. Selectman Oliver asked about the fund balance and when the balance would increase. TM Frost advised that the auditor gives us a report of fund balance after his fieldwork is complete for the year end. In the past couple of years, we have increased the amount in the reserve for unpaid taxes to approximately \$1M. The auditor recommends what to keep in that reserve, but due to the mill payment plan, he may decide to release a larger portion of that reserve, thereby making those funds available to help reduce taxes. TM Frost reminded the Board that those funds would not be available until the tax rate setting for 2017. Chairman LaPierre wrote a note to the other Selectman for them to read, and Kirsten Knowlton from the Berlin Daily Sun reminded the Board that it was a public session and asked for the note to be read. Selectman Oliver responded that there was nothing there. TM Frost advised that it would be illegal to have private communication on a subject during a public

session. After deliberation, **on a motion by Selectman Oliver, seconded by Chairman LaPierre, the board unanimously agreed to use \$300,000 from the fund balance, and \$75,000 in overlay, in setting the preliminary tax rate.** This will leave a balance of \$387,000 in the fund balance, which TM Frost advised should be around \$800,000. The rate will be an increase of \$2.45 over last year's rate.

Michael Waddell expressed concern over the tax rate and the town's valuation. Waddell stated that there was a problem with the valuation when the town brought the budget to the budget committee last year. He reminded the Board that next year would be the revaluation. He stated that work to the roads in Stony Brook may require a bond, that the town would be spending \$45,000 for the revaluation, that the capital reserve fund will be empty, the legal line for this year has been spent, and that the dredging line is low. Waddell sees a significant tax rate increase next year going from a 110% to 100% valuation, and suggested that the Board may want to sit down with the DRA to discuss these items. The Board asked TM Frost to review this information and report back to them.

4. Old Business/Updates:

a) Cascade Railroad Crossing – TM Frost advised that the order has not been signed by the Commissioner of DOT, but the town will receive it when it is. DOT will order the signs and install them, but will invoice the town.

b) Fairpoint Poles in Cascade – TM Frost advised that they are waiting for a line crew to move the lines.

c) Public Works Building – TM Frost advised that the footings are done, and they have been inspected and backfilled.

d) Sidewalk Grant – TM Frost advised that Gorham's application did not rank high on the priority list and will not get much consideration at the DOT level. Frost advised that Conway was first, then Littleton and Berlin. Frost advised that the town can reapply the next time it is offered.

e) School Resource Officer – Chief Cyr advised that he received a letter from school superintendent, Paul Bousquet, stating that the school would welcome a School Resource Officer, as long as it was paid for. Cyr advised that the town has been put into the queue for the COPS grant, but that funding is not currently available. Cyr also spoke with Bousquet about the Project Aware grant from the Department of Education. Bousquet stated that Berlin currently has it, but that he does not believe Gorham would qualify. Bousquet will look into it further.

f) Eversource Dam/Dike Update – TM Frost advised that there has been nothing from the Dam Bureau yet in reference to the letter that they are preparing to send to FERC. TM Frost advised that Attorney Chris Boldt contacted Attorney Sullivan from Portsmouth in reference to the encroachment issue and a possible similar situation there, but they did not have any issues. Burke York is working on adding the salt shed to the plans. Mike Waddell requested that TM Frost forward the email in reference to the dike to him, and she agreed.

5. Public Comment:

Mike Waddell asked if there was a signed contract with Attorney Boldt and Skip Sansoucy in reference to the legal work for the town concerning the Eversource divestiture. TM Frost advised that there is an agreement in place that they are representing the town. Waddell wondered if we even needed them to represent us in this matter. Waddell asked about the cost and TM Frost advised that the cost will be split evenly between Berlin and Gorham, with it estimated to be about \$100,000. Paul Robitaille asked if

the town was considering purchasing the property from Eversource, as Berlin has expressed interest in purchasing the Smith-Hydro facility. The Board advised that much of the information regarding the Eversource issue is ongoing litigation and is non-public.

Paul Robitaille also shared that he feels that the ATV use in town seems to be improved from past years. Robitaille advised Chief Cyr that there have been two ATV's racing up Lancaster Road between 5 and 7:30 pm each evening. Chief Cyr advised Robitaille to call and report it to the police department when it happens. Chief Cyr also advised that he has requested some added OHRV patrols in his budget for next year, in addition to the Fish and Game patrols that they already do. Chairman LaPierre asked when the trails close and Cyr advised that the town roads close on November 4. There is not a date posted yet for the Bureau of Trails.

Paul Robitaille also mentioned that the berm holding the bank on the corner by Libby's Pool on Glen Road has been deteriorating for a number of years and DOT should be considering repairs. He also mentioned that the federal money set aside for the Route 16 bypass was never used by the state of New Hampshire for the project and that someone should be asking where the money went and how it will be repaid.

6. Other Business:

a) Town Manager's Update – TM Frost advised that Jay Watkins has requested to donate some of the fire department's used gear to be sent to El Salvador for use there. The Fire Academy will be collecting the gear and there is no cost involved for shipping. Selectman Lefebvre asked if the town would be liable if the gear was not currently up to code and TM Frost advised the town would not be. **On a motion by Chairman LaPierre, seconded by Selectman Lefebvre, the board unanimously agreed to allow the fire department to donate the used equipment.**

TM Frost requested to set dates for the Board to meet to review the budget. It was decided that they would hold work sessions on Thursday, November 10 and Monday, November 21 at 6:00 pm.

b) Selectmen's Updates – Michael Waddell reminded the Board that the Budget Committee would begin budget meetings in January and would have some extra meetings in November and December. Waddell requested that the Board consider what capital improvement projects they want, such as the Stony Brook Roads or flood control.

Selectman Lefebvre asked if the sign for Marion's Way has been replaced and the potholes filled. TM Frost advised that she had told Joey Ramsay about the issue and assumes it has been done. Lefebvre also asked about the area in front of the mill entrance in Cascade Flat, and TM Frost advised that the town will be taking care of it.

Selectman Lefebvre mentioned that the name of the mill has changed to White Mountain Tissue. TM Frost advised that it is the name of one of the subsidiaries, and the name under which they are selling the tissue that they produce.

Selectman Lefebvre mentioned that the railroad tracks on Lancaster Road are getting rough, especially in the westbound lane.

Selectman Lefebvre also mentioned that the smell from the mill has been better. Selectman Oliver advised that all of the aerators have been running.

Selectman Oliver asked if anything has been done with the property on Railroad Street that Steve Grone is interested in purchasing. TM Frost advised that Burke York is taking a look at it.

Selectman Oliver asked if the tanks were removed at the old recreation trailer site. TM Frost advised that they have been emptied, but will not be removed until spring.

c) Approval of Minutes (October 3, 2016) - On a motion by Chairman LaPierre, seconded by Selectman Oliver, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of October 4, 2016 as prepared.

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

TM Frost advised there were no abatements or exemptions.

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

On a motion by Selectman Lefebvre, seconded by Selectman Oliver, the Board unanimously voted by roll call to move to non-public session at 7:16 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 8:15 pm. Lefebvre – Aye, Oliver – Aye, LaPierre - Aye.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm.

REVIEWED AND APPROVED:

Grace LaPierre

Terry Oliver

Patrick Lefebvre