

**MINUTES OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING
TOWN OF GORHAM
MONDAY, MARCH 10, 2014, 6:00 PM
GORHAM TOWN HALL**

Gorham Selectmen present: Jeff Schall, Paul Robitaille, Bill Jackson

Also present: Robin Frost, Town Manager; Michelle Lutz, Assessing Clerk; Kirsten Lukasak, Berlin Daily Sun; Denise Vallee, Finance Director; Chad Miller, EMS Director; PJ Cyr, Chief of Police; Jeff Stewart, Rec Director; Paul Mercier, Mike Waddell, Glen Eastman, Grace LaPierre

1. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:03 pm by Chairman Robitaille

2. Appointments:

a) Paul Mercier – Deferred Revenue: Mr. Mercier informed the Board that after he had last spent time in the office reviewing everything, he was concerned about the situation with the pending tax BTLA cases, noting that it could cost the town quite a bit of money if we lost those cases. He stated that he spoke with some colleagues regarding this matter and that, he and FD Vallee had just finished reviewing and finalizing the Town's audit and found that there was an approximate \$930,000 fund balance. Mr. Mercier recommended to the Board that instead of using that money to lower taxes, that it remain in a contingency fund to be used for the possible payment of abatements. At the beginning of the audit Mr. Mercier felt that the Town would have to keep, an additional \$1,000,000 in encumbered funds for the pending legal cases as well as the \$1,000,000 for deferred taxes because of old tax balances, bankruptcies, etc. However, Mr. Mercier did note that we did end better than originally thought. Selectman Jackson asked for clarification of the amount of money in the tax receivable areas. Mr. Mercier stated that the amount is currently at \$1.36 million. He went on to say that, the Town did not need to add additional money, but the Town could stay conservative and not use the general fund balance. He said that the Town did not need to book the liability that we could just simply not use the fund balance money. This contingency can be noted in a general note for reference. Further discussion took place regarding the current uncollected tax balance. Selectman Jackson asked Mr. Mercier how the town compared to other years. Mr. Mercier noted that the new tax staff is moving along and ambulance billing and finance seem to be okay. Mike Waddell noted that this is a much better picture than needing to encumber an additional million dollars. Further discussion took place regarding the outstanding tax situation along with the tax rate setting process. Mr. Mercier informed the Board that if this had been a typical year, the money in the General Fund could be used to reduce the tax rate.

b) Mike Waddell – Ambulance Contracts: Mike Waddell explained that it had been brought to his attention last week regarding the Board's decision with regard to the Ambulance Contracts for Shelburne and Randolph and to date it had created a firestorm. He said that he had spoken to Shelburne Officials, Jo Carpenter, Michelle Cormier and Paul Grenier. He said that while Paul Grenier understands Gorham's position, Mr. Grenier stated that the change came as quite a surprise. Mr. Waddell stated that while it may be time to make changes, Randolph and Shelburne had already set up their budgets and Town Warrants, noting that TM Frost told Shelburne that the amount for the 2014 Ambulance Contract would be \$13,500, and the Dispatch Contract would be increased by \$1,200 from the 2013 contract. Mr. Waddell noted the contract amount that was subsequently forwarded was 500% higher than what was originally quoted. He requested the Board to reconsider their decision of their prior meeting. Selectman Jackson stated that he was not fully

aware of where the negotiation process was when he took his vote at the previous meeting. He went on to say that, he only had the information/spreadsheets that had been provided by TM Frost and thought that both Shelburne and Randolph were aware of the direction of the Town's future contract. Selectman Jackson then reviewed email communications between TM Frost, FD Vallee and Jo Carpenter of Shelburne (please see attached). Selectman Jackson corrected the attached noting that in the final email and said "Paul was the lone Selectman voting in favor of a 4 year phase in of the new contract calculations". He reiterated that he was under the impression that we had worked with the other Towns. However, now that he had the opportunity to review the emails, he realizes that had not taken place. Selectman Jackson stated that he was prepared to make a motion to reconsider the vote that took place at the February 24th meeting.

Selectman Schall stated that he felt that the Town had definitely put Randolph and Shelburne in a bad situation due to the timing.

Chairman Robitaille stated that Shelburne and Randolph know that we have been discussing this and eventually things might change. He went on to say that, he felt that they should have been in contact with us. Selectman Jackson stated he felt it is our responsibility to contact them regarding the matter.

TM Frost stated that she agrees with Selectman Jackson's concerns and said that she was looking for permission from the Board before going to the other Towns.

EMS Director Miller stated that he is very concerned with the costs of the Town's services and noted that at one point in time the small contracts with Shelburne and Randolph were sufficient, but healthcare has changed. He said that he feels it is time to look at negotiating new contracts with Randolph and Shelburne.

Selectman Schall stated that the current issue is timing more than costs. Selectman Jackson stated that he agreed with Selectman Schall, noting that it was time to look at the cost factor. However, he does not want Randolph or Shelburne to feel that "the culture of working together has gone down the drain". Further discussion took place and the Board agreed that they want to give direction to TM Frost and EMS Director Miller direction with regard to this matter.

Selectman Jackson made a motion to reconsider the votes taken at the February 24th meeting on the Coos County Public Safety Contract and the Randolph and Shelburne Ambulance Contracts, seconded by Chairman Robitaille, voted unanimously. **Selectman Jackson made a motion to renew the 2014 contracts for the Coos County Public Safety Contract at the 2013 contract rate, seconded by Selectman Schall, voted unanimously.**

Mike Waddell informed the Board that he is concerned about the Ambulance Contracts, noting that there does not seem to be a consensus on what is being discussed. He further stated that he agrees that the Town should be billing what it costs, but is concerned about how the Town should go about it. He asked EMS Director Miller what the current revenue is for the outlying areas. EMS Director Miller stated that the old billing system did not allow breaking that down.

Further discussion took place regarding future negotiations and being able to keep a certain level of trust between the communities. **Selectman Jackson made a motion to renew the the Ambulance Contract with the Town of Shelburne, NH at the 2013 rate and to renew the Town of Randolph,**

NH Ambulance Contracts at the 2013 rate, discussion took place with regard to treating all three contracts the same for this year, but to give TM Frost direction at the next meeting, **Chairman Robitaille seconded the motion, voted Jackson – Aye; Schall – Nay; Robitaille – Aye.**

3. New Business

a) ZBA Reappointment: TM Frost presented the Board with an appointment certificate for Tom Dyar for the Zoning Board. **Selectman Schall made a motion to appoint Tom Dyar to the Zoning Board, seconded by Selectman Jackson, voted unanimously.**

4. Old Business

a) Public Works Garage Roof: TM Frost stated that at the last meeting the Board asked what the “R” factor for the spray foam insulation was. She said that it is approximately “6”. She also stated that the warranties for the roofing materials are 20 years for the 29 gauge and 30 years for the 26 gauge. Selectman Jackson asked how they plan to connect the material/roofing to the walls, noting concern about how it was done at the Fire Station. TM Frost said she would ask and get this information to the Board. Selectman Schall also asked TM Frost to find out what the total “R” factor will be for the roof once completed.

b) Public Works Office Project: TM Frost stated that she received information from Dave Laurin regarding the possible code issues. Mr. Lauren stated that it would be a less than 10% increase. Further discussion took place and it was agreed to move forward with the sketches.

5. Public Comment

Sue Demers stated that she is disappointed with the Board. She stated that the Town’s Safety Budget is over \$1,000,000, while Shelburne is \$287,000 and Randolph is \$327,000. She asked if the Gorham Taxpayers could pay the \$1,000,000 over a four-year plan and that if we do not receive enough money from the outlying towns to assist with our costs, then only Gorham should be serviced. She said she would like to see the Town reduce that budget by \$125,000 because of the change to Randolph and Shelburne’s Contracts. She again reiterated how disappointed she was in the Board decision.

Mike Waddell stated that he is ready and able to assist with the Contract negotiations if need be.

Jeff Stewart (spoke as a resident) stated that the Town has something that the other communities’ want and that we should just do it.

Jeff Stewart (spoke as Recreation Director) also noted that with regard to the Public Works Garage Offices that we are spending money on, he noted that he is still in the old trailer and just wanted to remind the Board of that.

Sue Demers stated that the tax rates for Shelburne, Randolph and Gorham are \$3.49, \$4.86 and \$12.99, and stated, “aren’t we proud”.

6. Other Business

a) Town Manager's Update: TM Frost had nothing to bring to the Board.

b) Selectmen's Update: Selectman Jackson stated that he wanted to add a meeting prior to the next scheduled meeting so the Board could get the house in order with the newly elected member and suggested next Monday, March 17th. TM Frost indicated that she would not be able to attend because of a schedule conflict. It was decided to have the next meeting on Tuesday, March 18th.

Selectman Schall informed the Board that he had attended the North Country Council meeting on February 27th. He said he had also received a call from Francois Rebello with regard to a luncheon that was scheduled for next Tuesday. Further discussion took place regarding this luncheon and that the tickets were \$250 per person, no Board members/Town representatives will be attending the luncheon. He stated that the new sign for Marion's Way is up, but that it was missing the apostrophe.

Chairman Robitaille stated that he had received complaints that the Bangor Street residents were not being given a right of way across the bridge. Further discussion took place and it was agreed to forward this information to Henry Sanschagrín so the local club could handle the matter.

Selectman Jackson personally thanked Chairman Robitaille for his years of service to the Town and Board since 1984, and told him he would be missed.

c) Approval of Minutes (February 24, 2014): Selectman Jackson made a motion to approve the Minutes of February 24, 2014, as presented, seconded by Selectman Schall, voted unanimously.

d) Sign Manifest: All manifests were signed.

e) Sign Abatements and Exemptions (if necessary): Selectman Jackson asked AC Lutz where we stood with regard to the Fish Abatement. She stated that she had forwarded the information to the board.

7. Non-Public Session: RSA 91-a:3, II a-e: There was no need for a Non-Public Session

8. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:34 PM.

REVIEWED AND APPROVED:

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Paul Robitaille

William H. Jackson

Jeff Schall