

PRESENT: TOM CLOW, CHAIRMAN; FREDERICK W. HIPPLER, VICE CHAIRMAN; JON OSBORNE, SELECTMAN; JOHN (JACK) MEANEY, SELECTMAN; AND JAN SNYDER, SELECTMAN.

GUESTS: Leigh Bosse, The Messenger; Richard Butt; John Lawton; Frank Campana; Gregg McDowell; Lori Davis; Beth Rouse, Finance Administrator; Benji Knapp, DPW Director; Neal Kurk; Heleen Kurk; Fire Chief Bob Vezina; Police Chief Sean Kelly; Chris Hague; Eileen Meaney

Chairman Clow called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM, welcomed everyone present and watching, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman Clow stated that the majority of tonight's meeting is going to be devoted to the public hearings that are posted for 7 PM, so the Board is going to proceed with the other agenda items first.

DPW Director Benji Knapp presented the Board with a Thank You card signed by each one of his employees for the thoughtful \$50 gift card they each received for plowing on Thanksgiving and Christmas. Director Knapp stated the men were very surprised and grateful. Director Knapp stated that Weare really didn't get hit that hard with the ice jams, although if you went down River Road they were impressive looking. There were a few minor runoffs that created icy spots on some roadways, but largely we went without any major flooding issues. Director Knapp stated that the couple of repaired spots on Mountain Road are still causing an issue. He has been informed that there should be no long term affects as it is the base. It would appear that we learned a very valuable lesson and we will not be scheduling pavement after 2 days of hard rain. Lastly, Director Knapp stated that we are down to just a few minor items to be finished at the new DPW garage before we actually fully move in. He's expecting within the next week or two they will be all in.

January 8, 2018 Minutes: Chairman Clow moved, Selectman Meaney seconded to approve the January 8, 2018 minutes as amended. Passed 5-0-0

Chairman Clow moved, Selectman Meaney seconded to order the Treasurer to sign accounts payable and payroll checks dated January 18, 2018 as included in the following manifests:

2017 Accounts Payable Manifest **\$ 72,239.12**

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2018 Accounts Payable Manifest	\$ 15,147.41
Supplemental Accounts Payable Manifest	\$ 100,562.55
John Stark Regional Coop School Manifest	\$ 250,000.00
TOTAL	\$ 490,538.79

Passed 3-2-0

Vice Chairman Hippler stated that he voted no because of the payment for the DPW Garage. He feels the DPW Garage should have been in by now. Selectman Snyder stated that she voted no because she wants the payment requests for the garage to have a signature by the clerk of the works not just something computer generated.

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### ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT:

Abatements: Town Administrator Bolton stated that a taxpayer had filed an appeal to the Board of Land and Tax Appeals (BTLA). The Town received a letter from the BTLA asking that the Town attempt mediation with the taxpayer in an effort to solve the discrepancy. On January 10<sup>th</sup> Avitar, the taxpayer and the Town Administrator met and an agreement was reached. As a result of the agreement, there are abatements for 2016 and 2017 that need the Board's signature. There were two other abatements. Both were for campers, one has left the site and gone to Florida. The other was registered and should not have been taxed. The Board signed the abatements.

### CORRESPONDENCE:

Town Administrator Bolton reminded the Board that each of them should have received an invitation from Center Woods Elementary School inviting them to be judges for this year's Young Inventors Program's Invention Convention. It will take place on Friday, February 16<sup>th</sup>. Judging will take place from 9 AM to 10 AM, with the evening awards from 5-6 PM. Selectman Meaney and Selectman Snyder volunteered to be judges. Town Administrator Bolton will notify the school.

### PUBLIC HEARINGS:

**Chairman Clow opened the public hearings at 7 PM:**

- 1. To hear public testimony and comment on the 2018 overall Proposed Town Budget, including all separate, special, and petitioned Warrant Articles, as well as disclosure of the Default Budget.**

Chairman Clow stated that we will begin at the first page and walk through the entire budget department by department and will take questions as they come up. While going down through the budgets, a common question was the Board's position on the default budget. In past years there was a concept presented to put the lower of either the proposed amount or previously approved amount for the default. Chairman Clow replied that the default budget being used is what was approved in 2017. The State law provides guidance in how the default is put together and that's what is being followed like this across all the departments. The Board has gone over this year after year and has created the default based on the 2017 approved amounts with the exception of contracts.

Many questions were asked on various line items and answers were provided. After all the questions, John Lawton pointed out that a lot of people in this community live on social security. This 2018 proposed budget

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reflects a 6% increase. He hoped the Board would take that into consideration that people are struggling to pay their taxes. He asked that the Board put in what the department needs versus what the department wants. Neal Kurk handed the Board and those present a worksheet that he did suggesting that there is approximately another \$60,000 that should be taken out of the default budget. Mr. Kurk explained the worksheet, which contained mostly contracted amounts. Frank Campana wanted to restate that the Social Security is getting a 2% increase and it has been said by 2-3 other people here. He hopes the Board would take that into consideration. Chris Hague pointed out that in New Hampshire we are considered a wealthy town. Her last research showed that out of 234 towns in the State, Weare is #37 wealthiest. Chairman Clow explained that he did some research on tax rates. He looked at the towns immediately surrounding us and our tax rate is the lowest. Dunbarton's is next but New Boston's tax rate is \$1.00 higher. If you broaden the circle Weare is still the lowest. This Board has always considered the taxpayer at the tax rate setting time.

2018 Proposed Warrant Articles: Chairman Clow stated that he would ask that we proceed down through them one at a time and take the questions that come up on the individual articles.

- Article 3 ó non-union town personnel and library raises: this article proposes a 3% raise. Frank Campana stated that it was stated that Social Security is getting 2% and there was another statistic provided last week which was 2.2%. He would like the Board to consider something close to that.
- Article 4 ó adding money to the Government Building & Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund: Heleen Kurk asked if there was a long range plan for the Town Hall. She stated that we can continue to keep patching but without a plan it doesn't move forward. Chairman Clow stated the intent of this article is to begin to work on the rot before it gets worse. Richard Butt asked the balance in the Mildred Hall fund and the Government Building Fund. He asked the status of the Building Committee. The Board didn't have the exact amounts for the funds. With regard to the Building Committee, we have had 2 residents volunteer and so without more interest it has not moved forward. Mr. Butt suggested that the Board keep in mind people with building experience.
- Article 5 ó purchase 2 fully equipped police cruisers: John Lawton questioned the need to have 5 front line cars and he questioned why the cost was so high. Chief Kelly stated that at any one time you can have 3-4 officers on duty and with the case load we are constantly sending officers out of town for cases. Five front line cars would be a bare bones minimum. Frank Campana reminded everyone that two weeks ago some board members expressed the need for only one and that they would have the opportunity to discuss it at the public hearing. Neal Kurk stated that the article is taking the money out of the fund balance to pay for it showing a tax impact of zero, but in reality spending it now will raise taxes. Gregg McDowell stated that he doesn't see the need for the cars.
- Article 6 ó additional police officer: Frank Campana again reminded the Board that this is the opportunity to make any changes. He would like the full year cost noted. John VanLoendersloot asking if this was the entire cost. The Board stated that this was only the payroll costs, the outfitting would have to be found in the operating budget. John Lawton stated that there are still 2 vacancies, common sense would be to fill those first before we add another officer. He would urge the Board to delete this article and fill the other vacancies before adding one more. Lori Davis stated that she has looked through the Town reports and nowhere does it indicate this would provide 24/7 coverage. Richard Butt stated that it may not have been written but that was the intent. He also wanted to remind everyone that Weare is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Safest Town to live in and it was done with the existing staffing.
- Article 7 ó expanding purpose of special revenue fund for Fire Department: Richard Butt asked the Board why the word replacement has been left from this article. He would like to see the Board clarify that. Chief Bob Vezina stated that the purpose of this article is to give taxpayers options and this would give the option of purchasing equipment from the same ambulance billing funds. This expansion doesn't

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change how the money will get spent. Any purchase will still have to go through the same process and the voters will still get the opportunity to vote on the final expenditure.

- Article 8 ó new 10-wheeler: Frank Campana stated that last year the truck that was purchased came in about \$29,000 under the warrant article. He is a proponent of good deals. His concern here is that we are over estimating and the same thing will happen again. He would like to adjust the number. Benji Knapp, DPW Director stated that he has reached out to both vendors he used last year and this is the estimated number they suggested he use.
- Article 9 ó new backhoe: Frank Campana encouraged the Board to use the word replacement. His concern is that it seemed like without that word the Board is adding to the fleet. Chairman Clow stated that the intent is to keep the old one until it breaks down and is no longer usable. Director Knapp stated that he never said he would replace the old backhoe. He just doesn't feel it is a good idea to use the new backhoe to bash cans. Once the old one dies then that is it. Gregg McDowell stated that when the old one dies he would like to see the Town invest in a hammer with a plate to crush the metal and demo.
- Article 10 ó Road Reconstruction: Director Knapp stated that this is the same article as last year. They try to rebuild one road per year with this article. Vice Chairman Hippler asked if the extra block grant money was going to all go toward contracting. Director Knapp stated that he will be looking to use it on pavement and chip sealing. Frank Campana asked that the 23 cent impact means nothing and he would like the Board to do the math in the article.
- Article 11 ó Part Time DPW Driver: Director Knapp stated that the intent of this article is to have someone available to get the mechanic out of a plow truck. His plow route is done in a smaller truck so no CDL would be required. Frank Campana stated that to be consistent the Board should put the cost for the full 12 months on the article. Richard Butt stated that he is not sure why we wouldn't use the existing Transfer Station employees during snow storms.
- Article 12 ó Bridge Article: The Board explained this is the second year of this funding. The Board asked Town Administrator Bolton to look at last year's wording.
- Article 13 ó Pavilions at Bolton Field: This request is from the Parks and Recreation for two pavilions to be constructed at Bolton Memorial Field.
- Article 14 ó Bell Tower at the Town Hall: Heleen Kurk knows the bell tower looks odd without the spires. She felt the Town should have a full plan for the Town Hall first. She also feels the Board should start at the bottom and not the top.
- Article 15 ó Library Planning/Engineering: Frank Campana stated that he understands this is part of four installments. He felt the total cost should be indicated at the end of the article.
- Article 16 ó Cemetery Construction: no questions
- Article 17 ó Cemetery CyPres: no questions
- Article 18 ó Fireworks: no questions
- Article 19 ó Conservation Commission Forester: no questions
- Article 20 ó Conservation Commission Town Forest Land: no questions
- Article 21 ó Pine Hill Road: no questions
- Article 22 ó KENO: no questions
- Article 23 ó Tax deeded property: no questions
- Article 24 ó Finance Committee televising their meetings: Lori Davis stated that she believes in transparency and the Board needs to make sure every committee is to follow this same rule. She stated that there are times they have confidential information and needs to be discussed in nonpublic.
- Chief Vezina stated that he has one more warrant article he would like to discuss the possibility of adding it to the warrant. They were beneficiaries of the Buxton bequest in the amount of approximately \$57,875. He would like to use approximately \$10,000 for health and fitness equipment for the Fire

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Department from the Buxton bequest Trust Fund. The Board stated that they would like to move onto the other two hearings and come back to that.

### **2. To hear public testimony and comment on the first of two (2) public hearings for an employment contract for the position of Town Administrator. The second public hearing will be held Monday, January 22, 2018 @ 7 PM.**

Chairman Clow stated that the contract is for 5 years. The base salary is \$92,000 with no additional raises for the first 2 years. Town Administrator Bolton provided those in attendance with copies of the contract. Chairman Clow opened up the floor for questions.

Heleen Kurk stated that the date of the contract is December 27, 2017, so what's the sense of anything that is said tonight it's already done. She asked if the TA position has changed. The response was no. What rationale for a 5 year contract? Chairman Clow stated it was a Board decision. How did you come up with an 18% increase? Chairman Clow stated the Board met in middle ground. In the contract it covers about \$4,500 of other expenses, is the intent to roll that into the salary? Why did the Board decide on no raises for years 1 and 2, why not all 5? Chairman Clow replied it was part of the negotiation. Mrs. Kurk stated she felt this was done not considering the Town, but the individual in the position.

Lori Davis stated that in the past year the Board has made some interesting contracts. She stated that most everyone thinks of Weare as a small Town but this contract is not taking that into consideration that the median income for 4 is \$72,000. Five years is unheard of, where did the levels come from?

Frank Campana stated that there is no job description attached and it indicates that one is attached. He asked if the job description is different from the previous contract. Chairman Clow replied it is the same. Mr. Campana asked if there were any major changes to staffing. He asked what the gain is for 18% - \$14,000 increase. If that was the middle ground what did the employee ask for?

Richard Butt stated that he thinks the public hearings are useless if it is only giving the people a chance to vent. He pointed out that when it was first mentioned that there were reasons given for not remembering back in 2005, but in 2015 there were two public hearings held on the first Police Chief contract. In 2017 there was only one public hearing for the Police Chief's contract and all five of the existing board was sitting there that is sitting today, so everyone at the table must have known about it.

Lori Davis stated that in both the Police Chief's contract and the Town Administrator's contract that explains what would happen if the positions are eliminated, which she felt is required.

John Lawton stated that he is very miffed that the contract was signed before the public hearings.

Heleen Kurk stated that it makes no sense to hold next week's public hearing.

### **3. To hear public testimony and comment on allowing the operation of KENO within the Town pursuant to the provisions of NH RSA 284:41 through 51.**

As there was no one present for this public hearing, Chairman Clow closed the public hearings at 10:12 PM.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Heleen Kurk, Mt. Dearborn Road stated that she watched the meeting on YouTube and after she left there were some comments made that she felt were directed toward her. Comments like things were being done to spite

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people. She wanted the Board to know that she is not doing anything to spite the Board. No one is trying to get anyone or throw them under the bus.

Eileen Meaney stated that she feels we have lost civility and respect for one another. She took notes of what was said by some people and it was very derogative and she was wondering if there is any way of changing the course going forward.

Chairman Clow stated that it will be an on-going fix. He feels confident that he is doing the best he can and when his ethics are questioned that offends him and that's when he usually replies back.

### OTHER BUSINESS:

Town Administrator Bolton reminded the Board to take action on the Fire Chief's request for an additional article to be added to the warrant. Vice Chairman Hippler asked Chief Vezina if using this \$10,000 will have any effect on future purchases. Chief Vezina stated they are very grateful to have received this funding and no it will not have any effect. **Chairman Clow moved, Vice Chairman Hippler seconded to add the article to the 2018 Town Warrant for \$10,000 to be taken from the Buxton bequest money for the purchase of fitness equipment for the Fire Department. Passed 5-0-0**

**Being there was no further business to come before the Board, Chairman Clow moved, Selectman Meaney seconded to adjourn at 10:29 PM. Passed 5-0-0**

### ADJOURNMENT

A True Record.

*Naomi L. Bolton*

Naomi L. Bolton  
Recording Secretary