

# Approved

## Town of New Boston Selectmen's Meeting May 4, 2020

**PRESENT:** Joe Constance Selectman  
Karen Scott Selectman via audio/conference call  
David Litwinovich Selectman via audio/conference call  
Peter Flynn Town Administrator

Fire Chief Dan MacDonald, Transfer Station Manager Gerry Cornett and members of the public were present for all or part of the meeting via town hall streams/audio/conference call.

**A. CALL TO ORDER:** A regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order by Joe Constance at 6:00PM beginning with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Consent Agenda-**The Selectmen reviewed the consent agenda pending signatures. Karen moved to approve the consent agenda pending signatures and review including appointment of Brian Allocca to the Forestry Committee and reappointment of Mark Suennen as Planning Board representative to the Southern NH Planning Commission. David seconded the motion. Poll Vote: Joe-yes, David-yes, and Karen-yes. All were in favor. 3-0

**Item 1: Public Hearing Per RSA 31:95-e Acceptance of Donated Vehicle for Fire Department (Presentation-Dan MacDonald):** The Public Hearing opened at 6:05PM. Fire Chief and Emergency Management Director Dan MacDonald presented via audio/conference call. New Boston resident and taxpayer Rick Paulhamus of RJP Auto has negotiated with Dr. Todd Hope of Lancaster, NH, owner of a GMC Yukon, to donate it to the town at no charge as a fire Department Command Vehicle until the department can get its own. Rick has supported the town and all the departments over the years. The vehicle is in pristine condition, very well maintained and includes two sets of tires, studded snow tires and summer tires. RJP Auto has reviewed the vehicle and agrees this is a very good opportunity. Retail value is approximately \$9,000. Going forward with the CIP Schedule to get an appropriate vehicle, this vehicle would have a resale value for the town.

No questions or comments were received from the public via text or e-mail as requested due to meeting restraints caused by COVID-19.

Karen noted she is in favor of accepting the donation with the condition that the Command Vehicle go back to its scheduled CIP Schedule of 2024 as the public voted no for a Command Vehicle on the 2020 Warrant.

Dan noted it was scheduled for 2024 on the CIP Schedule but one CIP Committee member felt it was needed in 2020 on an emergency basis, although there was focused opposition. This vehicle is being donated as an emergency measure, not as a vehicle to be used for four or five years. It is a stop gap to bring the Fire Department operational capabilities to where they should have been

if the Warrant Article had been approved. A Warrant Article for a Command Vehicle is planned for 2021.

Karen moved to accept the Command Vehicle donation for the Fire Department from Dr. Todd Hope with the condition that it remain on the CIP Schedule for 2024. The motion was not seconded and died.

Joe moved to accept the Command Vehicle donation for the Fire Department from Dr. Todd Hope. David seconded the motion. Poll Vote: Joe-yes, David-yes, and Karen-no. The motion carried. 2-1 Joe moved to close the Public Hearing at 6:32 PM. David seconded the motion. Poll Vote: Joe-yes, David-yes, and Karen-yes. All were in favor. 3-0

## **B. APPOINTMENTS:**

**Item 2: Fire Chief Dan MacDonald-Continued Discussion Re: COVID-19 Related Budgeting:** Fire Chief and Emergency Management Director Dan MacDonald was present via audio/conference call to discuss the following with the Selectmen:

- Contingency Program: Dan responded in writing to questions Karen submitted that were forwarded to him after the April 20 meeting. He noted this proposed program is not something that is required but is preplanning of a proactive approach to what could have a serious financial impact to the Fire Department due to COVID-19. The public discussed this on Facebook saying the department is looking for over \$200,000 for the program. However, it is merely a business practice where the Department is trying to express to upper management that this situation/proposal could happen. The Department has always done a very good job of being fiscally responsible in addressing issues but this proposal has taken on a life of its own as “doomsday.” In response to Karen’s questions the Department (including the volunteers) shows that it has responded to the pandemic in a very positive way.

Karen noted the reasoning behind the questions was if the Department was potentially looking for \$275,000 that is not included in the budget, she does not want the town to get hit at the end of the year with \$275,000. She would rather understand as time progresses how these figures are determined. The Selectmen reviewed the questions as follows:

- Request for a list of all Fire Department calls for the month of April including type of call and how many members responded to each call: Karen reviewed a provided report showing numerous medical calls where most, except for three, were ‘no transport.’ One medical call where eight members responded. The rest of the calls had an average of four to eleven members responding to each call. The majority of calls were less than thirty minutes. She noted Dan had mentioned at the April 20 meeting that COVID-19 was a concern to members as 10% have decided not to respond to calls due to personal and work requirements, but it appears a lot of people are still responding for each call so she doesn’t think nervousness is an issue.

Dan noted he did not say it was a concern at this time and three times in his April 20 presentation he noted it is a potential issue in the future that if one member

gets COVID-19 or the Department starts getting exposures, it could happen. In the April 20 presentation he never said the Department currently had an issue with responses.

Karen noted that at the April 20 Selectmen's meeting Dan said 10% of members have decided not to respond to calls due to personal and work requirements and they are nervous about bringing COVID-19 home to their families.

Dan noted that is a true statement.

Karen noted that if eleven members are responding to a call it does not seem to be a problem right now.

Dan agreed as he had said 10% of members were in quarantine, 10% have chosen, either because their employer would not allow them to respond or by personal family choice, not to respond. He did not say the department had a problem responding to calls. He noted the discussion at the last meeting was there are two potential solutions if the Department runs into this problem, a proactive approach, not a statement that the Department currently has the problem. One potential solution was scheduled shifts where the Department would pay a stipend to members to sign up to respond to calls. COVID-19 has now turned into a hazardous situation causing the Governor to approve a \$300 weekly allowance for full time firefighters and a \$150 weekly allowance for part time firefighters to try to ensure they recognize the value they are adding. The second potential solution was a per diem option which is farfetched in terms of needing it immediately, someday the Department may get to it. It was never really indicated that the Department had to do either solution immediately. The Department responded to 579 calls in 2018. The Department responded to 565 in 2019 for 4492 hours which cost the town \$40,000. The average was 572 calls per year, 47.6 average calls per month before the pandemic. In 2020 there were 53 calls in March, above average for the past two years with the average number of personnel responding to the calls at 5.9. There were 50 calls in April, 36 in the first three weeks, with the average number of personnel responding 5.6, a 3/10 decrease, partly due to six active members that were in quarantine for fourteen days. The Department is holding its own in quality and quantity of personnel responding to calls during the pandemic. There have been nine calls so far in May. The number of calls is not decreasing and neither is personnel response. The town should be proud of its Fire Department personnel and the sacrifices and dangers they are putting themselves in to care for residents.

Karen noted that is great and she appreciates members responding but if the Department is trying to limit COVID exposure she recommends limiting the number of personnel responding to calls. She doesn't see the need to have more than five members responding to each call and putting themselves at risk during this time especially when she looks at the April numbers and sees only three people transported and personnel on scene less than thirty minutes.

Dan asked if Karen is recommending a procedure change to not respond to calls until personnel know transport is needed. He also noted the personnel are not scheduled and are not required to be on call, that is why they are considered volunteers. If the Department begins making members sign up on a schedule, the town as the employer should be prepared to pay members a lot more than \$40,000 per year for an average of 572 calls.

Joe asked if any other towns or localities have volunteer departments with schedules and asked if it is a possibility for New Boston.

Dan said he has been told by knowledgeable people statewide that New Boston has the largest and most active department handling both fire and EMS that is not full time or per diem. He said it is not practical to ask members to sign up for schedules because once people are told when they are going to show up for work, they need to be paid a premium for their time because it is more of a job, a call department, asking members to commit their personal family time to be in town on call with a financial stimulus.

Karen noted a lot of Department members are responding to calls during the COVID situation.

Dan noted there are other towns with none or one member responding and does not want to frustrate or anger dedicated members who respond even in the middle of the night. The Department cannot control how many members respond unless the town citizens are prepared to change the \$40,000 personnel budget into a budget of approximately \$500,000 due to taking members time away from them and making them commit to this job. They would need to be reimbursed as all, in any industry, are.

Karen noted she respects the volunteers as she volunteered 6.5 years ago in Milford where she noted if members are home with nothing planned a schedule could work.

Dan noted Milford went full time last year and the ambulance service is scheduled and makes a lot of money every day. This is not six years ago, this is today. Dan also has thirty years of volunteer Fire Department experience in New Boston and could discuss how the New Boston Fire Department has changed. Today's members have much less time to volunteer and surrounding departments are reimbursing their personnel at much higher rates than New Boston.

- Request for an itemized list of supplies the Fire Department is looking to purchase including cost breakdowns: Karen noted Dan stated at the April 20 Selectmen's meeting \$35,000 in supplies were needed but a list of supplies at \$1,400 was submitted with notes of spending \$6,000 thus far. She requested this itemization.

Dan noted the \$35,000 figure is an estimate/potential exposure (not a solid figure) of needs to respond to the pandemic up to a year into the future as it is unknown

when or if the pandemic situation will end and this and the final figure cannot be predicted. He was trying to express to the Selectmen potential financial exposures the town has to respond safely.

Joe noted he heard the \$35,000 and asked if Peter has received a list of expenditures to date.

Dan noted Peter has the list of expenditures to date of \$1,700 but there is equipment on order that is coming in and not paid for yet.

Karen noted questions about items in the list provided as follows:

- Thermometers: Each town department will get a thermometer, the Fire Department will get three. Karen asked if the individual departments should have these costs in their budgets instead of all in the Fire Department budget. Peter noted it was easier to buy in bulk through one department, the Emergency Management Department, and that was the decision he made for this budget as it is an Emergency Management issue.
- Nordix air filters for homemade masks: Karen asked if the members have N95 and surgical masks. Dan noted at the time of purchase the Department did not have N95 and surgical masks. The members still use cloth masks around the fire station. These cloth masks were also supplied to senior citizens and other town departments including the Transfer Station and Recreation Department. The cloth masks are made for free by a town group of residents. CERT Director Bruce McKim then did some research and learned these filters can be installed into the cloth to make cloth masks better but not up to N95 standards. It seemed like a very good idea for the investment. Karen asked if the Department has surgical masks and noted these can be put inside homemade masks. Dan noted the Department did not have surgical masks to do that, they were rare about a month ago but are coming in regularly now. That solution may not be a better solution for the purposes the homemade masks are doing. The people using them are not typically health care providers, they are interacting with the public. The Department prefers to keep the N95 and surgical masks for the appropriate personnel and they are not distributed at this time.
- Safety glasses, goggles, gloves: Karen asked if this is standard equipment the Department would have on hand. Dan noted the rate of usage has increased due to COVID. These items are dedicated to first responders who need to be protected when responding to any call with public interaction.
- Flip flops and towels for showers: Karen noted members should be using their own. Dan noted members are responding to calls for very little compensation and could potentially bring exposures back to their families. He asked if the town as the employer should have some type of responsibility for the health and safety of the responders and their families. A decision was made to supply personal care items to responders to bring to a shower location provided by the Friendly Beaver Campground as the

town has not provided shower facilities to them to use before going home after calls. The items are then cleaned at town expense.

- Joe asked if these supplies can be reimbursed by the federal government COVID reimbursement program. Dan noted all the supplies on the provided list are on a list to be submitted for this program. He noted these supply questions are nit picking and the supplies are needed for the respect, support and safety of New Boston volunteers and their families. Joe noted the Selectmen agree with Dan but this accounting is needed. Dan noted the Fire Department has a reputation of providing services at low cost and the Department would not spend town money if there was another way to do things and has worked to find lower costs wherever possible.
- Dan noted the team of Captain Dubreuil, Captain Catalano, Finance Director Jennifer Allocca and himself met with the state representative for New Boston Friday. They have been working proactively for any departments that have spent money on COVID related supplies, all have been requested for submission to be reimbursed. They are working to save the town money and take advantage of any reimbursement programs offered, as the Fire Department always does.
- Request for a breakdown of the Fire Department overall budget and where it is addressing spending concerns relative to the default budget: Karen noted the Fire Department default budget is \$6,832 less than its requested 2020 Operating Budget. She noted she received an answer on this request saying the Department plans to meet the default budget by delaying some equipment purchases. Dan noted he, as Chief, reports to the Fire Wards who have made this determination. The Fire Wards are not required to provide this information to the Selectmen but will do so as a courtesy and to work with the Selectmen as a team. The town voted for a default budget in 2020. 60% of the Fire Department budget is not easy to predict or forecast but they try to predict costs each year as well as possible. The Department plans to meet the bottom line of this budget but will not itemize where in the budget cuts will be made. It will commit that the amount voted by residents will be met.
- Request for information on the Ambulance Revolving Account, including the balance and reason this account cannot be used to meet Department needs. Dan noted spending from this account is restricted by the Fire Wards, Finance Director and Auditor agreement for the long term. 85-90% of the costs residents were paying in taxes for EMS services were removed from the department budget and paid from this account each year since 2010. Since then \$245,000 in capital costs and \$361,640 in expenses have been saved from annual budgets. The problem cannot be fixed by moving the costs from one budget to another. The revolving account is forecasted until 2026 but if it is used for more costs than planned, such as this hopefully isolated problem, this will create problems for the ambulance revolving account and is not an advisable financial model.

Karen noted she received information through this request stating expenditures from this account can only be made for ambulance related services and COVID related costs are ambulance related, although the spending could disrupt the

account for the future. She noted all departments are tightening their budgets for the default budget and no one could have predicted this COVID situation to occur. She asked if the Department has money in the fund to draw from in the current situation to supplement any funds received from FEMA or the government.

Dan noted the Fire Wards have determined not to do this. The funds needed to respond to COVID are not in the Department budget or the revolving account. The Fire Wards plan to do their best and expect to be in good shape in the supply line for reimbursements. The labor line (overtime/excess time spent by the three part time personnel over the past two months) is yet to be discussed but expected to be addressed. Using the revolving account as a backup for the Department budget will not solve or address the problem, it would move the problem elsewhere.

The Selectmen thanked Dan for his time.

**Item 3: Transfer Station Manager Gerry Cornett-Discussion Concerning Transfer Station Activities and Issues:** Transfer Station Manager Gerry Cornett was present to meet with the Selectmen to discuss Transfer Station updates as follows:

- Default budget/COVID-19 restart:
  - Gerry noted the facility began the current procedure March 17 and it has lasted longer than expected. When the facility reopens previous procedures, it will be a slow process. In the beginning the facility is expected to accept only aluminum, tin, glass and cardboard for recycling. These items can be turned around quickly and the property can be reconfigured to allow two lanes of traffic for flow. The volume of material is expected to increase significantly once the Governor relaxes the stay-at-home order.
  - Joe reviewed the New Boston Transfer Station 2020 Operating Plan document provided to the Selectmen. Gerry noted he has been visiting surrounding towns to see how they are handling these materials. New Boston is currently averaging 2100 tons per week for trash including recycling materials with three operational days and acceptance restrictions in place. Without acceptance restrictions, Dunbarton is currently averaging 3600 tons per week for trash and recycling with less residents and three operational days. People everywhere are cleaning out their houses and doing construction projects. Gerry is concerned the New Boston Transfer Station and its budget could become overwhelmed when the stay-at-home order is relaxed. Joe asked how long the “Still Good Room” is expected to remain closed. Gerry noted this is unknown at this time, after a couple weeks paper and plastic recycling may be opened in a second phase and then the “Still Good Room” and brush pile could be considered for a reopening date. The “Still Good Room” causes a lot of effort by Transfer Station staff.
  - David asked if the first phase of accepting recyclables would occur the day the Governor relaxes the stay-at-home order, currently planned for May 31. Gerry noted the Transfer Station plans to be ready that day with advance notice of the plan to the public. The facility may be able to accept items such as aluminum cans before that date. Gerry analyses recycling costs and savings constantly and

is watching the recyclable markets which are beginning to improve. The facility has limited storage for items where the market has not yet improved.

- Karen asked if the compost pile could be opened once the stay-at-home order is relaxed. Gerry noted this is possible and may be one of the areas that opens sooner than others. He will discuss this with Peter to consider opening it in a couple weeks for residents to plan their gardens.
- Gerry wants to continue considering this to get an appropriate plan in place as there are many unknowns. The Selectmen agreed and requested any new information be submitted to Peter for consideration at the next Selectmen's meeting.
- Opaque bag recommendation: Karen asked about black bags and noted a recommendation from Gerry asking residents to use clear bags to bring items to the Transfer Station. She considers it unrealistic to require residents to use clear bags as she researched the availability and could not find many options. She noted generic bags are usually black and there is a significant price difference.

Gerry noted he recommends opaque bags, such as the white Hefty bags so employees can see through them to ensure they do not contain items the Transfer Station cannot accept at this time. The Transfer Station is having an issue with black contractor bags brought to the facility containing items the facility cannot accept. He noted using the Transfer Station is a resident's choice. The facility recycles as mandated as much as possible but also has to keep employees safe. The facility lost a substantial amount of money when the default budget was voted in. Recycling is truly a money saver and the facility needs to make sure everyone who uses the facility is recycling. With 1200-1500 cars bringing materials per week it would take too much time to inspect every black bag that comes in. If someone spends time at the facility it is easy to see black bags are an issue with people trying to avoid fees or who don't want to recycle. Most who use the facility are doing an exceptional job recycling. New Boston has a mandate in place to recycle since it was implemented in 1991 for environmental reasons. It has continued for its fiscal benefits as it is cheaper to recycle than to throw these items away and saves wear and tear on equipment. Opaque bags will save time and help the employees make sure the items coming in are acceptable according to the current restrictions.

Joe noted he agrees with the recommendation.

- Future planning: As the town grows and department funding planning continues, Gerry proposed a revolving fund for the Transfer Station such as the Recreation Department and ambulance have, funded by fee items, such as demolition (currently 8 cents per pound not including labor, licenses, testing or upkeep), so these items can support the service they were provided to. This will help the Transfer Station be self-supporting, show its true operating costs, decrease costs of running the facility and remove items from the CIP Schedule such as scales, demolition containers and scale testing costs. The fees currently subsidize the budget and are lower than fees for the same items in surrounding towns. Other towns are doing this, it is very successful and needs oversight to make sure it is done correctly. New Boston can do this but a Warrant Article is probably necessary for approval. Peter agreed and will help with the process. A meeting to discuss this would be held this summer prior to the budget season. Joe asked Gerry to

continue to bring the Selectmen as many examples, information and reasons to bring this forward to a Warrant as possible for the Selectmen to consider. Gerry noted the Transfer Station is ready for this change, especially with the recent scale upgrades and programs for this growing town.

#### **D. OLD BUSINESS:**

**Item 4: Approval of Public Minutes of April 20, 2020:** The Selectmen reviewed the Public minutes of April 20, 2020. David moved the Public minutes of April 20, 2020 be accepted as amended. Karen seconded the motion. All were in favor. 3-0 Poll Vote: Joe-yes, David-yes, and Karen-yes.

#### **E. NEW BUSINESS:**

**Item 5: Updates and Department Correspondence on Budget Status Including YTD Expenses:** Peter noted this was added to the agenda after the Selectmen asked him to regularly update them on YTD expenditures and revenues. He will do this every meeting and provided the information to them.

Department budgets were also reviewed as follows:

- Fire Department: Fire Chief and Emergency Management Director Dan MacDonald noted the CARES Act stimulus program tried to alleviate EMS costs due to the pandemic. 2019 Medicare reimbursements were reviewed to allocate a value for each service. \$3,700 was determined for the New Boston Fire Department, there was no notification, but a check was received electronically. There are terms and conditions, cost implications and unknowns such as how much will be reimbursed when transporting COVID patients. The team of Captain Dubreuil, Captain Catalano, Finance Director Jennifer Allocca and himself are researching this further and decided to hold off until research is complete. An e-mail was sent last week. Dan researched by speaking with surrounding towns, the state and the ambulance billing company for details. If the New Boston Fire Department transports a known COVID patient there are restrictions of how much can be reimbursed for transportation. They also learned the deductible that is usually not paid by insurance companies will now be paid. New Boston has not had a lot of COVID cases and the team determined New Boston does not have a financial exposure from accepting the grant and recommend the Selectmen accept it and complete the necessary paperwork. There are precise uses for the funds such as EMS supplies and equipment. David moved to accept up to \$4,000 from the CARES Act. Karen seconded the motion. All were in favor. 3-0 Poll Vote: Joe-yes, David-yes, and Karen-yes.
- Transfer Station: Transfer Station Manager Gerry Cornett noted the Transfer Station needs to make sure it meets its default budget as determined by public vote in March while still providing as much services as possible. This was discussed as follows:
  - The town is mandated to provide trash removal to the town.
  - Other services including brush and electronic collection are not mandated and do cost the town. The current budget is not enough to pay for these services if the facility continues to operate as it does currently. Gerry recommends watching the budget throughout the year and curtailing service if it becomes necessary for budget reasons as follows:

- Demolition acceptance could decrease to 100 tons instead of the 250 tons usually accepted annually. David asked when this could be expected and Gerry estimated this could take effect in July.
- Electronics. Fees are accepted for these items, currently considered revenues in the general fund, not the Transfer Station.
- Freon.
- Still Good Room.
- Gerry recommends discontinuing acceptance of brush, tires and hazardous waste immediately as there are other ways to dispose of these items.
- Currently it costs \$2,000 per week tipping for one trailer including trash and trucking. This is substantial. Some budget lines are spent at 70% and need to be watched.
- Joe noted he supports the recommendation to curtail unmandated services if necessary as proposed.

**Item 6: Discussion Re: Backhoe Purchase-State Bid Process by Highway Department and Request of Transfer Station Superintendent:** Peter noted this item is pending more information. It was deferred to the May 18 Selectmen's meeting.

**Item 7: First Reading-Police Detail-Revised Fees:** The Selectmen reviewed the proposed revised fees. They plan to discuss this with Police Chief James Brace at the Second Reading.

## **F. OTHER BUSINESS:**

### **Item 8: Town Administrators Report:**

- Recreation Bus Shelter: Joe will ask contractor Ken Dionne to submit a proposal if he is interested in the project.
- RFQ's For Air Conditioning at Police Station and Recreation Building: These were sent to potential contractors.
- Highway Superintendent Position: The Selectmen will recommend seven people each for consideration to serve on the hiring committee.

### **Item 9: Selectmen's Reports:**

Joe reported the Forestry Committee's annual Christmas tree planting event with NBCS will not be able to take place this year. It was held in the fall but there may be a delayed opening so the event was postponed to 2021.

Karen reported the Road Committee postponed its next meeting until June due to COVID-19. There are no updates currently.

David reported the Planning Board is planning to hold its next meeting via Zoom.

## **G. PUBLIC FORUM:**

Peter noted a Public Comment came in as requested via text but did not include a name or address. The person asked regarding a New Boston Beacon article and tonight's discussion with

Fire Chief and Emergency Management Director Dan MacDonald “If it were not for the Friendly Beaver Campground offering decon facilities, we would have little to offer our members for that purpose. My question is, why are town employees using a privately-owned facility when there is a functioning shower at the Hilltop Fire Station?” Joe noted the Hilltop Fire Station is located at the Air Force Facility and the only capacity the town uses it for is to house an engine. To use the shower facility there may require permission from the base Commander. Former Selectman and Fire Department volunteer EMT volunteered the shower facility and it is a convenient location for most Fire Department members. Peter will also contact Dan for any further information.

**ADJOURNMENT:** David moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 PM. Joe seconded the motion. All were in favor. 3-0 Poll Vote: Joe-yes, David-yes, and Karen-yes.

*Prepared by Maralyn Segien*

**Next Scheduled Meeting: Town Hall Conference Room on May 18, 2020 (6:00 PM)  
7 Meetinghouse Hill Road- New Boston, NH 03070  
Phone: (603) 487-2500-[www.newbostonnh.gov](http://www.newbostonnh.gov)**