

Approved

Town of New Boston Selectmen's Meeting October 18, 2021

PRESENT:

Karen Scott	Selectman
David Litwinovich	Selectman
Donna Mombourquette	Selectman
James Brace	Interim Town Administrator

Selectmen's Assistant Laura Bernard, Transfer Station Manager Gerry Cornett, Finance Director Jennifer Allocca, Bill McFadden, Chris Hall, Dan Garrity and one or more additional members of the public were present for all or part of the meeting.

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

Consent Agenda- The Selectmen reviewed the October 18, 2021 consent agenda. Donna moved to approve the October 18, 2021 consent agenda including payroll, Accounts Payable and other signed official documents. Karen seconded the motion. All were in favor. 3-0

B. PUBLIC FORUM:

David noted the Board always welcomes public comment and feedback. There are two opportunities for public comment, one at the beginning of the meeting and then another at the end. Anyone with a comment is asked to comment as per the rules for live meetings and state your name and address for the record and that comments be respectful and thoughtful. The Board will listen, but public comment is typically not back and forth. If there is any need for extended dialogue a request to be added to the agenda and supporting documentation should be sent to the Town Administrator beforehand. Seeing none, David closed the first session of public comment.

C. APPOINTMENTS:

Item 1: Elderly And Disability Exemptions-Town Revaluation-Laura Bernard: Selectmen's Assistant Laura Bernard was present to meet with the Selectboard to discuss a hardship abatement proposal for 2021 Elderly and Disability Exemptions in relation to the town revaluation completed in September. She noted property valuations have increased townwide by an average of 35%. A Warrant Article is planned for changes to the exemptions and credits to increase the elderly exempted amounts and allowed assets amounts for qualified applicants that have not been updated since 2007. This will allow the elderly exemption to protect elderly residents on a fixed income by keeping pace with property sales inflation, avoiding the need for hardship abatement applications and bringing tax levels for qualified elderly residents back to levels of recent years. A chart was reviewed showing an estimate of the potential tax payment increase to elderly residents who currently qualify for the exemption that has resulted in low or

no tax payments for them. Exact tax increases will not be known until the tax rate is set. Laura requested the option of offering hardship abatement applications to already approved elderly exemption applicants if they call indicating the new valuation is a hardship to abate the increase and keep the amount of taxes they pay in 2021 at a level similar to previous years. The Selectboard will review all hardship abatement applications in the Consent Agenda as they come in. The annual application process was reviewed. Donna moved to approve the proposal to provide hardship abatement applications to residents who are approved for an elderly exemption in 2021 by request. David seconded the motion. All were in favor. 3-0

Item 2: Application For Appointment-Jim Keyes-Solid Waste Advisory Committee: The Selectboard reviewed Jim Keyes' application for appointment to the Solid Waste Advisory Committee. Transfer Station Manager Gerry Cornett was present and noted he has met with Jim to discuss his interest in the Committee, noting he would be an asset as he is very knowledgeable, thoughtful and volunteers with his family often throughout town including the Fourth of July, Hillsborough County Fair and constant roadside cleanup. Karen moved to appoint Jim Keyes as a member of the Solid Waste Advisory Committee for three years. Donna seconded the motion. All were in favor. 3-0

Item 3: Transfer Station-Operational Hours Change-CRF-Gerry Cornett: Transfer Station Manager Gerry Cornett was present to meet with the Selectboard to discuss proposals to change operational hours and a CRF, along with the Transfer Station budget status as follows:

- He reviewed a document provided regarding a proposal to change operational hours. The facility now has three full time employees resulting in significant operational improvements. He requested approval to keep the facility open to residents for one additional hour on Thursdays beginning November 3, 2021, until 6:00 PM, as a thank you for supporting the facility with this staffing change. This will also help decrease facility traffic on Saturday and there is a need to expand hours. The staggered staffing schedule on Tuesday and Thursdays was reviewed. Karen moved to approve the request to extend operational hours at the Transfer Station to be open to residents on Thursdays from 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM. Donna seconded the motion. All were in favor. 3-0
- He reviewed the Transfer Station CRF. He noted when he took over Transfer Station management in 2003 the facility had one piece of equipment, a very old skid steer. Over time, the Selectboard approved purchasing additional needed equipment with budget savings resulting from Transfer Station operations. This equipment was well under the \$20,000 CRF threshold. The department is now self-sufficient and has frontline equipment in line with the Highway Department allowing the Transfer Station to respond in kind if needed. Gerry would like to maintain the current quality of equipment although the Transfer Station does not have this budget line or a CRF. He recommended a CRF begin for good fiscal responsibility for Transfer Station equipment replacement with good-quality used equipment when needed such as bailers and skid steer, estimated at \$60,000. Transfer Station items on the CIP Schedule and anticipated Warrant Articles were reviewed. Gerry noted he has discussed this proposal with the CIP Committee who agreed it should be done and recommended it be brought to the Selectboard for review and approval of a Warrant Article to create an appropriate CRF for physical plant and equipment, wording to be obtained from the NH DRA. The Selectboard anticipates also considering a proposed CRF for town building maintenance as discussed at the October 4 meeting, Gerry noted he supports this proposal as it could save the town a lot

of money. Donna moved to create a Warrant Article for the proposed Transfer Station CRF pending official naming and language from the NH DRA. Discussion: The Selectboard would draft the Warrant Article to create the CRF and a Warrant Article to begin funding the CRF. CRF funding would be managed by the CIP process. Karen seconded the motion. All were in favor. 3-0

- Gerry reported there has been a massive worldwide shift on the need for recycling. To date in 2021, the Transfer Station has collected approximately \$70,826 in recycling revenues for 204 tons, a \$20,400 savings in trash hauling plus \$8,800 savings in trucking, plus \$4,000 for an additional load of cardboard plus \$28,322 for the recently established Transfer Station Revolving Fund. The total value of recycling to date in 2021 is \$100,026, 25% of the Transfer Station budget. He commended residents for their recycling efforts resulting in a clean, marketable product that earns top dollars in revenue and asked residents to increase these efforts.
- Gerry reported savings are anticipated in the 2021 Transfer Station budget.

Item 4: Fire Department-Costs Related To Generator Repair-Dan MacDonald: Jim reported Fire Chief Dan MacDonald noted concerns that costs related to the recent generator repair discussed at the October 4, 2021 Selectboard meeting would be applied to the Fire Department budget. At that meeting, the Selectboard voted to approve the request to order a new generator for the radio tower and to divide all associated costs including the \$915 rental charge incurred to date between the Police, Highway and Fire Departments at one-third each, and if funds are not available in those budgets, to cover the cost with savings in other areas of the town budget. These departments were asked to review their budgets for funds available and to meet with the Selectboard at tonight's meeting to discuss areas of the budget that could cover these costs if funds were not available. Jim reported Dan was concerned as the Fire Department budget is much smaller than the Highway and Police Department budgets. The Selectboard asked Dan to meet with them at the November 1, 2021 Selectboard meeting to discuss the concerns if needed. Finance Director Jennifer Allocca was present and noted this is an unanticipated expense caused by mice chewing wires and suggested an expendable trust be established for the radio tower for unanticipated repairs to avoid impacting department budgets. The current expense is anticipated to be covered by the approved 2021 operating budget. Bill McFadden of Dane Road was present and noted he had suggested researching the possibility of using American Rescue Plan Act funds for the generator replacement discussed above instead of sharing the cost between the three departments. Jim noted Finance Director Jennifer Allocca is reviewing the ARPA funds application language to confirm this is a permitted use of the funds.

E. NEW BUSINESS:

Item 5: Finance Director-CRF, PandaDoc, ARPA, Broadband-Jennifer Allocca: Finance Director Jennifer Allocca was present to meet with the Selectboard to discuss proposals for CRFs, PandaDoc implementation, potential uses and current status of ARPA grant funds and an update on broadband research as follows:

- Jennifer reported some CRFs are established but there are many other town items that come up every twenty years that funds should be set aside for to responsibly save funds to keep the tax rate stable. These include anticipated needs for the radio tower as it is shared by several departments, municipal facilities/town building improvements, IT infrastructure and voting machine. Jennifer reviewed and suggested language similar to

the town of Bedford and offered to draft some Warrant Articles for future consideration. The Selectboard is in favor of a Municipal Facilities and Improvements CRF for government buildings, the radio tower and IT infrastructure. Jennifer will confirm with NH DRA these items can be included in this type of CRF and bring this proposal to the CIP Committee. Karen moved to approve the request to draft Warrant Articles for a Transfer Station CRF and a Municipal Facilities and Improvements CRF pending language approval from the NH DRA. Donna seconded the motion. All were in favor. 3-0

- Jennifer has been considering vendors for electronic signature software with Jim and Twin Bridge IT Services. The current process of AP and Payroll Warrants was reviewed as it may be revised. PandaDoc was originally considered as it is a free service, but Twin Bridge Services may suggest a service that would be more appropriate for town needs. The Selectboard expressed cybersecurity concerns and requested any electronic signature software used comply with state policies.
- In March, Jennifer and former Town Administrator Peter Flynn began the process of obtaining input from Department Managers on how American Rescue Plan Act funds could be used in New Boston. Town departments are still considering how ARPA funds could be used, including expanding broadband, ventilation systems in public spaces and Power Cot and decontamination needs submitted from the Fire Department. The ARPA grant fund approval process and potential uses were reviewed as the town wants to ensure it uses the funds appropriately, if not, the town may have to return the funds. New Boston received some funds this year that may be used to offset revenue loss in 2021 although there are other projects to get it directly to residents and expanding broadband.
- Jennifer has been working with the group/unofficial broadband committee including Donna and Bill McFadden, considering the possibility of expanding broadband in New Boston by changing copper to fiber with Consolidated Communications. Consolidated Communications and Comcast responded to a Request For Information and Alfred Eisenburg used this proprietary information to map services in town that was reviewed. The information received from Comcast may be inaccurate and Jennifer will contact them to discuss. Jennifer will invite Comcast and Consolidated Communications to the November 1 Selectboard meeting to discuss options.

Item 6: Phone Vendor Change-Laura Bernard/Jim Brace: Selectmen's Assistant Laura Bernard and Interim Town Administrator/Police Chief Jim Brace were present to discuss a proposal for a phone vendor change. Laura reported the contract with the current vendor ends in December. There have been hardware and outage issues and decreased support when needed. Other vendors have been considered, most recently through a recommendation from Twin Bridge Services. A meeting took place last week, resulting in this proposal that is anticipated to save approximately \$500 per month and increase the quality of the product (including user friendly phones), internet bandwidth speeds and services. Options to fund this transition were considered including paying for the entire transition with savings in the 2021 budget (Town Administrator salary and benefits lines) or splitting the cost between the 2021 (2/3) and 2022 (1/3) budget. The funding arrangement will be determined at the end of 2021. Twin Bridge Services will assess all POTS lines to ensure all are needed. If some are found that are not needed, they would be turned off, resulting in significant savings with the proposed vendor. Donna moved to accept the agreement with Twin Bridge Services to replace and improve phone communication systems throughout town buildings using the 2/3 in 2021 and 1/3 in 2022

payment plan. Karen seconded the motion. Discussion: Phone systems are not anticipated to qualify for ARPA grant funding, but this possibility will continue to be considered. All were in favor. 3-0

Item 7: Setting Of The Tax Rate Discussion-Laura Bernard: Selectman's Assistant Laura Bernard was present to discuss the status of the 2021 tax rate setting. She thanked the Selectboard for signing the MS-1, the final document needed to send to the NH DRA to set the 2021 tax rate. An additional Selectboard meeting may be needed to review the tax rate to allow tax bills to be mailed by November 1 which would then allow a December 1 due date. The total town valuation increased \$244,370,378 as a result of the 2021 townwide revaluation, with an average increase of 35% in value of each town property as of April 1, 2021. Property improvements made after April 1, 2021 will be evaluated in 2022 and are anticipated to further increase the town valuation.

D. OLD BUSINESS:

Item 8: Decision Town Employee 2022 Pay Scale For 2022 Budget: The Selectboard reviewed a town employee salary proposal for consideration during 2022 budget preparations as discussed at the September 20 and October 4 meetings. The Selectboard appreciates the workforce and plans to review COLA plan annually. Donna moved to accept the town employee pay scale and COLA as presented and annual review of COLA. Karen seconded the motion. All were in favor. 3-0

Item 9: Decision On Curbing/Mill Street: The Selectboard considered the suggestion of adding curbing on Mill Street to address water concerns as discussed at the August 16 and September 20, 2021 Selectboard meetings. Brush cutting has been done behind the Fire Department to help improve drainage and this need will be evaluated on a regular basis. The Selectboard considered allowing residents to add pieces of curbing to the area that are available at the Highway Department. Karen moved to allow Chris Hall and Dan Garrity to add pieces of curbing available at the Highway Department to Mill Street to address water concerns as presented. Donna seconded the motion. All were in favor. 3-0 Donna moved that upon acceptance of the curbing and installation, the town assumes no liability or responsibility and the curbing should not be placed in the right of way or in any way impeded town equipment such as plows, etc. Karen seconded the motion. All were in favor. 3-0

Item 10: Decision On Decommissioned 2014 Police Cruiser For Building Inspection Purposes: The Selectboard reviewed a proposal to use the decommissioned 2014 police cruiser primarily for building and fire inspection purposes as discussed at the September 20 and October 4, 2021 Selectboard meetings, along with use by any town hall employee who needs it as it is available. A financial analysis was reviewed. Approximately \$7,000 has been paid in mileage over 21 months according to the IRS mileage rates, although there was a large increase in need for inspections in 2020 as more people were home doing projects. Karen noted concern that she has been told used police cruisers are junk and of a potential future need to fund a replacement vehicle with a large Warrant Article. Jim noted in this situation a used police cruiser would work well as inspectors would not drive it in the manner police or fire personnel would in emergency situations and a Warrant Article for replacement is not anticipated or recommended as, if there is need to replace the vehicle, it would be replaced by another decommissioned police cruiser that

occurs almost yearly. The proposed vehicle was the Chief's car, driven in a different manner than a patrol car and well maintained with at least one or two years of life remaining. Laura noted a town vehicle for this purpose could make the part time inspector positions more attractive as inspectors would not have to use personal vehicles for inspections, that sometimes occur in hard to get to areas causing wear and tear. Donna and David noted interest in the plan to use a vehicle that the town already owns that still has life on a trial basis for a year to provide this benefit to employees although the benefit is not guaranteed. The Town Administrator would have responsibility for vehicle maintenance needs that could probably be covered by the current mileage budget line. Karen moved to accept use of the 2014 police cruiser as a town vehicle to be used by inspectors and those deemed needing it for town business with the understanding that it would be replaced with another used vehicle as needed in future years. Donna seconded the motion. All were in favor. 3-0

Item 11: Approval of Public Minutes of October 4, 2021 and Non-Public Minutes of September 23, 2021 and October 4, 2021: The Selectmen reviewed the Public minutes of October 4, 2021. Karen moved the Public minutes of October 4, 2021 be accepted as amended. David seconded the motion. All were in favor. 2-0-1 The Selectmen reviewed the Non-Public minutes of September 23, 2021. Karen moved the Non-Public minutes of September 23, 2021 be accepted as presented. David seconded the motion. All were in favor. 3-0 The Selectmen reviewed the Non-Public minutes of October 4, 2021. Karen moved the Non-Public minutes of October 4, 2021 be accepted as presented. David seconded the motion. All were in favor. 2-0-1

F. OTHER BUSINESS:

Item 12: Update-Year-To-Date Expenditures And Revenues: Documentation reviewed.

Item 13: Town Administrators Report: Jim reviewed the Town Administrator's report as follows:

- The Selectboard reviewed the revised Finance Committee schedule.
- Mill Street drainage as above.
- The Town Administrator hiring process is continuing. This will be discussed in non-public session.
- Jim contacted the School Board about the status of the historical New Boston High School bell currently kept at the Historical Society. They are considering the possibility of moving it to NBCS.
- The impressive Lyndeborough Road Bridge Project is progressing despite a delay caused by crane placement.
- Jim reported Road Agent Allen Brown brought a proposal to replace two department 6-wheel dump trucks relating to the CRF and CIP Schedule with 10-wheel dump trucks. He has researched a vendor in VT that offers vehicles at a significantly lower rate than anticipated, pending approval of Warrant Articles in March 2022. He requested the Selectboard sign the Purchase and Sales Agreement. CIP Committee member Jennifer Allocca noted the CIP Committee reviewed the proposal at a recent meeting. Karen also noted the CIP Committee is adjusting some Highway Department lines on the CIP Schedule and the Committee was in favor of the proposal with concerns of its impact on purchases in future years and requested more information on current Highway Department truck inventory from Allen. David noted concern that 10-wheel dump trucks

would require more maintenance than 6-wheel dump trucks, but Jennifer noted this was not anticipated according to discussion at the CIP Committee meeting. The Purchase and Sale Agreement was read aloud. The Selectboard is in favor of the proposal. David moved to authorize Road Agent Allen Brown to enter into the proposed Agreement. Donna seconded the motion. All were in favor. 3-0

Item 14: Selectmen's Reports:

Karen reported the following:

- The Road Committee will meet November 3, 2021.
- The New Boston Republican Committee asked Karen to participate in their Adopt A Road program October 16 when they cleaned the roadside from the center of town to South Hill Road. Fifteen bags of trash were collected. They were disappointed to find plentiful Dunkin Donuts, water bottles, hard seltzer and Bud Light litter. The town appreciates their cleanup efforts.

Donna reported the following:

- She has been working with Finance Director Jennifer Allocca to determine how ARPA funds should be used in New Boston, and both will attend an upcoming virtual information session for Hillsborough County October 26, 2021 at 2:30 PM.
- Donna has been working with the group/unofficial broadband committee including Finance Director Jennifer Allocca and Bill McFadden considering the possibility of expanding broadband in New Boston. They, along with Jim, recommend New Boston use ARPA funds to participate in a broadband planning network, a partnership between the NH Municipal Association and the National Collaborative For Digital Equity, based in NH with consultants that would be very helpful to New Boston. It costs \$7,500 to participate with the group that would negotiate, apply for grants and bring a bond before town voters, if necessary, on this long-term project. Goals are to assist New Boston to develop required joint broadband investment funding proposals to provide fiber optic to 100% of town locations, design investment plans to support business models, support pricing for low-income households, assist New Boston in becoming broadband-ready and other broadband projects as deemed fundable. David moved to empower the group/unofficial broadband committee to move forward with the NH Municipal Association for \$7,500 of ARPA funds for help and resources for broadband in New Boston. Donna seconded the motion. All were in favor. 3-0
- Donna reported she will attend the New Boston Space Force Station Wood Energy Center October 20, 2021 for sessions they are offering on using forest resources.
- Donna plans to attend a session about expanding net metering law October 25, 2021 at noon and will bring the information to the Selectboard. Energy Commission member Bill McFadden is also interested in attending.
- The Solid Waste Advisory Committee currently has four members. Transfer Station Manager Gerry Cornett will schedule a meeting. Committee procedures will be drafted.

David reported the following:

- The Safety Center Committee met October 8 to discuss a conceptual building design and considered the possibility of holding public meetings. Jim reported details of the design and noted the Committee determined the proposed building would fit on the currently

proposed parcel of land and is still considering the needs of each Department. The next Committee meeting will be October 29, 2021 at 9:00 AM via Zoom. A Committee member will write an informational article on Committee progress for the New Boston Beacon. The Selectboard requested Safety Center meetings be public on an observation only basis for transparency to avoid public confusion. Jim noted Committee discussions so far have been very preliminary with many concepts discussed that were not finalized and may cause public confusion if meetings were previously open to the public, but this might be a good time to open to the public due to recent progress in the discussions. Meetings at the library can be live streamed on Town Hall Streams. David will bring this information to the Committee.

- The next Planning Board meeting will be October 26, 2021 to continue discussing a potential solar ordinance and zoning and building code amendments for 2022.

Item 15: Department Manager Reports: Documentation provided. The Selectboard thanked the Conservation Commission for providing documentation of approved minutes.

G. PUBLIC FORUM:

David noted the Board always welcomes public comment and feedback. There are two opportunities for public comment, one at the beginning of the meeting and then another at the end to comment as per the rules for live meetings and state your name and address for the record and that comments be respectful and thoughtful. The Board will listen, but public comment is typically not back and forth. If there is any need for extended dialogue a request to be added to the agenda and supporting documentation should be sent to the Town Administrator beforehand. Seeing none, David closed the second session of public comment.

Item 16: Possible Request for Non-Public-Per RSA 91-A:3, II(a)(b)(c): David moved to enter Non-Public session per RSA 91-A:3II at 9:27PM. Donna seconded the motion. All were in favor. 3-0 Poll Vote: David-yes, Donna-yes and Karen-yes. The Board then entered non-public session.

Move to exit Non-Public Session: Karen moved to exit Non-Public Session at 11:02 PM. David seconded the motion. All were in favor. 3-0 Poll Vote: David-yes, Donna-yes and Karen-yes.

David moved the Non-Public minutes of October 18, 2021 be sealed five years. Karen seconded the motion. All were in favor. 3-0

ADJOURNMENT: David moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:03PM. Karen seconded the motion. All were in favor. 3-0

Prepared by Maralyn Segien

**Next Scheduled Meeting: Town Hall Conference Room October 30, 2021 (8:30 AM)
7 Meetinghouse Hill Road- New Boston, NH 03070
Phone: (603) 487-2500-www.newbostonnh.gov
Handicap Access available**