**MINUTES SPECIAL SELECTBOARD MEETING**

**Thursday, December 9, 2021, 4:00 PM**

**@ Town Hall Upstairs and via Microsoft Teams.**

Present at the meeting in the Town Hall:

Selectboard: Joe Pollio, John Gregory, Cathy Siano-Goodwin, Suzanne Welch, and Richard Thompson.

Also: Kim Record (Town Clerk/Treasurer), and Bill Kearns, (Town Administrator).

Present online: Fact8TV.

1. Call to order: The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

2. Adopt Agenda: John Gregory moved, second Cathy Siano-Goodwin to adopt the agenda as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Budget for 2022-2023 – Budget Discussion.

* The Chair: There are four items I think, the salaries of Town employees; we’ve got the sexton; we have the fire department and the Library and the Fast squad to approve them or not, and what else do we have on the table, Kim.

Kim Record: I think those items and just a few of those changes, I have changes to point out for you guys to decide. The salaries and all that.

Chair: But I think those are the main things. We did the health insurance Monday. And that’s that.

Kim: Yes

Chair: So, shall we start from the top and so what is the recommendation for income.

Suzanne: You mean for compensation.

Chair: Yes, employee compensation.

Suzanne: Yes, because Kim wasn’t sure what you were talking about. Okay, so here’s the analysis (handing sheets of paper for distribution to the persons present) that Cathy and I describe.

Chair: (holding up the budget sheet prepared for this meeting) This budget sheet: What is in here? 5.9?

Kim: 5.9 that is all that is in there.

Suzanne: So on this spreadsheet you will see the key positions on the left hand side. We took a look at the FY22 hourly rate and we are recommending a 5.9 COLA increase for FY23 and the reason for that is the Town has had a process over the years of providing to employees the COLA increase and so Cathy and I are recommending continuing on with that practice. And in the FY23 w/increase column you will see the hourly rate takes that 5.9 increase into consideration. And then on the next column to the right FY23 Recommended we did make a couple of adjustments, or actually three that we wanted to go over with you. I have a mistake on this spreadsheet that I want to correct when I talk my way through it. So the FY23 Recommended amount for the Town Administrator is for an hourly rate is $28.73 for an annualized Regular Pay of $50,796. We are recommending for the Asst Town Clerk/Treasurer, Michelle, that her FY23 w/ increase would be $19.89 and we are recommending that we increase that amount to $21.00. As you know Michelle has taken on a number of responsibilities and has a wonderful job with FEMA and her work is absolutely pristine and so we, Cathy and I thought, in agreement with Kim, that bumping her up from almost 20 to 21 would be a good thing to do. Listers. The listers would be at $15.89 per hour. We did agree today to bump up Mike, the Asst Road Supervisor, from $27.62 per hour to $28.00 per hour. So that is a mistake on my spreadsheet, that should read $28.00 per hour, and we did communicate that with Kim and she did include the $28.00 in her calculation.

Kim: In my budget sheets, yes.

Suzanne: Then in terms of Dave, his hourly rate would increase to $23.20, and we are suggesting bumping him up to $24.00 and then Danny would be at $33.15. Making the respective annualized rates for our highway department $57,447 (actual on the sheet was $58,240, which was used for the calculation of the total for highway in that column) for Mike, $49,920 for Dave, and $68,945 for Danny. That totals $177,105, so that budgeted amount I believe is going to be about 178.

Cathy: And we recommend a different title for Dave…

Suzanne: Yes.

Cathy: Primary Truck Road Crew Member.

Suzanne: Yes

Bill Kearns: Pardon me I did not hear that.

Cathy: Primary Truck Road Crew Member. We changed it just from Road Crew.

John: Can we ask why some of them were raised higher than the 5.9?

Suzanne: Sure…

John: Like, for instance, the Assistant Road Supervisor?

Suzanne: The Assistant Road Supervisor, according to the conversation we had with Danny, Mike is going additional work and there are some things that he only does. And I believe he credited him with good work in the excavator and other responsibilities that he is carrying out. This is really just raising the 27.62 to an even 28.00.rate.

Chair: But I have a problem with that. Not with the increase, but a problem with the boost. He is not doing his job. When Danny is not there, He is not Assistant road supervisor. When Danny isn’t there, he does not perform his job.

Suzanne: Has he ever received that criticism?

Chair: Nope. It has been that way for how many years? How many years has it been he does not want to take it on when Danny is not around?

Cathy and Suzanne: That was not brought up.

Chair: No, it was brought up at the executive session.

Cathy: You mean at the meeting?’ (check this wording)

Chair: No, no no…it was brought up here.

Suzanne: So let’s just back up a second Joe. When we went and we talk about these matters it was our understanding that our conversation in that executive session was just that – our conversation in executive session. We did not communicate to anyone what we discussed.

Chair: No, I understand.

Suzanne: And it certainly to our knowledge had not been made known to either Danny or Mike that their work is perceived this way. Had they received any feedback about that? So as far as holding them accountable, it seems to me, first of all our increases are not based on performance, they are based on the COLA increase. The one for Mike is raising it what? 38 cents per hour to $28.00 per hour it is hard to consider it could be construed to be a performance increase. And I don’t see how we con hold employees accountable for anything they haven’t received feedback about.

John: Well, the only reason I bring this up is that mentioned this to Danny and Danny has said these things. Like, for instance, if they need to salt, he gets up at three and salts and then in the afternoon, if they have to salt again, he does it himself because he cannot get the other ones to do it. So that was the only reason I brought it up. So I don’t think that was relayed from Danny to you two that way.

Suzanne: So I … Did you have your hand up Bill?

Bill Kearns: Yes. Danny is the supervisor. Has he approved these changes for the to the 24 and 28?

Suzanne: Oh, Yes. Oh, definitely. We would not have brought them forward without something from Danny.

Chair: Here is what I understand…if the supervisor approved this then I do not have a problem. Let’s move on. [Both John and the Chair were speaking at the same time, so John’s message was difficult to transcribe, but as best the transcriber can decipher it, he was repeating what he said at the beginning of this discussion, i.e., having heard Danny complain numerous times performance of the crew, he was taken aback by the recommendations, but if Danny approved the raises, he agreed with the chair.]

Suzanne: I just want to wrap this up Joe, please. Part of the reason why Cathy and I are recommending quarterly reviews with employees now is to be able to give them feedback in a timely way so that they can be not surprised by any of our actions. That is what I want to say.

Chair: I have nothing against quarterly reviews, but that needs to be done ata Selectboard meeting as an agenda item.

Suzanne: Oh sure, this would be quarterly reviews for the employees themselves.

Chair: I understand that but that is not what the policy is now. So if your going to change it they need to do that at a regular quarterly Selectboard meeting.

Suzanne: Yes, No. Any salary discussion is public information with the exception of disciplinary action which much take place…any, anything that might even evolve into disciplinary action must take place in executive session. So are you saying you are alright with the 28 dollars.

Chair: I have no problem.

Suzanne: Okay. So, Cathy and I are also recommending $19,500 for Kim as Town Treasurer, just lifting up the $19,380…just rounding it up to $19,500. And then the Town Clerk at $32,600. Which brings Kim’s total compensation to $52,199. And then with calculating out Bill’s hourly rate on an annualized basis, plus his role as Administrative Officer at $500, and in Emergency Management at $500, his is about $51,800. So Cathy and I just looking at the relative compensation levels of our employees we sense a fairness and equity in that, but, of course, that’s the Selectboard’s ultimate decision, but this is what we are pushing for your approval. Cathy, do you have a comment on anything?

The Chair, interrupted, asking Kim if the $144,000 in Salaries/Compensation (showing her the budget presented for this meeting) reflects all of this here (indicating the sheet presented by personnel committee)? Or do we have to change again. Kim Record replied that the sheet prepared for this meeting did not include what the personnel committee presented at this meeting, but she had a sheet that and other changes that she will be going over when the discussion of compensation is over. In response to a question from Suzanne welch, Kim Record stated that the sheet presented for this meeting did contain the 5.9% raise in compensation on both the Town Government and the Highway Department Budgets and Kim would note the differences as she went through the spreadsheet.

The Selectboard, with Kim record leading the discussion, proceeded to page one of the Town Government Budget in the budget sheets presented for this meeting, not including what was proposed by Personnel Committee. Kim first noted that the figures in the compensation did reflect the 5.9% raise, but not the raises Page two Cemeteries zeroed out except cost of maintenance contract and Sexton. Page two Library discussion on raise from $5,500 to $6,500. The Chair raised the concern that the figures on not based on the relevant budget, but on this years budget. Suzanne Welch commented that the presentation was relevant for the basis of a raise, the value of the Library to the Town and that the amount of increase was small compared to tits value and services to the Town. Rich Thompson sought clarification that what they presented was last years budget not this years, and concluded they did not styate the reason for the raise was increase in costs as shown in the relevant budget. Suzanne Welch showed Rich Thompson the budget they used, that is the current year, because they do not do their budget till the spring. The chair stated his point is that every other entity requesting money uses the budget for the year for which they are requesting the funds. Siuzanne Welch stated that verbally in their presentation they justified the increase. Rich asked if there was a reaction from the Selectboard at the time, and the Chair stated the Board told them the increase would be taken under advisement and decided when the budget was adopted. Suzanne restated her position on the raise and talked about the asset the library is to the Town and its role in COVID recovery. They agreed to the raise, and Rich Thompson suggested that in the future the Selectboard require a budget for the relevant year. The Board Agreed.

Kim continued on page 3. The only change was to debt service, which was lowered to $11, 900 for interest. Grafton Rescue raised to $4.500. Chair stated this was their request but the Board has this chance to discuss. Suzanne questioned the situation where this amount was supposed to be requested last year, but was not, and Kim explained the failure of communication, acknowledged by Rescue, that lead to the issue. Rich Thompson commented that they have a small request compared with their budget, because they rely on their fine fundraising, which has yet to fail them. The chair asked if all agreed to the amount requested and the answer was yes. Joe questioned the fire department, and Kim replied that did not change. Page 4 regular hours were rounded up to $178,000. Discussion of overtime was raised by john Gregory. Kim explained the figure in overtime is just for those who did not take comp time and chose to be paid for their overtime. There was a discussion on how that figure was arrived at: since only 8600 was actually used in FY 2021 the board dropped it this year to $10,000 from $17,000. In repairs, Danny was in this morning asking that the repairs fro Trucks one and two be raised by $3,000. He had just repaired and replaced tires and rims and based on the increase in cost he requested the raise for each truck. Thus Truck 1 $7,500 and Truck 2 at $9,500. Kim state there was nothing on page 5 and nothing on page 6. The Chair asked for the changes in totals. Kim stated with all the changes the total was $1,212,576.33. Cathy Siano-Goodwin stated that on page 2, under Parks, there should be no cost for Parker Hill. It was agreed there is nothing to do at that park and the line item should be zeroed. Kim asked I there were anything else anyone could find. The Chair asked if the difference was two cents on the tax rate? Kim stated the new total was $1,212,076.33. the difference from last year is $32,275.22, which is about 2 cents. Every penny is approximately $15,000. Kim stated she would make the corrections and reprint the sheets. There is nothing for FEMA and it was also noted there is nothing for Sexton. Discussion of the stipend for the Sexton. Kim is suggesting the fund to be $1,000. Responding to Rich’s question as to the role of the Sexton, Kim Record recounted what the Sexton did here and what the neighboring Towns expect of the Sexton and the role of the morticians in some Towns. Discussion ensued on the Sexton’s role in supervision of the lawn maintenance contractor’s work, in addition to other responsibilities, and how the Sexton interfaces with the Cemetery committee and the Board. Discussion of job description possibilities, back and forth. And suggestion that this be worked on this winter and be ready for spring. During this discussion it was noted that we had one person interested in the job of Sexton. Discussion, too, of clean up in November and notices to the grave owners of the removal of decorations. Kim stated it is on the policy which every grave owner gets but suggested we might advertise each fall in the Grafton News reminding the owners that the lots would be cleared. The chair, Joe Pollio, stated that he and John would work on a job description for the Sexton. The Chair asked if the stipend was acceptable. Discussion ensued and included a long discussion of the personal touch and sensitivity needed for the job. Also discussed the Flags ordered by Kim and put up by Bob Wright and Jason Archambault. Suzanne Welch asked that it be $1000 as Kim suggested, and when the Chair asked all agreed to add the Sexton to the line and $1000. on page 2.

Dates: The Chair noted that the Selectboard had till the 20th of this month to make a change and Kim reminded them all that the real final date on the budget was on January 13, 2022 when all the Article had to be finalized. Rich Thompson made the motion to accept the changes to the budget as negotiated, second Suzanne Welch and the motion Passed unanimously.

1. Other Business: the Chari reminded members that if the Selectboard wanted to put any Article in the Warning for Town Meeting it had a right to do so. So, if anyone has such an Article, we need to discuss it at the next meeting. SeVDS is one of the Article that would be an example. If an individual wants an Article to be voted on it requires signatures of 5% of the voters, whereas if the Selectboard approves the article there is no necessity for the signatures on a petition.

For the Town Report town Department reports are due ASAP. Need DRB, Selectboard and Health Dept – mentioning the ones of people in the room! Kim stated she has most of the required reports.

1. Public Comment. None
2. Date of next Regular Selectboard Meeting: December 20, 2021 @ 6PM upstirs at Town Hall with Microsoft Teams accommodation.
3. Adjourn Motion to adjourn at 4:47 PM made by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, second Suzanne Welch, and passed unanimously and meeting adjourned at 4:47PM

Respectfully presented,

William G. Kearns

[except for the motion to adjourn, the last 3 minutes of the recording contained no sound]