

**Board of Selectmen
Special Meeting Minutes
September 7, 2021**

Present: First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectman Alesia Kennerson, Selectman Laura Garay; Member of the Public Joe Toro; Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward.

First Selectman Jerram called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

The First Selectman stated that the reason for the meeting was to be able to call a Special Town Meeting in order to attend to some additional appropriations.

Operations Updates:

Mr. Jerram recalled that one month ago, on August 10, 2021, the fire at the New Hartford House in downtown New Hartford occurred. Several fire departments were on scene to assist New Hartford in battling this fire. "Thank God, they trained together" said Garay. She thanked all of the firefighters who worked together to put the fire out.

First Selectman Jerram complimented Incident Commander Fire Chief Mark Worsman and stated that "he was amazing as he led his team."

Mr. Jerram expressed his gratitude to all of those who have donated gift cards and money to the Neighbor to Neighbor fund to provide assistance to the fire victims. He commented that the generosity of those who donated has been incredible. Selectman Kennerson stated, for the record, "Christine Hayward has been doing a fabulous job helping the victims of the fire," Selectman Garay said that she wanted to comment on a recent meeting where there was a discussion concerning the funds that have been received. She said that when things happen and there are large amounts of money involved, there are times when things get questioned but it should not be seen as a negative reflection on those who are involved. Garay added it is her opinion, that when there are questions about how things are run, questions should be addressed to the person who is directly involved and who handles the matter. It should not be something that is discussed without input from those directly involved. Ms. Garay asked for a brief public explanation of how Neighbor to Neighbor requests are handled so that this information could be shared. Hayward explained that requests are shared with a committee. The committee consists of representatives from various civic organizations and churches. They review the information presented and each member casts a vote as to whether or not the request should be honored. Ms. Hayward stated that cash is not given to an individual; payment is usually made directly to a vendor to pay for a specific expense. Ms. Hayward reiterated that decisions regarding expenditures are made by the committee – not by an individual. Selectman Garay thanked the Administrative Assistant for her work with Neighbor to Neighbor.

Jerram explained how decisions were made regarding the steps taken to determine the fate of the burned structure. He stated that it was a collaborative effort between the town and the owner of the property. The owner was willing to work with the town to get things moving quickly due to the unstable nature of the building. Jerram noted that the closure of the road by the State for a couple of days allowed for a safe demolition. The Town Attorney was consulted throughout the process. The owner of the property is responsible for the fees associated with the demolition of the building, removal of

hazardous material and site stabilization following the demolition. The town acted as the liaison for some of the contracts. The Attorney has recommended that the Board seek approval for additional appropriation in the event one is needed if the owner fails to reimburse the town for expenses. Having the approval allows the town to place liens if reimbursement is not received. Garay has asked if there is any reason to think that there may be an issue with insurance claim submittals by the owner. Jerram replied that things have gone smoothly so far.

The owner has indicated that he is willing to move forward with reconstruction.

Tenant relocations are by Statute \$4,000 per tenant. The Town is assisting with the temporary housing for those tenants who need housing. The town is making the arrangements and paying the expenses, but will be billing the owner for the costs incurred. Jerram noted that it is ultimately the town's responsibility if the property owner does not pay for the housing. The Town would place a lien on the property if that were to happen. Selectman Garay asked if there is any exposure to the town with issues of possible asbestos in the ruins of the building. She was concerned about liability with those who may have entered and taken "momentos." Jerram stated that it was private property and anyone that may have taken it was trespassing. The Town did take old granite windowsills and 2 truckloads of bricks (with the owner's permission) to hold onto in case the owner would like to use them in the future.

Storm Updates:

First Selectman Jerram stated that Storm Henri was a "dud" as far as storms go; However, Storm Ida caused some damage. Several Roads suffered fairly big washouts – Ramstein (near Flanders Crossing), Cotton Hill (at the base where it meets East Cotton Hill Road), and Stub Hollow Road had areas that suffered damage.

Town Clerk:

Town Clerk Debbie Ventre is resigning her position. She is relocating to Florida. She has given verbal notice and has her house on the market and will be moving shortly after it sells. The exact date will be determined once there is a buyer for her home. She and her husband have already purchased a home in Florida and he is living there, so she hopes to join him soon.

Senior Housing:

The proposed Senior Housing development continues to move forward. Planning and Zoning will meet on Wednesday evening to discuss changes to the regulations that will allow for this type of development.

Cedar Lane Bridge, Cottage Street:

The Cedar Lane Bridge repair was awarded to Hemlock Construction. Hemlock would like to consider using an alternate dewatering plan. Mr. Jerram replied that this will not occur unless DEEP approves it. The redesign of the intersection at Cottage Street is underway. Lenard Engineering has drawn plans and is consulting with Department of Transportation to make sure that they have no concerns since Cottage Street intersects with Route 219.

Disc Golf:

The Recreation Commission has been working on creating a disc golf course at Brodie South. This is one of their projects for this year. There are a few posts and baskets in place and additional equipment has been ordered to complete the course. Garay asked how the Disc Golf fits in with the bird area that the Conservation Commission has had concerns with. Mr. Jerram replied that the Recreation Commission had discussed the habitat area and they have no concerns with the disc golf course location.

Pending Legal Action:

The First Selectman mentioned the ongoing legal issue with LSE CANIS MINOR (solar array at RRDD). They are appealing their assessment for last year and this continues to be handled by Halloran and Sage. The Carpenter Road Bridge matter is still in court; there won't be any action regarding this for about another year.

Deed Transfer:

Mr. Jerram informed the Board that Flanders Road developers still owe a deed for the road and they need to pay some back taxes before the remaining bond funds can be released to them. The deed needs to transfer the road to the town.

Town Property:

The First Selectman stated that the town owned house on Surdam Farm may soon be vacant. Jerram said that the current renter has lived there for many years during the summer and is currently not in good health. He has been spending winters in Florida and did not return this year for the summer and the town has been told that this house will be vacated. The Selectmen will need to look at this house and make a decision as to what should be done with it.

New Hartford (day) Night:

New Hartford night is coming; Two bands – Apricot Brandy and the Tradesmen will be performing; There will be Food Trucks, a Corn hole Tournament and the event will be something a little different this year. "We'll see what happens," said Jerram.

Set Time and Date of Special Town Meeting/Approve Call of Meeting:

First Selectman Jerram read the Call of the Special Town Meeting into the record. He explained that approval of Item Number 1 will allow the town to spend money if it needs to outside of the budget. If the property owner defaults on any of the agreements to pay for services, the town is able to pay the bill and then lien the property.

MOTION: by Kennerson to accept the Notice of Special Town Meeting as read and hold a Special Town Meeting on Wednesday, September 15, 2021 at 7:00 PM; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous

Status of Ordinances:

First Selectman Jerram noted that the ordinances have not been forgotten. They just got pushed back a little farther because of the current events dealing with the Fire. Attorney Roraback has been working on a lot of things and has not been able to complete the review of all of the pending ordinances. Jerram stated that the Fee Ordinance is most important to him due to being able to move forward with online permitting. The bear ordinance could be a lengthy discussion due to emotions. Blight is still an issue with a couple of houses in town. Garay noted that blight can also be an emotional issue. Jerram noted that there are two houses that are clearly abandoned and have fallen into disrepair. Currently, there is nothing that can be done, but an ordinance would allow the Selectmen to take necessary action.

Appointments to Boards and Commissions:

Jerram noted that there are a few vacancies on Economic Development Commission. He has not been able to connect with all of the individuals yet and has to check on voter registration status. He reminded all that those who serve on a Commission must be a registered voter.

Correspondence:

Request from New Hartford ambulance for consideration of upgrading an ambulance using American Rescue Plan Funds.

A request from Pleasant Valley Nursery School for consideration of an appropriation of \$10,000 towards the purchase of the building they are currently renting. They are a 501c3 organization and have also requested funding from the Town of Barkhamsted.

Mr. Jerram stated that there was also correspondence from the WPCA regarding extra work that was needed to combat issues that arose at the wastewater treatment plant due to the amount of ash that entered into the system, as firefighters battled against the fire that occurred on Main Street. Mr. Butler, present at the meeting, stated that he guessed the expenses would be in the area of \$10,000.

A memorandum of support for an access road to the Farmington River to allow access for fire trucks to pump water from the river was drafted by the WPCA. Mr. Jerram noted that this will require some consultation with Lenard Engineering to see if this is a feasible request.

Economic Development Chairman Brian Watson sent an email to the Board of Selectmen on behalf of the members of the Commission. They have requested that the Selectmen not place any limit on the number of times that a Food Truck is permitted to be at one specific business.

Approval of Minutes:

MOTION: by Garay to approve the minutes of the June 22, 2021 meeting of the Board of Selectmen as presented, second by Kennerson.

Unanimous.

MOTION: by Garay to adjourn at 8:20 PM; seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant

Attachments (available from the Town Clerk upon request)

Call of Special Town Meeting

Request from Ambulance

Request from Pleasant Valley Nursery School

WPCA memo re ash impact

Memo from WPCA re Support for Access Road

EDC Chairman Brian Watson email re Food Trucks