

**Board of Selectmen
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, November 27, 2012**

Present: First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectman Alesia Kennerson, Selectman Jack Casey, Members of the School Building Study Committee Bud Butler and Roy Litchfield, Members of the Public Christy Tellier and Will Tellier, Bob Moore (New Hartford Independent) , Sarah Bogues (Register Citizen,)and Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward.

First Selectman Jerram called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM. Mr. Jerram welcomed Will Tellier who was present at the meeting in order to fulfill a scouting merit badge requirement. Mr. Jerram urged Will to feel free to ask any questions he may have at any time during the meeting.

MINUTES:

MOTION: by Kennerson, second Casey to accept the minutes dated September 25, 2012 as presented.
Unanimous.

MOTION: by Kennerson, second Casey to accept the minutes dated October 23, 2012 as presented.

AYE: Kennerson, Jerram ABSTAIN: Casey Minutes approved.

OPERATIONS:

First Selectman Jerram introduced Mr. Butler and Mr. Litchfield as members of the School Building Study Committee. He stated that Mr. Butler was present to update the Selectmen on the progress of the committee thus far. Mr. Butler informed the Board that the group has met 3 times. So far, they have examined Ann Antolini and looked at the doors, windows and air handlers. Some questions have been posed to the architects and engineers that had provided quotes for work in the past. At this point, it appears unlikely that there will be a building project during the 2013 summer. There have been some changes in organization at the State level regarding oversight and management of School Building Facilities. In July of 2012, the State Department of Education gave up control of construction projects to the State Department of Construction Services. There are many applications on hand waiting to be reviewed and the application that was submitted from New Hartford for consideration a couple of years ago is no longer considered to be an active application. Best guess of a timeline for review of any application submitted now is approximately 7 months before it "gets off the pile."

Butler noted that following discussion with people at the State, the committee feels that the best way to proceed is to have a facilities analysis performed of the existing structure. The analysis should include areas that have not been identified as part of the current project. The purpose of such a study is to be sure that one project does not interfere with another. The committee will be recommending to the Board of Education that an analysis be done as the first step before determining the scope of the project. Selectman Kennerson questioned who would perform such an analysis. Butler replied that a request for proposals has been submitted to the Superintendent for consideration of distribution. First Selectman Jerram asked if the Board of Education is aware of the delay in the timeline for initiating the project. Butler replied that they will be.

The Selectmen thanked Mr. Butler for his presentation.

Storm Update:

First Selectman Jerram informed the Board that the damage from the recent storm in October was not as severe as the October 2011 storm. Some areas did suffer more extensive damage than New Hartford and the estimates for costs for these areas enabled the region to qualify for FEMA reimbursements. Jerram will look to see if New Hartford costs might qualify for some reimbursement – but due to restrictions as to what qualifies, they may not. Jerram noted that he had sent a letter of thanks to Tennessee (John Shea) for the efforts of his crew while they were in New Hartford. Jerram

stated that many residents had taken the time to let him know that ‘Jesse James’ and his team from Tennessee were diligent, kind and remarkable in the services they provided.

Mr. Jerram stated that the communication with CL&P was different this time due to the fact that the usual liaison between CL&P and the town was on vacation and not available. A substitute liaison was assigned to New Hartford. This created some difficulties due to the fact that the liaison was not really familiar with the systems in town.

Berkshire Hall:

Restoration work at Berkshire Hall has been completed. The deck/porch had sagged significantly and thus the footings needed to be replaced. Additionally, the driveway leading to Berkshire Hall has been repaved – this was done using funding from the highway paving line item. This was a less expensive way to have this done rather than have the Recreation Department seek quotes from smaller paving firms.

Brown’s Corner:

The completion of the handicapped ramp, an ADA requirement, at Browns Corner will wait until spring.

RRDD#1 Assessment:

The Board of the Regional Refuse Disposal District #1 has voted to reduce 3rd and 4th quarter assessments to member towns. The capital funds that had been the topic of discussion for construction of a possible athletic field at the site will be used for operation expenses. The member towns did not fully support the construction of fields and had urged the Board to consider using those funds to offset expenses of member towns. First Selectman Jerram asked the Selectmen to consider using the savings of the 3rd and 4th quarter assessments to purchase the town truck that had been approved as a capital expense. Jerram noted that paying cash now for the truck will save the town interest costs. Adding the funding from the assessment to the already approved dollar amount in the capital expenditures budget would provide the funding needed to take this route. Jerram explained that he had discussed using these funds for this purpose with both the auditors and the town attorney. Neither of them expressed any concern with this; noting that this would be considered a line item transfer which is allowed within the budget. He asked the Selectmen if they would approve moving this request to the Board of Finance for consideration.

MOTION: by Casey, second Kennerson to recommend to the Board of Finance to approve a transfer not to exceed \$100,000 from the Regional Refuse Disposal District # 1 Line item to capital expenditures to be used for the purchase of a new plow truck.

Unanimous.

New business in town:

Jerram noted that a new high turnover restaurant would soon be occupying the space formerly used by Rocky River Sweets. The new owners had been in to introduce themselves. They will be opening a restaurant named “Querciabella” which will serve flatbread pizzas and salads. The use of the existing structure has not changed; although there will be some interior renovations performed. Jerram stated that this new restaurant will be welcomed.

Holiday Events:

The First Selectman noted that the Holiday Season is upon us and there will be several events being held in the next few weeks. Light New Hartford will be the 1st Sunday in December (as always). Breakfast with Santa will be on the same morning as Light New Hartford. The Bakerville Tree Lighting will be held the following Friday evening. Although it typically falls on the same weekend as Light New Hartford, the decision was made to hold off due to the fact that the Friday before Light New Hartford would still be November. The Library Board preferred a December date.

Have You Seen Santa?

The First Selectman announced a contest he has created for children in New Hartford up through (and including) Grade 6. There will be several “Santas” placed throughout local retail and restaurant operations. Children will need to find 5 of the Santas in order to be entered into a random prize drawing. Local resident Jeremy Schaller, owner of Write Way

signs has offered to make and donate the Santas. Jerram noted that the contest is designed to increase foot traffic in local businesses. Entry forms will be available in the school “Friday Folder,” on the town website and also at Town Hall. Selectman Casey stated that he thought this was a great idea and he fully supported the contest. Kennerson agreed. Mr. Jerram asked for approval of funding to be used to purchase prizes.

MOTION: by Kennerson, second Casey to approve the expenditure of \$500.00 to be used for prizes for the “Have You Seen Santa?” contest.

Unanimous.

At this point in the meeting, First Selectman asked the Selectmen if they would consider moving on to the next item on the agenda – the recommendation of the clean and wastewater study group and return to operations updates at the end of the meeting. He noted that both Mr. Butler and Mr. Litchfield were members of the study group and moving this item up on the agenda would afford them the opportunity to leave the meeting following the conclusion of the agenda item. The Selectmen agreed to this change in the agenda.

Recommendation of the Clean and Waste Water Study Group:

Mr. Jerram noted that this agenda was a carry over from the last Board of Selectmen meeting. Selectman Casey was unable to attend that meeting and the Selectmen did not want to take any action on any recommendations without the input of Mr. Casey. Mr. Jerram asked Mr. Butler to address this agenda item.

Mr. Butler noted that the study group had investigated three options with respect to the operations of the Water and Sewer services in New Hartford. The options were: keep it “as is” – using contracted providers to operate on behalf of the WPCA; ‘return to the Town and bring the operations in-house’ – which would require hiring individuals with the knowledge and certifications required to maintain the systems and would also require the purchase of equipment, Or “sell the assets” – which would involve sending out a request for proposals from other entities who would purchase the systems and then operate them with no ties to the town.

An analysis of what it would cost to bring the system ‘in-house’ estimated that the cost would be in the neighborhood of an additional \$300,000 over current expenses. This, therefore, does not seem to be a viable option. The Study Group all agreed that if the assets were to be offered to sale, a condition of the sale would be that the sale would have to be advantageous to the users and the town. Any action put forth would need to be in the best interests of all the taxpayers in town – the users of the system and the non-users. The First Selectman asked for authorization to send out letters to interested parties advising them of the potential sale. Selectman Casey noted that he would like to be part of any committee that might be formed to discuss the sale.

MOTION: by Casey, second Kennerson to authorize the First Selectman to send out a letter of interest regarding the sale of assets to interested parties regarding the possible sale of the water and sewer utilities.

Unanimous.

RESOLUTION – DEEP professional services agreement:

First Selectman Jerram informed the Board that the State has allowed the town to use the left-over funds from the low impact development grant to be used towards work being performed as part of a stormwater management program up at West Hill Lake. In order to use the funds, it is necessary to adopt a resolution and forward required documents to the State.

MOTION: by Casey, second Kennerson to approve the following resolution:

Be it resolved that it is in the best interests of the Town of New Hartford to enter into contracts with the Connecticut

Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. In furtherance of this resolution, Daniel V. Jerram holds the office of First Selectman since December 5, 2011 and will hold the office until December 2, 2013, is duly authorized to enter into and sign said contracts on behalf of the Town of New Hartford. First Selectman Daniel V. Jerram is further authorized to provide such additional information and execute such other documents as may be required by the state or federal government in connection with said contracts and to execute any amendments, rescissions, and revisions thereto.

Unanimous.

Appointments to Boards and Commissions:

MOTION: by Casey, second Kennerson to appoint Lynn Charest to fill a vacancy as an alternate member of the Economic Development Commission.

Unanimous.

MOTION: by Kennerson, second Casey to appoint William Smith to fill a vacancy as a member of the Retirement Board/Pension Committee.

Unanimous.

MOTION: by Casey, second Kennerson to appoint Karen Griswold Nelson to fill a vacancy as an alternate member of the Open Space Preservation Commission.

Unanimous.

Request for Tax Refunds:

MOTION ; by Kennerson, second Casey to approve the request for refund of motor vehicle taxes due to payment made in error as presented by the Tax Collector in the amount of \$411.93

Unanimous.

Website Update:

A brief update of the progress of the new website was presented by Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward. Work is continuing so that a new website can be unveiled soon. The EDC has approved the general layout and design of the website. The next step is to begin working on moving the content over from the old site to the new site. This work is being done by Assessor Beth Paul and Christine Hayward.

Any Other Business to Come Before the Board:

Alesia Kennerson gave an update regarding the school consolidation study committee. She has personally made contact with three area day care centers to see if there is an interest by any one of them to possibly use a vacant school as one of their facilities. She noted that buildings that are not occupied and remain unused tend to fail quicker and it would seem wise to see what possibilities exist for future tenants if a school is closed. The Seniors would like to have a tour of the building so that they could determine if they had any interest in Bakerville School as a possible Senior Center. Selectman Casey wondered what the actual savings would be if the schools were to consolidate. This question remains unanswered. Dan Jerram opined that transportation costs may increase which might eradicate any potential savings. Ms. Kennerson will keep the Board apprised of meeting discussions.

Operations (continued):

Mr. Jerram spoke regarding the current controversy surrounding the tree trimming of the pin oaks located in the downtown center island. He noted that the State DOT had begun to cut the trees and the chipper stopped working. This put a halt to the tree pruning/removal. The First Selectman has asked the state to take a “second look” at the trees to see if they can be pruned rather than removed. The State has agreed to do this, but they reserve the right to remove the trees if pruning will not be effective. Their reasoning is that the sight line for the traffic light is impeded by the trees and this creates a hazardous situation. Additionally, the trees were badly damaged during the October storm last year and needed significant pruning. It is the opinion of the State arborist that the pruning will be extensive. The trees will no longer look as they do now. The trees will be re-evaluated by the State to see if any of them might be saved. If, however, they believe that they need to be removed, the State intends to do so. Selectman Casey noted that he did check to see if there may be a sight line problem. He agreed that he felt this is an issue. He “checked it out and he could not see the light traveling west on Route 44 through the center of town.” The Board of Selectmen all agreed that they do not want to see an unkempt island. Casey stated that from a practical standpoint, removal of the trees might afford more exposure to local businesses.

WPCA – benefit assessments:

First Selectman Jerram and Selectman Casey attended a workshop meeting of the WPCA. The topic of discussion was “benefit assessments.” The WPCA has been discussing the idea of imposing benefit assessments on the users of the sewer system for quite some time. When funding was gained for the treatment plant expansion, the WPCA had stated that benefit assessments would provide an avenue for increasing revenue to help offset the debt. The USDA loan is now entering the phase where the payments due will include principal as well as interest. The WPCA has mentioned asking the Board of Selectmen to reallocate the current split of 61% - 39% agreed to in 2009. The First Selectman stated that he does not believe it to be within the Board’s authority to make any changes to an agreement that was voted on at a referendum. The vote was the will of the people and the Board of Selectmen cannot alter that. The WPCA has made a request to schedule another joint meeting with the Boards of Finance and the Selectmen to discuss consideration of changing the debt service agreement. First Selectman Jerram informed the Board that he has sent a letter to the USDA asking for consideration of an additional year of an “interest only” repayment. Jerram indicated that he did not feel that there was a need to meet again with the WPCA so soon after the joint meeting that was held several weeks ago. There has been very little movement on the part of the WPCA to initiate any revenue producing operations. There have been numerous discussions regarding septage acceptance at the plant, benefit assessments and orders to connect; yet no action has taken place on any of these issues. Jerram indicated that he had a discussion with the WPCA that there is little belief on the part of many residents that the WPCA has taken action to help themselves financially. He noted that when orders to connect were initiated, the recipients of the letters reacted badly and asked the WPCA to reconsider the orders. It is the belief of many that if the WPCA cannot force those who are already abutters of existing lines to connect, how would they force anyone to connect to new sewer lines? The Selectmen agreed that they would prefer to wait until after the holidays before considering holding a joint meeting.

Capital plan:

First Selectman Jerram noted that the capital plan needs to be revised and presented to the capital advisory board. Noting the lateness of the evening, he asked if the Selectmen would consider holding a special meeting to attend to the revision and adoption of the 2013-2014 capital budget. The Selectmen agreed to meet on December 4, 2012.

MOTION: by Casey, second Kennerson to adjourn at 9:55 PM.

Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,
Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant

