

**Board of Selectmen
Regular Meeting
May 23, 2017**

MINUTES

Present: First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectman Alesia Kennerson, Selectman Laura Garay; Town of New Hartford Bookkeeper Annie Witte; Members of the Public Tom Buzzi, Midge Langston; Member of the Press Kathryn Boughton (Republican American); Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward.

First Selectman Jerram called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

Mr. Jerram asked the Selectmen for their consideration of altering the order of agenda items; requesting that number 3(Executive Session re: real estate and contract negotiations) be moved to the last item on the agenda after Any Other Business.

MOTION: by Kennerson to change the order of the agenda placing Executive Session as the last item on the agenda; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous

2017-2018 Budget Discussion:

Mr. Jerram stated that the 2017-2018 proposed budget, after all of the cuts are made as mandated by the Board of Finance, will stand at \$4,936,829.33. He noted that this figure is \$38,000 less than the 2016-2017 budget. The First Selectman commented that, at this point, the Board of Finance is forcing the town to operate at 2015-2016 Fiscal Year spending levels. Jerram also noted that one of the cuts made by the Board of Finance was to reduce the OT/ Substitute line item to a \$0 funding level. Mr. Jerram found this ironic as this line item is the line item that funds expenses incurred for the services of a consulting CPA to provide assistance and oversight on an occasional basis to the town's bookkeeping department. This service was recommended by the town's auditors as a response to an audit finding and without the funds, it will not be able to continue.

It was noted that the Board of Finance had made several cuts to various line items at their May meeting and the Board of Selectmen is now faced with cutting an additional \$128,081 in order to get to the bottom line mandated by the Board of Finance. Mr. Jerram commented that it was his goal to try and not reduce staff/labor until there was more certainty as to what the State will do. He did not want to "mess with peoples' lives" unless it becomes absolutely necessary. Layoffs may be needed, but he would prefer to know exactly what the town is dealt with before going that route. He also commented that he would like to leave the position of Building Inspector proposed as a full time position for now and again, wait and see what happens with the State. The Board of Selectmen reviewed each line item in the budget to determine where cuts might be made with the least drastic consequences. Each proposal was tossed back and forth between the Selectmen.

The following reductions were made to the budget that had been presented at the Public Budget Hearing:

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Board of Finance Supplies	\$800.00
Communications	\$1,000.00
Town Clerk Supplies	\$1,000.00
Town Clerk Training	\$ 500.00
Janitor (salary increase reduced to 0%)	\$ 340.00
Engineering	\$10,000.00 (First Selectman Jerram commented that without any capital funding to do capital projects, engineering costs could be reduced)
Police Vehicle Operations	\$ 2,000.00 (First Selectman Jerram commented that we are fortunate to have 3 newer vehicles, therefore hopefully maintenance expenses can be reduced – however, wear and tear on the vehicles is extensive due to heavy use)
Emergency Management Director	\$2,060.00
Tree removal	\$10,000.00 (First Selectman Jerram commented that he really did not want to cut this line item, as there is a liability associated with hazardous trees)
Sand	\$5,000.00
Salt	\$5,000.00 (First Selectman Jerram said “hope for a mild winter”)
Paving	\$23,050.00 (First Selectman Jerram commented that this line item has not been properly funded for years, but there aren’t many options for reducing expenses and this is one of the larger line items in the budget. He noted that he would prefer to increase the paving budget, not reduce it. Well maintained roads are important to the community.)
Town Planner	\$1,000.00
Engineering fees	\$2,000.00
Libraries	\$28,275.50 (First Selectman Jerram stated that he didn’t want to have to ‘go there’, but there aren’t many options for reductions. The Selectmen agreed that the Library does provide valuable services, but Town Hall services need to be a priority at this time.)
Foothills Visiting Nurse	\$12,000.00 (The Selectmen would like more information from this organization to find out exactly what services are provided and to whom)
Municipal Agent for the Elderly	\$ 900.00 (There is a requirement to have a Municipal Agent and there needs to be some funds available for attendance at conferences)
Helping Hands/CHORE	\$ 750.00 (Selectman Garay commented that she was disappointed that this could not remain in the budget since this was only supported by the Town for one year, yet she agrees that there aren’t many options of where to find the mandated cuts.)
Sports Allocations	\$400.00 (most of the recreational sports leagues have their own funding sources now)
Seasonal help for maintenance	\$2,000.00 (a difficult cut for First Selectman Jerram due to the increased need for maintenance of the parks during the summer and the lack of personnel at times due to vacation time off)
Conservation and Open Space	\$2,000.00 (Jerram noted that the funding for Boards and commissions will be viewed as an aggregate total and can be used upon approval)
Assessment Appeals	\$ 500.00

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Historical Society	\$ 500.00
New Hartford Day	\$ 700.00
Winchester Youth Service Bureau	\$4,305.00
Economic Development Comm.	\$2,000.00
West Hill Lake Association	\$8,000.00
TOTAL CUTS	\$ 128,081.00

The Selectmen did not take any formal action on the cuts that they made, they decided to move on to the next agenda item and allow some time to think about their choices; stating that they would come back to this item later in the meeting.

Request for consideration of Training for Registrars of Voters:

First Selectman Jerram informed the Selectman that the Registrars have requested a modification to their approved schedule. He stated that they would like to attend an All day Training Session for Moderators to be held on Saturday, June 3, 2017. As a prerequisite to that class, there is some on line training that needs to be completed. They requested additional hours for the work week.

MOTION: by Garay to approve the request made by the Registrars to modify their weekly schedule to include training hours; seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous

Request for Tax Refunds:

MOTION: by Kennerson to approve the request for tax refunds as presented by the New Hartford Tax Collector; seconded by Garay

Unanimous.

Correspondence:

Administrative Assistant Hayward informed the Selectmen that she had been trying with the Assistance of the New Hartford Ambulance Association to secure funding for an Automatic Defibrillator (AED) for Town Hall and has been successful in getting donations to purchase a unit. The New Hartford Womens Club has generously offered to pay for the unit in its entirety. Additional funds have been granted by the Torrington Savings Bank and the Northwest Community Bank. Those funds will be used to fund a second unit to be located at the Beekley Library. The Ambulance Association has requested grant funding for the balance of the cost. Mr. Jerram commented that there have been 3 ambulance calls at Town Hall in the past couple of months. Having an AED will be a plus to Town Hall.

Any Other Business:

First Selectman Jerram informed the Board that he had been approached by Midge Langston, a resident of New Hartford to be considered as a candidate for membership on the Economic Development Commission. Mr. Jerram met with Ms. Langston to discuss her interest on serving on this Commission and feels that she would be a good team member on this Commission.

MOTION: by Kennerson to appoint Midge Langston to serve as an alternate member of the Economic Development Commission, term to expire December 31, 2018; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous

First Selectman Jerram informed the Board that there were a couple of line items that are in the red and he would like to propose line item transfers as outlined by the bookkeeper (attached).

MOTION: by Garay to approve line item transfers as recommended by the Bookkeeper; seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous.

At this point in the meeting, the Selectmen decided to revisit the 2017-2018 Budget Discussion. Selectman Garay expressed some concern with the cut made to the Foothills Visiting Nurse line item. She struggled with not knowing exactly what the funds that are given to the organization cover and expressed a desire to know “what need are they filling in our community?” Ms. Garay also was concerned about cuts made to the Helping Hands Chore line, stating that there are services that they provide that are beneficial to some Senior Citizens. Selectman Kennerson agreed that some Seniors need the services provided by agencies such as Foothills and Helping Hands, but she also expressed concern that “we don’t know what we get for our money.” She added that there are many questions as to “who gets the services? And “who decides who qualifies and who doesn’t?” She would like additional information before making a final decision. The Selectmen discussed that the Board of Finance is requesting cuts that will affect services to residents before there is any final state budget numbers to work with. First Selectman Jerram stated that he was not comfortable cutting the libraries but noted that there aren’t many line items to choose from as to where cuts can be made. He added that he would support reinstating funding to the libraries before restoring funds to Foothills Visiting Nurse services.

The Selectmen then discussed the fact that there still is not an approved budget for the 2017-2018 fiscal year and concern was that there are expenses that need to be paid. Operations could come to a standstill if action is not taken to issue tax bills in order to generate revenue needed to pay bills. Discussion occurred regarding the timeline needed to pass a budget. It was noted that the Board of Finance has not formally approved a budget; they have asked for reductions from both the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Education; but no formal approval has occurred. There are noticing requirements once a budget is approved; such as publication of the summary in a local newspaper. Legal noticing is needed prior to the budget meeting and prior to a referendum. All of this takes time and there is also time required for the Tax Collector to prepare the data needed to generate the tax bills by an outside vendor. The Selectmen determined that the best course of action would be to use the existing mill rate and issue tax bills.

MOTION: by Kennerson to authorize the First Selectman to work with the Tax Collector to issue tax bills at the current tax rate in order to continue the operations of the Town of New Hartford into the new fiscal year; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous.

First Selectman Jerram informed the Selectmen that he wanted the Board to know that the new Registrars are doing a great job under challenging circumstances. They were newly assigned to their positions when they had to hold a referendum. Mr. Jerram publicly thanked Registrar Deborah Jones of Winchester who offered assistance and professional guidance to both registrars.

Executive Session re: real estate and contract negotiations:

MOTION: by Kennerson to enter into Executive Session at 9:40 PM for the purpose of discussion related to real estate and contract negotiations; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous

NOTE: The Selectmen exited from Executive Session at 10:20 pm

MOTION: by Kennerson to authorize the First Selectman to sign the Union Contract for the Town Hall Personnel (NAGE) with salary increases of 2.50% in 17-18; 2.75% in 18-19 and 3.00% in 19-20; and also authorized the First Selectman to discuss the possibility of the reduction of scheduled town hall hours as a potential solution to avoid layoffs; seconded by Garay.

Selectman Garay noted that the increases afforded to town hall personnel were lower than those already approved for Region 7 and Board of Education; and Kennerson noted that the average salaries of those employees is lower than the average for BOE employees.

Unanimous.

MOTION: by Kennerson to adjourn at 10:23 PM; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant