

**Board of Selectmen
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, June 27, 2017**

MINUTES

Present: First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectman Alesia Kennerson, Selectman Laura Garay; Members of the Public Annie Witte, Ben Witte, Linda Goff, Aulay Carlson, David Rosengren; Member of the Press Kathryn Boughton; Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward.

First Selectman Jerram called the meeting to order at 7:06 PM.

Discussion of Status of Budget 2017 – 2018:

First Selectman Jerram reviewed the status of the 2017-2018 budget process with the Selectmen. The State of CT still has not developed a budget, therefore, the local budget remains in a state of uncertainty. The Board of Finance had requested cuts to the General Government budget. The Board of Selectmen complied and reduced their budget by \$128,081. Mr. Jerram noted that the spending level of the budget is \$159,000 lower than the spending level of 2016-2017 and that does not include the fact that adjustments have also been made to offset the increase in assessment to the Regional 7 Board of Education. Jerram clarified that it is not the town and local education budgets that would cause local taxes to increase, it is the burden of the state budget crisis that will cause an increase in taxation.

Mr. Jerram recollected that due to the fact that there didn't seem to be any way to move forward a budget for the people to take action on, the Board of Selectmen took the necessary steps at their May 23, 2017 meeting to insure that the operations of the town could continue. The Selectmen used the powers afforded to them by CT General State Statutes 12-123 to levy taxes. The tax collector was advised to issue tax bills at the current mill rate (minus motor vehicles, which will be sent out at a later date once the new mill rate has been established). Issuing tax bills allows the town to get revenue from tax collections that can then be used to pay expenses. The First Selectman noted that the first installment to Regional 7 in the amount of \$600,000 is due on August 15, 2017 with an additional \$1.5 million due 30 days later. These invoices cannot be ignored as penalties for late payments are assessed.

The First Selectman said that he has been in discussion with the Superintendent of Schools to get an idea of what cash flow is needed to meet their required expenses for the next couple of months. An estimate of \$700,000 (which includes the Board of Education's payment for the pension liability) has been received.

Mr. Jerram commented that the Board of Selectmen needs to adopt a plan to move forward for the next few months. Having a plan in place will let the townspeople have an idea of how the town will operate. A formal budget will need to be adopted by the taxpayers, but for now, an interim budget can be utilized.

Selectman Kennerson expressed her concern that there are still many unanswered questions as to what the State will do. Revenues remain uncertain. Due to that uncertainty, she has concerns about some of the agencies that receive funding from the town. First Selectman Jerram suggested that the plan that

was instituted last year with holding back 15% of each allocation to those entities that are not Statutory assessments be adhered to for this year as well. Ms. Kennerson replied that she would feel better withholding a little bit more – perhaps 20% with review of the situation on a regular basis.

Ms. Garay commented that the current budget crisis at the State has resulted in negative impact to both the town and those who are dependent on the funding from the town for services. Mr. Jerram interjected that the situation continues to get worse, not better. Earlier today, it was revealed that the current proposal cuts the Educational Cost Sharing revenue to the Town has been reduced even more than what was originally anticipated.

Board of Finance member Ben Witte, attending the meeting and speaking as a resident, not as a representative of the Board of Finance suggested that the First Selectman contact the Regional Refuse Disposal District No. 1 to discuss the current budget situation that all 3 of the member towns are facing. He noted that RRDD seems to be “pretty healthy “ and wondered if there were some measures that they could take that could result in lower assessments to member towns. Mr. Jerram replied that he would not have a problem having such a discussion and thanked Mr. Witte for his suggestion.

Selectman Garay expressed her displeasure at the reduction made to the Foothills Visiting Nurse line item. She stated she has been thinking about this and requested that the Selectmen take another look at this line item to see if there could be some funding reinstated to this agency. She added that, earlier in the day, she had spoken with a resident who is concerned about the impact a reduction in allocation to this agency may have on services his wife is currently receiving. This man pays out of pocket for care provided to her. Ms. Garay stated that if the town does not provide any funding to Foothills Visiting Nurse Association, they will not provide any services to New Hartford residents. Ms. Garay stated that this reduction is “targeting the most vulnerable in our community.” Selectman Kennerson countered that she did believe that to be a true statement, she stated that Foothills is a non-profit agency who has other sources of funding and has stated that they will not turn anyone away who is in need of services. Selectman Jerram asked Ms. Garay for recommendations as to what other line items could be reduced in order to fund Foothills Visiting Nurse. He noted that the Board has scrutinized the budget and all line items on many occasions and he has gone on record to say that he would be more likely to restore funding to the Library or line items in the highway department before reinstating Foothills Visiting Nurse. Ms. Garay suggested that the paving line item would be the only place that she could suggest cutting an additional \$12,000.00 from. First Selectman Jerram was adamant that he would not be in favor of any further reductions in the paving budget as he felt it is underfunded as is. Ms. Garay replied that it was her opinion that it is “tragic if we cannot provide home services to those in need; we’ve gone from a \$30,000 allocation to \$0 in three years.” Mr. Jerram countered that “people like to have their roads paved.” Mr. Jerram stated that he would be willing to

review the allocation at a future time, when there is more information regarding the State budget and added that if the local School Board is at MBR (minimum budget requirement) , there aren't many places to go with more cuts if the State budget doesn't get any better. It will start to be personnel and layoffs.

Selectman Kennerson agreed with Mr. Jerram that if the State budget comes in better than anticipated, she would have "no problem adding an allocation to Foothills."

MOTION: by Kennerson to adopt the June 22, 2017 draft budget as an interim budget to operate for the foreseeable future until there is an approved budget passed at referendum; interim budget consists of:

\$4,936,822.33 general government expenses, \$23,906,139.33 total government (includes education) and also includes the proposed teacher pension liability for a total of \$24,692,833.33; seconded by Garay.

Selectman Garay commented that she seconded the motion so that it would be open for discussion. She reiterated her concern with the lack of funding to the Foothills Visiting Nurse Association. She stated emphatically that she could not support any proposed budget that does not include funding for the most vulnerable in the community.

Selectman Kennerson rebutted that "they will still be taken care of, no one gets turned away (according to what was told by the Director)"

First Selectman Jerram interjected that "we have been through the budget dozens of times, and a \$12,000 to \$15,000 additional cut from the paving budget is not something I'm willing to consider. We cannot hit that line item any more, the roads will fall apart."

Selectman Kennerson stated that she would be willing to have the town budget include the costs of services provided by Foothills that are provided to the Seniors through the Senior Center.

Resident Linda Goff, present in the audience, asked for and was granted permission to speak regarding the topic. She stated that "when it comes to cholesterol and blood pressure screenings, aren't these people seeing their regular doctors?" She added that "Foothills can increase their fundraising to pay for these services", and noted that she is a contributor to their cause. Ms. Goff stated her concern that the Board might be considering to cut from the paving line item; saying "there are towns around us that have standard budgets for paving a certain number of miles of roads per year. They maintain a schedule. New Hartford doesn't come close." She mentioned that a culvert on her road needs to be replaced, but the funding was cut. Yet recently, a Town Board approved work to be done on a neighboring property that requires large Tri-axle trucks to pass over that culvert. She stated that eventually, the culvert will collapse and the road will be impassable. Ms. Goff also mentioned that it is her understanding that when the Mason Beekley library was built, it was to be 'self-sustaining' – yet over the years the funding for that library has grown to an enormous amount of money. "How did that happen?" she asked.

Focus of the discussion returned to the Foothills Visiting Nurse. Ms. Garay continued her quest to find a line item that could be cut in order to appropriate some funding for the organization. Mr. Jerram intervened, stating that he would be willing to consider removing \$3000 from the Zoning Legal and

Professional line item and placing it in for Foothills as an interim move – to fund the first quarter; adding that as the impact from the State Budget becomes clearer, adjustments could be made. This \$3000 will be subject to the 20% hold and is for the first quarter only. Selectman Garay commented that she would agree to this for now because “compromising for the sake of the Town is a good thing, but I will revisit this.”

Ben Witte, present in the audience, was asked by First Selectman Jerram if he had any comments on this interim budget. Mr. Witte responded that at some point, a budget needs to go to referendum to see what people want to do and find out how much of an increase they will tolerate; but added that without revenue information from the State, it is hard to do that. This interim budget allows the taxpayers to see what expenses will move forward.

Mr. Aulay Carlson, present in the audience, commented that support of the Foothills Visiting Nurse expense seems to be one of uncertainty – there doesn’t seem to be a clear understanding of their finances. He suggested that the town look at their tax returns. He stated that if an organization is not willing to share their financials, they should be “zeroed out.”

A vote on the motion remaining on the floor occurred;

Unanimous.

First Selectman Jerram then asked the Selectman to consider “how will we operate going forward for the next few months?” “We are taxing at last year’s mill rate – how do we handle the contractual salary increases, do we implement them or do an adjustment later?” He noted that the current budget document includes the increases. Brief conversation was held regarding some clarifications with respect to the interim operating budget, which led to the following clarifications:

The Building inspector position will remain as a part time position until such time as a budget is approved at referendum (it will only be increased to full time if a budget is approved to do so)

There will be hold backs (20%) for all non-profits/agencies that receive discretionary funding from the town.

Salaries/wages that are contractual will receive their contractual increase effective July 1, 2017. Raises will be implemented so as to avoid adjustments later on.

Board of Selectmen to review proposed contract for revaluation services (Vision Appraisal) and discuss/take action regarding contract

First Selectman Jerram informed the Board that there were three bids received for services related to revaluation. The low bidder is Vision Appraisal Services. Mr. Jerram explained that there were 2 options presented for how to conduct the revaluation. One option consists of physical inspections and the other option is data mailers with some physical inspections. Vision presented a bid of \$124,000 for the physical inspections and a bid of \$66,200 if data mailers were used (plus \$25.00 per inspection needed); Municipal Valuation proposed \$125,000 for physical inspections and \$90,000 for data mailers (plus \$25.00 per inspection needed); Tyler Technologies bid \$156,200 for physical inspections and \$97,100 for data mailers (plus \$20.00 per physical inspection).

First Selectman Jerram stated that the bids came in lower than anticipated; noting that the total

reevaluation costs could wind up being between \$99,000 - \$110,000. Mr. Jerram commented that a member of the Board of Finance has concerns regarding contracting for services for Revaluation. This member has opined that it is his understanding that revaluation can be postponed by a vote of the taxpayers. The Assessor checked with the Office of Policy and Management to see if there was a way to postpone this mandated revaluation and she was sent a response that stated that it takes a Special Act of the Legislature to postpone a revaluation. Therefore, it is necessary for the Town to move forward with this at this point in time. Mr. Jerram informed the Board that he would ask them to approve Vision as the vendor to do the revaluation, but would not execute the contract at this time. Vision is willing to hold their bid for three months.

MOTION: by Kennerson to approve Vision Government Solutions as the company to contract with for revaluation services; and authorization given to the First Selectman to execute the contract within the next three months; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous

Appointments to Boards and Commissions:

MOTION: by Garay to appoint Kathy Kinnane to fill a vacancy and serve as a member on the Conservation Commission; term to expire 12/31/2019; seconded by Kennerson.

Selectman Garay commented that this is an appointment that has been discussed at prior meetings; Kathy has attended some Conservation Commission meetings and is very interested in being a member. Ms. Garay noted that Kathy also serves on the Board of Directors of the Bakerville Library and will be a great addition to this Commission.

Unanimous.

Operations Updates:

First Selectman Jerram informed the Board members that many members of the Public Works Department are on vacation this week due to the fact that they need to “use it or lose it.”

The Brodie House demolition has been completed.

Carpenter Road Bridge – water level has receded quite a bit. Correspondence has been sent to the contractor advising him of the lower water levels and requesting that consideration be given to a start date for completion of the project. Mr. Jerram noted that the final completion date is supposed to be July 19. Selectman Garay stated that residents have questioned why the project has taken so long. Selectman Kennerson recounted the delay on acquiring the State approvals needed by the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities and the difficulties encountered with the dewatering/channeling of the river. Mr. Jerram commented that the project remains under budget and there are no additional change orders.

The First Selectman continued with other updates, highlighting that Camp Brodie has begun, Regional 7 has had their graduation ceremonies, and the beach is open for the summer. He noted that there will

soon be the Farmers Market downtown as well as concerts at Brodie and at the Pavilion. He stated that he plans to get in touch with Mrs. Childs to discuss a dedication ceremony for the Pavilion.

Discussion of Special Town Meeting Agenda items:

The First Selectman noted that there are several items pending that need to go to Town Meeting for approval. The Ordinance for the Cemetery Association, the Elderly Tax Abatement, acceptance of donation of a parcel of land that runs along Wickett Street; addition of a third alternate to the Board of Finance, Open Space Tax Abatement, CT Green Bank, acceptance of Lepore Open Space, and Election of a member to the Stanclift Cove Authority.

The Selectmen agreed that it would be best to have a Special Town meeting in the near future in order to get some of these items wrapped up. Administrative Assistant Hayward will check the calendar and come up with some dates for consideration for the meeting.

Requests for Tax Refunds

MOTION: by Kennerson to approve the requests for tax refunds as presented by the Tax Collector (CAB East in the amount of \$98.30 due to sale of vehicle; CAB East in the amount of \$168.37 due to sale of vehicle; CAB East in the amount of \$158.09 due to sale of vehicle; CAB East in the amount of \$67.62 due to sale of vehicle; Vault Trust for Ally Financial in the amount of \$343.49 due to sale of vehicle; Vault Trust for Ally Financial in the amount of \$183.68 due to sale of vehicle; Vault Trust for Ally Financial in the amount of \$309.07 due to sale of vehicle; Vault Trust for Ally Financial in the amount of \$50.98 due to sale of vehicle; Lavigne, Mark, Rogers & Bruggeman, LLC in the amount of \$1,543.11 due to sale of vehicle); seconded by Garay.

Unanimous

Correspondence – re; Geo Cache on Surdam Farm:

Correspondence (via email) has been received from an individual identified in the email as Chris Dube, address unknown. This individual is seeking permission from the Town to place “geocaches” off the trails of Antolini Woods/Surdam Farms. They appreciated the fact that this person has contacted them to seek approval rather than “just doing it.” The Selectmen discussed this request briefly and would like to discuss this with the insurance company before rendering any firm decision.

The First Selectman presented a request to the Selectmen from the Registrars of Voters seeking approval to add 8 hours of additional training time each to their schedule prior to the end of June. They noted that they are still familiarizing themselves with the office and its responsibilities and the additional time would allow them to review some past records that will be helpful in gaining an understanding of some of the upcoming events – such as party caucuses, primaries, and the election.

MOTION: by Garay to approve the request of the Registrars of Voters for 8 hours each of additional time between now and June 30, 2017; seconded by Kennerson.

First Selectman Jerram commented that “they are working well together, things have been great.”

Unanimous.

Any Other Business to come Before This Board:

Selectman Alesia Kennerson informed the Selectmen that she is in the midst of organizing a “protest” against GlaxoSmithKlein, (pharmaceutical company) who plans to discontinue the production of a drug named Potiga which is currently being used to treat a one year old resident of New Hartford. This child is currently receiving the drug to control seizures that have a severe negative impact on his life. This child suffers from a rare disorder that causes him to have frequent seizures and this drug is the only thing that can bring some comfort to him. The Company has decided to stop making the drug due to its low usage. Without this drug, this child will suffer. The protest will be held in front of the New Hartford Town Hall on Saturday, July 1, 2017 at noon and is scheduled to last for one hour.

Selectman Garay thanked Ms. Kennerson for organizing such an event.

First Selectman Jerram informed the Selectmen that a decision needed to be made with respect to the Senior Van. Although there is still uncertainty with the 2017 – 2018 budget, the funding for the van remains in the budget. Jerram stated that he feels it is important not to lose this grant; the cost to the town is minimal for the purchase of the van, since CT DOT is providing 80% of the cost. Senior Transportation has been identified as a need in the town and this van could help with some transportation issues. He noted that if it is necessary to cut the funds for a driver, he would advise that a member of Public Works get a passenger endorsement and assume the role of driver.

MOTION: by Garay to authorize the First Selectman to execute a contract with Matthew Buses Commercial for the purchase of a Senior Van at a cost of \$55,050.00 of which 80% will be paid by CT DOT; seconded by Kennerson.

Selectman Garay remarked that this van will be a tremendous help to the Town and she was glad that is moving forward.

Unanimous.

MOTION: by Garay to amend the minutes dated May 23, 2017 to include adding “Animal Control Fund – reduce by \$2000” to the list of cuts that were approved by the Board of Selectmen; seconded by Kennerson.

This cut was accidentally left off the list and should be included so that the total adds to \$128,081.00

Unanimous.

MOTION: by Garay to adjourn at 9:50 PM; seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant