

**Board of Selectmen
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, February 27, 2018
MINUTES**

Present: First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectman Eric Claman, Selectman Alesia Kennerson, Members of the Public Donna LaPlante, Dan LaPlante, Mary Beth Greenwood, Water Pollution Control Authority Chairman Bud Butler, Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward.

First Selectman Jerram called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

Bud Butler re: WPCA Finances Update:

Mr. Butler, present as the Chairman of the WPCA, presented information pertaining to the state of the finances of the WPCA. He stated that at this point, the WPCA is notifying the Board of Selectmen that they are not able to fulfill the requirement of issuing payment to the Town for debt service. Butler clarified that this action does not mean that the WPCA is requesting/seeking forgiveness of the entirety of the debt; but rather they are seeking a temporary reprieve for this payment. It is not their intent to make a request for more than temporary relief at this time.

Mr. Jerram noted that there were 2 payments already temporarily suspended; one that was due in September 2017 and the other was due in December of 2017. Selectman Kennerson questioned the status of the outstanding accounts receivables; with Butler replying that over time they have gone down. There are a few accounts, however, that continue to struggle. Butler went on to add that there are a few accounts/customers who tend to use the WPCA to "solve their own cash flow problem." There is one account in particular that is keenly aware that tenants cannot be left without water and uses this to personal advantage by not paying the bill. This leaves the WPCA in a situation where there is a fairly large balance due, but no means to force a payment. Kennerson asked if there is interest charged on late payments; Butler replied that interest is charged, but in this case, it does not seem to matter. Kennerson asked if the property can be lienied; with Butler noting that liens are placed when necessary.

Butler noted that the WPCA is fortunate that its two contracted service providers- Aquarion Water Company and Torrington Water Company have been very patient with late payments made by the WPCA for their services. They continue to support the Town/WPCA and provide good service and are constantly looking for ways to promote operational efficiencies. Butler remarked that the WPCA continues to do all it can to keep operations flowing smoothly, but there are unscheduled events that are "breaking the bank." Butler repeated that it is the intent of the WPCA to fully honor all of its debt service obligations when it can.

MOTION: by Kennerson to suspend the first quarter 2018 debt service payment owed to the Town by the Water Pollution Control Authority; seconded by Claman.

Unanimous.

Donna LaPlante re: conference expenses:

Town Clerk Donna LaPlante addressed the Board of Selectmen regarding conference expenses. She explained that last fall (September), the Town of New Hartford did not pay for the room she reserved when she attended the Fall Town Clerk's conference. She noted that she paid for it out of pocket

because she was aware that the Selectmen had made a decision that due to budget constraints, they would not pay for overnight lodging to attend conferences. The Conference was held in Westbrook, CT; which is 64 miles each way. Ms. LaPlante stated her concern that she has learned that the Board of Selectmen were contemplating not paying for lodging again this year. She noted that there is a history of attendees staying overnight due to distance and also due to the fact that the meetings begin early in the morning and also include scheduled evening activities. The Secretary of State has been the guest speaker at the evening banquet at most of the Conferences and this is a valuable opportunity to hear about potential changes in procedures and policies. LaPlante also noted that conferences provide an opportunity for networking and sharing of ideas. It is her opinion that attendance at all segments of the conference is very valuable; stating that attendance at these conferences keeps everyone up to date and is a way to find out how to do things better. Ms. LaPlante stated that the cost of the lodging (approximately \$120.00 for two nights) is a small percentage of the department budget. She also added that the Town Clerk's Association pays for the majority of the conference fees, with only minimal charges passed on as registration fees for attendees.

Selectman Kennerson asked why are there two conferences per year and is attendance at both required. Ms. LaPlante replied that the conferences focus on different subjects; so there is a difference in content at each conference. There is a mandatory requirement to continue to gain continuing education credits in order to keep on top of changes in policies and procedures.

At this point, First Selectman Jerram noted that the prior year was a tough budget year, it was "bare bones." There was a lot of uncertainty with respect to revenues and there was a need for extra cautious spending. Last year was "extreme," he said, "and we needed to do things we normally don't need to do." Jerram stated that this year is a little better; there has been some Grand List growth to help offset some loss in revenues. He stated that when the decision was made last year to not fund expenses for conference lodging and to reduce mileage reimbursements, it was stated that the Selectmen would reserve the right to consider conference expenses on a case by case basis each year. Jerram added that all elected officials should be conscious that there is always the chance that budgets will be cut and they need to realize that "just because something has happened in the past, does not mean that it can happen again and again." With respect to the Town Clerk's request for overnight lodging expenses to be incurred; Jerram agreed (with no opposition from the Board) to allow funds from the Town Clerks supplies line item to be used for these purposes. Jerram reiterated that these type of expenses would be subject to annual review. Town Clerk LaPlante expressed her thanks to the Board.

2018-2019 Budget:

First Selectman Jerram informed the Board that the local Board of Education proposed budget currently stands at a 3.93% increase. The Regional School District budget is projected at a -1.79% decrease to New Hartford's assessment. This is due to a shift in student population; with the average daily membership numbers decreasing for New Hartford this budget year.

With respect to other areas of the budget, Jerram stated that the pension actuarial report is not yet completed for this year, therefore the pension contribution number is uncertain. The report should be completed by the end of March, so there will be a number forthcoming. The New Hartford Ambulance Association would like an opportunity to present their funding request to the First Selectman; however, no date has been agreed upon at this time. Therefore, this line item does not yet reflect the actual

request, and has been flatlined for now. Jerram noted that there has been discussion of another new ambulance purchase for the Association.

The line item for the equipment maintenance and repair in the highway department has been short for the past couple of years. The Selectmen reviewed the average expenditures and agreed to add an additional \$10,000 to this line item.

Review of several line items continued, with some changes being made to the draft budget document. Selectmen Kennerson and Claman both agreed to support \$750.00 in the budget for CHORE. Jerram explained that although debt service sees an increase in the line item this year, there will be a decrease in fiscal year 2019-2020 when one of the general obligation bonds is completely paid off. Discussion regarding the line item for the Economic Development commission occurred; with the result being that the funds included for the website will be moved out of that line item and added to Administrative Expenses. Therefore, the line item will drop to \$5,000 but the website expense will be removed. A brief discussion of the library line items ended with the Selectmen deciding to schedule an additional meeting on March 14 to address this line. A meeting with library representatives will hopefully have been completed by then so that information gleaned from that meeting can be considered prior to developing a budget number for the libraries.

Ordinance Review:

First Selectman Jerram explained that there are several ordinances that need to be reviewed and perhaps revised by the town attorney and then they need to be taken to Town Meeting for consideration of adoption. In addition to the rewriting/editing of some existing ordinances, there is also a request for adoption of a new ordinance. The Planning and Zoning Commission has asked that the Board of Selectmen consider an ordinance that outlines the “right to farm.”

Ordinances that may need revision include:

Capital Advisory Subcommittee ordinance: The current ordinance states that this commission shall determine the capital needs; however, it is the Board of Finance that has the final authority with respect to the capital funding.

99-1 Acceptance of roads: the current ordinance conflicts with some of the current subdivision regulations. This ordinance needs to be reviewed and revised so that steps for acceptance of roads is clearly defined and no conflict exists.

Open Space Preservation Commission ordinance includes guidelines for the land acquisition fund. However, there is concern that the current language regarding proceeds from the sale of town owned land is ambiguous and needs some clarification.

Ordinance establishing the Conservation Commission: The ordinance currently states that this Commission is made up of 11 members. It has been a struggle for the past few years filling vacancies on this commission, which makes it difficult to have a quorum present for meetings. The First Selectman will discuss reducing the number of members to the Chairman of the Commission and, if agreed, the attorney will be asked to revise the membership requirements.

Peddlers Ordinance: Mr. Jerram explained that this ordinance has been in existence since the 1930's and needs to be reviewed and revised to address current practices.

The First Selectman stated that he has received requests from residents to enact a blight ordinance. He noted that this is a sensitive issue due to the differences people have with respect to “defining blight.”

He suggested that the Board of Selectmen be given the authority (through an ordinance) to deal with extreme circumstances of blight. He stated that there are currently some abandoned properties that are cause for concern in some neighborhoods. It would be advantageous to be able to take some sort of action with these properties. He will discuss this with the Town Attorney and seek his advice. Another possible ordinance for consideration at some point would be an ordinance that allows for the appointment of the Tax Collector, rather than the position being an elected office. Mr. Jerram reiterated several times that there is no issue with the current tax collector, noting that she is highly respected and does her job extremely well. However, there will be a time when she will no longer wish to pursue election for her office and at that time, it may be advantageous to have an appointed tax collector. Jerram noted that many towns have chosen to make the position an appointed position due to the fact that it allows for a broader pool of candidates to be considered.

Homeland Security Grant:

First Selectman Jerram informed the Selectmen that the Homeland Security Grant memorandum of Agreement for Fiscal year 17-18 needs to be submitted and in order to do so, a resolution authorizing him to submit the application needs to be approved by the Selectmen. He asked for a motion to approve the following resolution:

*RESOLVED, that the Board of Selectmen may enter into with and deliver to the State of Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security any and all documents which it deems necessary or appropriate; and
FURTHER RESOLVED, that Daniel V. Jerram as First Selectman of the Town of New Hartford, is authorized and directed to execute and deliver any and all documents on behalf of the Board of Selectmen and to do and perform all acts and things which he deems necessary or appropriate to carry out the terms of such documents, including, but not limited to, executing and delivering all agreements and documents contemplated by such documents.*

MOTION: by Kennerson to approve the resolution as read; seconded by Claman.

Unanimous.

Pension Recommendation:

First Selectman Jerram informed the Selectmen that he had a meeting with the financial advisor from Hooker and Holcomb, the firm that provides actuarial and benefits counseling for the town pension plan. Overall, the investments are doing very well and the portfolio has shown good growth. Art has recommended some modifications to the current portfolio and Mr. Jerram asked the Board for their consideration of these proposed changes.

The recommendations are as follows:

Reduce the Schwab S&P 500 index from 12% to 9%

Increase the Russell Inv International Devd Mkts S from 3% to 4%

Increase the Schwab International index from 3% to 4%

Increase the Russell Inv Emerging Markets S from 3% to 4%

MOTION: by Kennerson to approve the changes to the Town of New Hartford pension portfolio as recommended by Hooker and Holcomb; seconded by Claman.

Unanimous.

Appointments and Resignations to Boards and Commissions:

MOTION: by Kennerson to appoint Gary Colbert to fill a vacancy and serve as a regular member of the Historic District Commission; term to expire December 31, 2020; seconded by Claman.

Unanimous.

MOTION: by Kennerson to reappoint Mary Ann Gunning to continue to serve as an alternate on the Historic District Commission; term to expire December 31, 2020; seconded by Claman.

Unanimous.

MOTION: by Kennerson to appoint Karl Hermonat to fill a vacancy as a member of the Inland Wetlands Commission; term to expire December 31, 2018; seconded by Claman.

Unanimous.

MOTION: by Kennerson to appoint Mark Russo to serve as a member on the Rails to Trails Subcommittee in the absence of member Bill Baxter; seconded by Claman.

Unanimous.

Request for Tax Refunds:

Jerram read into the record the following requests for refunds of taxes:

\$55.10 to Anthony Bascetta due to certificate of correction following payment for motor vehicle taxes.

\$152.13 to Lawrence and Patricia Cassella for adjustment after payment of motor vehicle taxes.

\$4,942.34 to Corelogic Tax Services for overpayment of real estate property taxes due to homeowner already paying the taxes due.

\$3,499.83 to Corelogic Tax Services for overpayment of real estate property taxes due to homeowner already paying the taxes due.

\$6,848.65 to Corelogic Tax services for overpayment of real estate property taxes due to homeowner already paying the taxes due.

\$2,452.69 to Corelogic Tax services for overpayment of real estate property taxes due to homeowner already paying the taxes due.

MOTION: by Kennerson to approve the request for refund of taxes as presented by the Tax Collector; seconded by Claman.

Unanimous.

Operations Updates:

First Selectman Jerram notified the Selectmen that the Asset Evaluation Team continues to meet to review the proposals received for the possible sale of the water and/or wastewater assets of the Town of New Hartford. This committee has met several times and continues to ask questions and seek clarification from the companies that provided bids. The committee is firm in their belief that they will only forward a recommendation for a possible sale of the assets if there is consensus that this would be in the best interest of the Town. Ultimately, it will be the people of New Hartford who make the final determination, but the AET wants to be sure that they have done due diligence with fact gathering. Jerram explained that the meetings continue to be in Executive Session while negotiations continue. Once the negotiations are complete and action has been taken regarding this matter, all of the RFPS will be available to the public and questions regarding the contents of the proposals can be answered.

Jerram stated that he has had surveillance cameras installed at the Town Garage. There have been cases of theft occurring on the premises and hopefully, these will help to either eliminate the issue or help to identify the individual(s) responsible.

The recent freeze/thaw cycle has wreaked havoc on the local dirt roads. Major problems developed on Stub Hollow Road where several vehicles got stuck in the mud and had to be towed out. Jerram explained that the water level in that area is very high which makes it very difficult to maintain the roadway. Paving it will not solve the problem, it would need extensive drainage improvements as well. This would be a major expense.

The Sanitary Survey for the water system is being completed and will be submitted soon.

Insurance rates for the liability insurance have been reduced for the 2018-2019 year. This is due to the good ratings given to New Hartford for risk control measures. However, the audit for the Workers Compensation resulted in additional liability/costs due to additional volunteers on the ambulance and fire departments for which the town is obligated to provide workers comp coverage.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was ended.

MOTION: by Kennerson to adjourn at 10:00 PM, seconded by Claman.

Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant