

**Board of Selectmen  
Regular Meeting  
Tuesday, October 22, 2019**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectman Eric Claman, Selectman Alesia Kennerson; Members of Open Space Preservation Commission Bill Michaud, Madeline McClave; Resident Denton (Bud) Butler; Member of the Press Kathryn Boughton; Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward.

First Selectman Jerram called the meeting to order at 7:10 PM.

**Review and Discussion of Trail Management Plan:**

The Selectmen reviewed a draft of a management plan for the Helen Butler Riverfront Trail. The purpose of the plan is to outline the management of the trail in accordance with the Conservation Easement made by and between the Town of New Hartford, Connecticut and the New Hartford Land Trust.

Concern was expressed regarding the term “trained volunteers.” Consensus was reached that level and type of training would be dependent upon the task being performed. Removal of invasive plants, for example, would require supervision/training by someone knowledgeable in the proper removal of such plants. However, simple trash pick- up would not need much more than a reminder to wear gloves. A Notice of Intent to Conduct Activity on Town Owned Property form will be required when performing volunteer work on the trail. Town Hall will communicate with the Land Trust to insure that training/supervision of activities is adequate for the job specified.

It was noted that there should be some sort of notification posted in the kiosk regarding the need to notify Town Hall and gain permission when conducting any volunteer work on the trail.

Denton (Bud) Butler commented, as the empowered property owner, that there needs to be consistency between the deed and the management plan.

Edits were suggested for the draft plan. The First Selectman will incorporate suggested changes into the draft and it will be distributed to the Open Space Preservation Commission for their review, as well.

**MOTION:** by Kennerson to approve the draft Management Plan for the Helen Butler Riverfront Trail with suggested changes (as amended); seconded by Claman.

*Unanimous.*

**Operations Updates:**

First Selectman Jerram informed the Selectmen that the Water and Wastewater Asset Evaluation Team has completed their charge and has made a formal recommendation to the Water Pollution Control Authority and to the Board of Selectmen to sell the water and wastewater assets to Aquarion Water Company, subject to referendum approval.

Selectman Kennerson asked about the status of the request to the USDA seeking forgiveness of the repayment of the grant portion of the funds received to upgrade the Wastewater Treatment Plant. First Selectman Jerram replied that the request was still pending. He noted that there have been several

follow ups with USDA personnel to insure that the request is still being “passed through the ranks.” The Town has been told that it remains an active request, with no resolution yet. Mr. Jerram noted that not having the answer to that question is the biggest stumbling block in being able to move forward. Not knowing whether or not the Town needs to reimburse the USDA for grant funding has a large impact on what may or may not be done with the proceeds of the sale. Jerram expressed his dissatisfaction that getting a response is taking so long; he noted that there is increased potential for price escalation with proposed sewer expansions the longer it takes to get things moving. Potential sewer expansion would occur in the Pine Meadow section of town; namely Wickett Street and portions of Main Street. The recent donation of the old aqueduct “canal” parcel on Wickett street provides the opportunity to help reduce the cost of sewer expansion in that area. Pipes could be laid in that area rather than within the State highway; resulting in easier access for connections and avoidance of having to do construction within the State right of way. If grant forgiveness is not approved, it could result in a collapse of the current proposal.

The Asset Evaluation Team has done the legwork of reaching out to regulatory agencies to see what needs to be done in order to be able to present a proposed sale to them. The Asset Evaluation Team needs the Board of Selectmen to interface with the USDA and encourage them to act upon the request for relief from grant repayment.

The Board of Selectmen agreed that they cannot take any formal action regarding any recommendation to sell the water and sewer assets due to the unknown status of the grant forgiveness. They discussed their role in this issue and agreed that they should reach out to the USDA as the governing body of the town to seek resolution to this request. Resolution is needed prior to the Selectmen discussing the sale of the assets.

**MOTION:** by Kennerson to request that the First Selectman draft a letter to the USDA on behalf of the Board of Selectmen seeking resolution of the Town of New Hartford’s request for relief of repayment of the Grant portion of funds issued for the upgrade of the Wastewater Treatment Plan; seconded by Claman.

Kennerson noted that “our residents continue to suffer with the highest rates in the State for water and sewer and we need to be able to present them with an alternative to consider.”

*Unanimous.*

Discussion continued and the Board was in consensus that the AET should begin to prepare materials to present to the public regarding this proposed sale. The Selectmen were cognizant that time continues to move on and they felt that it would be best to have a presentation ready so that when the USDA opinion is received; the group could come before the Selectmen and make their pitch. The Selectmen discussed that the members of the Asset Evaluation Team are the ones who are most familiar with the proposal

and therefore they should be the ones to prepare a presentation. They discussed adding a 5<sup>th</sup> charge to the group's responsibilities.

**MOTION:** by Kennerson to add a 5<sup>th</sup> task to the original charge of the Asset Evaluation Team; #5.) To prepare a presentation of the potential sale of the water and wastewater assets to be presented to the Board of Selectmen; such presentation will serve as the basis for presentations to our constituents; seconded by Claman.

*Unanimous*

Mr. Jerram stated that the Rails to Trails contract for engineering services with Anchor Engineering has been executed. A kick off initial meeting with the engineers has been scheduled.

First Selectman Jerram praised the Economic Development Commission for their successful Open Farm Day event. He noted that, even with a rainy afternoon, there was good attendance for a first year event. He distributed a summary report created by Donna LaPlante to the Selectmen as information. Total EDC expenses for the event were \$1686.67; 142 passports were issued and 251 individuals were present. Jerram thanked both Town Clerk Donna LaPlante and Assistant Town Clerk Debbie Ventre for all the work they did for several weeks to organize this event.

The First Selectman announced that a part time Assessor has been hired to be the certified Assessor on staff to partially fill the vacancy left by the resignation of the prior assessor. Michele DaSilva will be in the office on Mondays and Thursdays from 8:30 – 4:00 to assist the public and to provide training to an individual who has expressed an interest in becoming a certified assessor. Personal Property declarations are being returned, so there is a lot of document processing that needs to be completed.

**Appointments/Resignations:**

A letter of resignation has been received from Mary Ann Gunning who is moving out of New Hartford and therefore is resigning her position as a member of the Historic District Commission.

**MOTION:** by Kennerson to accept with thanks for her service as a member of the Historic District Commission, the resignation of Mary Ann Gunning; seconded by Claman.

*Unanimous.*

**Correspondence:**

First Selectman Jerram informed the Selectmen that he had received a note from Carie Hodel, a New Hartford resident and member of the Board of the Northwest Ct Arts Council, stating her concern that several artists who participated in a local cultural event had received letters from the Assessor regarding declaring personal property. She questioned this practice and expressed her displeasure with the notices. Mr. Jerram explained to the Selectmen that the former Assessor did, in fact, send notices to anyone who ran a public business. He explained that the Assessor has a Statutory right to do this. However, there are cases when requiring filing of personal property declarations is not worth the expense. He explained that towns are allowed to establish policies establishing a level that determines when the filing of these declaration forms is required. Mr. Jerram requested information from the current Assessor regarding the number of personal property accounts and the value of the accounts.

He shared the findings with the Board. In summary, there are currently 1020 personal property accounts of which 792 accounts are currently taxable and 228 have no value established yet. Of the 792 taxable accounts, 179 accounts have a value of less than \$700 – with the average value being \$313.00. The income from these accounts average \$9.47 in tax revenue per year.

The Selectmen discussed the matter and were in agreement that they would consider implementing a diminus level with respect to personal property. They stated that there is a level of concern that there are many accounts that are not generating revenue; especially when one considers the administrative work needed to process the accounts. They will consider this further at a future meeting.

**Any Other Business:**

Selectman Claman requested that he be provided an opportunity to address the Board and offer commentary on his experiences as a Board member. He noted that his term as a Board member was coming to a close and he would appreciate the chance to make a statement. Mr. Claman asked that his commentary be recorded into the Minutes. He stated his disappointment that there were not members of the public present to hear what he had to say. He told his fellow Board members that the past two years as a member on the Board had been an ‘eye-opening’ experience. He had come into his position as a member with some ‘pre-conceived’ notions of what could be expected and further stated that he had been misled by many as to what to expect as a member of the Board. He indicated that he had been told that the reporter who covered the Board meetings was ‘one sided and would not give a fair representation of the discussions that occurred at meetings.’ Mr. Claman stated that he found this to not only be untrue, but he wanted to personally thank ‘Kathryn’ for being the best voice for New Hartford and thank her for the newspaper coverage she provides to the town. Mr. Claman went on to state that he had been told that the Administrative Assistant worked ‘solely for Dan’ and would not be helpful to him and would not provide any information to him other than what ‘Dan would allow.’ Mr. Claman said that he found this to be totally unfounded and was far from the truth. He noted that his requests for information and answers to questions were always provided without any objection. He stated that he always felt that the Administrative Assistant acted in the belief that she was responsible to the residents of New Hartford and provided guidance to him when requested. Mr. Claman stated that his biggest regret is that it took him almost a year to figure things out on his own. He stated that it has been a pleasure to work with Dan and that he firmly believes that Dan does what he truly believes is best for New Hartford. The one concern expressed by Mr. Claman is the lack of a plan for the town garage – adding that he would like to see that facility moved to another location so that the current site could be used for something that would benefit Economic Development. Mr. Claman also thanked Selectman Kennerson for her commitment to the Board and wished her continued success. First Selectman Jerram thanked Mr. Claman for his commentary and stated that he would miss having Eric as a member of the Board. He agreed that they got off to a ‘rocky start’ but noted that things did improve as time went on and told Mr. Claman that he appreciated his commentary.

**Requests for Tax Refunds:**

Michael or MaryAnn Sabia	\$12.64	overpayment	motor vehicle
Financial Services Trust	\$341.97	overpayment	motor vehicle
Lynette Stelly	\$28.86	overpayment	motor vehicle

Joseph Ficca	\$6.62	overpayment	motor vehicle
David or Lori Boyajian	\$12.41	overpayment	motor vehicle
Ford Credit Personal Property Tax	\$275.49	overpayment	motor vehicle

**MOTION:** by Kennerson to approve the requests for tax refunds as submitted by the Tax Collector; seconded by Claman.

*Unanimous.*

**Minutes:**

**MOTION:** by Kennerson to approve the minutes dated September 24, 2019 as presented; seconded by Claman.

*Unanimous.*

**MOTION:** by Kennerson to approve the minutes dated October 8, 2019 as presented; seconded by Claman.

*Unanimous.*

*Respectfully Submitted,*

*Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant*

*No attachments filed with these minutes*

*The Open Farm Day report referenced in the minutes is available upon request from the Office of the First Selectman and is also available from the Town Clerk*