

**Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes
June 28, 2022**

Present: First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectman Laura Garay, Selectman Alesia Kennerson, Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward.

Others Present: Mary Beth Greenwood, Brian Watson, Steven Sekulski

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

Request from EDC for consideration of additional website:

First Selectman Jerram welcomed Economic Development Commission Chairman Brian Watson to the meeting and granted him the opportunity to address the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Watson stated that his reason for being at the meeting was to ask the Selectmen for consideration of funding and approval for a website that would focus on businesses and tourism. A dedicated website would allow New Hartford businesses to showcase their offerings on a site that would make New Hartford a destination. Mr. Watson stated that he had joined the EDC to help with positive growth of the town. He feels that businesses are hurting and there is a need to showcase them.

Mr. Watson would like to see a website developed that uses "search engine optimization." He explained that search engine optimization sites show up first on the list when someone attempts to find information by using Google. He has been doing research and finds that area towns are using tourism websites in addition to their regular sites. Social media, such as Facebook and Instagram are also being utilized.

Mr. Watson has been speaking with a local firm, Quadro Marketing, and has received an estimate of costs to develop, host and update a tourism site. The estimated fee is about \$9,850 as an annual cost which includes a \$250.00 yearly hosting fee and 10 hours of updating info per month at a cost of \$800 per month.

Mr. Watson stated that offering subscriptions to local businesses to be included on the website would be a way to generate some revenues to put toward costs of the site. Board member Garay expressed concern that it currently is already difficult to get organizations to provide information about their events for the town website and questioned how it would be different for a tourism site. Garay asked the First Selectman if the American Rescue Plan Act funds (\$10,000) that were set aside for Economic Development Commission could be used to fund this initiative, if the Selectmen supported it. Jerram replied that since this request for consideration is coming after the budget has already been developed, the ARPA funds would be the best option if this were to move forward. Watson replied that the EDC budget is \$6,000 per year and there are funds remaining from the current fiscal year that could be used. Jerram replied that the end of the fiscal year is upon us and there is no way to roll remaining funds over to the next year. The Selectmen were not ready to make any decision regarding this request at this time. Mr. Watson offered to send links of some examples of the different tourism websites that are currently available for the Selectmen to review.

Status of Regulating Cannibals:

First Selectman Jerram informed the Board members that the Recreation Commission had met and discussed the issue of the regulation of cannibals within town parks. Mr. Jerram stated that the

discussion was one where there were conflicting opinions and lots of conversation. The members had different viewpoints and really would like to see what other towns are doing before making a final decision. Some expressed their opinion that it would seem reasonable that if cannabis is regulated, there should also be some sort of restrictions/regulations regarding alcohol, too. There was reluctance at having to do this as they acknowledge that current practice tolerates alcohol as long as it does not become a problem. They don't really want to stop a practice that has not been a problem and wondered if they should enact regulations regarding cannabis as there hasn't been any problem with it yet. However, they also agreed that cannabis is different due to the fact that people can be exposed to the smoke from cannabis and it can have an effect on them, whereas Alcohol only effects the person consuming it. They were leaning towards supporting some type of regulation, but want time to deliberate on the matter.

First Selectman Jerram stated that the Planning and Zoning Commission will need to discuss the regulation of establishments that provide for the sale and manufacture of cannabis. If the Commission does not adopt regulations specific to cannabis, then they are obligated to review applications related to the sale/manufacturing of cannabis products in the same manner as they would to a business of a similar type (manufacturer/retailer). The P&Z is considering a moratorium on the matter; which allows them time to deliberate before making any firm decisions and adopting specific regulations. Jerram mentioned as information that the state has chosen to prohibit the use of cannabis on public property.

Mr. Jerram also informed the Selectmen that the Planning and Zoning Commission is also deliberating on Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). They do have regulations that permit ADUs, but there are some other guidelines that come into play and they will need to decide whether to adopt them or opt out. They will hold a public hearing on the matter.

American Rescue Plan Act

The Selectmen reviewed some new requests for 'grants' from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds that have been received. Each of the fire districts has made written requests for consideration by the Selectmen. One of the Commissioners of the South End Fire District submitted a letter requesting \$50,000 for dealing with rust on one of the firetrucks. The Chief of the New Hartford Village Fire District has asked for a total of \$56,966 to pay for a combination of HVAC improvements at both of their fire houses and also includes some funds for new radios.

An additional request has been received from the Farmington Valley Health District for \$27,149 from New Hartford (portion of a total \$448,544 from all participating towns) to pay for a community outreach coordinator, new technology, staff training and a vehicle. Dan stated that the FVHD was a huge asset during the pandemic; coordinating the vaccines and keeping track of infections. He supports their request for additional funding.

New Hartford Public Schools has a request for a roof at New Hartford Elementary School. First Selectman Jerram does not believe there is adequate funding 'set aside' for the roof. There is currently \$175,000 earmarked for this purpose, but Mr. Jerram feels that additional funds will be needed to complete the job.

Mr. Jerram is currently working with professionals who are assisting in creating specifications for the installation of a new roof on town hall. That project will go out to bid when the specs are completed. Another town hall item that is on the list of ARPA funding is technology. There is a need for funds to pay for upgrades to technology needed to support all of the new requirements in place due to the Police

Accountability Bill. Body cameras will be required for all officers and there is the need to store the video on servers so that it is accessible when needed. This is a massive undertaking and requires additional server space.

Funding for the Pine Meadow sewer expansion project has been the topic of some debate with the Water Pollution Control Authority. The WPCA had requested an ARPA allocation/grant in the amount of \$450,000 to be used for the sewer expansion. The Selectmen set aside \$360,000 from the first round of funding; with the thought that there may be additional funds set aside when the second allocation is discussed.

Rails to Trails has a significant allocation penciled in; but it remains to be seen whether or not this trail concept can move ahead. There are numerous challenges to overcome for a trail to become a reality. A final design needs to be completed in order to move ahead with seeking additional funding for construction.

The Selectmen discussed resident and business relief and recognized that there could be additional requests for assistance forthcoming once the public is more aware of their options. The Selectmen questioned if additional funds should be set aside for this purpose with the second round of funds. Selectman Garay commented that there isn't much funding for the seniors. Kennerson stated that she keeps looking to see if there is anything available for sale that might be suitable for a senior center. Jerram mentioned that the developer of the proposed senior housing has indicated that there might be an opportunity to set aside some land within the development for consideration of a senior center. Building permit software has been reviewed. The vendor of interest is IWORQS which is a fee of \$6,500 per year plus an initial \$5,000 set up fee. The software allows for online permitting. Town Hall IT should be increased to \$60,000 for a total of \$85,000 over two years.

The Selectmen briefly discussed the application process for those seeking business or individual funding through ARPA. Sharon and Cornwall have short applications while Canton has a detailed application. The Selectmen will review the various applications and see what they would like to include on an application to be used by New Hartford businesses and residents. Dan suggested that Neighbor to Neighbor Committee be the entity to screen the COVID relief applications. They are most familiar with reviewing requests for assistance. They could review the applications and make recommendations to the board.

The First Selectman noted that one specific request has been received for funding. That request has come from the ambulance association. An invoice will be submitted for payment.

The Department of Public Works will order the plow truck that has been approved to be paid for using ARPA funds.

Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan:

The Northwest Council of Government has had the natural hazard mitigation plan updated. Selectman Garay noted that the plan makes reference to relocation of the town garage, something she has been in favor of for many years. First Selectman stated that he has requested that the plan include a clarification that the water level of the river is now controlled by the dam and that the flood plain designation for that site is not accurate. FEMA has not updated their flood plain designations for that section of the river and there are errors. Mr. Jerram asked that the Selectmen approve the plan and authorize him to sign it.

MOTION: by Garay to approve the 2021-2026 hazard mitigation plan and authorize the First Selectman to sign the plan seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous

Discussion Of Food Truck/Vending Permits:

Jerram informed the Selectmen that a letter has been drafted and will be sent to the various businesses that contract with Food Trucks regarding reinstating the need for vending permits to be acquired for all food trucks operating within the Town. The Selectmen agreed that July 15, 2022, would be a target date for permits to be effective. They agreed that \$25.00 per day would be the fee; which is what it had been Pre-Covid. An ordinance had been proposed with a different fee structure, but that ordinance was tabled and was not adopted. The Selectmen were in agreement that adopting an ordinance is still something that they wish to pursue; but would go with the daily permit fee until that happens.

Appointment To Boards And Commissions

The First Selectman announced that he had been contacted by Doug Roth, Chairman of the Open Space Commission to seek appointment of Mary Hoag as an alternate on the Open Space Commission.

MOTION: by Kennerson to appoint Mary Hoag to serve as an alternate member of the Open Space Preservation Commission with a term to expire December 31, 2022; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous

Hogback Watershed Recreation Commission:

First Selectman Jerram has been the representative to the Hogback Watershed Recreation Commission and there is a need to appoint/reappoint representation as his term has expired. There is currently a conflict with several agencies because no one is taking the responsibility for monitoring water levels in the Farmington River. There is concern about the lack of water for recreational activities in the river due to the drought. The Hogback Watershed Recreation Commission does not have the authority to control releases from the dam when levels are less than desirable, but they are charged with providing opportunity for hunting, fishing and boating on hogback land. Therefore, they are advocates for maintaining proper water levels for these recreational activities to occur.

MOTION: by Garay to reappoint Dan Jerram to serve as representative on the Hogback Watershed Recreation Commission through December 2023; seconded by Kennerson.

Operations Updates:

East Cotton Hill Road Cross pipe:

First Selectman Jerram informed the Board that there had been a need to get new quotes for the replacement of a cross pipe on East Cotton Hill Road due to a clarification needed regarding the scope of the project. Two contractors had submitted bids, however, they were not “apples to apples” and there was need to ask for revised quotes. ME Carroll has been contracted to install the cross pipe for a cost of 27,874.62.

Cedar Lane Bridge repairs:

Hemlock Construction was low bid when the RFP was issued. They were awarded the job but were not able to begin the work due to DEEP permit not being issued. The permits is finally in place and Hemlock has notified the town that there has been a small price escalation for the first phase, but it is still within the budget.

Jerram noted that the price of pavement has increased substantially and this is no longer part of the first phase. Paving of the area will be completed at a later date.

Road work:

Chip seal has been completed on several roads throughout town. This is a pavement preservation technique. The town will sweep up the loose stone within a matter of weeks.

Recreation:

The Camp program at Brodie has begun. The enrollment figures for the season look good. The camp director is the same individual as last year and there are many returning counselors. It is a good program.

Summer concerts will begin soon. All of the bands have been booked and confirmed.

Recreation/Senior Director:

Kara DeSantis has been hired to be a combined Recreation/Senior Director. Both of these positions were part time and independent of each other and a decision was made to combine the positions and hire a full time individual to provide oversight of the two areas.

Police Officer:

Mr. Jerram stated that former resident trooper Marc Puzzo has been hired as a part time New Hartford Police Officer. Officer Puzzo retired from the State Police but was interested in part time work and went through the hiring process to fill a vacancy in the police department. Finding candidates for police work is becoming increasingly difficult. It may be necessary to hire a few part time officers rather than full time.

Special Duty Officer Fees:

First Selectman Jerram informed the Board that the police have suggested that the town increase their fee for Special Duty police. Neighboring towns are charging more than what New Hartford currently charges for special assignments (traffic control for utility companies and things like that). The suggestion is to increase the hourly rate to \$100.00 per hour for special duty assignments. This fee helps to offset the cost of the overtime wage plus wear and tear on police vehicles.

MOTION: by Kennerson to increase the hourly rate for special duty police officers to \$100.00 per hour, seconded by Garay.

Unanimous.

Affordable Housing Plan:

First Selectman Jerram stated that the Town is required to file an Affordable Housing plan. Former Northwest Council of Governments employee Janelle Mullen has gone into private consulting and will draft a plan in conformity with state regulations. Dan has executed an agreement for services with Janelle and his office will work with Land Use Administrator Mike Lucas to gather information needed for this plan. Dan noted that it is difficult for small towns who have 3 or 4 houses built per year to have a housing plan.

Sustainable CT:

An intern working with the NWCOG came to Town Hall and met with the First Selectman and the Administrative Assistant to explain the Sustainable CT initiative. This program is a certification program for towns that inspires and supports communities in being resilient, inclusive and offers recognition to towns for sustainability measures. This was the initial meeting to see what this program involves.

New Hartford House re-build:

The owner of the property next to Town Hall – the site of the former New Hartford House met with the Planning and Zoning Commission. A conceptual plan was presented to the Commission just as information; not a formal application. The plans were well received by P&Z. He will continue to move forward with a design plan.

Superintendent Search Committee:

The local Board of Education met to discuss how they will move ahead to search for a Superintendent. The Board has asked Dan Jerram and Jeff Linton to serve along with them as members of the search Committee.

Survey work:

First Selectman Jerram stated that he has asked local surveyor Carmine of Dufour Surveying to complete a survey of the “Surdam” property and the Antolini property. Jerram noted that there is no recorded survey of these town owned properties. The Surveyor has stated that he will do this when the leaves are off of the trees. As-builts for the Antolini Salt Shed and the pavilion behind town hall have also been requested. Jerram stated that the town requests as- builts from residents/commercial properties and therefore the town should provide them also.

Executive session:

MOTION by Kennerson to enter into Executive Session at 9:10 PM for the purpose of discussion related to pending legal claims; seconded by Garay.

The Selectmen exited from Executive Session at 9:26 pm.

MOTION: by Kennerson to retain Attorney William (Bill) Wilson, formerly with the law firm of Halloran Sage and now with the firm of Robinson Cole as legal representative for the Carpenter Road Bridge matter, seconded by Garay.

Unanimous.

MOTION: by Kennerson to adjourn at 9:30 PM; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant