

**Board of Selectmen
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, January 24, 2023
MINUTES**

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

Others Present: Brian Watson, Chairman of Economic Development Commission, Greg Watkins, Shelly Lloyd, Jay Bailey; Also present were members of the public attending “virtually” – not all were identified.

First Selectman Jerram called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM.

American Rescue Plan Act Funding – 2023 proposals (includes EDC Website Presentation)

Economic Development Chairman Brian Watson introduced Greg Watkins, owner of Quadro Marketing, to the Selectmen. Mr. Watson stated that Quadro Marketing is a local company that has provided a quote to the EDC to develop a business/tourism website.

Mr. Watkins lead the presentation. He shared examples of various websites (including Visit Litchfield and Washington, CT) for the Selectmen to see. He stated that there are templates that can be used to develop the website. He stated that his company will do the legwork to get businesses on board – but businesses will need to provide their own photos and create their own blurb to advertise the business. The site will include information on businesses as well as information on fun/interesting events and things to do. It will utilize “SEO – Search Engine Optimization.” This makes use of title tags and key words to direct traffic to the site. SEO increases the number of “hits” a website gets.

The Selectmen had questions regarding the functionality of the site. Who will be able to update the site? Will there be a calendar that businesses/sponsors of events will be able to post to? Who will monitor the content of the site – will information require approval prior to being posted on the site? Mr. Watkins stated that his service contract will allow for a certain number of hours to be utilized for updating the site. Unused hours can carry over from month to month. Mr. Watson clarified that businesses that appear on this site will be redirected back to their own specific websites. Business owners will have the responsibility of keeping their websites updated.

Selectman Garay voiced her concern that the website be easy to navigate. She asked if this website would be available only to EDC members to update – or would others be able to update information. It was agreed that someone has to be able to approve the content prior to it being posted.

Selectman Kennerson questioned the timeframe for implementation. Mr. Watkins replied that it usually takes about 3 months to get content and images needed to launch a site. The fees for services will be separated out for host fee, build fee and updating fees. Ms. Kennerson stated that the ARPA funds should be expended by December 2024. Therefore, she supports the use of \$15,000 of ARPA funds to get this site up and running and if it is successful, the costs will need to be included in the annual budget.

The Selectmen thanked Mr. Watson and Mr. Watkins for being present at the meeting and for providing answers to their questions. The Selectmen will discuss the funding level for this initiative as part of their ARPA agenda item.

The Selectmen continued their ARPA funding for 2023 discussion with First Selectman Jerram presenting requests received for funding from the next round of American Recovery Plan Act funding. Farmington Valley Health District is seeking additional funding for their operations. Some towns have already given the funding to FVHD while some towns are not providing additional funding. New Hartford is being asked to consider an additional \$27,149. Jerram asked the Board to decide if they desire to fund this request, noting that CARES funding was given as was extra funding for vaccinations. Jerram noted that an outreach coordinator has been hired (it's a short term funded position that would eventually have to move into a permanent budget item) The assessment to the town will not be increased due to FVHD using some of their surplus funds (due to APRA funding some of their routine costs).

Mr. Jerram would like to make sure that there are some funds remaining to add to the Pine Meadow sewer system expansion and he urged the Selectmen to keep this initiative in mind.

Garay would like to add additional support to the emergency services. The Selectmen discussed the funding for the ambulance association noting that \$75,000 had already been appropriated to the ambulance during the first round of funding. Adding \$40,000 to this second round will be a total of \$115,000, which would be generous. The Selectmen decided to review the remainder of the list prior to determining what to do with this line item.

Town Hall IT (technology) is an area that could use additional funding. There is a lot of GIS mapping that the town would like to do. It would be great to see this increased to \$60,000 to allow the Assessor to work on this project. The cost of the plow truck cost has increased by \$50,000.

The Selectmen discussed an allocation of \$2400 to St John's Episcopal Church to be used for gift cards for the food pantry. The Selectmen also decided that the EDC consult /website should be funded at a level of \$20,000.

A discussion occurred regarding funding to be used for Seniors. There has been some internal discussion regarding seeking improvements to the kitchen so that it can be an approved "food prep" area. This would allow for simple meals to be prepared and served onsite. Ms. Garay is frustrated that a short term goal of improving the kitchen is taking place of a search for a senior center. Jerram commented that despite a lot of new programming opportunities being offered to the Seniors, participation levels are not increasing. It is frustrating – the interest level just isn't there. Having a kitchen that allows for the serving of meals in-house is a way to provide the social activity that seems to draw seniors – food. Garay asked if there may be a chance to discuss the inclusion of a senior center within the 55+ housing that is being proposed along route 44. She commented that there seemed to be excitement of looking for a building that would be suitable for a senior center, but that excitement has waned. Kennerson responded that it was due to increased pricing and the lack of suitable options in the area that seems to be most desirable to the Seniors. The Selectmen discussed some other improvements that may be needed to the space – including a new floor (perhaps commercial high grade vinyl plank flooring) and some fabric panels to assist with the acoustics in the room. Jerram suggested \$75,000 be earmarked for the Senior Center.

Rails to trails will get \$100,000 in funding.

Laura Garay expressed concern about Veterans in town that may be needing assistance. She stated that there are those who are too proud to ask for help and she wondered how to reach them. Ms. Hayward, who acts as Social Services in her capacity as Administrative Assistant replied that there are a few Veterans who have reached out and do get energy assistance. She stated that if Ms. Garay has anyone specific in mind, she should discuss with Ms. Hayward and Ms. Hayward could do outreach if needed. Kennerson wondered if there is a way to assist in giving Veterans a one -time assistance with property taxes. Jerram replied that there are Veterans Rebates through the Assessor's Office that are available to Veterans.

The Beekley Library has presented quotes they have received for a new roof. Mr. Jerram remarked that the library had originally asked for funds to expand their facility, but they have now decided not to go through with the expansion. Garay questioned if they still are seeking 100K. Dan replied that Board of Director President Jeremy explained that the roof needs to be replaced (currently 3-5 years "life" left) and they would like to also have solar panels installed. There are also some mechanicals that need to be tended to. Selectman Kennerson is in favor of supporting the roof noting that the lowest quote is \$63,500. There are additional costs for gutters. Kennerson suggested \$75,000 might be a more appropriate level of funding. Ms. Kennerson would want to discuss this with Board of Finance to see how they feel; would they want to keep the funding at 100 K because it was already approved, with the understanding that funds not used for the roof would be used towards mechanicals? Mr. Jerram supports that the library wants to take care of their existing building.

The First Selectman suggested that an additional 10K be added to cover administrative expenses so that "the good work that is currently being done to get town hall file organization and records retention" can continue. He commented that the records retention project is one that is tedious and takes time to go through files and determine what can be expunged versus saved. Additional support to get this completed has been extremely beneficial and he would like to see this continue while it can.

Garay returned to the subject to the Ambulance – she is very supportive of funding this request. The Ambulance is a service that benefits the entire town. They take care of all of us. She stated that the fire districts get tax revenues, but the ambulance does not. Emergency Services is important to everyone.

All of the Selectmen support additional funding towards the sewer line expansion in Pine Meadow. They all agreed that if there are unexpended funds in any of the planned line items, those funds should be redirected to the sewer line expansion.

American Rescue Plan Act Funding – applications:

The Selectmen reviewed 2 requests from local businesses seeking funds to help with expenses due to lost revenue during COVID. Both applications received positive referrals from the review committee. Personal information was redacted but it was noted that financials were reviewed and the businesses showed a loss during COVID.

MOTION: by Kennerson to approve the two applications for small business relief funding using the ARPA funds; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous.

Revaluation – bid results/award of contract:

First Selectman Jerram informed the Board that it is time for a five year revaluation. Two quotes were received; one from Municipal Valuation Services and the other from Vision Appraisal Services. Mr. Jerram stated that the town has a good existing relationship with Vision and the Assessor would like to continue to work with Vision; even though their quote was a little higher than Municipal Valuation Services. She feels that their knowledge of New Hartford and their intimate familiarity with the software are benefits that give them a slight edge over the competition.

Selectman Garay commented that the Assessor is the one who has the knowledge of what needs to be done and if she is recommending that the Town engage the services of Vision to perform the revaluation, she is in favor of supporting this.

MOTION: by Garay to accept the recommendation made by the Assessor to retain Vision Appraisal to conduct the 2023 Revaluation at a not to exceed cost of \$124,000, seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous

Capital Expenditures:

A review of the Proposed Capital Plan was conducted by the Board. Few comments were made regarding the proposal. It was noted that the funding levels are high as this is a planning document with a “wish list” of items. Garay questioned if there should be a reduction to General Park improvements due to the use of the ARPA funds to make improvements in the parks. Jerram replied that it might be best to leave the plan as is for now and then as the budget process moves forward, make reductions that may be needed. The Selectmen agreed to submit this plan to the Capital Expenditures Commission at their February meeting.

Requests for Tax Refunds:

The following Tax Refunds were presented to the Board for their approval:

2018 Grand List:

Matthew Greenwood	Motor Vehicles	90.25
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2019 Grand List:

Matthew Greenwood	Motor Vehicles	80.02
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2020 Grand List:

Matthew Greenwood	Motor Vehicles	149.75
Ali Mohammad	Motor Vehicles	296.03
Ali Mohammad	Motor Vehicles	116.20
Toyota Lease Trust	Motor Vehicles	215.73
Ally Financial	Motor Vehicles	485.05

2021 Grand List:

Matthew Greenwood	Motor Vehicles	29.99
Kanengiser & Holland	Motor Vehicles	3,697.69
Field/Arceo	Motor Vehicles	264.97
Christopher Bromson	Motor Vehicles	650.19
Toyota Lease Trust	Motor Vehicles	497.16
Ivette Sanchez	Motor Vehicles	468.95

MOTION: by Kennerson to approve the tax refunds as recommended by the Tax Collector; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous

Minutes:

MOTION: by Kennerson to approve the minutes dated October 25, 2022 as presented; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous

MOTION: by Garay to approve the minutes dated November 22, 2022 as presented; seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous.

Any Other Business to Come Before this Board:

Dan stated that there are a couple of Appointments that need to be made. He stated that he has been notified that his term as a Board member on the Farmington Valley Health District has expired and therefore needs reappointment. Also, there is a vacancy on the Board of the Regional Refuse Disposal District and a resident has agreed to fill this position.

MOTION: by Garay to reappoint Dan Jerram to serve as New Hartford's representative on the Board of The Farmington Valley Health District through 12/31/2025; seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous.

MOTION: by Kennerson to appoint Sam Arbinson to fill a vacancy on the Board of Directors for the Regional Refuse Disposal District #1 for a term that expires 12/31/2023; seconded by Garay.

The Selectmen acknowledged that it was "nice to have a new volunteer on Board" and thanked Sam for his willingness to serve.

Unanimous.

First Selectman Jerram informed the Board that there are some Grants that are received on an annual basis and there should be public approval to spend these during the fiscal year. The town also has a Historic Documents fund that can be used to supplement expenses for items needed by the Town Clerk. Attorney Roraback has suggested to put something in process for the Annual Town Meeting that authorizes the First Selectman to utilize these funds with the approval of the Board of Selectmen. Jerram mentioned that there are Opioid Settlement funds that will need approval to spend.

Selectman Kennerson asked if there will be a town wide mailing that will alert residents of the new Open Burning Ordinance that has taken effect. A suggestion was made by Administrative Assistant Hayward

that perhaps a Newsletter that touches upon that plus a few items of interest (i.e water and sewer asset sale, Brodie Bathroom project, Trail status, etc...) might be better served.

Resident Jay Bailey offered his opinion that the proposed Economic Development Website costs are high. He was concerned that this would be an expense that would be on the books forever without documentation of worthiness. Selectman Kennerson replied that there should be a way to check the analytics (which Mr. Watkins indicated would be available) and make a determination as to usage.

Resident Shelly Lloyd (and a member on the Economic Development Commission) stated that she is in favor of the website and felt it will be good to have some time to get businesses on board before launching the website. She stated her concern that many of the businesses are not members of the business council and it is important to include all businesses; just not those who are members.

MOTION: by Garay to adjourn at 10:01 PM; seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant

NO ATTACHMENTS TO THESE MINUTES