

**Board of Selectmen
Regular Meeting
December 17, 2019**

Minutes

Present: First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectman Alesia Kennerson, Selectman David Rosengren; Members of the Public Joe Toro, Denton (Bud) Butler, Tom Buzzi, Jay Bailey; Member of the Press Kathryn Boughton; Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward.

First Selectman Jerram called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM. He welcomed newly elected Selectman David Rosengren to the Board.

Operations Updates:

Mr. Jerram stated that the agenda item "operations updates" allows for him to be able to update the Selectmen on various operational matters. It is a sampling of the issues and tasks that are mostly routine business. It is not intended to be all inclusive, but does provide for the Board to be kept abreast regarding operational matters and town business currently underway.

Highway updates:

Mr. Jerram informed the Board that a substantial amount of sand and salt has been used to address the storms that have occurred thus far. He informed the Board that the Highway Superintendent is experimenting with using straight salt rather than the usual mixture of sand and salt on 2 of the plow routes. The downtown route and a route that is in the Gillette Road area are being tested to see if this is efficient or not. He noted that plow routes that include areas of extreme grade are continuing to use the sand/salt mixture as it does provide additional traction.

Assessor Office Update:

The First Selectman informed the Board members that a clerical assistant has been hired to assist the part time certified Assessor. This individual will provide support on a regular basis in the Assessor's office. She is scheduled for a 20-hour work week. Currently, there is still another Certified Assessor providing assessing support on one day per week during this transitional period. Mr. Jerram explained that this is an unusual time of year to have assessing staff turnover as this is the time of year when the Grand List is getting finalized. It is not common for an Assessor to take over mid stream in the preparation of the Grand List due to the fact that they are relying on someone else's data to prepare the list. This does complicate matters a bit, but it will not prevent the Grand List from being completed.

Rails to Trails:

The Rails to Trails Committee has met with the Kevin from Anchor Engineering and Val from Good Earth consulting and have begun the task of putting together a proposed trail route.

Routine Operations:

The Emergency Management Grant paperwork has been filed with Region 5. This allows for partial reimbursement of wages that are paid to the Emergency Management Director.

Discussion has begun regarding Health Insurance. Mr. Jerram stated that there has been an increase in experience rating which will most likely result in an increase in premiums.

The Local Board of Education and Region 7 Teacher contracts have been resolved. Teachers are receiving an average of 3% increases per year for the next 3 years.

Mr. Jerram informed the Board that all Town Union contracts expire in 2020 – police, town hall employees and highway personnel. He is in the midst of scheduling contract negotiations dates.

The Conservation Easement for the Helen Butler Trail has been completed and recorded.

The Lease for the Beekley property (on Town Hill Road) will be in effect at the beginning of January. The town will contract to have the parking area site plan developed.

CIRMA has completed their audit of the Workers Compensation policy and estimated premium for the 2018 -2019 year. There will be an additional premium of \$4300 due to CIRMA for coverage for the last year. Mr. Jerram explained that the premium for coverage is based on an estimate of wages paid out each year. CIRMA conducts an audit of actual wages at the end of each year to determine if they have billed appropriately. Overtime for police and highway personnel is always an unknown and historically there have been extra fees due once the audit is performed. This year is no different.

The 2018-2019 financial audit is completed. There were no findings. The Audit is generally presented to the Board of Finance at either the January or February meeting. Timeframe is determined by the Chair. First Selectman Jerram stated that the IT Consultant, Kurt Lange, is working on a server upgrade. There is a need to get all computers upgraded to Windows 10 and Kurt is also completing that task. It has been discovered that the assessing software needs to be upgraded as well, as the current version is not compatible with Windows 10. This will require some funds that were not previously anticipated.

Appointments to Boards and Commissions:

MOTION: by Kennerson to reappoint Donna Howard, Kathy White and Penny Miller to continue to serve as members on the Commission on Aging (COA); terms to expire December 31, 2022; seconded by Rosengren.

Unanimous.

It was noted that COA member Karen Kuhl had sent a letter asking that she not be reappointed to serve at this time. She thanked the COA and the Selectmen for the opportunity she had being a member on the Commission, but does not currently have the time to remain as a member on the Board.

MOTION: by Kennerson to reappoint Douglas Roth to continue to serve as an alternate member on the Open Space Commission; term to expire December 31, 2022; seconded by Rosengren.

Unanimous.

Selectman Kennerson questioned membership on Stanclift Cove. She asked if there are enough members to constitute a quorum at this time. Mr. Jerram replied that the Town of New Hartford is short one member and Barkhamsted has had one resignation, which leaves 2 vacancies out of 6 positions. However, attendance at the meetings has been spotty and there have been difficulties having a quorum present. The two New Hartford members have had consistent attendance and have posted agendas and taken minutes of any discussions that have occurred. Any action items that need to be revisited by a full quorum will be done as attendance permits.

Selectman Rosengren questioned the status of the Conservation Commission. He wondered if there had been any interest expressed by potential candidates to fill the vacancies. First Selectman Jerram replied

that since the establishment of the Open Space Commission, there has been difficulty finding volunteers to serve on this Commission. There is an overlap of charges between the two boards and therefore, they have similar duties. In general, there is difficulty in finding volunteers to serve on Boards and Commissions. Jerram stated that the Ordinance establishing the number of members required to be on the Conservation Commission needs to be amended. This will occur at the Annual Town Meeting in April.

Discussion of Goals and Objectives for 2020:

First Selectman Jerram stated that he would like to have a roundtable discussion regarding Goals and Objectives for the Board to consider for 2020.

He presented his ideas to the Board for consideration. Mr. Jerram stated that his biggest priority is to maintain affordability for residents and to continue to support Boards and Commissions and also support the general upkeep and maintenance of the Parks in town. He noted that there are two larger initiatives currently underway that will require public input. One is the proposed rails to trails and the second is the potential sale of the water and wastewater assets. Mr. Jerram would like to see the expansion of Senior Housing in New Hartford, noting that privately owned Canterbury Village always has a waiting list and there is a need for additional senior housing. Satan's Kingdom Road and Stedman Road are two roads in New Hartford that are cause for concern and these will need to be looked into at some point in the future. Jerram would like to see the undeveloped land in the Industrial Park area be put to good use. There are prime commercial spots that are currently vacant that need to be filled; such as the former Dunkin Donuts site, Portabellos Restaurant site and Blue Sky Foods Restaurant. Jerram also mentioned his desire to have the cesspools that exist at Brodie Park that service some of the cabins be condemned and have the current bathrooms in the affected cabins be removed. He mentioned investigating the possibility of having one larger centrally located bathroom be constructed which would be available for use by those who frequent Brodie Park; similar to what is in place at Browns Corner. Mr. Jerram also suggested investigating areas where potential solar arrays could be installed. His final thought regarding goals and objectives was to have some sort of volunteer recognition to recognize several individuals who have had dedicated volunteer service to the community. He noted that the town has lost a couple of individuals who had dedicated many years of their lives to community service, most notably Dave Childs and Roy Steeves. First Selectman Jerram stated that the completion of the new Dunkin Donuts was a big accomplishment for the year.

Selectman Kennerson stated that she was in agreement with the goals and objectives as presented by First Selectman Jerram, but also added that she would like to see the implementation of an electric car charging station. She would like to have that be one of the priorities as she feels that in order for electric cars to become a more popular vehicle choice, there needs to be commitment by communities to have places available for people to charge their vehicles when visiting. Mr. Jerram replied that the proposed additional public parking lot on land between the Community Club Tennis courts and the Post Office has been stalled. This would be a good place to consider a charging station, if a lease agreement can be made between the town and the officers of the Community Club. He noted that there had been a verbal agreement in place but the officers of the Club have changed and they are now looking for some compensation for use of the land. The initial proposal was for a 25 year lease with the

construction costs being the only costs being incurred by the town. The current Board would like additional compensation.

Ms. Kennerson informed the Selectmen that she had attended a workshop at the recent Connecticut Conference Municipalities Conference that focused on internal operational assessments. She felt that there was some good information gleaned from that workshop and suggested that there should be some kind of process engineering engaged by the town to establish efficiencies in departments. She also would like to have a Freedom of Information presentation held at Town Hall so that interested members of Boards and Commissions and staff could attend and have a refresher on FOI matters.

Selectman Rosengren stated that he was looking forward to being a member of the Board of Selectmen. He said that he has reviewed the Plan of Conservation and Development which serves as the current plan in place for the direction the town should move in. He is in agreement with the plan and he supports downtown development. Mr. Rosengren stated that he would like to enhance the attractiveness of the downtown area; noting that curb appeal is very important to attracting visitors. He suggested that there be attractive directional signage rather than the current mixture of individual signage that sometimes clutters the area. Mr. Jerram responded that the Economic Development Commission has been working on improved signage and perhaps this is something that could be addressed with them. Selectman Rosengren would like to see a combined Senior and Community Center. He stated that he had recently visited Litchfield and saw that they have a combined center and it was a nice facility that saw a lot of use. Mr. Rosengren emphasized that a new garage should be a consideration of this Board. He noted that a recommendation to move the existing structure has been in place for many years and he would like to see this accomplished. He agreed with First Selectman Jerram's desire to do something about increased housing for seniors. He also would like to see the professionalism of town government officials expand. He cited the recent change in the Tax Collector position as an example; noting that it moved from an elected position to an appointed position. Selectman Rosengren also would like to see that the Board of Education budget is watched. The education portion of the town budget is a large percentage and Mr. Rosengren feels it should be monitored to see that the resources are properly utilized. Selectman Rosengren would like to see a Grantwriter hired by the town so that the town can actively pursue grants. He added that it is necessary to spend money to make money. Mr. Rosengren stated that he spoke with personnel at USDA and he was told that there are grants available that could assist in acquiring a new garage.

Mr. Rosengren stated that he has concerns with the proposed sale of the water and wastewater assets, noting that if the sale goes through, it will be one of the largest capital sales this town has ever seen. He stated that water has been deemed a public trust and the citizens of New Harford deserve to have a fair presentation of what the scope of this proposal entails. He added that he feels it is necessary to have professionals and experts in the field engaged in the process in order for residents to make an informed decision when it comes time to take a vote. Mr. Rosengren added that those serviced by private water companies pay more for water than municipal water companies and this is a concern to him. Selectman Rosengren reiterated his comment that professionals should be the ones to present information, not members of a committee.

Selectman Kennerson rebutted the comment made by Selectman Rosengren stating that the Asset

Evaluation Team has had access to professionals and have gleaned information from them. She noted in particular the engineering firm of CDM Smith who has provided cost estimates when needed. She also referenced meetings that have been held with public agencies which she considers to be professionals.

First Selectman Jerram addressed Selectman Rosengren's commentary on the town garage issue; informing him that the capital plan has, for the past few years, included funding to be set aside for a potential town garage. This has been included as an item on the long term capital plan to show the residents that this is a long term goal. Should there be a proposal for purchase of the land where the garage currently sits, immediate action could be taken by going to a town meeting for funding. Having a place holder in the capital plan shows that this issue is not forgotten. Mr. Jerram explained that there has been discussion with the owners of the property adjacent to the town garage site (the "Hurley" property) and an understanding exists that should there be an interest in developing the Hurley property, the Town would be willing to negotiate the sale of the town garage property and include it to be considered by the interested developer. Jerram explained that this would be the sensible way to consider relocation of the garage as there would be funds available from the sale to put toward a new garage. Mr. Rosengren expressed his concern that the current situation with the town garage is that it is all split up –different parts in different areas. He is of the opinion that it lacks efficiency to have to drive to several different areas when it could all be in one place. The First Selectman encouraged Mr. Rosengren to visit the Town Garage and have a first- hand look at the facility. Mr. Rosengren replied that he has already done so.

Mr. Jerram addressed concerns expressed by Selectman Rosengren regarding the Asset Evaluation Team (AET) and the proposed sale of the water and wastewater assets. Mr. Jerram stated that the Asset Evaluation Team has done extensive research and has been meeting for a couple of years investigating the potential sale. They have recently voted to make a presentation to the Board of Selectmen, which will fulfill a portion of the charge originally assigned to this committee. Mr. Rosengren again expressed his concern that there should be expert testimony on the matter. He acknowledged the time and effort put forth by the committee, but stated that he does not feel that enough time has been spent on getting experts to weigh in on the question of 'does a sale make sense?' He would prefer that experts be consulted on the matter before hearing a presentation. Selectman Kennerson stated that she would be willing to hear a presentation by the AET to ascertain whether or not she feels that there is sufficient information to move a recommendation forward to public presentations.

The Selectmen agreed on a date of Monday, January 13, 2020, at 6:30 PM for a presentation by the AET to the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Rosengren stated that he would like to have information that will be presented that evening in advance of that meeting so that he could review it and be ready to ask questions.

MOTION: by Kennerson to add Opportunity for Public Comment to the agenda at this time; seconded by Rosengren.

Unanimous.

Opportunity for Public comment:

Resident Jay Bailey commented that he did agree with the need for better signage in the center of town so that it is more appealing. He commended the Selectmen for their thinking that Hurley Park is a good

place for future development and he is in agreement that this is the key to being able to replace the town garage. He added that he “sleeps well at night” knowing that this Administration has for several years not been wasting his tax dollars and continues to look out for careful spending.

Request for Tax Refunds:

2017 Grand List

Jordan Wolcowicz	MV overpayment	\$51.10
Tammy Annis	MV overpayment	\$224.62
Catherine or Michael Brunnetti	MV overpayment	\$53.59
Stacy Leeman	MV overpayment	\$61.63

2018 Grand List

Joan Rock	MV overpayment	\$36.06
Jonathan B. Sedgwick	MV overpayment	\$100.28
Laura K. Bedford	MV overpayment	\$31.16
Stacy Leeman	MV Overpayment	\$80.30
Toyota Lease Trust	MV overpayment	\$172.94

MOTION: by Kennerson to approve the request for Tax Refunds as approved by the Tax Collector; seconded by Rosengren.

Unanimous.

Approval of Minutes:

MOTION: by Kennerson to accept the minutes of the November 19, 2019 Board of Selectmen meeting as presented; seconded by Jerram.

AYE: Jerram, Kennerson

ABSTAIN: Rosengren

Motion passes, minutes accepted as presented.

MOTION: by Kennerson to add Executive Session to the agenda of this meeting for the purpose of discussion of matters related to security, seconded by Jerram.

Unanimous

MOTION: by Kennerson to enter into Executive Session at 8:50 PM for discussion of matters related to Security; seconded by Jerram.

Unanimous.

Selectmen Jerram, Kennerson, Rosengren and Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward entered into Executive Session at 8:50 PM.

Executive Session ended at 9:00 PM and no action was taken.

MOTION: by Kennerson to adjourn at 9:00 PM; seconded by Jerram.

Selectman Rosengren stated that there is no need to call for a motion to adjourn according to Robert's Rules of Order.

AYE: Jerram, Kennerson

Motion to adjourn passed, Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant

No attachments submitted with the minutes