

**Board of Selectmen
Special Meeting
Monday, February 29, 2016**

MINUTES

Present: First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectman Alesia Kennerson, Selectman Laura Garay; Members of the Public Joe Toro, John Burdick, Dave Kimmel, Mark Russo; Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward.

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

Minutes:

MOTION: by Kennerson to accept the minutes of the Special Board of Selectmen Meeting dated February 18, 2016 as presented; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous.

Appointments to Boards and Commissions:

First Selectman Jerram informed the Board that he had received a request to appoint an alternate to the Farmington River Coordinating Committee (FRCC). This request came from current representative Alison Murdock. She states that this individual is active in the group and would be a good candidate. Jerram noted that it is not often that someone steps forward to seek appointment on this Committee and recommended that the Board support this request.

MOTION: by Garay to appoint Joe Merlino of Johnnycake Lane in New Hartford, CT to serve as an alternate member on the Farmington River Coordinating Committee; no term of office assigned; seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous.

MOTION: by Garay to appoint John (Jack) Casey to fill a vacancy as a member of the Economic Development Commission; term to expire 12/31/2020; seconded by Kennerson.

Mr. Jerram commented that Mr. Casey, a former member of the Board of Selectmen, would, in his opinion, be an asset to the EDC. He noted that as a Board of Selectmen, they were all able to work well together; even when there were differences of opinions and he believed that Jack would bring this "willingness to work together" characteristic to the EDC. Selectman Kennerson agreed with this comment. Selectman Garay added that she had no qualms in supporting this appointment and stated that she was eager to see the EDC move forward.

Unanimous.

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At this point, Selectman Kennerson stated that she would like to add some commentary to the record regarding the appointment of individuals to serve on Boards and Commissions. Ms. Kennerson said that it has always been her goal to appoint individuals who she feels can work well with fellow commission members as well as with the Board of Selectmen. She noted that she had recently had some initial reservations regarding the appointment of certain individuals to serve on a Commission, and after serious consideration, she had changed her mind and was going to support the appointment. However, a recent chain of social media posts that were negative in spirit were cause for her to once again reconsider her position. She continued by adding that the posts “clearly demonstrated an unwillingness to work together with this Board of Selectmen.” She stated that the negativity of the posts was contrary to the spirit of moving forward. Keeping this in mind, she added that she will not support the recommendation of anyone who is actively working against the spirit of this Board. Selectman Garay added that she agreed with Selectman Kennerson regarding appointing individuals who can help to move things forward. She stated that she felt it is good practice for a candidate to be thoroughly vetted and that it is important that individuals have positive attributes to bring forth as members of boards and commissions. First Selectman Jerram agreed with his board members, adding that ultimately, it is the Board of Selectmen that is charged with the authority to appoint board members.

Budget 2016-2017:

The Selectmen reviewed the budget and discussed some of the line items. It was noted that the Stanclift Cove Commission may request an increase in the allocation given to them. The Authority would like to be proactive and include tree removal within their budget. First Selectman Jerram updated the Board regarding the tree issue at Stanclift. Currently, there are many trees that have been deemed to be a liability and need to be removed, cabled or pruned. An estimate of \$40,000 has been received. Don Stein, First Selectman of Barkhamsted and First Selectman Jerram met on site with the highway foreman from each town to determine if some of this work can be done “in house.” There will be the need to hire a professional service for some of the larger trees where a crane will be needed. The highway foremen estimate that it would take roughly 5 days to remove the trees and would be a cost of about \$15,000.

Selectman Garay stated that she thought this was a “good plan” and was pleased that the two towns were working together to expedite the process. First Selectman Jerram noted that in-kind labor is not factored into the cost and commented that due to having a mild winter, the expense should be able to be covered within the highway budget. Mr. Jerram commented that the Metropolitan District Commission has signaled that they have the authority to restrict access to the beach if the tree concerns are not addressed. Therefore, both Mr. Stein and Mr. Jerram felt that action needed to be taken as soon as possible.

The Selectmen then discussed the budget for the Registrar of Voters. They expressed concern at the request that has been presented to them; noting that no surrounding town has a budget of \$75,000. The Selectmen agreed that they would like the Registrars to reconsider their budget and pare it down.

Selectman Kennerson stated that one of the concerns expressed at the Roundtable meeting was the need for “increased communication to residents.” It was noted that several comments were made regarding the need to reach out to residents so that they can be better informed of town news and events. Kennerson suggested that consideration be given to a one page newsletter mailed monthly to households. Selectman Garay questioned the cost of such an endeavor. Brief discussion ensued regarding how often a mailer could be done ; with consensus being that bi-monthly would be a more attainable goal. The Board agreed to increase the communication line item to \$10,000.

First Selectman Jerram requested that the Board consider adding \$5,000 to the Town Engineer line item. He stated that there are several trail initiatives being considered that may need some engineering. He said that there is a large washout at Barella Road, south of Winchester Road, which may need engineering services. This area would be part of a trail network that would run through Marsh Road, Shady Brook Road and Barella Road. As a side comment, Jerram stated that having an “in-house” engineer may be something to consider in the future; noting that the Town currently has several different line items for engineering services within different departments. If they reach a point where salary plus benefits is being expended, it may be time to move in a different direction.

First Selectman Jerram stated that he has not been able to confirm the “surplus” number from the auditor. He will continue to work on gathering that number.

It was noted that the Ambulance Association has not yet submitted their budget request.

The Selectmen tried to get a more concrete number regarding the costs associated with the maintenance of Bakerville School. They had some data that had been gathered showing what some of the costs were, but it was noted that the data had some “holes” in it. The Selectmen will use the figure of \$90,000 that the Board of Ed had stated would be their savings if the school is turned over to the town.

Allocations to the libraries were another area that was discussed. Selectman Garay stated her concern that the town is funding libraries at such high levels. Bakerville Library receives 55% of their operating budget from the town and Beekley Library receives 70% of their operating budget from the town.

First Selectman Jerram stated that he has not yet received the pension fund allocation information and stated that he will follow up on that to get that information for the next meeting.

Selectman Garay shared some thoughts that she had regarding areas that could use some funding. She mentioned that she would like to see security cameras in use at some of the parks; naming Callahan Park specifically. She also asked if the Selectmen would consider funding the Helping Hands Chore Service, explaining that this is an organization that provides assistance to the elderly on a sliding scale basis. Mr. Jerram replied that he would look for the formal request letter that was sent to the town and present it to the Board for consideration at the next budget workshop meeting. Ms. Garay said that she

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was scheduled to meet with the Winchester Youth Services Bureau to find out more about the specifics of the services they provide to New Hartford residents. She will share that information at the next meeting.

Mr. Jerram noted that the Board has discussed the possibility of a tax abatement ordinance for the elderly and that this would have a minor impact on tax revenues. He said that he is working on establishing criteria for eligibility. He wants to make sure that this tax relief is given to the elderly who have lived in New Hartford for many years and are well established. It would not apply to elderly who are new residents. The Board agreed that this was a good idea.

The final budget workshop will be on March 10, 2016 and the Selectmen will vote on a proposed budget at that time that will be presented to the Board of Finance at their Saturday, March 12, 2016 workshop.

MOTION: by Kennerson to adjourn at 9:00 PM, seconded by Garay.

Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant