

**Board of Selectmen
Special Meeting
MINUTES
Monday, March 13, 2017**

Present: First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectman Laura Garay, Selectman Alesia Kennerson, Democratic Registrar of Voters Daria Hart, Republican Registrar of Voters Lila Tuxbury, School Building Committee Chairman Denton(Bud) Butler, Members of the Public Reggie Smith, Donna LaPlante; Michael Companik; Member of the Press Kathryn Boughton (Republican American); Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward.

First Selectman Jerram called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

School Building Project – action regarding additional upgrades discussed and endorsed by Board of Education

First Selectman Jerram stated that both he and Selectman Garay had been in attendance at the Board of Education meeting last week where the Statement of Work regarding additional projects for consideration as part of the Antolini School Building project were discussed. Jerram noted that the items were voted on as 3 different requests and all three additional “add-ons” were approved. He stated that there was some concern expressed regarding the Air Conditioning for the Library, but that it did pass by a vote of 5:3. Ms. Garay commented that some of the discussion that occurred was regarding the opinion(s) that the entire school should be considered for air conditioning. Mr. Butler, Chairman of the School Building Committee, stated that when he met with the School Facilities Committee he had explained to them that the addition of A/C to the entirety of the building was a very expensive proposition. There would need to be an upgrade in electrical service currently supplied to the building which alone has a projected cost of \$100,000 and that is only the first step. There would be numerous other changes that would need to be implemented and the budget could not support that. Mr. Jerram commented that the inclusion of the heating upgrades (pipe freeze protection) as part of the upgrade project should result in the removal of that item from the Board of Education’s proposed capital expenditures for 2017-2018.

Selectman Kennerson opined that the add-ons should move forward. She stated that the renovations are occurring now, there is funding available due to savings in other areas and it makes sense to include these items. She stated that “we wouldn’t want to be 5 years down the road and say ‘we should’ve done that when we had the chance.’”

Selectman Garay concurred, adding “we need to make investments in order to maintain the building for the future.” She also stated that the teachers and students both need a place to cool down during times of extreme temperatures.

Mr. Jerram agreed with the Selectmen. He stated that the school was built in 1968, has had two renovations - one in 1991 and the one being done now (2017). It may not be for another 20+ years that “the town goes there again.” He added that this is a bonded project with BAN funding in place. The add-ons may have a \$15,000 - \$20,000 impact on the debt service (if the funding is used for the add –ons in

lieu of returning to the General Fund), which is “small change on the total.” He further stated that the total budget will remain \$600,000 under budget, which will not need to be bonded.

MOTION: by Kennerson to approve all 3 of the additional projects presented by the School Building Committee for consideration and as approved by the Board of Education; specifically the protection for the heating system, the ceiling work – replacement of tiles and grills and the Air Conditioning for the library and the associated adjustment to architect fees for a total of \$295,000; seconded by Garay.

Mr. Jerram noted that the ceiling grids are not part of the ceiling tile replacement and added ‘tongue-in cheek’ to School Building Committee Chairman Mr. Butler “ Bud, work your magic on getting those grids painted.”

Selectman Garay stated that “Bud continues to bring back good numbers on this project.”

Unanimous

Mr. Butler took advantage of the agenda item and asked if he could briefly update the Selectmen on an area that continues to be a challenge. The snow in some areas of the roof continues to slide off in large chunks due to the slickness of the roof. The contractor is looking at ways to stabilize the snow. Butler noted that this does not appear to be an ‘expensive fix’ and should not be more than a ‘couple thousand.’

Appointments to Boards and Commissions:

First Selectman Jerram announced that there were some appointments to Boards and Commissions that he would like to move forward. He presented the names of Mary Ann Gunning, David Douyard and Mark McCarthy for consideration.

Selectman Garay stated that she would be pleased to recommend Mary Ann as a member of the Economic Development Commission. She noted that Mary Ann has been in attendance at many EDC meetings and is very involved on the New Hartford Business Council. She noted that it was Mary Ann who worked very hard at recognizing the Litchfield Hills Triathlon as a New Hartford community event.

MOTION: by Garay to appoint Mary Ann Gunning to fill a vacancy and serve as a member of the Economic Development Commission; term to expire December 31, 2019; seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous

WPCA Chairman Bud Butler stated that David Douyard had been interviewed by himself and WPCA member Joe Toro and has been determined that he would be a good member on the Authority. Mr. Douyard has attended a meeting, so he is fully aware of the issues this Board deals with.

MOTION: by Kennerson to appoint David Douyard to fill a vacancy and serve as a member on the Water Pollution Control Authority; term to expire December 31, 2019; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous

Mr. Jerram stated that Mark McCarthy was approached by Mr. Jerram to see if he would be interested in being a member of the Recreation Commission. Mr. McCarthy uses Brodie Park regularly and is eager to be a part of the Commission.

MOTION: by Kennerson to appoint Mark McCarthy to fill a vacancy and serve as a member on the Recreation Commission; term to expire December 31, 2021; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous

Discussion and possible action regarding policy related to hours of work for Registrars of Voters:

First Selectman Jerram stated that setting a policy with respect to hours of work and compensation for the Registrars of Voters is something that has been under consideration for a while. He stated that the reason for such a policy is to insure consistent and more regular work hours and is an effort to control the budget. He stated that a “same day work schedule” would be better for collaboration between the 2 Registrars. He asked for consideration of a policy that would establish one 7.5 hour work day, establish a mutual day of work, require advance request of any additional hours for the Registrars and would also require advance request of any additional staffing.

This led to discussion of the matter between the Selectmen, with Selectman Garay expressing her concern that limiting the day of work to one full day may hinder the process of finding a replacement for the current Democratic Registrar of Voters who has expressed her intent to leave the position. She noted that the Democratic Town Committee is seeking an individual to take on that role and not having the flexibility in schedule may be problematic. She agreed that this topic of a policy has been in the works for about a year, but she thought that the hours should be between 8 – 10 hours per week and could be split between 2 half days. Ms. Garay also expressed concern that requests for hours needs to come before the entire Board. She asked what the operational benefit of having to have the Board make this decision regarding a policy was. Mr. Jerram explained that it is Statutory.

Ms. Garay stated that she had polled area towns to see what their Registrars do and found that it varies. Barkhamsted for example has one day from 9:00 – 4:00; while Litchfield has Tuesdays and Fridays from 10:00 – 12:00; and Harwinton Registrars are available on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:30 – 12:00. Ms. Garay felt that accessibility to the Registrars would best be served by 2 half days. Mr. Jerram replied that a request to modify hours would always be an option. He noted that currently, there are changes that are made too frequently. A calendar of scheduled hours would benefit all. He explained that there is also a concern of redundancy of efforts if the Registrars are not working together on the same day. Registrar of Voters Daria Hart questioned Ms. Garay regarding her research regarding office staffing of area towns, wondering if Ms. Garay had questioned if Deputy Registrars are used in addition to the

Registrars. Ms. Hart stated that Litchfield staffs the office with both Registrars and their deputies, which makes a difference when one discusses staffing levels. Ms. Hart also responded to Mr. Jerram's comment regarding duplication of efforts and working together. She stated that there are times when the Registrars do work together; as there are times that are statutorily required to do so. She also defended that duties in the office are agreed to and split between the Registrars; thereby eliminating redundancy. She questioned the authority of the Board of Selectmen with respect to determining the number of hours worked; stating that in the past, it has been the Board of Finance who determines that. Ms. Hart objected to the reduction in hours, noting specifically that this was not a personal objection as it will not have an effect on her as she has already made the declaration that it is her intent to leave the position. She is objecting on behalf of whoever her replacement is as she has concerns that a new Registrar may need additional hours due to inexperience. Registrar of Voters Lila Tuxbury echoed that concern; stating that she wasn't sure what it would be like when someone new comes into the office. Mrs. Hart presented some statistical information regarding what the workload is in the Registrar's office during their Canvas period, which can be conducted between January 1 and April 30. She also noted that in 2016, there were over 770 Voter Registrations processed. Mrs. Hart noted that all of the work performed within the Office of the Registrar is Statutory.

Mrs. Tuxbury commented that she, too, is concerned with the rigidity that will accompany a set policy. She stated that there has been flexibility in the office for 8 years. Mr. Jerram asked specifically to both Registrars, "would you admit that the office went unstaffed for months?" Mrs. Hart replied that she did not come in for the months of November and December because she had reviewed the line item and the required responsibilities of that office and determined that there wasn't a need to be coming in. Donna LaPlante commented that if controlling costs for the Registrars line items was a concern, then it was her suggestion that consideration be given to having one polling place for referenda and/or elections. She stated that there would be a savings associated with having one larger polling place at which to conduct those votes. The First Selectman replied that it "is easy to say to do that, but is hard to do." Selectman Kennerson echoed that, adding that she could foresee complaints from residents who would find that one polling place may restrict their accessibility to a convenient polling place.

Mrs. Hart was concerned that a policy would be too restrictive and would not allow the flexibility needed to handle needs and concerns of residents. She used the example of a petition that may need to be processed or a request from residents to speak to the Registrar of their political party on a day that is not necessarily the posted office hour day.

The Republican Registrar of Voters asked if it would be allowed for the Registrars to work out an amicable schedule for office coverage. Mr. Jerram responded that the Registrars need to work together to communicate and stated again that changes could be presented in accordance with the policy. Selectman Garay stated that she is not opposed to having a set schedule, but she is not agreeable to one day per week.

Selectman Kennerson stated that she would be willing to try implementing a policy and see how it works.

MOTION: by Kennerson to set a policy of work hours and compensation for the Registrars of voters consisting of the following: Effective April 1, 2017, (1) The Registrars of Voters will work one day per week between the hours of 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM with a 30-minute unpaid lunch resulting in a total of 7.5 paid hours per week; (2) the Registrars of Voters will agree to a set schedule consisting of a mutually agreed upon “day” that the office will be staffed and submit it to the Board of Selectmen for approval; (3) Any requests for additional paid hours of work must be submitted in writing for consideration of approval not less than one week in advance of the next regularly scheduled Board of Selectmen meeting; and (4) any requests for additional paid staffing (i.e. deputies, etc.) will also be submitted one week in advance of the next regularly scheduled Board of Selectmen meeting for approval; seconded by Jerram.

In favor: Kennerson, Jerram

Opposed: Garay

Motion passes; 2:1

Requests for Refunds of Taxes:

The Selectmen agreed to move this agenda item to later in the meeting.

Budget 2017-2018:

The First Selectman stated that the budget workshop being held by the Board of Finance is scheduled for Saturday, March 18 and the proposed budget needs to be presented at that time. The General Government budget is showing an increase of roughly \$108,000 and there is a proposed loss of Revenue attributable to General Government in the amount of \$139,074.

He suggested that the Selectmen review the proposed Capital Projects and determine what, if any, changes should be made.

The Selectmen reviewed each proposed expenditure and discussed the merits of each proposal.

Jerram noted that the mini-excavator is a piece of equipment that the highway department uses, but is currently available as a rental. While rental fees are high, renting remains an option for consideration. He would suggest to move that purchase to another year further out in the capital plan.

Mr. Jerram commented that there is the potential for surplus in the highway department snow sand, salt and overtime line items if the winter does not throw any additional surprises. He would advocate for a line item transfer to pay for a Police Car using those excess funds. Selectman Garay commented that purchasing the Town Jeep last year using a cash payment seemed to have caused some discussion by the public regarding how the Jeep was paid for. Jerram countered that it was all transparent and that when “opportunities provide for being more efficient with spending, it’s best to get as much possible out of the approved budget ; if it is in the best interest of the taxpayers. The overall cost of the Jeep last year amounted to \$14,000 - - a very good deal.” Additional discussion occurred regarding where to make cuts. The Selectmen deliberated over each item.

MOTION: by Garay to modify the 2017-2018 Proposed Capital Project List dated February 28, 2017 as follows: Remove the Mini Excavator at \$35,000 out of 2017-2018 fiscal year with the understanding that it will be placed somewhere within the 5 year plan (moved out to a later year within the plan); Reduce the Rails to Trails funding by \$10,000 (from \$30,000 - \$20,000); Reduce General Park Improvements by \$15,000 (from \$35,000 to \$20,000); Remove the Police Car at \$45,000; leaving an overall Capital Budget request at \$382,000; seconded by Kennerson.

Selectman Kennerson noted that she was concerned about removing the police car from the Proposed budget because Public Safety needs to be protected. She stated that she had concerns that the Board of Finance might remove the Waterline Proposal from the Capital Budget because of their belief that it should be a WPCA expense and should not be considered public safety. She asked that if the Waterline is removed by the Board of Finance, that there be a discussion about returning the Police Car to the plan.

Unanimous

Mr. Jerram noted that one item that the Board had not addressed as a possible Capital Expenditure was the inclusion of the preservation of the Michael Butler Farm parcel. Jerram stated that the Capital Advisory Commission was in support of the purchase of the development rights as a Capital Expenditure, but it was up to the Board of Selectmen to decide whether or not to include it. The First Selectmen commented that the Board of Finance has asked for a specific recommendation regarding the funding to come from the Board of Selectmen.

Selectman Kennerson stated her thoughts that had been expressed at a prior meeting, reiterating that she supports the purchased, but would like it to be booked as a “receivable” with the funding coming as a loan from the General fund and then paid back from the proceeds of the Land Preservation Fund. She stated that she felt it would be bad precedent to pay for it any other way when there are other needs and funding for those needs is uncertain. The proper vehicle for payment is the Land Use Preservation Fund, in her opinion.

Mr. Jerram and Ms. Garay concurred with this.

MOTION: by Kennerson to instruct the First Selectman to address the Board of Finance and recommend that the use of the Land Preservation Fund to preserve the Butler Farm is the best option for the people of the Town of New Hartford at this point in time to allow for the acquisition of the property at no expense to the taxpayer; funds for the acquisition could be loaned from the General Fund and would be paid back over time from the future receipts in the Land Preservation Fund; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous

The Board then turned their attention to the General Government budget.

The First Selectman highlighted some of the specific lines that will need to be changed due to a need to add a line item in the budget that will account for the Defined Contribution Retirement plan that is

currently in effect for employees. He reminded the Board that the Pension plan has been discontinued and all new employees are subject to the current retirement plan. There has not been a line item that shows the 5% required contribution that is made by the Town and now that there are several employees who are part of the plan, this needs to be clearly reflected. A new line item will be created that will be listed as “retirement benefits.” This will result in adjustments to some salary line items that had included those expenses as part of the line.

The Selectmen discussed the Building Official Line item. Mr. Jerram asked the Selectmen what they would like to do with respect to the position. A lengthy discussion occurred regarding this matter; with the Selectmen debating the costs of full time employment and the need for consistency in the position. The Registrars line item was adjusted to reflect change in hours allocated to the position and also reduced the referenda line item to one referendum.

The Selectmen scrutinized each and every line item, reviewing the rolling averages of expenses for line items where they thought there might be room for changes. Discussions were held on several of the line items. The libraries were re-visited and the Selectmen debated the increase given to the Beekley Library during past reviews. Selectman Kennerson stated that upon review of the library budget and the increases given to the Library in the past, it is noted that the overall increases given to the Beekley Library in the past few years has exceeded the town budget increase. The Selectmen agreed that the library would stay flat for this year.

Commissions and other agencies were reviewed to see where potential savings might occur. The end result was that Foothills Visiting Nurse would be reduced, Conservation Commission, Open Space, and Economic Development Commission would be reduced; West Hill Lake also saw a decrease and Contingency was lowered.

One line item was added at the request of the First Selectman. COST (Council of Small Towns) dues was added at a cost of \$825.00. Mr. Jerram explained that during tough budget times, small towns need the lobbying power supplied by an organization such as COST. He noted that several area towns are members of this Council and he recommended that New Hartford reinstate its membership in this organization.

The Selectmen reviewed the overall increase, noting that \$45,000 in increases is due to mandates in Public Safety (the cost of a Resident Trooper and the costs associated with the Paramedic Intercept program).

Not satisfied with the final number, the Selectman once again scrutinized each department looking for additional cost savings. They agreed to reduce the Planning and Development Secretary line item and reduced Pavement Preservation.

After several hours of deliberation, the Selectmen agreed that nothing more could be done at this point and Mr. Jerram asked if this was the budget that the Board wished to present to the Board of Finance.

MOTION: by Kennerson to approve the Town of New Hartford General Government Budget with a total of \$5,082,766.33 for 2017-2018 and to present this to the Board of Finance on Saturday, March 18, 2017; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous

Request for Refund of Taxes:

First Selectman Jerram presented a Request for Refund of Motor Vehicle Property Taxes presented by the Tax Collector for consideration. He announced that the request was for a refund in the amount of \$112.90 to JP Morgan Chase Bank due to overpayment caused by a lease ending.

MOTION: by Garay to approve a Request for Refund of Taxes as presented by the Tax Collector; seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous

MOTION: by Kennerson to adjourn at 11:15 PM; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant