

**Board of Selectmen
Special Meeting
Monday, July 7, 2014**

Present: First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectman Alesia Kennerson, Selectman Jack Casey, School Building Committee members Denton (Bud) Butler, Roy Litchfield; New Hartford Tax Assessor Elizabeth Paul, Town Clerk Donna LaPlante; Board of Education members Josh Adams, Martha Bussmeyer; Members of the Public Ben Witte, Joe Toro, Troy LaMere; New Hartford Independent reporter Bob Moore, Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward.

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

Discussion and action regarding Union Contracts- NAGE (covering some Town Hall Employees) and AFSCME (highway):

First Selectman Jerram stated that the two employee contracts in place – town hall employees and highway employees—had expired June 30, 2014. He announced that tentative agreements were in place with both unions. He stated that he was seeking the Board’s approval of the negotiated contacts.

Mr. Jerram provided the Board with information regarding the negotiated changes/additions to the contracts. Jerram noted that he had, at one point, been asked by members of the Board of Finance if it were possible for the employees to join the health plan consortium that included the Regional 7 school district and the local Board of Education employees. Jerram announced that the town had changed health insurance agents and would be joining the health care consortium. He noted that the health care line item in the budget is one of the largest line items in the budget and joining the consortium will help to reduce these costs. Both unions agreed to a change in health care providers.

Jerram stated that one of the biggest negotiated changes had to do with Town Hall office hours. The union requested a change in operating hours, noting that the extended hours on Wednesday evenings were not productive. There is very little business conducted after 4:00 PM. A suggestion was made to extend Friday hours from noon to 1:00 PM. The lunch hour seems to be a popular time for many to conduct business at town hall and the Union has agreed to reduce lunch periods to 30 minutes each day (no lunch on Friday) in exchange for the reduced hours on Wednesdays. The work week remains stable at 35 hours. The First Selectman also noted that employees always have been and will continue to be available by appointment for matters that require individualized attention at times that are convenient for both parties. Jerram stated that he agreed to give the revised operating schedule a try, with the understanding that if there was documentation to show that the public was dissatisfied with the new hours, operations would revert back to the original schedule.

Selectman Casey commented that he was of the opinion that the change in hours would not be detrimental to public service; noting that he frequently is at Town Hall on Wednesdays later in the afternoon and that it is “like a ghost town.” He agreed with the observations that an additional hour on Fridays and availability during the noon hour would be beneficial to the public.

Other changes to the NAGE (town hall employees) contract include the return of a discretionary day to the holiday schedule; a pay increase of 2.25%; the inclusion of a drug and alcohol policy; clarification of the defined contribution plan and a clause that rewards employees with a one time salary adjustment for those employees who earn certain ‘certifications’ that apply to their employment positions. Jerram noted that this rewards employees who improve themselves and remain employed with the Town. Selectman Kennerson stated that the

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changes seem fair and noted that the reduction in health care expenses afford the opportunity to offer salary increases to employees. Kennerson felt that these increases were warranted. Mr. Casey agreed.

The public works contract mirrors the Town Hall contract with respect to wage increases and benefits. Jerram noted that there is very little difference between the two Unions; the major difference is the overtime and meal reimbursements that are afforded to highway employees.

MOTION: by Kennerson, second Casey to accept the contracts for the highway department and the Town hall employees as negotiated; subject to legal review for language changes that may be appropriate for the written contract.

Member of the public Denton (Bud) Butler asked who represented the management team during the negotiations. First Selectman Jerram replied that he had, in conjunction with discussion with legal counsel.

Unanimous.

Discussion regarding Antolini roof and windows:

Mr. Jerram stated that the Board of Selectmen were concerned about the \$6 million cost of the “all inclusive” building project that was presented to the Board several months ago. Jerram noted that recently e-mails had been circulating suggesting that if this project is to move forward, the time is now to ‘take it off the shelf and begin focusing on what needs to be done.’ The Selectmen agreed to begin the discussion to see what the scope of the project should entail. Ms. Kennerson noted that, since the School Security Project has moved forward and some components of the full project have been included in that project, she would like to know what things have already been addressed and what remains to be done. Jerram stated that he would begin to have discussions with the Town’s financial advisor to see what options exist for financing this project as well as others. The Selectmen agreed to invite the School Building Committee to the next Board of Selectmen meeting to discuss the project. Mr Butler, present at the meeting, asked the Board to please forward any questions they may want discussed at the next meeting to either he or Mr. Litchfield in advance of that meeting. This would allow them the opportunity to be prepared with specific answers to specific questions, making it a more productive meeting.

Having no appointments to Boards or Commissions to act on and having no other business to discuss, Mr. Jerram publicly thanked Elizabeth Paul and Annie Witte for serving on the Town Hall negotiating team and also thanked Doug Spencer for serving as the negotiator for the Highway Department.

MOTION: by Kennerson, second Casey to adjourn at 7:31 PM.

Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant