

**Board of Selectmen
Special Meeting**

Tuesday, February 4, 2020

MINUTES

Present: First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectman Alesia Kennerson, Selectman David Rosengren; Member of the Public Jay Bailey; Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward.

First Selectman Dan Jerram called the meeting to order at 5:40 PM.

Approval of Minutes:

First Selectman Jerram asked if there were any corrections or changes to the minutes of December 17, 2019.

Selectmen Rosengren pointed out a typographical error in the section "Rails to Trails" on page 1. He stated that the extra word "the" should be removed in the sentence that reads: *"The Rails to Trails Committee has met with **the** Kevin from Anchor Engineering and Val from Good Earth....."*

Selectmen Rosengren requested that the sentence on page 5 that reads: *"Mr. Rosengren again expressed his concern that **there should be expert testimony** on the matter"* be changed to *"Mr. Rosengren again expressed his concern **that experts should be heard** on the matter."*

MOTION: by Kennerson to accept the minutes dated December 17, 2019, as amended, seconded by Rosengren.

Unanimous.

First Selectman Jerram asked if there were any corrections or changes to the minutes of January 2, 2020.

Selectman Rosengren requested that the sentence on page 2 that reads *"Selectman Rosengren stated that both locations would be able to accommodate a garage **as well as** a wash bay,"* be changed to read *"Selectman Rosengren stated that both locations would be able to accommodate a garage **with** a wash bay,"*

MOTION: by Kennerson to accept the minutes dated January 2, 2020, as amended, seconded by Rosengren.

Unanimous.

First Selectman Jerram asked if there were any corrections or changes to the minutes of January 13, 2020.

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Selectman Rosengren requested that on page 2 the sentence that reads, “*He did, however, request that the Asset Evaluation Team (AET) **not go forward with a full presentation** regarding the potential sale due to the fact that..... be changed to read: “He did, however, request that the Asset Evaluation Team (AET) **not read the entire report** regarding the potential sale due to the fact that.....*

MOTION: by Kennerson to accept the minutes dated January 13, 2020, as amended; seconded by Rosengren.

Unanimous.

Budget Workshop Fiscal Year 2020-2021:

First Selectman Jerram distributed a draft budget dated 2/4/2020 to the Board for review. He stated that this initial budget workshop was being held to allow new Board of Selectmen member Rosengren to become familiar with the budget process and ask questions regarding budget line items. Mr. Jerram stated that the Audit is used to see where individual line items ended up at the end of the fiscal year. This budget draft “has a lot of holes” as it is early in the budget process and requests have not yet been received from many departments and agencies.

Mr. Jerram explained that the assessment from Regional 7 School will be at about an 8% increase due to student population assessment alone. This does not include the general operations numbers, which are still in development. The student assessment numbers are taken as of October 1 of each school year and the assessment figures are in arrears.

Mr. Rosengren asked if there is any way to anticipate and prepare for what the assessment from Regional 7 to the town will be each year. Mr. Jerram replied that the student population changes each year – students move in and students transfer out or move out of the area. It is always hard to predict what the number will be.

Mr. Rosengren commented that the town budget has essentially increased at a rate that is below inflation. He asked if there has been any ‘real dollar increases’ in the budget recently. He stated that there needs to be investment in the town. The Plan of Conservation and Development is a general agreement of what direction the town should move in. Mr. Rosengren stated that the town has not been aggressive in getting grant funding. He would like to see funding for a Grant writer included in the budget. He spoke directly with George Krivda at the USDA to discuss possibilities of funding for a town garage. Mr. Krivda said that there are grants available through the USDA.

Selectman Rosengren stated that he would like to have funding for a grant writer included in the town budget and he also stated that he wanted funds available to hire someone who could offer training and assist with document management. He said that hiring a consultant to assist with document management needs to be explored because not being efficient with document management results in a loss of productivity. He said that a several thousand dollar investment in a consultant would allow for business to be conducted efficiently.

First Selectman Jerram responded to the request of funding for a grant writer, stating that the expectation that “we will increase headcount at this time is questionable.” He added that, “This is one of those years where you are happy to survive – the goal will be to look for places where there can be savings.”

Selectman Kennerson responded to Mr. Rosengren's statement about investing in the town; she stated that "we do invest in the town but we look for opportunities that do not result in large increases in expenditures."

Selectman Rosengren replied that "we are standing still – not advocating large enough tax increases to stay ahead of inflation." He stated that an investment in a Grant Writer would reap benefits to the Town in the form of Grants.

First Selectman Jerram countered with "most grants have a hitch – there is a match of some sort."

Selectman Rosengren turned the discussion to the topic of Education funding in New Hartford. He stated that this Board needs to encourage the Board of Education to fashion a budget that fits the current student population of 450 students. He commented that in 2016 a study was performed regarding enrollment and there was a referendum held to consider closing a school and it failed. Rosengren questioned, "why do we have three buildings for 450 kids when we used to have three buildings for 650 kids." Mr. Rosengren further stated that he would like to ask the Board of Education to find ideas of how to address an enrollment of 450 kids in the schools. The costs should be proportional to the student population; budgets should decrease as the student population declines. Selectman Kennerson replied that the local Board of Education does try to hold the spending down, but the costs associated with Special Education are not controllable.

Discussion regarding this topic ended and there was no other business to address.

MOTION: by Kennerson to adjourn at 5:30 PM; seconded by Jerram.

AYE: Kennerson, Jerram

Rosengren remained silent

Motion to adjourn passed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant

Attachments

Draft Budget dated 2-4-20