

**Board of Selectmen
Regular “Virtual” Meeting
February 23, 2021
Minutes**

Present: First Selectman Jerram, Selectman Kennerson, Selectman Garay; Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward; Several guests attending the ‘virtual’ meeting.

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

Operations Updates:

First Selectman Jerram commented that the virtual town meeting went well. All business was taken care of without any difficulty. Ms. Kennerson did a great job as moderator.

Jerram informed the Selectmen that he and his administrative assistant have spent the past two weeks registering residents for COVID vaccine appointments. Farmington Valley Health District is sponsoring clinics in several different places for residents and the appointments fill quickly. Residents are very pleased that Town Hall is reaching out to them to schedule appointments. A lot of positive feedback is being received about offering this service. Selectman Garay extended her thanks to the First Selectman for taking the time to do this for residents. First Selectman Jerram thanked her for her compliment and noted that it is very time consuming and has required that “normal” day to day business has been put on hold a bit in order to devote the time to providing this service. He stated that he is not as far along in the budget preparation process as he would like to be, but the appointments take priority because it is a service that has great reward for the residents. Many people have been very anxious about securing an appointment because the state system can be complicated.

First Selectman Jerram updated the Board on overtime costs for highway personnel and the costs of product being used on the roadway. He stated that the crew has been called out many times in the past couple of weeks. Selectman Kennerson asked if using the salt product is working out. Jerram replied that it seems to be successful. Jerram noted that the recent storms have lasted all day, requiring several applications of product throughout the day which becomes costly. There have not been any complaints that sand is not being used. The highway crew seems pleased with the way things are working.

Jerram stated that the STEAP Grant application is still in process; a scope of work document has been filed. The application is now at the office of the Attorney General for approval of the scope of work and hopefully, this will be returned soon and the project can move forward.

Jerram informed the Board that the mailer informing residents about the upcoming referendum for the proposed asset sale has been mailed. Selectman Kennerson asked if this mailing has resulted in questions being posed to town hall about this proposal. Jerram replied that there have been some calls, but commented that the majority of calls coming in to the office recently are COVID related. Garay asked if there was an estimate of how many calls per day were referendum related. Jerram reiterated that COVID calls outnumber the referendum calls, but that it probably averages a couple of phone calls per day with questions about the referendum.

First Selectman Jerram stated that there are a few items that need to go before Inland Wetlands. Some capital improvements that have been funded need to go through Inland Wetlands for approval prior to beginning the work. Cedar Lane Bridge needs some repairs to the southern abutments. There is also a

parking plan for the Beekley Views Park that needs approval. Jerram also mentioned that the street lights for downtown are still pending. There has been a change in the type of structure that needs to be used along the State Highway. They require “break away” posts for the lights. The Town Engineer is researching this requirement and will find a vendor that can supply them as the vendor we have used in the past has gone out of business.

Mr. Jerram informed the Selectmen that Fire Marshal Bill Baldwin will be retiring. He noted that later in the meeting, he will ask for recommendation to appoint the Deputy Fire Marshal as Fire Marshal. There have been several recent changes in staff at Town Hall. As previously mentioned at the last meeting, Town Clerk Donna LaPlante has retired and Assistant Town Clerk Debbie Ventre has been appointed to fill the position until the next regular election as Town Clerk. Sharon Zordan has been hired to take the assistant to the Town Clerk position. Jill Healey, assistant bookkeeper and office assistant has left the Town of New Hartford to move on to the Town of Winchester to be their Assessor. Erin Phelan has been hired to fill the vacancy left by Jill’s departure. An assistant, Chris Rhoades, has been hired in the office of the Tax Collector to provide part time help.

Capital Budget Review and Discussion:

The First Selectman stated that the Capital Expenditures committee will be meeting soon to review the proposed capital plan; therefore this plan needs to be developed by the Selectmen.

First Selectman Jerram presented his draft capital plan to the Selectmen for review. He reviewed year one. Jerram noted that there are similar concepts on this plan that have been on in the past. The second payment for the truck purchased last year will be paid this year. Technology has some accruing funds and it is Mr. Jerram’s plan to purchase some software that can be used in the Building/Land Use department to assist in making the permit process accessible to contractors and residents. It can streamline the permit process and provides the option of online submittals of permits. It also allows for review of where things stand with each permit. It provides an opportunity to see where there may be “log jams” and assist in getting things moving. Town Hall Equipment funds are mainly used to replace heat pumps that are starting to fail. This is a recurring expense. Additionally, the HVAC contractor has advised that the 20 year old cooling tower is in need of some maintenance. There are several parts that need to be replaced due to age; the quote for this maintenance is \$10,000. It is an expensive piece of equipment that needs to be maintained. There are also issues with the boiler where water in the system is heavy with sediment and there needs to be treatment applied to curtail this. There is also an underground oil tank in the rear of town hall that needs to be addressed.

Mr. Jerram informed the Board that during this COVID state of limiting access to the public and not holding public meetings, there has been an opportunity to do some much needed interior updating of the Sessions Conference Room (painted, new carpet, new chairs) and the administrative area of the First Selectman’s office suite (paint, new carpet). The building is 20 years old and some renovations were necessary. The First Selectman stated that the police department is in need of paint and carpet. This is a difficult area to work in due to being operational 7 days a week and there is a lot of stuff in that office that they need to operate on a daily basis. Hopefully, there will be a way to be able to get this done with minimal interference in operations.

Electric Charging station is also on the capital plan. The Recreation Department also has capital funds allocated. There has been a lot of work done at Brodie this past year – painted several cabins and Berkshire Hall. The roof at the Field House was also repaired. There is still more work to do – the nurse’s

cabin needs a new roof. Selectman Garay asked if this allocation includes all parks or just Brodie; Jerram replied that it is for all parks. Rails to Trails funding is also included in the plan. Equipment for the highway department is also on the plan. A skid steer is now needed to replace one that is no longer working. We are currently renting this valuable piece of equipment and it needs to be replaced. Additionally there is the need for a mini excavator – this has been pushed off for many years. Mr. Jerram stated that these are items that are being requested by the town crew to enable them to work more productive and efficient. There is also a need to replace the 15 year old former “DARE” truck. They use this as a utility vehicle. Also included on the Capital Plan is the continuing downtown improvements and funding for bridgework. Jerram stated that it is imperative to keep ahead of the maintenance needed on the bridges so that minor repairs do not turn into major repairs. Jerram turned his attention to previewing the 5 year capital plan, stating that the 5 year plan is intended to warn residents of future capital needs. He stated that the average level of spending as been \$375,000 - \$385,000 for the past few years. A continuing need on the lists is replacement of town trucks; having a replacement plan in place is key to having working vehicles. Jerram also informed the Selectmen that a furnace replacement will be an expense that will be needed within the next few years. He stated that the furnace that was installed when Town Hall was renovated 20 years is thought to be a used furnace. There are indications that it was not new at the time of installation, and therefore will need replacement sooner than what would be if it were new. A new roof for town hall is also included in the plan for future capital expenditures. The wash bay is an item on the plan that may be modified. It does not seem like there is interest by the Board of Finance to fund this and this will need some review. Mr. Jerram explained that the town garage is not on municipal sewers and the wash bay was proposed to be on the site of the Wastewater Treatment Plant which would allow for cleaning the trucks. Selectman Garay stated that she wanted to note that Satans Kingdom Road is a road that needs some improvements and she would like to see it included on a plan at some point. Jerram stated that if the Board would like to have some investigation done by Lenard Engineering regarding the road, he would be amenable to having them do some preliminary engineering. Selectman Kennerson stated that she has not been on the road herself, but has heard that it needs some work. Selectman Garay also asked if a waterline is still needed when there is the chance that a cistern will be placed on site of a proposed development on Route 44. Jerram replied that even if a cistern were to be required on the site, a waterline would still be a bonus for other establishments in the area. Garay asked if hookups would be mandated to connect to the line; noting that expense versus income from the line should be considered. She further commented that moving the town garage has been a topic of consideration for several years and she would like to encourage proactive action into making this happen. She would like to encourage this Board to consider establishing a committee for investigation of a new garage. First Selectman Jerram replied that he would prefer to have a “signed document for development” on the Hurley property along with this town garage site prior to putting time and effort into a new location. He stated that several improvements have been done to the existing town garage and he felt that a new garage at this time is a “want” and not a “need.” Kennerson agreed that some planning of the future design of the garage would not be a bad idea; might want to start to consider what will be needed in a new garage. She stated that it was her belief that finding a suitable location would be the hard part. Jerram replied that he would love to see the existing owner of the back side of the Industrial Park do some marketing and planning with that site and it might provide an opportunity to relocate the garage to the Industrial Park. Jerram wrapped up the discussion by stating that he would reach out to Lenard Engineering to

investigate Satans Kingdom Road. Regarding the garage relocation committee, Jerram stated he was reluctant to expend time and energy on a committee when relocation seems to be a long way off. He stated that this committee could be a topic for a future meeting. Jerram stated that, at this time, preliminary figures indicate that the Grand List may have a \$9.25 million increase; \$4.2 million from real estate and \$4.4 million from motor vehicle increase. Jerram stated that this capital plan will go to the Capital Expenditures Committee as approved by this Board.

MOTION: by Kennerson to approve the proposed 5 year capital plan, subject to revision of minor typographical errors; seconded by Garay.

Garay noted that she would like to be sure that a study of Satans Kingdom Road and establishing some kind of garage study is agreed to. Jerram replied that these items would not be capital expenses. Garay replied that she just wanted to be certain that these concerns would be included in the minutes.

Unanimous

First Selectman Jerram asked the Board members if they had reviewed the written request from Farmington Valley Health District to consider additional funding to assist in covering extra expenses that have occurred due to COVID. Jerram commented that the Board of Finance can authorize an additional expenditure without going to Town Meeting as long as it is less than \$20,000. He stated that the town has received funding from the Federal Government in the form of Municipal COVID Relief Funds and this has been put into the General Fund. The Selectmen need to make a formal request to the Board to appropriate these funds. Jerram expressed his support to this request; stating that the Health District has done an outstanding job in running vaccine clinics and working hard to get residents vaccinated.

MOTION: by Garay to request funding in the amount of \$7,980 to be taken from the Municipal Cares Relief Funding already received for use to fund the Farmington Valley Health District for COVID related expenses, seconded by Garay.

Discussion led to consideration of increasing the approved amount to \$10,000 in case there are additional shortfalls.

MOTION was amended by Garay to change the funding amount from \$7,980 to “not to exceed \$10,000” second by Kennerson.

All agreed to the amended motion and voted on the amendment.

Unanimous.

Discussion of Budget Preparation Dates:

First Selectman Jerram reviewed the budget preparation dates. He stated that March 9 is the Board of Finance meeting and March 13 is where the Board of Finance will hold their workshop to review all of the proposed budgets – Town Government, Local Board of Education and Regional Board of Education. He stated that he would like to discuss some options for the Selectmen to meet again and focus entirely on the budget. The Selectmen chose March 2, March 8 and March 11 as options to meet as needed.

Request for Tax Refunds:

None available at this time

Correspondence:

First Selectman Jerram informed the Board that Fire Marshal Bill Baldwin has submitted a letter of retirement. His retirement is effective as of March 1, 2021. In his letter, he expressed his thanks for the support of the Fire Marshal during his tenure. He also recommended that Deputy Bob Diorio be appointed to fill the vacancy being created by his retirement. The Selectmen thanked Mr. Baldwin publicly for his service and wished him well in his retirement. Dan stated that Bill has been great and done a great job for the town and thanked him for creating this transition plan by providing training to Bob to take his place. Jerram commented that there are no funds in the budget for a deputy fire marshal and that Bob has been in training without compensation.

First Selectman Jerram informed the Board that he had correspondence from the Town Clerk requesting that the Board appoint sub registrars as recommended by the Town Clerk. He stated that the appointment will be handled under Other Business.

Other Business:

MOTION: by Garay to nominate Robert (Bob) Diorio to serve as Fire Marshal upon the retirement of the current Fire Marshal; seconded by Kennerson.

First Selectman Jerram stated that he was thankful to have Bob take over this position.

Unanimous.

MOTION: by Kennerson to appoint Jason Montano and Susan Montano as sub registrars for the Town of New Hartford; term from February 23, 2021 through January 3, 2022, seconded by Garay.

Unanimous.

MOTION: by Garay to adjourn at 8:54 PM, seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant*

*Attachments:
Capital Project List – Approved in Process
Capital Project List – 5 year plan
Farmington Valley Health District – request for funding
Fire Marshal Bill Baldwin – letter of retirement
Town Clerk – request for appointment of sub registrars*