

**Board of Selectmen  
"Regular" Meeting  
Tuesday, April 28, 2020  
Virtual Meeting**

**Minutes**

**Present:** First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectman Alesia Kennerson, Selectman David Rosengren; Chairman of the Board of Finance Regina Wexler, New Hartford Tax Collector Karen Wieduwilt, Member of the Press Kathryn Boughton, Republican American; Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward.

**Others present (Virtually):** Members of the Public Penny Miller, Andrew Lefebvre, Mary Beth Greenwood, Alison Murdock, Aulay Carlson, Bruce Delaini, Colby Wilhelm, Janet Corey, Laura Bedford, Laura Garay, Neil English, Sue Lundin, and other members of the public.

First Selectman Jerram called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM. Mr. Jerram explained that this meeting is being audio recorded as currently required but will also have the usual minutes taken as per usual practice.

**Operations Updates:**

Selectman Kennerson suggested that it might be prudent to explain how residents can provide public comment before beginning the meeting. The First Selectman replied that he would watch for those present on screen to see if it appeared that they wished to offer comment. He also stated that residents could submit emails to [town@newhartfordct.gov](mailto:town@newhartfordct.gov) as a way to submit public comment for items addressed at this or any other meetings to come. He noted that there had already been a letter submitted this way. The submittals will be made available.

Mr. Jerram began his updates by offering an update regarding the COVID-19 emergency currently occurring. He noted that the Town is in contact with Farmington Valley Health District and is kept informed of statistics. He added that the Town is able to assist those in need of getting groceries or any other help that may be needed. They can call Town Hall and assistance can be provided.

The First Selectman informed all that he is actively participating in the updates and meetings that are occurring on a regular basis regarding COVID -19 and operations by several agencies/organizations; such as daily Governor Briefings, Regional Emergency Operations briefings, meetings (virtual) with local first responders. The communication has been flowing. Distribution of Personal Protective Equipment occurs as it is received. Mr. Jerram mentioned the morale boosting events that have been occurring such as the Emergency Responder 'parades,' the teacher/education vehicle parade and the bell ringing that has been occurring on a weekly basis.

First Selectman Jerram informed all that Town Hall is operational and has been busy. The Department of Public Works and the Police continue to work a regular full time schedule. Town Hall staff has been staggered with appointments available to the public on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The First Selectman's office staff is working every day all week to schedule appointments and respond to phone calls. Mr. Jerram stated that anyone who comes to Town Hall to conduct business must have a face covering in order to gain admittance; in keeping with the Governor's requirements.

First Selectman Jerram offered a special "shout out" and thank you to Custodian Bob Goodskey who has worked tirelessly to keep Town Hall sanitized. He is constantly wiping surfaces, door knobs, bathrooms

continually to “keep us all safe.” He praised his efforts and offered his public thanks.

The Department of Public Works is busy working on a number of jobs, but being cautious with spending due to some revenue shortfalls currently being experienced. They are currently working on a project on Hemlock Drive; a job that was slated for last year; a \$60,000 construction project. Security gates have been installed at both sand/salt locations in order to prevent people from taking from the stockpile. The boat mooring area at Brodie Park has been redone. The Town’s insurance risk consultant had advised that the sloped concrete staircase that led to the boats was a liability due to its condition and it has been removed. A cable has been installed for boats to hook up to. Mr. Jerram noted that “it may need some tweaking” but was, for the most part, completed.

Some of the smaller projects funded by the Recreation Commission through the capital budget are in progress. Berkshire Hall floors are currently being refinished. The Lions Club has been doing some restoration to their cabin – painting and windows. The Lifeguard cabin has had some minor work done and the Cub Scout cabin is in the queue for some work, as well.

Town Hall has seen some upgrades during this time when meetings have not been able to be held. The Selectman’s Office area was painted and new carpet was installed, the first time in 20 years. Also, both Conference Rooms have been painted and carpeted.

Mr. Jerram has been providing training sessions regarding the use of ZOOM conferencing to the Land Use Boards so that they can get comfortable with the platform prior to holding meetings. He noted that town hall (town computers) will serve as the base for these meetings so that data is on the town server. The First Selectman stated that there is great concern for the wellbeing of local businesses. He thanked residents Jaime Widmer and Isa Keller for creating Cash Mob events to support several local businesses. He informed the Selectmen that the Senior Van continues to be available and operational for those who need transportation to medical appointments and he thanked driver Mel Johnson for his service.

The First Selectman stated that he had attended the virtual meeting of the Regional 7 School District budget hearing. He submitted written correspondence requesting consideration of a wage freeze. Jerram mentioned that the Town is still running at a deficit in revenues of close to \$2 million. An ECS payment, LOCIP, and Town Aid Roads have not yet been received. He expressed his concern that these have been approved but not received.

Selectman Rosengren stated that he has reviewed the state revenues received thus far and sees that one half of the ECS has already been received. He questioned the First Selectman’s anxiety at not having this revenue yet; stating that he doesn’t want to get people nervous about not getting these payments as there is no shortfall yet.

To close the operations updates, Mr. Jerram reiterated that Town Hall is available to anyone who needs services – they just need to call ahead.

**Revisit of Executive Order 7S-section 6; (Executive Order 7W also applies):**

The First Selectman reviewed that the Selectmen had approved the Low Interest program at the previous Selectman’s meeting. Mr. Jerram had been asked by Selectman Rosengren to check with OPM to see if the designation could be modified once a choice was submitted to OPM. Mr. Jerram stated that he had a conversation with personnel at the Office of Policy and Management who indicated that the town is considered to be compliant by selecting an option and notifying OPM of the choice made; adding that if the Town decided to go above and beyond that requirement and offer additional relief, it was doubtful that anyone would find fault with doing so. The First Selectman stated that he

was comfortable with the decision made to adopt the low interest program as it gives immediate relief to taxpayers. The deferred tax payment does not assist taxpayers until after August 1. Mr. Jerram had asked OPM if the deferral program could be revisited at a later date and he was told that an amended form could be submitted if the Board wanted to change their course of action. The First Selectman asked the Board if they wanted to consider offering relief to the WPCA under the low interest or the deferral program. A brief discussion ensued regarding this matter. Mr. Rosengren stated that the people who are in charge of the WPCA and the rates are the WPCA, and that the BOS cannot do anything about the charges. Mr. Jerram countered that he disagreed with that statement; stating that the Executive Orders 7S and 7W have empowered the Board of Selectmen to take action and modify the interest rates. Mr. Rosengren challenged this, stating that the orders referred to taxes, not fees. Mr. Jerram reiterated that 7s and 7W address this. Mr. Rosengren asked if OPM had been asked to interpret this specific section. Ms. Kennerson interjected that Executive Order (EO) 7W clarifies this. Mr. Rosengren did not agree with this and explained his interpretation of the order; stating that the order does not apply to fees charged by the WPCA – it only applies to “taxes on charges to assessments” He does not believe that the Selectmen have the authority to include the WPCA charges as applicable for the low interest or deferment options. He does not believe that the charges or assessments can be altered, only the taxes incurred on these charges. However, he added that he is not against and in fact would encourage that the WPCA develop some sort of program like this for their customers – but it would be acting within their authority, not as part of this Executive Order. Mr. Rosengren advised that the Town Attorney be asked to interpret the Executive Order. First Selectman Jerram replied that he did not feel that was necessary, his interpretation differs from Mr. Rosengren’s and he would like to reach out to the WPCA chairman to see if the WPCA has any interest in either of the programs; noting that the WPCA and the Town could work together on this. There was agreement that the WPCA should consider some measure to assist their ratepayers, but opinions differed as to the best way to proceed. Mr. Rosengren stated that he is in favor of suggesting that the WPCA offer a deferment. In fact, he would like to see a method in place to allow for those financially affected by COVID to apply for relief, much in the same way that there are guidelines as outlined by OPM for the tax deferral.

Mr. Rosengren added that he would like to go even further, suggesting that the Town take on all of the debt service payments for the WPCA so that rates could be reduced for the next year. Selectman Kennerson stated that she agreed that the WPCA should be consulted as to what they would like to consider regarding relief. Ms. Kennerson questioned the timeframes for when water and sewer bills are due and asked if clarification could be gained from the WPCA. She was not clear as to when the low interest would be in effect and if the timeframes in the EO would be in sync. At this point in the meeting, a text message was received from the Chairman of the WPCA indicating that the WPCA has adopted a policy for now where interest is not being charged on late payments. First Selectman Jerram stated that he would have further discussion with the WPCA regarding options for relief. Mr. Rosengren requested that the WPCA investigate Ordinance 86-1; which he believes relieves the WPCA of the requirement to pay for the debt service. He stated that if the WPCA was relieved of the debt service payments, they would be able to build a surplus in revenues. Mr. Jerram took exception to Selectman Rosengren’s statement and questioned his interpretation of the Ordinance; stating that the Town Attorney has opined on the matter.

**Budget – review timeline; review of revenues and expenditures for Fiscal Year 20-21:**

First Selectman Jerram invited Board of Finance Chairman Regina Wexler to participate in the discussion of this agenda item. Mr. Jerram stated that both he and Ms. Wexler had “attended” the Regional 7 Board of Education virtual meeting. First Selectman Jerram stated that he had sent a letter to the Regional Board asking that they consider approaching staff to see if there could be some concessions regarding wages. Mr. Jerram stated that it was his opinion that maintaining employment and foregoing raises is better than getting a pink slip. He indicated that it will be tough for many residents to pay taxes, let alone have taxes pay for raises when they, themselves, are struggling. Ms. Wexler commented that she felt the tone of the Regional Board meeting was defensive from the start. She stated that she and members of her Board had also sent letters seeking consideration of reduction of expenses. She clarified that letters were sent as individuals, not as members of the Board. She stated that the Board of Finance would like to add an additional meeting to their initial projected timeline, and suggested May 6 as a meeting date. She stated that the Board would most likely want to send letters as a Board to the local Board of Ed, the Regional Board of Ed and local town government asking for consideration of reductions in the proposed budgets.

Selectman Rosengren commented that he would encourage all to view the recording of the Regional Board meeting. He felt it was civil and productive. He sees the issue that there was a request to the Board to go back to the Unions and request waiving of pay raises that were settled “pre-Corona.” He stated that Labor Contracts are ‘set in stone.’ He added that Molly, Chairman of the Board, did indicate that she would look at the issue. Mr. Rosengren stated that a member of the Board, a teacher herself, defended keeping the increases as negotiated because teachers are working harder than ever right now and devoting more time than ever to their jobs.

Mr. Rosengren commented that while it is a noble idea to go ask the Union to consider the concession, it is highly unlikely that a Union will give up the raises. The Board was prudent in stating that they would go about this carefully so as not to put the unions in a defensive position. Mr. Rosengren stated that the Regional Board has two months – 60 days- to consider this action. Selectman Rosengren added that since Regional teachers are being asked to consider foregoing raises, shouldn’t the same request be made of the local BOE and town employees?

Selectman Kennerson stated that, as a State Union Employee, she can attest that contracts are not always set in stone and can be revisited as she has had personal experience with concessions.

The First Selectman stated that the 60-day timeframe is incorrect, adding that there has to be action soon as there is a tentative date of May 13 for Regional to adopt a budget. Mr. Jerram stated that there are multiple ways to restructure contracts. There could be a delay in implementing the first year of an increase and spread the 3 years increase over the final 2 years. This would give a break to taxpayers for a year, allowing the economy to stabilize. When questioned by Mr. Rosengren regarding the status of town contract negotiations, Mr. Jerram replied that contract negotiations have been discontinued for now. The contracts do expire June 30 of this year. He stated that additional discussion regarding current negotiations could be held at a later date and in Executive Session. Mr. Jerram stated that if the Board agrees, he would draft a letter to the local Board asking for the same consideration that was requested of Regional 7. Mr. Rosengren stated that since the Board was not asked to provide a motion for the first letter, he encouraged the First Selectman to send the letter on his own accord. Ms. Kennerson stated her support of the letter. The First Selectman stated that the current proposed budget “as is” is close to zero. There is \$30,000 in increases (mostly salary related), and \$40,000 reduction in capital; resulting in

an overall decrease of \$10,000. Mr. Jerram stated that he had some options for consideration for reduction in the budgets if required to make adjustments. Projected salary increases currently at 2.5% with a placeholder could be held flat, resulting in approximately \$40,000 savings; an additional \$10,000 savings could be gained by cutting increases to both libraries and reducing the allocation to West Hill Pond Association. Also, some savings in capital could be gained by eliminating the electric charging station and recreation capital could be trimmed by \$5,000. The Brodie septic issue could be set aside for a year; the septic systems could be decommissioned and funds could be reduced from \$50,000 to \$5,000, keeping enough in the budget to pay for porta potties for the time being. Downtown improvements could also be reduced by \$5,000. This could result in \$55,000 - \$60,000 in savings in capital.

The roadside mower, payment for the truck and town hall technology should remain in the budget as proposed.

Mr. Jerram stated that additional savings could be found by not immediately filling 2 vacant positions – one highway crew member who retired and one police officer. Mr. Jerram announced that in addition to the retirement of the highway crew member, Police Officer Kevin Wilkinson had recently retired from town service after 6 years with New Hartford Police. Mr. Jerram stated that there could be a delay in refilling these two vacancies which could result in \$50,000 - \$60,000 in savings.

Board of Finance member Lou Helt was invited to join the meeting. Mr. Jerram asked for her opinion. Ms. Helt agreed that not replacing employees is a hiring freeze which is often done in the business sector. “You make do with what you have.” She concurred with this line of thinking and stated that the Board of Ed should also be asked to look at their capital expenses and see if cuts could be made. Mr. Jerram replied that the Board of Finance could discuss this at their next meeting.

Mr. Rosengren suggested that letters be written to boards and commissions and ask them to consider making cuts to their budgets. He suggested that they be asked to provide input. Ms. Helt replied that she did not think this was feasible because many agencies are not holding meetings.

The First Selectman commented that it was a good idea in concept but in reality there is not enough money allocated to those lines to make much of a dent in the budget.

Mr. Rosengren stated that education is 74% of the budget, highway is 7% and all other departments are 9%; therefore, all should be asked to consider because it all totals 91% of the budget and we need to see how cuts can be made.

Mr. Jerram defended the highway department budget and stated that the funds allocated to that department are necessary to tend to the needs of the Town.

Mr. Rosengren stated that people who have control over their budgets should look to see where they can cut spending, especially with the Board of Education. Mr. Jerram stated that the Board of Finance has control over the Board of Education budget, not the Board of Selectmen.

Selectman Kennerson commented that she was in agreement with the suggestions for possible savings in the areas Mr. Jerram mentioned, but she was not sure that West Hill should be cut back. She stated that West Hill did not ask for an increase in this year, however, the libraries did.

**MOTION:** by Rosengren, that we, as the Board of Selectmen send a letter to the Board of Education and request, in these most difficult times, that they have a meeting on the budget and examine it carefully and write a report on what they feel they can cut, as one of the biggest municipal

money operations in this town, to assist in the community effort to lower our tax burden this year. No second on the motion.

Mr. Jerram stated that he was not up to second that motion, but would prefer to mirror the request for consideration of examination of pay raises. He stated that it was the Board of Finance who has the purview of addressing the Board of Ed. Mr. Rosengren called a point of order, stating that there was a motion and that if Mr. Jerram wanted to enter into a discussion, he needed to second the motion. The motion was not seconded.

Chairman Wexler commented that she wanted to clarify that Region 7 has complete and absolute control over their budget. She stated that the Board of Finance does have control over the local Board of Education budget and the local government budget; and as such she has had conversation with the Board of Education chair. She also noted that the Board of Finance may choose to send a letter to the Board of Education and the town when they meet next week.

**Brodie Park South-mowing concern/review of Recreation Commission Ordinance:**

First Selectman Jerram stated that this agenda item was requested by Selectman Rosengren. Mr. Rosengren said that several citizens had reached out to him with concerns that an area of Brodie Park that had been a habitat area has been mowed down. They have requested that this area be returned to its original state. Selectman Rosengren understands that the recreation commission has the authority of the maintenance of this area but would like to see them take consider this request. Mr. Rosengren said that the town could save money by not mowing this area.

First Selectman Jerram replied that the ordinance is clear that the Recreation Commission has the control over this. He stated that this request was brought before the commission and they did not change their position on this matter.

Mr. Jerram commented that this area is also a popular dog walking area and birds and dogs don't mix. A successful habitat area would require that dog walkers stay away from the habitat area. Mr. Jerram suggested that Mr. Rosengren go to the Recreation Commission to discuss this.

Member of the public Janet Corey commented that she is an abutter to Brodie Park South and she knows that a lot of people want this area to be preserved. She, herself, would like to see this area preserved. Mr. Jerram stated that she should send her comments to the Recreation Commission and copy the Selectmen to keep them aware of the situation.

**MOTION:** by Rosengren to have the Board of Selectmen write a letter to the Recreation requesting, not ordering, but suggesting that a meeting take place between those that are supportive of this and we support a reasonable accommodation of both interests – that is the dog walkers and the people who want to see a partial restoration of that area.

No second was heard.

Member of the public Jean Darlington commented that she is of the opinion that the field is big enough for both dog walking and a habitat area.

Mr. Jerram encouraged that public opinion regarding this matter be sent to Town Hall and it would be forwarded to the Recreation Commission for consideration.

**Discussion of C.G.S. 7-7:**

First Selectman Jerram stated that this was a revisit of a discussion that began in January, where Selectman Rosengren had concerns regarding how meetings were conducted. Selectman Rosengren stated that there seems to be confusion over the rules that apply to meetings. He stated that many towns indicate on their websites how their Town Meetings are conducted. He suggested that Roberts Rules of Orders be adopted as the rules that govern Town Meetings (clarifying that he was referring to Town Meetings – capital “T”, capital “M”)

The First Selectman clarified that Section 7-7 addresses posted published Town Meetings. Mr. Jerram stated that there is a difference between Town Meetings and meetings of local boards and commissions. He noted that many use the term “town meeting” when they refer to the more routine meetings that are held such as Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Planning and Zoning and the like which are run by the chairman. Presentations such as the recent AET public meetings, which were not Town Meetings, and small groups such as Rails to Trails are not Town Meetings and therefore do not fall under Section 7-7. He noted however, that there is the opportunity to develop rules by Town Ordinance. The First Selectman stated that he is not opposed to asking the town attorney to consider rules that could be adopted by an Ordinance that would govern how the meetings are run. However, he added, he is not aware of any concerns expressed by any local boards regarding how they operate and he would not want to create rules if these boards felt they may be burdensome. Mr. Jerram stated that he was not opposed to asking the town attorney to see if there is sample language for such an ordinance that could be reviewed. Mr. Rosengren re-stated that other towns advertise what rules they use to conduct their meetings.

**MOTION:** by Rosengren, as to Town Meetings, the Board of Selectmen adopt a measure that Roberts Rules of Order shall apply at all town meetings.  
No second heard.

Mr. Jerram commented that the Statute states that an Ordinance is adopted when rules are applied to the conduct of meetings.

Mr. Rosengren claimed “point of order” due to the fact that there was no second and therefore no discussion. Mr. Jerram replied that it was Mr. Rosengren who asked for the agenda item. The First Selectman reiterated that he would request that the town attorney see what other towns have done with this and perhaps draft an ordinance for consideration.

**MOTION:** by Rosengren that the Board of Selectmen unanimously support an ordinance to adopt Roberts Rules for Town Meetings.  
No second heard.

**Request for Refunds of Taxes:**

**MOTION:** by Jerram to approve the requests for refunds for taxes as presented by the Tax Collector, seconded by Kennerson.

Financial Service Vehicle Trust	\$308.67
David G. Howes and Jason Emerson	\$18.04
Nissan Infiniti LT	\$226.36
Nissan Infiniti LT	\$171.52
Wells Fargo Home Mortgage	\$785.58
Lisa Worley	\$63.83

*Unanimous.*

**Opportunity for Public Comment:**

Mary Beth Greenwood stated that she always supports assistance to the customers of the WPCA during this difficult time, but she would also like to see additional support given to all of the taxpayers in New Hartford in the form of a tax deferral rather than just the low interest option.

First Selectman Jerram explained the reasoning as to why the low interest option was chosen by the Board over the deferral. He stated that the low interest option was effective as of April 1 and offers immediate relief; whereas the tax deferral does not help until a few months from now.

Ms. Greenwood questioned the proposed salary increases in the Region 7 budget. Mr. Jerram replied that it is different for several bargaining units, but the teachers are at 3%.

Selectman Rosengren asked how the representatives from New Hartford on the Regional Board of Education voted on the budget. Ms. Wexler responded to Mr. Rosengren that there was no vote on the budget.

Mr. Rosengren asked how much of the dollar increase in the proposed Regional 7 budget is attributed to an increase in wages. Mr. Jerram replied that it is in the area of \$180,000.

Selectman Kennerson commented that she enjoyed seeing two recent articles in the newspaper regarding assistance being provided to the Pleasant Valley Drive In and the Gilson Theater. She said it was a good showing of community spirit.

Mr. Aulay Carlson “reminded” the elected officials that there is a school board that is currently running three schools in New Hartford for 400 students that has space for 1100 students, has increased the number of teachers per year and the teaching assistants while student populations have decreased.

Mr. Carlson stated that it is time to look and see how funds are being spent.

Laura Garay complimented the employees of the Town for their work and dedication during this pandemic. She also expressed her thanks that the Senior Van continues to provide service to those that need it right now. Mr. Jerram stated that the town is fortunate to have a driver who is committed to continuing to provide transportation during this time.

First Selectman Jerram ended the meeting by reiterating his thanks to Town Hall Custodian Bob Goodskey for the excellent job he does each day to ensure the safety of employees and those who enter Town Hall by sanitizing everything constantly.



**MOTION:** by Kennerson to adjourn at 9:52 PM, seconded by Jerram.

*Unanimous.*

*Respectfully Submitted,*

*Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant*

*Attachments: (available in the Office of the Town Clerk by request)*

*Executive Order 7S and 7W*

*OPM – Application for Tax Relief*

*Recreation Commission Ordinance 1967-1*

*CGS 7-7*

*List of Tax Refunds*

*Note: 2020-2021 Proposed Budget (dated 03-14-2020) was posted on town website and available for viewing*