

**Board of Selectmen
Special Virtual Meeting
June 2, 2020**

(immediately following the close of the Board of Finance Public Hearing with a 7:00 PM start time)

MINUTES

Present: First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectman Alesia Kennerson, Selectman David Rosengren, Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward.

(Note: This meeting convened during a recess of the Board of Finance Special Virtual Meeting being held on June 2, 2020 Board of Finance members were present virtually, but did not participate in this meeting).

First Selectman Jerram called the meeting to order at 8:16 PM. Mr. Jerram noted that the agenda had two items on it in order to be able to take whatever action was needed regarding the budget. Due to Executive Orders in place outlining budget adoption procedures due to the COVID -19 situation, the Selectmen need to take action as to how the budget process will proceed. The two agenda items are:

Board of Selectmen to consider implementation of interim budget

Board of Selectmen to consider authorization of Board of Finance to approve Fiscal 20-21 budget and set mill rate (Pursuant to Executive Order 7i-13 and 7HH-1)

Mr. Jerram asked that a motion be made regarding one of the options.

A Motion was made by Kennerson to authorize the budget making authority to adopt a budget and set a mill rate; seconded by Rosengren.

First Selectman stated that he remained uncomfortable with the suspension of voting rights in Connecticut. He thinks it is wrong for the Governor to take away voting rights. He feels it is "flat out wrong" to not allow the people to cast a vote, especially when "we can go to Home Depot and stand in line to buy mulch with a mask on."

Selectman Kennerson agreed with Mr. Jerram's sentiments, but stated that she is comfortable that the Board of Finance has done their best to develop a budget this year. She noted that there may be difficulties/challenges next year and there may be a big hole due to the uncertainties of what the future will bring. She stated that no one knows what might happen with Educational Cost Share funding, or what schools may have to do to get ready to open again or how long it will take the economy to recover. Ms. Kennerson said that she thought it was risky to go with an interim budget because there are bills that need to be paid. Therefore, she believes the better course of action is to have the Board of Finance adopt the budget and set a mill rate.

Selectman Rosengren commented that he had trouble following all of this because he has struggled with not knowing if we have decided on the question we are trying to answer. He thinks that is the stumbling block because no one knows what they are up against. He stated that while there is talk of "tightening the belt," there is nothing behind it in terms of substance. He went on to say that most people in this town have a secure income. He stated that there is a majority population of seniors who have a steady income; and as a matter of fact, they have received an increase in their Social Security. Many residents are not going to lose their jobs and they are going to be able to save money. They are not going out to

dinner, not going to the movies, not going to the cleaners and not paying as much for gas. Therefore, there is a large part of the population who will not suffer if taxes are increased or remain the same. They are not feeling the pain. They are going to save money because the Board of Finance is going to lower the taxes. We are not helping them. However, there is “the other guy” – the one who is in desperate straits – the one who will suffer from the loss of a job. These folks may get some income from other sources, but not enough to pay a \$4,000 - \$5,000 tax bill. An increase in their taxes of \$250.00 will not make a difference to them. We are currently subsidizing those who don’t need the help but not subsidizing those who do. Mr. Rosengren stated that a decrease in their taxes in a small amount does nothing for them, it doesn’t make a difference. We are not addressing those who need the subsidy. Reducing something that you cannot pay anyway does not help anyone. Selectman Rosengren suggested that if there is intent to help those who are in dire straits, perhaps a \$500.00 check could be issued to those who can prove that they lost their job. He noted that this will not pay their taxes, but it could help them buy food. He stated that they would still have a bill to pay when this is over. Mr. Rosengren stated that currently there is nothing being done to help those in dire straits. He added that the town continues to help those who will not be feeling any pain. He stated that budgets in this town have been cut consistently and this will continue to be the trend for the next few years. He stated that one way to address this is to “bite the bullet” and keep a modest tax increase and do not use the rainy day fund. He said that it will be evident in 6 weeks from now whether or not the taxes are rolling in; at that point, it will be easier to determine “if the storm is going to hit,” however, he does not think that there will be a major loss of tax revenue because unemployment numbers in New Hartford are not that high. Mr. Rosengren wants to help the desperate people and would like to see policies enacted to help them. Mr. Rosengren stated that cutting the budget is not going to help anyone.

First Selectman commented that the question that needs to be answered is ‘shall the Board of Finance approve the budget and set a mill rate?’ Mr. Jerram clarified that the Board of Finance is not moving to lower the budget, it is going up. He asked for a vote on the motion.

*AYE: Kennerson, Jerram
Motion Carries*

ABSTAIN: Rosengren

Having no other business, Mr. Jerram asked for a motion to adjourn.

MOTION: by Kennerson to adjourn at 8:30, seconded by Jerram.

Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant