

**Board of Selectmen
Virtual Meeting
Tuesday, May 26, 2020**

Present: First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectman Alesia Kennerson, Selectman David Rosengren, WPCA Chairman Denton Butler; Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward;

First Selectman Dan Jerram called the meeting to order at 5:38 PM.

Executive Session – re: union negotiations; (note: this portion of the meeting was not available to the public; the public was allowed into the meeting when Executive Session ended):

MOTION: by Kennerson to enter into Executive Session at 5:39 PM for the purpose of discussion related to Union Contract Negotiations; seconded by Rosengren.

Unanimous.

Jerram, Rosengren, Kennerson entered into Executive Session (note: virtual meeting, members of the public were held in the “waiting room” until the end of Executive Session)

Executive Session ended at 6:04 PM.

Action regarding Executive Session – union contracts:

MOTION: by Kennerson to approve all three union contracts (police, town hall employees, public works employees) for the next 3 years; seconded by Jerram.

First Selectman Jerram summarized the changes to the existing contracts for the record:

Department of public works has agreed to a new 3 year deal that is equivalent to 2.5% for each year of the next three years; however, they have deferred the 2.5% in year one and will instead receive 3.75% in years 2 and 3 (a total of 7.5% over 3 years). Their health care premium share will remain stable for years 1 and 2 at 14% and will increase to 14.5% in year 3.

One other change in the contract applies to the “highway maintainer trainee” position which will lengthen the period of being a trainee from the current 2 years to 3 years.

Town Hall employees contract mirrors the DPW contract with union members agreeing to the same 7.5% over three years, deferring in year one with wages remaining stable and then will receive 3.75% in years 2 and 3.

Health care premium shares are the same as DPW.

An administrative change in the contract is the inclusion of a 4 hour minimum for any employee who is called out after hours or on weekends due to a matter that needs immediate attention (i.e. building inspector needs to be at a fire scene).

The New Hartford Police Union has agreed to a total increase of 5.25 % over 3 years; they have set on 0% in year 1, followed by 2.5% in year 2 and complete with 2.75% in year 3. The health care premium shares are the same as the other 2 unions.

An administrative change in language for Special Duty assignments includes the requirement that outside contracted special duty requires 24-hour notice of cancellation or the contractor is liable to pay a 4- hour minimum. Also, there is a requirement that officers must notify the First Selectman or his designee if called out on the weekends or after hours. This notification is so that the employer is aware of the whereabouts of its employees in case of any issues.

Mr. Jerram stated that he cannot speak highly enough regarding the willingness of all of the members of the three unions to work with the Town during these times. He noted that the unions have already voted to approve these changes. Selectman Kennerson echoed Mr. Jerram and stated that it shows cooperation between the administration and the employees and agreed to a 0% in the first year, knowing that we are all in a difficult position. She is happy that was accomplished.

Selectman Rosengren stated that he will support the motion, but wanted to make some additional statements. He commented that he was concerned about “kicking the can down the road” and instead of having to pay \$40,000 next year, it will be deferred to the following two years. He stated that there is surplus in this year’s budget that could fund that. He also expressed concern that there will be a division between those who will say “the teachers are bad and the town employees are good for doing what they are doing.” He said that the teachers expressed their desire to not take a deferment and there were a number of letters that came in to the Board of Finance that supported the decision the teachers made to not defer their wage increases. Mr. Rosengren would have been in support of allowing the raises for next year because the raises in question were not even in keeping with Cost of Living at this time. Inflation is at 2.7% - 3.0% so a raise of 2.5% would not even get them to today’s dollars. However, he will support the motion because they made the decision to defer and he will agree to that.

Unanimous

Opportunity for Public Comment:

No comments

WPCA Update – Chairman Butler:

Denton Butler (Bud), Chairman of the Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA), was invited to participate in the meeting to present an update regarding the WPCA. Mr. Butler noted that there has been a delay in receiving receipts for payment of bills. On June 2, there will be the beginning of collection calls. Mr. Butler noted that there are 3 payments of non- wastewater treatment plant debt that will be coming due in June and July. There are payments due to the USDA for debt service related to the water tanks, the Prospect Street sewers and the water system improvements that were done in the 1990’s. These payments are processed electronically. They are automatically deducted from the account and funds need to be available.

Mr. Butler stated that the WPCA does not need to make a request for the Selectmen to intervene at this time; but noted that there are some capital expenditure projects that are being deferred at this time in order to ensure that current obligations are met. Mr. Butler indicated that the WPCA may be inserting

information with the bills to be sent in July notifying the customers that if they are not current with payments, they should be making arrangements to set up a payment plan. Those that do set up a payment plan will be offered relief from interests and penalties for a period of 6 months (from April). Mr. Jerram asked if all operational contracts were current. Mr. Butler stated that they are. Selectman Rosengren questioned Mr. Butler about his reporting to the WPCA at their May meeting that they had a positive cash flow. Mr. Butler replied that at that time, it was so. Mr. Rosengren asked if Mr. Butler knew the figure for that time, and Mr. Butler replied that he could not answer that with certainty without documentation in front of him.

Mr. Rosengren asked Mr. Butler if the WPCA had considered taking the debt service payments off the table for this year. Mr. Butler replied, “no.” Mr. Rosengren asked Mr. Butler if he was aware of the opinion (August 28, 2008) written by the Town Attorney regarding WPCA debt service obligations. Selectman Rosengren repeated this question to Mr. Butler several times, with Mr. Butler responding that he is aware of the opinion and that, to his understanding, there is a difference in the interpretation of that opinion between Mr. Rosengren and the WPCA/Town. This discussion went back and forth and was ended by First Selectman Jerram, stating that Mr. Rosengren has a difference in the interpretation of that opinion than others have and ruled that he was ending the discussion and stated that the meeting should continue to the next agenda item.

FY 2020–2021 Municipal budget – discussion and possible action:

The First Selectman stated that he had electronically distributed the May 13 budget document to the Selectmen for review. He had asked that the Selectmen review the document for accuracy. Due to the changes in salaries/wages made earlier this evening, adjustments need to be made to the wages for union employees, non-union employees, elected officials, and part time employees. The salary increases will all show 0%. However, Mr. Jerram explained that the highway department salary line item will show a slight increase due to contractual obligations that result in a salary increase to 3 highway employees. These employees have been receiving wages as “trainees” and they have completed that training period and will now be subject to the wages as indicated for “maintainer.” This increases their hourly wage, but is separate from a raise in pay.

Jerram quickly reviewed the budget and pointed out a few changes. He noted that Probate is decreasing their assessment to the town, which lowers the line item. He stated that there is a vacancy in the highway department and a vacancy in the police department at this time and there is currently a hiring freeze. The recreation director position has also been vacant, but there is an individual lined up to fill this vacancy soon. Mr. Jerram reminded the Selectmen that the Senior Citizens line item had been adjusted and split into two line items; in order to account for expenses related to the Senior Van. Jerram briefly mentioned the revenue sheet and stated that he and the bookkeeper, during a final review of the revenues, realized that they had forgotten to include the revenue from the Pequot Grant and it has now been added. Additionally, Jerram stated that the Town has been notified that there will be \$13,344 coming to the Town in the form of funding associated with the CARES Act. Jerram opined that since this allocation is intended to assist the local Board of Ed to provide alterations to the school that may be necessary due to COVID, he felt that for New Hartford to only receive \$13,344 out of \$110 million is a “travesty”. This revenue has also been added to the revenue sheet. Mr. Jerram mentioned

to the Board of Selectmen that they might want to recommend changes to the Tax Collection rate to the Board of Finance. Ultimately, the Board of Finance makes the final decision, but Jerram suggested changing it to 96.5% (reducing it from the current 97.5%), in light of previous discussions concerning the “ability to pay taxes” during this financially difficult time.

Selectman Rosengren stated that he had reviewed the budget carefully and has some questions regarding some of the line items currently in the budget. He noticed that the Referendum line item has \$8,000 in it and since there will be no referendum, he suggested that perhaps this line item could be cut. The Fire Marshal line item has one full time and one deputy fire marshal. Selectman Rosengren stated that the Deputy was supposed to be training to become the full time Fire Marshal and perhaps now is the time to visit that. Mr. Rosengren also stated that he would like to revisit the reduction of the \$15,000 in the highway paving line item. He doesn't think a \$15,000 deduct accomplishes much. Mr.

Rosengren had a question as to why Meals on Wheels line item was reduced. He also questioned the allocation for New Hartford Day, stating that since that event has been “taken over by a non-profit” and there is still \$1,800 in the budget for this event-- this expense may not be necessary. Rosengren stated that he noticed a reduction in the Senior Citizen line item; a decrease in the amount of \$12,000 and wondered what that was about. He also suggested that the Senior Director line item be looked at, noting that there has not been any programming for Seniors downtown and asked if there is a need for a Senior Director for the next few months. Mr. Rosengren stated that, in the interest of time, it was not necessary to address these items.

First Selectman Jerram did address some of the questions Mr. Rosengren had regarding the line items. He explained that the Referendum line item is for referendums to be held in 20-21 – specifically for the 21-22 budget, noting that while there may not have been a budget referendum this year, there will be one next year. With regard to the Fire Marshal line item, Mr. Jerram stated that the Fire Marshal line item is a requirement and he did not think that it would be appropriate to make changes at this time. The Meals on Wheels is an assessment given to the Town based on actual usage and the town uses the bill for the line item. It is an actual cost. New Hartford Day still runs through the Town; noting that the women who have ‘taken it over’ are members of a non-profit, but this is a separate event that they volunteer to take on. With regard to the Senior Citizen line item decrease of \$12,000, Mr. Jerram stated that there had been action taken during previous budget discussions to split the line item into two and add “senior van driver” so that costs associated with the van driver were separated out, allowing for more transparency. Jerram was also against making any changes to the Senior Director line item, noting that while services may be reduced right now due to COVID, there is the expectation that activities will resume.

MOTION: by Kennerson to approve the General Government budget at \$5,330,916.87; seconded by Jerram.

Unanimous

Jerram stated that the Board understands that times are tough and they have tried to reduce spending. He noted that the revenue end is tricky due to uncertainty and this will be discussed with the Board of Finance later in a joint meeting.

Rosengren asked if he was correct in stating that after all of the changes made to a \$5.3 million budget, the actions taken by this Board resulted in cuts to the budget in the amount of \$41,000 – Jerram clarified that it is \$41,900 in operational cuts and an additional \$40,000 in capital reductions.

MOTION: by Kennerson to recommend to the Board of Finance to consider a 96.5% collection rate for 20-21 and the modifications to the Revenue to include the CARES Act Funding and the Pequot Revenue; seconded by Jerram.

Unanimous.

First Selectman Jerram stated that, at this time, he would entertain a motion to adjourn this meeting in order to then join the joint meeting of the Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen that immediately follows this meeting.

MOTION: by Jerram to adjourn at 7:07 PM; seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant