

Town of Northumberland Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes (Draft)

Date: Monday, September 21, 2020

Place: Town Meeting Room – 10 Station

Square Time: 6:00 P.M.

During the meeting “social distancing” will be practiced and wearing of masks is strongly encouraged

Select Board Members present: Michael Phillips, Chairman, James Weagle, Chris Wheelock

Others present at the meeting: James Gibson, Al Rossetto, Norm Cotter, Sam Oakes, Nancy Mellow, Jim Tierney, Robin Irving, Glenn Cassady

- 1. Chairman opens the meeting:** Michael opens the meeting.
- 2. Acceptance of Minutes:** Michael ask for motion to accept minutes of Sept 1, 2020 meeting, Jim makes motion to accept and Chris seconds, all in favor, 3-0.

3. Selectmen Business:

a. Department Head Business: Ambulance and Police

James Gibson: 430 calls so far, 66 ahead of last year at this time.

Comstar expenses so far are \$171,542.55 and payments have been \$129,298.??

No new Covid cases to report.

The radio grant was passed over but Robin is submitting to different agencies to see if another will offer the grant.

All ambulances are in rotation, and will be state inspected and also inspected by the Bureau of EMS in December.

Working with Cohos Advisors on better business, budget and billing plans.

b. Discussion of EMS Business Plan

Michael: wanted to jump into discussions before budget season to be able to have time to look over things. I appreciate that you have an outline of a business plan which I just received and have not had a chance to look at much of it yet. I think one of the deciding

questions is are we a 2 ambulance or 3 ambulance department based on the economics of it? Two years ago we were looking at \$180,000+ per new ambulance. Ambulances are only supposed to last 10 years and you have worked miracles the ambulances (2006, 2011 and 2015) and an annual gear cost of \$25,000 to \$30,000 to be placed into a capital reserve fund. Since I have been on the Board the Ambulance Dept., revenues have not exceeded expenses, and that's ok because you provide a valuable service. It is a question of how we raise the money to cover the expenses, covered by taxes and CRF, which is also funded by taxes. We service 5 other towns and we asses them \$14 per capita.

James makes correction that the rates have gone up, he wanted \$17 or more per capita, and had to settle on \$15. The national average is \$21 to \$25 per capita. Some other things will have to come into play.

Michael need to raise other towns rates because the taxpayers of Groveton are paying \$81 per capita. Groveton covers too much, same as the water situation.

Discussion of local talent pool is drying up in the search for a paramedic. In looking at an article on the 45th Parallel where they had a few transfers and that would not help us if we had a paramedic. When there is an ambulance sitting in the garage it costs the Town approximately \$80 per day. 3 ambulances equal \$240 per day. Something to think about in the discussion of how many ambulances.

Final question is that the population of the other towns we service is 1,825 to Groveton's population of approx. 2,400, how many ambulances do we need to service approximately 4,000 people? How does collaboration with other ambulance departments work? A few years ago North Stratford had an ambulance voted for at Town Meeting, then 2 years later they did not have enough people to service so they dissolved the ambulance department. Want to keep this in mind. We need to look at collaboration with other towns and make this work as best we can.

Chris brings up how in the business plan James mentioned it is getting harder and harder to collect, and what you do collect is just a portion of our expenses. Seems to be getting worse.

James relates this to the affordable care act, medicare, medicaid, insurance, cuts from the Government. Transfers are the best paying runs, 911 is not profitable. Transfers get repaid almost 100%.

Chris: on recoup, municipality goes by different rules than a private organization. Like the 45th.

James: they bill higher and can go after stuff better than we can.

Chris: so they have more leverage to go after the money.

James: we probably could but why throw more money into trying? Comstar not big into collections.

Jim: why do we hold the ambulance to a business standard? Why do we hold them to higher standards than the Police or any other department? If you need them but get rid of them, you may not be alive. No other department hit with the scrutiny, not right.

Michael not in agreement with Jim's assessment. Not talking about dismantling the department, talking about 2 or 3 ambulances. Looking that other towns pay much less than Groveton. Legitimate concerns.

Michael and Jim discuss the needs of keeping the ambulance and not unfairly charging the population of Groveton with such a large amount versus other towns served.

Chris: we all wanted to move ahead faster than we have, a new modern facility may bring in more paramedics. Also a large pill to swallow to hope we get them to come. Not saying building the new facility is not a good idea. Argument needs to be the other towns need to pay more.

James has talked to other ambulance departments in other towns. They do not want to lose the help of Groveton. For a contract to Groveton it would cost over \$133,000 if we could find anyone to do it.

Chris asks what percentage of calls are Groveton and what percentage is other towns?

James: the breakdown is in every report I give to you.

Chris: so, we are over 50%?

James: in agreement with percentage, but we are already over calls this year from last year.

Chris: our population is a relatively aging one.

James: an aging population and a transient population. If a bill does not get paid it gets submitted to the serviced town. The town can then only go after people who have property, not renters. Basically, can't get blood from a rock.

Jim asks if the number of runs also includes accidents and out of staters?

James says yes, and if another company were to contract with us they would only handle the 911 calls not the Fire or Police calls, no CPR call, 911 only. In working with Tammy breaking this down to an operational and service costs will help. Need more lines for accounts instead of grouping together.

Michael: This is a good start to an important conversation. The purpose to keep you guys in business. But there is also the reality of standing up in Town Meeting and proposing a warrant for 2 new ambulances at \$360,000 and another warrant for a new EMS facility which will cost 1 and a half million. Need to convince the voters, may be able to with the numbers we are discussing.

James has spoken to some town's people and there is a mixed reaction. He has checked into the actual cost of the 3rd ambulance, minimal, has only done 16 runs, \$475/year for insurance, \$158/year for oil change, it is a diesel, and an annual inspection. All vehicles paid for.

Ambulance Fee per Capita

Consideration of what we charge area towns to pitch in for ambulance services reveals an undue subsidy being paid by Groveton taxpayers in net loss years. What follows are accounting synopsis for the past five years, with the resulting transfer of net earnings to capital reserve funds (CRF) for purchase of new ambulances and equipment.

2015	Actual	Budget	Under budget	Notes
Total revenues	174,821.29	256,844.00	82,022.71	Revenues fell short
Total expenses	249,672.01	256,844.00	7,179.99	Spent less than budgeted
Profit/Loss	<74,850.72>			

Sum of \$12,140 was approved for CRF funding in 2015.
This figure derived by Selectmen Jim Tierney on unknown basis.

2016	Actual	Budget	Under budget	Notes
Total revenues	285,640.07	296,092.00	10,451.93	Revenues fell short
Total expenses	291,886.79	296,092.00	4,205.21	Spent less than budgeted
Profit/Loss	<6,246.72>			

Sum of \$62,032 was approved for CRF funding in 2016.
This figure derived by Selectmen Jim Tierney on unknown basis.

2017	Actual	Budget	Under budget	Notes
Total revenues	299,932.74	330,030.00	30,097.26	Revenues fell short
Total expenses	308,791.83	330,030.00	21,238.17	Spent less than budgeted
Profit/Loss	<8,859.09>			

Sum of \$21,103 was approved for CRF funding in 2017.
 This figure provided by accountant based on unspent budget.

2018	Actual	Budget	Under budget	Notes
Total revenues	261,905.84	332,711.00	70,805.16	Revenues fell short
Total expenses	288,202.00	332,711.00	44,509.00	Spent less than budgeted
Profit/Loss	<26,296.16>			

The select board recommended passing over CRF funding in 2018.

Goal to only use surplus revenues (profit) for this purpose was again put into effect in 2018. The selectboard had followed this "rule" in 2012, 2013, 2014. Individual board members were led to believe this continued to be the case the intervening three years.

2019	Actual	Budget	Under budget	Notes
Total revenues	185,608.26	364,856.00	179,247.74	Revenues fell short
Total expenses	319,051.82	364,856.00	45,804.18	Spent less than budgeted
Profit/Loss	<133,443.56>			

Sum of \$40,000 was placed in Ambulance Vehicle CRF and another \$5,800 placed in a newly proposed Ambulance Equipment CRF in 2019.

This figure provided by accountant based on unspent budget. The board agreed to this methodology for CRF funding for 2019 because of imminent need to replace the older ambulance. The increase in the wage lines in the operating budget not being fully utilized partially explains these unspent monies.

That loss in 2019 divided by resident count for our town would look something like this, if our town were contracting with a neighboring town for ambulance services:

Groveton, NH - \$133,443.56 (based on 2200 residents) at \$60.65 per capita.

The other five towns we serve are assessed at \$14.50 per capita: Bloomfield, VT – \$3,204.50 (based on 221 residents) Brunswick, VT - \$1,624.00 (based on 112 residents) Maidstone, VT - \$3,016.00 (based on 208 residents) Stark, NH – \$7,946.00 (based on 548 residents) Stratford, NH - \$10,672.00 (based on 736 residents)

Groveton taxpayers thus paid considerably more than what other area town taxpayers paid per capita in 2019. Additionally, funding for Ambulance Vehicle CRF and Ambulance Equipment CRF came from collected (but unspent) taxes. Consideration for this additional spending puts the actual per capita rate at \$81.48 for Groveton residents in 2019. This rate amounts to 5.6 times what other area taxpayers were assessed for ambulance services in that one year alone.

The population of other covered towns totals 1825. Groveton population figure of 2200 is an estimate. Take note that other area residents are paying \$26,462.50 in annual support through their tax dollars at this per capita rate. Each year that the subsidized portion of the ambulance budget (loss) and CRF funding (if not based on realized profits) totals \$31,900 or more Groveton taxpayers begin to pay a greater per capita charge through their tax dollars.

It would be interesting to think about recommended number of ambulances to effectively serve 4000 people total.

Michael: Going to move on because there is so much to cover tonight, but we will continue these talks. Will go to Peter and the Police Department.

Peter Pelletier reports there have been 276 calls for service, of which 101 were car stops. Started 10 new investigations with 11 arrests, 3 taken into protective custody and 3 accidents to investigate.

A few meetings ago it was discussed about getting rid of the 2013 Ford Explorer. Originally going to be used for Town employee travel but mice got into it. Had Randy estimate a trade in, low end, \$6,875. Suggestion of selling with a sign and amount on it.

Jim suggests putting out to bid and see what we get.

Michael says it will be put out for bid, do not think motion is needed for that.

Peter: There is an email to the Select Board regarding memorandums of agreement between the North Country Health Consortium and Police Department, this relates to grants to help with drugs, homelessness, etc. Jennifer Goulet has assisted in this project, just need a signature from the Board.

Michael: we have already agreed to this but I need a motion for the Police Chief to be able to sign both memorandums. One dated 8-20-2020 to 9-29-2020 and 9-30-2020 to 9-29-2021.

Jim makes motion for Police Chief to sign both memorandums. Chris seconds, all in favor, 3-0.

Norm Cotter asks if there has to be a motion to put the Ford Explorer out for bid.

Jim says he will make a motion to put the Ford Explorer out to bid for a minimum of \$3500. Chris seconds, all in favor, 3-0.

c. CARES Act-Elections application

Michael: the Select Board voted to submit. But Robin needs a formal vote.
Jim makes motion to submit application, Chris seconds, all in favor, 3-0.

d. Vote to approve transfer of \$114,337.40 from Road Fund CRF to general fund to pay various bills for paving for Mill and Odell Park, Spring Street, Pleasant and Summer. More work to be done but this total covers it. Michael asks for motion. Jim makes motion to transfer this money from the Road Fund to the General Fund, Chris seconds, all in favor, 3-0.

e. Discussion of changing 11/2/20 business meeting (elections on 11/3)
Date established: November 9th

f. Discussion of residential encroachment on Town property – Brown Road

Michael: camper removed, now moving back onto town property.

Jim: write to owner, give 10 days to comply.

Chris: a letter to be delivered by Peter.

Motion Jim, 2nd Chris, all in favor, 3-0.

Question from someone(JimTierney or Sam Oakes??) asking if the boundary lines have been surveyed and or blazed. Glenn replies that they are perfectly plain on the map.

Jim: Maple Street what's going on?

Glenn: Nothing

Chris: trailer on municipal

Glenn: says they have been in contact with someone.

Letter to be sent by Select Board.

Michael: agree that stationary trailer cannot be parked in Municipal Parking Lot, only a mobile trailer or camper.

Chris: brings up that on Friday there was a soccer game and a lot of parking was on the new grass. Spoke to superintendent they thought that because the ribbons were down they could park there.

Glenn: did not realize they were there, do not want them on that new grass.

Chris: 40 cars.

Norm Cotter: Is there room for them park elsewhere. Route 3?

Chris: always on Route 3.

g. Discussion of security measures at Gazebo and Covered Bridge

Wires pulled out, broken picnic tables, graffiti.

Michael: budget cameras.

Jim: game cameras donated by Jodi.

Chris: game cameras will be stolen.

Jodi: got them from a neighbor. Says they are very helpful. But have a card.

Michael: Robin do we have to post that there are cameras on the premises?

Robin: Public property, yes.

More discussion on posting and maybe fake cameras.

Jim Tierney or Sam Oakes???? asks if you post on public, do you have to post on private? Worth asking Bob Chapman if cameras could be posted on his property looking at the Gazebo and Covered Bridge.

Robin: you can post cameras on the bank and not have to post.

Chris: Michael do you need a motion?

Jim: I make a motion to have Jodi put the cameras up as soon as we get the signage and put up.

Robin: Not sure if these Wifi, cords, etc. Jodi and I can coordinate.

Michael: do I have a motion? Jim motions, Chris seconds, all in favor, 3-0

Norm: are you going to get ahold of Chapman so you don't have to post? That's a good idea.

Jim: these are only game cameras, if we put in other cameras then we will consider asking Chapman.

More discussion on cameras, property owned by Chapman, who to install, and how big the signs have to be.

h. Road Toll Request – Boy Scouts

Columbus Day Weekend – 10 to 2, gloves to handle money. Chris makes motion to allow with rules, Jim seconds, all in favor.

i. Road Toll Request – GHS Booster Club

May 8 2021, backup date of May 15, 2021, 9am to 1pm, 2 adults and 2 athletes present. Jim makes motion to allow, Chris seconds, all in favor, 3-0

j. Discussion of upkeep of dog waste receptacles in town

Jim: Julie and I were to do but schedules conflict. So she is going to do top part and I am going to do bottom part separately.

Michael: Thank you for doing that. Chris also thanks Jim.

k. Discussion of future building plan scenarios/vote from CRF with contingency

Michael: proposal tonight, but if we make motion now, we have authorization to spend. The Board in favor of using to utilize for feasibility project.

Michael and Jim and Chris discuss why voting and trying to keep the time frame.

Jim Tierney or Sam Oakes: why don't you make a motion to spend up to?

Jim: can't vote on something I don't know what it is.

Michael: we will pass over.

l. Submission of MS1

Michael needs motion to submit MS1, Jim makes motion, Chris seconds, all in favor, 3-0.

m. Cash Summary Report

Michael: As of August and this is not reconciled. Cash first of month, \$1,016,417.68. Added revenues of \$140,481.20 from taxes etc. Less expenses of \$338,914.48 gives us a balance of \$717,918.40. There is \$96,165.00 being transferred from capital to general in order to pay the paving bills.

4. Applications/Permits and Warrants:

a. Timber Warrant

Jeffrey and Antoinette Burt, owner Greg Menetes, map 101 lot 53. \$349.11. Jim makes motion to sign, Chris seconds, all in favor, 3-0.

b. Building Permit Applications

1.) Michael & Theresa Cormier - 66 Longview Dr. would like to put on a single-floor addition to their existing home to add a bedroom, dining room and bathroom plus a 12 X 12 open deck. The builder would be Jeff Beaton and they in hopes to hire JD Plumbing for the bathroom plumbing. Al has signed, fee paid. Jim makes motion to sign, Chris seconds, all in favor, 3-0.

2.) Bob & Francine Pinette - 13 Pleasant St. - Plan to do renovations with materials exceeding the \$5000 ceiling. They want to remodel the kitchen with all new cabinets and an island. Contracted Richard McKenzie to build. Also want to change their front porch into a laundry/mud room combo, an all-season insulated room and have contracted Mark Brassard for that work. Al signed, fee paid. Motion by Jim to sign, Chris seconds, all in favor, 3-0.

3.) Patrick and Heidi Platt, 63 Maple, demo and remove shed debris. Al has signed, fee paid. Jim makes motion to sign, Chris seconds, all in favor, 3-0.

c. Non-Resident Transfer Station Permit Applications

Michael Lubowsky property at 57 Covell Heights – renewal
Paul Mahoney, property 138 Old Village Road – renewal
Jim makes motion to approve, Chris seconds, all in favor, 3-0.

5. Public Matters To Be Addressed By The Board:

Announcement that there is a Building Committee meeting at 7pm tonight after the Select Board meeting.

6. Non-Public Session: (Pursuant to RSA'S 91-A:3,II (c)):

Motion to go into Non-Public by Jim at 6:53pm. Second by Chris, all in favor, 3-0.

Michael asks for motion to come out of non-pub. Jim makes motion to come out of non-pub, Chris seconds, all in favor, 3-0.

7. Adjournment:

Jim makes motion to adjourn, Chris seconds, all in favor, 3-0. Adjournment at 6:56pm.

Next meeting, Oct. 5, 2020

Respectfully submitted,

Pam Kathan
Select Board Minute Taker

Minutes approved by Select Board Members on _____

X

Jim Weagle
Northumberland Select Board Member

X

Michael Phillips
Northumberland Select Board Chair

X

Chris Wheelock
Northumberland Select Board Member

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