

**Kingston, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting of November 21, 2022
FINAL MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by the Chairman.

PRESENT: Chair Richard Wilson; Vice Chair Kevin St. James; Electra Alessio, Chris Bashaw, Charles Hart, Select Board Members

APPOINTMENTS:

DPW Director Phillip Coombs: budget lines for heat and electricity:

Mr. Coombs spoke to the Board about the line items for heat and electricity expenses; he said that some Town departments are responsible for their own building's budgets, and some are not. He said he has identified a few problem areas such as \$600 per year being budgeted for lights that have not been on in 6 years. He said that having the department heads responsible is a good idea in theory, but if they are not getting or reviewing the bills they will not know where things stand. It was noted that reviewing bills may not be a priority for some departments. He said that the bills have to go through Buildings and Grounds any way, as a capital line item. He said that if his department is responsible, they should have budgeting power.

Chairman Wilson said that Mr. Coombs can review utility bills without changing the budget line. Mr. Coombs said he is tracking them all, and they can stay on their current budget lines but need oversight.

Discussion continued among the Board, Mr. Coombs, and three members of the Budget Committee. Stacy Dion of the Budget Committee said that she would like to see the bills separate per building. She said that they used to all be in one bucket but were separated to give the responsibility for oversight to the department heads. Rick Russman said that the Budget Committee feels that every department needs to be accountable, and if they don't see the bills they don't care. Chairman Wilson said that if they are reviewed by one person who is unbiased that might be better. Ann Marie Roth said that when the budgets came in it looked like the bills were in three different places. She said this should be made easier and more transparent. Mr. Coombs said that that buildings that are separate are the Police station, Fire station and Highway garage. Others are lumped under Town Buildings.

It was agreed that Mr. Coombs will review the bills for 2022 to evaluate trends; this data will be shared with the Budget Committee. Going forward, he will review the bills and budget and bring any concerns to the department heads.

Brian Weego, 11 Church St.: Request for trash barrel

Mr. Weego introduced himself and said that he owns two buildings, 11 Church Street and 173 Main Street. Both are apartment buildings, but he lives in Apartment 3 at 11 Church Street. He said that he has rented a full 6- 9-yard container for trash at his Main

Street building which costs \$3,000 per year to maintain and is “complete overkill” and only emptied twice per month. He said at 11 Church Street they had had Town trash pickup, and never had more than two barrels at the curb at one time; however, when the Town switched to the new barrels, he was not issued one for that property. Instead, the DPW loaned him one to the end of the year. He said that when he bought the building, its residents were elderly and were paying rents about 30% below market. He said if he has to add a \$3,000 trash dumpster, he will have no choice but to raise the rents.

The Chairman asked DPW Director Phil Coombs for guidance on this issue. He said that as the Waste Management contract is only for residential pickup, commercial buildings are excluded. Some had been receiving trash pickup when they shouldn't have, and he delivered temporary bins to seven of them, to give them time to make other arrangements. Selectwoman Alessio pointed out that there is a difference between a rented house and an apartment building. Mr. Coombs said that they have made allowances for owner occupied businesses, such as Memories Ice Cream. Mr. Weego pointed out that he lives in Apartment 3. He said what makes it commercial is that there are six units; if there were four it would not be considered commercial. Mr. Coombs said he had not delivered bins to buildings with over four units. Chairman Wilson questioned the owner occupancy issue; Mr. Coombs said that it must be their primary residence. Mr. Weego said he is in the building half the time. Asked if there was a dumpster there when he bought the building, he said yes, but he removed it to save money and avoid having to move people out or raise rents. He added that his other building at 173 Main Street has 8 units, and the turnover is different, allowing him to keep the rents current.

Chairman Wilson said he would like to discuss this with Mr. Coombs and will call Mr. Weego tomorrow with an answer.

PUBLIC COMMENT 1: None heard.

OLD BUSINESS:

Complaint from resident at 5 Rockrimmon Road

The Chairman noted that the Board had tabled this complaint aside from addressing water delivery concerns, until Fire Chief Pellerin was available. Chief Pellerin said that the house is directly across from the new fire station, and he has talked to the owner several times, beginning before they had moved into the new building. He said as for the issue with the lights shining in the bedroom windows, he can't know when calls will come in and the personnel can't report to a dark station. He said the lighting was installed according to the Town's ordinance, angled down. He said they are not dimmable but are timed to come on at 7 pm and go off at 6 am. He said there are two zones, one in the parking lot and one attached to the building.

Another complaint was about music playing; Chief Pellerin said that there used to be a boom box in the bays, but that was discontinued. They now have blue tooth enabled speakers that play over the bay space, with volume controlled. He said that issue is resolved.

Chairman Wilson said that the point is the old station was there when this resident bought his house and had a large light at the back. There was discussion of property values, and Chairman Wilson said it doesn't drive values down, just might cut back on the number of buyers interested.

Chief Pellerin said that the resident has shades for his bedroom windows. Selectwoman Alessio said maybe the Town could offer to buy blackout shades, but she did not think any other concessions are called for. None of the Board felt that reducing the resident's tax bill was an option. Selectman Hart suggested a letter be written to reflect this discussion.

COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORTS:

Selectwoman Alessio reported that the **Kingston Days Committee** met and about 25 people attended who had seen information in the Carriage Towne News or on Facebook. She said that the decision was made to form a Steering Committee, to be chaired by Stacy Dion and consisting of six members. They will hold a preliminary meeting and start organizing. She commended all who were on the original committee, who did all they could this past year with little help. She said she hoped the seasoned members would stay on and that with the new members it will not be as stressful.

Selectwoman Alessio said that the tuition reimbursement that is being added to the new **Personnel Policy** is not included in the budget. There are questions about when it will be in effect and how it will be implemented. She said it states that 50% of tuition toward collage courses related to the employee's current job, provided the employee has received a grade of C or above, can be reimbursed.

MOTION: by Selectwoman Alessio, to add \$3,000 to the 2023 budget to fund tuition reimbursement.

SECOND: Selectman St. James
All in favor

Selectman Hart said that there is a heating problem at the **Museum**, that the boiler there is not functioning, and the building is being heated only minimally. He suggested they update the building with mini-splits. Chairman Wilson said those are not heating units. Selectman Hart said that the old boiler had been pulled out of the fire station before it was demolished. Chairman Wilson said that was a propane burning unit, so the museum building would need to be changed over.

Selectman Bashaw said that the **Planning Board** will be asking for legal review of its zoning article changes. He said they also voted to have individual Planning Board votes reflected on articles for the Warrant; he said they feel the vote count is important for transparency. Selectwoman Alessio said that she has no issue with this as long as it is okay with the Secretary of State.

It was noted that while there was a discussion of the forestry grant received by the Fire Department at the last meeting, there was no vote to accept the funds.

MOTION: by Selectwoman Alessio, to accept Forestry Grant funds in the amount of \$2,499

SECOND: Selectman Hart
All in favor

BOARD BUSINESS:
Change of Election Hours

There was a discussion of the pros and cons of changing the Town's election hours. It was pointed out that the Board can only change the Town election hours; changes to state elections must be presented to voters on the ballot. Points aired were that with all the changes to the election process, workers are kept very late, and this means more expense as well. Selectman St. James said that this should be up to the voters. Selectman Bashaw said that if just the Town hours were changed it might be confusing, so maybe both should be changed at once. Since there won't be a state election until 2024, it was decided to petition the state and place the question on the 2023 ballot, to change the hours for all elections.

186 Main Street

Chairman Wilson commented on the matter of this property for which the new owner is proposing veteran housing. He said that any questions on use are not in the Select Board's hands, but changes would have to go through the process of HDC and Planning Board approval. He said the only permits currently being issued are for normal maintenance of the house.

Rich St. Hilaire

The Chairman acknowledged a nice sympathy card received from the Town of Plaistow. He added that the Governor's citation has been received and he will deliver it to the St. Hilaire family.

Town Planner bids

Two bids for this contractual position have been received, one from current Planner Glenn Greenwood, and one from Rockingham Planning Commission. It was observed that the compensation would be roughly the same. Planning Board Chair Lynne Merrill will be asked to do the breakdown and give her opinion.

Budget discussion

Selectman Hart reminded the Board that their meeting with the Budget Committee is set for November 30th. He said that it needs to be decided what to do about cost-of-living increases, as there is currently nothing in the budget for this. There was discussion of whether to ask the voters on this, and if the increases would be included in a default budget. It was noted that neighboring towns had put in COLA increases of 6 or 7%, and that the federal increase is 8%. Selectman St. James said that the Board should recommend rates, but then the Budget Committee can choose to change them. It was decided to review rates and also check with the State on possible wording of a warrant article.

Selectman Hart also said that some Department Heads had submitted departmental pay raises as part of their budget, and some had not. He said this should be done across the

board to be built into the budget. There was a discussion of COLA vs. raises and Pay for Performance increases.

Selectman Hart questioned if some of the increases may be covered by ARPA funding. He said that all department heads should be looking into items in their budget that may be eligible for payment through this funding.

PUBLIC COMMENT 2: NONE

CORRESPONDENCE, APPLICATIONS, PURCHASE ORDERS:

- Timber intent signed for R15 Lot 8
- Correspondence has been received again about the gun range on Little River Road. The Chairman will go out together with the Police Chief to talk to the owners about the complaints.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

MOTION: By Selectwoman Alessio, to approve the meeting minutes of November 7, 2022, as submitted.

SECOND: by Selectman Hart

All in favor

The Chairman noted that the Department Heads meeting for December needs to be moved to December 19, as December 26 is a holiday.

The next meeting will be on November 28th, also a Department Heads meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:45 pm

Respectfully submitted:

Susan H. Ayer, Administrative Assistant to the Select Board