

**Kingston, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting of January 31, 2022: Meeting with Department Heads
FINAL MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 am by the Vice Chairman.

PRESENT: Chairman Phillip Coombs (arrived @ 9:15 am); Richard Wilson, Vice Chair; Electra Alessio, Kevin St. James, Donald W. Briggs, Select Board Members.

Department heads present: Highway Agent Richard St. Hilaire; Fire Chief Graham Pellerin; (Police Chief Donald Briggs); Town Clerk-Tax Collector Tammy Bakie; Finance Director Cindy Kenerson; Library Trustee Stephanie Hasselbeck; Library Director Melissa Mannon

TOPICS BY DEPARTMENT

Library

Ms. Hasselbeck introduced Ms. Mannon as the new Library Director. Ms. Mannon then spoke briefly on the immediate needs of the library. She said that the library trustees are in the process of taking applications for a children's librarian, an adult services librarian, and a technologist. She said the children's librarian is a top priority as the summer reading program is among the biggest programs the library offers.

Ms. Mannon also said collaboration is important to her, and she is already working within the school system, and will meet this week with the Recreation Director. Fire Chief Pellerin said that this is important as some events should be done as community events rather than various departments all doing their own thing. Ms. Mannon said she comes from a background in schools, and plans to increase the focus on young adults.

Finance/Personnel

Ms. Kenerson handed out copies of the draft personnel plan as it has been revised by the committee assigned to it. She asked the Board to review the policy and vote at the next meeting to accept the changes made; she can then consult with the attorney who is working with her on the policy, to get it finalized.

Chief Pellerin asked if the policy now includes a provision for banking of sick time which had been discussed at a prior meeting; Ms. Kenerson said it does not. There was a discussion of the reasons why a "sick bank" would be helpful; Chief Pellerin gave the example of a new employee who was out with COVID. Ms. Bakie said that it makes sense that rather than unused sick time being lost at the end of the year, it can be used by others who don't have coverage for an emergency situation. Mr. St. Hilaire said that it could fill some holes in the system in the case of serious illness.

It was agreed to discuss the matter of a "sick bank" at the February 7 meeting.

Selectman St. James said he would like Ms. Kenerson to attend the Deliberative Session.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector

Ms. Bakie reported that she had purchased a cash counting machine for her office, which is very useful when large amounts of cash come in; it also checks for counterfeit bills.

Ms. Bakie requested that the Town Hall be closed on Town Election Day, March 8, in order to avoid problems such as people coming in to drop off absentee ballots. This was agreed to by the Board.

On the topic of revamping the Town Hall, Ms. Bakie suggested that it would be nice to have a room set aside for taking a class and to better communicate without people in the office.

There was then a discussion of notification when department heads or other key personnel are not available. Ms. Bakie said that people will call her office looking for others if they don't get an answer when they call. Various solutions were talked about, and in the meantime, all were encouraged to notify other offices and to put an "out of office" message on Outlook and the phone answering machine.

Ms. Bakie reminded all that there is a new law that requires a central list to be kept of all non-public sessions for any Town board or committee. This will be kept by the Selectmen's Administrator. There was also a reminder that all meeting minutes need to be kept at the Town Clerk's office, so board and committee Chairs should make sure they are up to date.

Lastly, Ms. Bakie said that Moderator Ellen Faulconer is arranging a candidates' night, date to be announced soon.

Fire/Emergency Department

Chief Pellerin said he has two quotes for the new phone system, one from Block 5 and one from Kent Communications. He said Block 5 quoted \$18,000 for upfront costs and \$992 per month going forward; Kent Communications is \$8,000 upfront and \$830 thereafter. Due to the difference in cost, he said he thinks the Board should talk to a representative of both companies to understand the differences. He said that ARPA funds are set aside for this purpose, and it should be done sooner than later.

Highway/Building Maintenance

Mr. St. Hilaire said that one of his trucks was involved in an accident Saturday during the snow storm, and is being assessed for damage. He said there were no injuries and he will talk to Primex, but the other party admitted fault.

He said the storm itself was a 34-hour plowing event, so overtime for his department is adding up. He said the police department helped in getting parked cars off the roads;

another problem is that people clear the snow off their driveways into the road, making it necessary for the Town plow to go back and re-clear the road.

Mr. St. Hilaire then reported that the State has lowered the standard for several chemicals that water is tested for, and that because of this, 3 or 4 of the tests done at the closed landfill no longer meet the guidelines. He said that this information is available on the NH DES website, and in case there are inquiries there should be one point of contact at the Town. He said he is evaluating the situation and will talk to the Town's engineer. Chairman Coombs said that the state keeps changing standards, and the Town has done everything it had to do for the landfill and also for PFAS testing. He said this should be raised with the state delegation. He agreed to be the point of contact for these matters.

Mr. St. Hilaire said he is losing an employee, who can make \$7/hour more and receive a large sign-on bonus by working at Walmart. He said he can't compete with that. This led to a question on pay increases. It was noted that Ms. Kenerson had asked for the department evaluation forms to be submitted by today. Cost of living raises are dependent on the budget passing, and if the default budget is put in place, they would not be included.

Police Department

Chief Briggs said that he is losing a part-time police officer. He also reported that the new owner of the Safeway property is going to allow them to continue to use parking spaces when needed during storms.

BOARD BUSINESS

Evaluation forms

Selectman Wilson said he had asked for this topic to be included; he did not like how the evaluations were handled last year. He said that the liaisons were meeting with employees and filling out the evaluation, then the Select Board was evaluating a second time, which he thinks is not necessary. Selectwoman Alessio said that it was awkward going back to an employee with a different message when the evaluation had already taken place. Chairman Coombs said that there was some confusion last year, but the idea was to do an initial review and discussion with the employee, then come back to the Board to fill out the evaluation form. Selectman St. James said that he agreed that the opinion of the full board should count. Selectman Wilson said that it doesn't make sense for evaluations to be done by someone who does not know anything about the employee.

Ms. Kenerson suggested that it depends on how much the Board wants to micro-manage the process. Chairman Coombs said that a written policy with a timeline is needed so that the process will be consistent from year to year. Ms. Bakie said that Caitlyn Milhomme is putting the evaluation forms into a Word document so that they can be done online. It was decided that the same committee who worked on the forms will meet to create an abbreviated form to be used for self-evaluation. The Board will revisit this topic with input from the committee on Monday.

Scanning, Records Management system

The disagreement on indemnification wording in the contract with Records Force has been settled, and the wording suggested by Primex and town attorney Sumner Kalman is in the final document.

MOTION: by Selectman St. James, to authorize the Chairman to sign the Records Force contract for Scanning and management of Town records.

SECOND: by Selectman Wilson

In favor: Alessio, Briggs, St. James, Wilson; Abstain: Coombs; Passes

Unanticipated funds

A check has been received from the Town of Plaistow representing a partial refund of the cost of the Spring Household Hazardous Waste day.

MOTION: by Selectwoman Alessio, to accept \$4,650.25 in unanticipated revenue from the Town of Plaistow, as a refund from HHW Day, Spring 2021.

SECOND: by Selectman St. James

All in favor

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

MOTION: By Selectman St. James, to approve the meeting minutes of January 24, 2022, with one correction to the name of a Unitil employee (Tim Noones).

SECOND: By Selectwoman Alessio

All in favor

Costs of hiring Fire Department employees

Selectman St. James said he has found out that candidates for Fire/Emergency jobs have to pay for their background checks and fingerprinting that the Town requires for those positions, and also need a doctor's note. He said this is discouraging to applicants that are already difficult to find. In discussion, it was noted that for Police Department hiring, background checks are gotten for free from the state, and in the case of camp counselors and others, the town pays for them. Selectman St. James said he thought Fire Department applicants should be reimbursed, as the Town should not be charging people to come to work.

Chief Pellerin agreed, saying that he has tried to save the Town expenses wherever possible, but reimbursement would make sense, possibly after a time frame in which the person may change their mind. He said that he is going to do a membership drive, and if 15 people apply, he would not like to pay thousands of dollars for the background information only to have the people not show up. Selectman St. James suggested reimbursement once qualifications are met.

Chairman Coombs agreed that if the Town wants new employees it can't put barriers in the way; the Town should pay for all background checks. Chief Pellerin said this is not currently in his budget. Ms. Kenerson said that there is a line for background checks under Personnel, and if it is underfunded this can be addressed. It was agreed that all results will be mailed to the Town if the Town is paying for them.

MOTION: by Selectman St. James, that from this point forward, the Town will pay for background checks of all new employees, and results will come to the Town.

SECOND: by Selectwoman Alessio

All in favor

Stormwater Permit

Mr. St. Hilaire said that requirements for the MS-4 Stormwater permit include public education about such things as disposal of dog waste and grass clippings, use of pesticides, etc. He said he is wondering about the best and cheapest way to get this information to the public. Selectwoman Alessio suggested a newspaper flyer can be targeted to residents of Kingston only. Mr. St. Hilaire also wondered if a flyer can be mailed out with the tax bills. Ms. Bakie will check to see if this is legal.

CORRESPONDENCE, APPLICATIONS, PURCHASE ORDERS:

- A letter was received from Muriel Ingalls of the Kingston Lake Association. Ms. Ingalls had several concerns about upkeep of the area used for the Lake Host program near the boat launch every year, including overflowing trash barrels and porta-potties that are not emptied often enough. She also had a suggestion to place signs to notify people they are in a Watershed area or Aquifer Protection Zone. Chairman Coombs will contact Ms. Ingalls and include Evy Nathan of Conservation in the correspondence.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION:

MOTION: by Selectwoman Alessio, to enter non-public session under RSA 91-A:3, II (I) legal advice

SECOND: by Selectman Briggs

All in favor

Meeting adjourned to non-public session at 10:32 AM.

MOTION: by Selectman St. James, to return to public session at 11:00 AM

SECOND: by Selectwoman Alessio

All in favor

Motion made to seal these minutes: Motion made by Selectwoman Alessio, seconded by Selectman Wilson, because it is determined that divulgence of this information likely would...

XX Affect adversely the reputation of any person other than a member of this board.

Roll Call Vote to Seal Minutes:

Phillip Coombs	Y	Richard Wilson	Y
Kevin St. James	Y	Electra Alessio	Y
Donald Briggs	Y		

Motion: PASSED

Discussed in non-public session: Legal advice

Meeting Adjourned at 11:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Ayer, Administrative Assistant