

**Kingston, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting of February 28, 2022: Meeting with Department Heads
FINAL MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order at 9:03 am by the Chairman.

PRESENT: Chairman Phillip Coombs; 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; Library Director Melissa Mannon

TOPICS BY DEPARTMENT

Library

Ms. Mannon reported on recent activity at the library. She said an adult services librarian has been hired, that will start on March 14, and that they have a potential candidate for a new children's librarian.

The library's 10th anniversary is in May of this year, and Ms. Mannon shared the various activities that are planned; she has met with the school and the museum committee for help with planning an event on May 21. A Billy Joel band is planned to coincide with the annual plant sale fundraiser. A new makers space and seed library will be unveiled, and memories of older residents will be recorded and saved.

There was a brief discussion of how to control traffic at the plant sale.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector

Ms. Bakie said that something needs to be done about changing banks; she said that the TD bank's regular driver (for picking up deposits) is in the hospital and there have been four different drivers since then; in at least one instance the driver had no badge or ID. She said that on Friday no one showed up at all. Ms. Bakie said that the money is her responsibility and that after almost a year, it is time to open an account (at Partners Bank).

In discussion it was pointed out that the Town's Treasurer is in charge of the accounts, and has been out of Town. Ms. Bakie will send an email to the Treasurer.

Ms. Bakie said that all ballots cast at next week's Town Election need to be counted in order to compare to the machine count. She said this has always been required, but there is special attention being paid this year. She said that her office will close at 5 pm on Monday and will be closed for Election Day itself as she and her staff will be working at the election, which takes place at Swasey gymnasium. Ms. Bakie also reported that the school ballots and machine memory cards have not yet been delivered, but that this is a state-wide problem. She said she will be hand delivering absentee ballots when they do arrive. Paper ballots were sent to out of town absentee voters.

Mr. St. Hilaire noted that the locks were changed to the Swasey gym, and to be sure everyone has a key that needs one.

Fire/Emergency Department

Chief Pellerin said that he had received his Town credit card, but had the concern that there is a \$1,000 limit on it, which would be a problem if he had several \$500 items in a row, for example. Chairman Coombs said that the limit can be changed with a phone call to the Finance Director, or that he can also do it as a co-signer.

Chief Pellerin then said that Brentwood is hiring more full time personnel, which will relieve some of the pressure on Kingston. He noted that even at 30% capacity, the All American assisted living facility generated 40 EMT calls in the last two months. He then said that he would like to draft a letter for Select Board approval and signatures, to begin a discussion of regionalization. The discussion of the reasons for considering this, begun at previous meetings, was reopened. Chairman Coombs said that Chief Pellerin should draft the letter and set a date for an initial meeting; it will be sent to all neighboring towns to gauge the level of interest. Mr. Pellerin said that this will take years, and may not be attained before his tenure as Chief is through, but that the process should be started.

Highway/Building Maintenance

Mr. St. Hilaire said that he has placed want ads for the opening he has for a full time employee, noting the difficulties of finding equipment operators for under \$25 per hour. Chief Pellerin suggested it is time to look at a wage matrix, as has been entertained before. Chairman Coombs said there should be a working group to explore the matter, and that a better approach is to offer additional pay for additional duties, such as a Fire employee being a fire inspector, or a Maintenance employee having certification for pesticide application. He said the Town will never catch up with the wage matrix, it is moving too fast and comparing the same job in different towns is like comparing apples to hand grenades. Discussion continued on classifications within the town, pay rates and incentives. This topic will be explored further at the next Department Head meeting.

Mr. St. Hilaire said that it is too late for this year, but plowing rates should be raised, as diesel fuel has gone up and the plow contractors pay their own fuel.

Police Department

Chief Briggs said that, as with the other large departments, retention of employees is his number one problem. He agreed that there should be a meeting to work on the employment and wage issues as soon as possible.

Selectman St. James said that mutual aid is a problem, and that over the weekend, due to a funeral there was only one person available in Kingston in one other town, and with one person on duty they can't do anything. He said that they Kingston went out to help transport a patient, leaving Kingston with no coverage. Chief Pellerin suggested that the three departments try to project future needs.

APPOINTMENTS

Steve Lieber, Affinity Lighting

Selectman St. James introduced the topic, saying that Affinity recently replaced the streetlights with LED bulbs, and then it was decided to pursue changing the lights in Town buildings as well. He said there were some obstacles while the funding for rebates was in limbo, but it is now again available. The question has come up, though, whether to expand the project to other energy efficiency measures.

Mr. Lieber introduced himself and also Bill Garbati of Ameresco. Mr. Lieber said that the New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission had rejected all funding for energy efficiency in November, but the state legislature and Governor had recently put it back in place. He said that Affinity has partnered with Ameresco on more comprehensive projects; Affinity takes care of the lighting component and Ameresco handles everything else.

Mr. Garbati listed other projects Ameresco has completed. He spoke about the opportunities for solar energy now that net metering limit has been increased in New Hampshire. There was a wide discussion of solar power at the landfill (being discussed by the Town's solar committee), and the cost and scope of various efficiency projects for Town buildings. It was noted that the landfill solar project will go out for bids. Selectman St. James asked what the cost of a comprehensive energy audit would be. Mr. Garbati said the for a preliminary audit there would be no cost, but a more comprehensive study would require an understanding that the Town is going forward with a project. He said the cost of the audit is typically rolled into the project cost.

Selectwoman Alessio said that she thinks it makes the most sense to start with the Town Hall building, and break the project down in smaller pieces. Selectman Wilson said that the Town also needs to be looking to the future. Mr. Lieber said that he would love to get started on the lights, but that it may be beneficial to the Town to look at a comprehensive project. He said the rebates are in place and it's a matter of timing. He also said that the only building that doesn't qualify, as it is not open enough hours at this time, is the Recreation building.

Selectman St. James revisited the breakdown of how the lighting project would be paid for, and the life expectancy of the bulbs. He said that the goal is to remain budget neutral.

This topic will be discussed again, and it was suggested that the Highway Agent should give his input.

Dave Black, Kent Communications re: phone system

Mr. Black introduced David Baker of Blueface, a Comcast company. He said Mr. Baker used to be with Panasonic, but that they are no longer making phones. Fire Chief Graham Pellerin explained that when planning the phone system for the new fire station, it was suggested that all Town offices should be on the same system. He said the two quotes received may need to be adjusted depending on the exact number of phones needed.

Chairman Coombs said that ARPA funds are going to be used for this expenditure, as the VOIP phone system will enhance the ability of employees to work from home. The functionality of using a cell phone but having calls show as forwarded from a Town extension will be added, among other improvements.

Mr. Black then reviewed the phones he is recommending and the functions they offer. The cost of the replacement phones would range from \$90 for a basic phone that is only for calls in and out, and up to \$300 for models with larger screens and more functions.

The fact that the phones in the Town Hall were recently upgraded was brought up; these were replaced by Kent Communications. Mr. Baker said that the current phone system can offer mobility, in that they can be brought home and plugged in; he said they are all cloud based. A mobile app can be used on cell phones. He said that trunks can be added to the current cabinet.

Mr. Coombs asked if the current system can show which employees are out of the office, and Mr. Baker said this can be done by integrating through Microsoft Teams.

Pricing and number of phones needed was discussed. The quote from Kent Communications included only the Fire Department phones and the work required to install software at the Town Hall. Selectman Wilson said that a revised quote will be needed, to add the option of replacing the current phones. A list will be emailed to Mr. Black of how many smaller phones and how many larger phones should be included.

Discussion continued on the various functions of the different phones and where the more expensive models would be required. It was noted that this needs to be decided soon, as the fire station is nearing completion.

CORRESPONDENCE, APPLICATIONS, PURCHASE ORDERS:

- One elderly tax exemption form was received that will be sent back for corrections.
- John's Truck and Auto has submitted the annual junkyard license application; all junkyards will be inspected before approval of the licenses.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

MOTION: By Selectwoman Alessio, to approve the meeting minutes of February 24, 2022, as written.

SECOND: by Selectman Briggs

All in favor

The Chairman announced that there will be no meeting on March 7.

Meeting Adjourned at 11:50 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Ayer, Administrative Assistant