

**Kingston, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting of June 28, 2021: Special Meeting with Department Heads
FINAL MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 am.

PRESENT: Phillip Coombs, Chair; Richard Wilson, Vice Chair; Electra Alessio, 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 Director Rebekka Mateyk.

Chairman Coombs began the meeting by introducing the topic of funding that will be available to the Town from the American Rescue Plan via the Governor's Office for Emergency Relief & Recovery (GOFERR). It was established by the Finance Director that while the deadline to file an account to accept the money is August 18, 2021, the Town has several years to use the money for eligible expenses.

There was a discussion of various possible uses:

- meeting room upgrades such as acoustical panels and hardware to improve sound
- large televisions (rather than a projector) for including remote participants in meetings
- Laptops or tablets for all employees and inspectors, and mobile printers, to facilitate remote work and communication between departments.
- Cyber security and computer server upgrades and improvements; possibly to capture what is already being spent. Centralization of the server at the new Fire Station was discussed. Block 5 will be consulted about this.
- Engineering costs for sewer and water projects
- Digitization of all Town records

It was agreed that all departments will submit a list of ideas for use of the GOFERR funds, to be discussed at the July 12 meeting.

TOPICS BY DEPARTMENT:

Fire Department

Fire Chief Graham Pellerin discussed personnel issues, mainly retention of personnel. He said they are exploring the option of merging with the Town of East Kingston. The Selectmen were in favor of a meeting of liaisons, to include a Selectman and Fire Chief from both towns. Chief Pellerin will set up this meeting, and Selectwoman Alessio, as Select Board representative for the Fire Department, will attend.

Chief Pellerin said that the Beer Fest application has been submitted, to be held September 25. He said it will include food and music, take place from noon to 4:00 pm,

and all will be cleaned up by 5:00 pm. There was a brief discussion of the last event (in 2019); parking this time will be handled by an outside company or a dedicated group of volunteers. This year, no children or animals will be admitted.

The matter of the generator which needed to be re-ordered in a larger size due to an oversight by the architect was briefly discussed. Chief Pellerin had consulted Town Counsel about what recourse the Town may have, and Attorney Kalman had advised that as the problem was caught early, there was no loss to the Town and no need to involve the court.

Chief Pellerin has met with representatives of the Recreation department and Camp Lincoln to go over emergency procedures. He also will be putting in a purchase order for a new command vehicle; the old one may be used by the Code Enforcement Officer.

The Chief concluded by informing the Board that he will be on vacation from July 17 through 24, but will come back to oversee placement of the cistern, which is scheduled for July 22.

Highway Department

Highway Agent Rich St. Hilaire went over his projects currently in process, which include summer work such as roadside mowing. He said that as in the past, the old Fairgrounds property will be used for materials and debris storage, which could trigger complaints from local residents, but it is Town property that he is entitled to use.

Mr. St. Hilaire also reminded all to call him if they see driveways going in, so that he can be sure they have permits and the work is being done correctly. He also briefly discussed the parking area near the State Park, which is being eliminated in favor of additional roadside parking. There have been complaints of cars being parked on both sides of the road as well as in the roadway.

Police Department

Chief Donald Briggs reported that his department is still looking for one more full-time officer. He asked if there is interest in doing a wage matrix this year. He said the goal is to be able to keep personnel from leaving due to the Town's pay scale being on the low side of the spectrum.

There was a discussion of the pros and cons of setting a wage matrix, and also the problem of the cost of living rising at a much higher level than the cost of living allowance given annually. Various ways of encouraging employees to stay in town, especially Fire and Police personnel, were discussed at some length, including the topics of the budget, salaries, and recognizing and rewarding valuable employees.

Town Clerk-Tax Collector

Town Clerk-Tax Collector Tammy Bakie said that her office has been reorganized, and new Office Clerk Caitlyn Milhomme is doing very well and will be able to work more hours in the Fall when her children start school. She is training Ms. Milhomme on all aspects of the office.

There are three more days to collect the first tax bill for 2021; Ms. Bakie said about 2 million dollars are still due out of 8.8 million.

Ms. Bakie said that with two customer windows and four employees, there are often long lines at her office. She said they would like to be able to add a third window for tax payments only, as those are fast transactions. As opening the hall door would constitute a security risk, she suggested that a half door could be installed there that could be used as an additional service window as needed. The Board had no objection to the Building Maintenance department doing this work.

Ms. Bakie added that there are still 80 dogs that have not been licensed and that the final letter will go out on Wednesday, adding fines. Also, the History of Kingston books have arrived and are available for sale at her office.

There was a discussion of the storage areas at the front of the building and under the stairs; the spare room is in the process of being cleaned and organized, but the vault under the stairs is very full of old documents belonging to various committees. It was decided that this room needs to be emptied and the paperwork separated into categories so that the groups involved can go through them and identify what needs to be kept and what can be discarded.

Finance and Human Resources

Finance Director Cindy Kenerson said that there is a new Federal holiday, June 19, that was just legislated. It was created in time that last Friday would be the day Juneteenth was observed for this year. It was affirmed that the Town of Kingston does recognize all Federal holidays. There was discussion regarding how to handle this, such as by offering employees a floating holiday. A decision on this will be made at the July 12 meeting of the Selectmen.

Ms. Kenerson was asked to distill what information she can get about the ARP/GOFERR funding details and submit this to the Board.

There was a brief discussion about recently mandated harassment training. Ms. Kenerson said she sent out the memo to all paid employees, whether elected or appointed. Fire Chief Pellerin said that his department holds in-person training through Primex, which he will open up to all departments.

Library

Library Director Rebekka Mateyk said the library is still in need of part time employees, and that one challenge they are running into is the lack of affordable housing in and near Kingston, as many of the applicants are from far away.

Ms. Mateyk then said that ARP funds have been distributed through the State Library; \$1,688 received has been applied to the cost of the tent used for the summer reading program, and that additional funds will be used for equipment to make hybrid meetings better. She said that expanding Broadband access is the wave of the future, and funding

can be used for laptops, hot spots and solar charging stations. She suggested a "Meeting Owl" device for better Zoom viewing and participation.

Ms. Mateyk spoke about hours and library participation; she said that some East Kingston residents have been paying the \$40 per year for non-resident library cards as their library is limited on hours. She said that the Kingston library will be back to regular hours in July.

Human Services

Ellen Faulconer, Administrative Assistant for Planning, could not attend but had shared printed notes to share.

On the topic of GOFERR funding, Ms. Faulconer suggested upgrades to the meeting space to improve hybrid meetings. Instead of a projector as has been proposed, she suggested large screen TVs in order that all participants can see clearly, whether in the room or via cable or Zoom. In addition, she mentioned laptops for all departments/positions, to include Human Services and the Town Planner.

Ms. Faulconer has also suggested that a sign off area for the Town Engineer should be included on building permit forms so that he will check that all work is done to the site plans, where applicable.

General Information

Selectman Wilson mentioned that there are volunteers in Town that need recognition, and that the Departments should keep this in mind to share with the Board if they know of someone. Chairman Coombs said that input for the Town Report dedication will be welcome.

There was a discussion of the next meeting of the Department Heads in conjunction with the upcoming budget season. A tentative schedule for the Budget Committee meetings was received from Chuck Hart, that indicates the first meeting will be October 20. It was decided to include a discussion of preliminary budgets at the next meeting of the Department Heads and Select Board, which is set for August 30 at 9:00 am.

BOARD BUSINESS:

- A letter received from Jeff Sands of Sands Lane was briefly reviewed. An answer will be prepared by Selectmen Coombs and Wilson.

Adjournment:

Meeting Adjourned at 10:45 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Ayer, Administrative Assistant