

**Kingston, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting of August 30, 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, Kevin St. James, 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

Chairman Coombs began the meeting by saying that he would like each Department Head to discuss any current issues in their department, and budget topics, and save discussion of suggested usage of American Rescue Plan Act (Local Fiscal Recovery Fund) money for the second half of the meeting.

TOPICS BY DEPARTMENT:

Town Clerk-Tax Collector

Tammy Bakie said that she has a couple of items that will be for her budget if not eligible to be paid through grant money. She said that basically, her budget will remain the same as last year, with a couple of minor items increasing.

Ms. Bakie said that she would like to revisit the topic of pay for the Supervisors of the Checklist, which was discussed last year. She said that their current pay of \$400 each per year is fine on a year with one election, but on a year such as 2020 with four elections, they are underpaid. Selectwoman Alessio agreed, saying that they do more work than just on the day of the election. There was a discussion of how to rectify the situation. It was agreed that an annual stipend of \$300 each per election, and \$10 per hour in addition on election days, would be fair.

All Departments

There was a lengthy discussion on pay for performance vs. cost of living increases. The topic of salary ranges and a wage matrix was also explored. It was agreed that the Department Heads need to give input when it comes to their own personnel, and that more frequent meetings with the Board will be helpful.

MOTION: by Selectman Wilson, to meet once per month with Department Heads, on the last Monday of the month at 9 am, to replace that night's regular evening meeting.

SECOND: by Selectwoman Alessio

All in favor

Chairman Coombs suggested that a committee should be formed to discuss pay for performance and cost of living increases, and to create a new template for evaluations. This committee should include employees.

General discussion continued on what to include in the 2022 budget and how to account for increases.

MOTION: by Selectwoman Alessio, to make each department's base personnel budget line reflect the current payroll; to have a separate line item of 3% increase for Cost of Living, to be meted out at the Department Head's discretion; to have another separate line item for Pay for Performance, to be in the Select Board's purview

SECOND: by Selectman Briggs

Selectman St. James said that he felt both the Cost of Living and Pay for Performance lines should be at the Select Board's discretion.

Budget Committee Chair Chuck Hart said that his committee has 5 new people this year, and he would like to see consistency among all departments. He said it will be easier if the Cost of Living percentage is all the same and the Pay for Performance is in the Selectmen's budget.

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

Fire Department

Fire Chief Graham Pellerin said that he has trucks going in for service, which is budgeted work. He said the new building is coming along; the roof and cistern will be done soon. He said he still has staffing issues; the department is down to three per diem employees now and overtime is being used to compensate for the lack of staff. He said he is still talking to East Kingston about possibly forming a fire district; there is a lot of mutual aid activity.

Highway Department

Highway Agent Rich St. Hilaire said that the list of Town roads needs to be updated to what the State Department of Transportation has for Class 5 vs. Class 6 roads. He also said he has an extra plow truck and will want to hire a part-time worker to be on call for storms only, not routine road maintenance.

Police Department

Police Chief Don Briggs said that the 3% Cost of Living increase can work for his department. He also said that two of his officers could be vulnerable to being stolen by another Town or the State, as they are still on the low end of the pay scale, but that implementing three- and five-year pay bumps will help.

Chief Briggs said that he needs to replace tasers, and the computer software system is being updated.

Finance/Human Resources

Finance Director Cindy Kenerson provided information on professional services for updating the personnel manual, saying it will be preferable to hire professionals as she does not have expertise in the legal aspects. She recommended McLane Middleton, who gave a quote of between \$2,500 and \$3,250.

MOTION: by Selectman Briggs, to hire McLane Middleton to upgrade the personal policy, at a cost of no more than \$4,000.

SECOND: by Selectman St. James

In discussion, it was agreed that Town Counsel will be asked to review the policy when it is complete.

All in favor.

An electronic copy of the current Personnel plan will be sent to all Department heads.

Ms. Kenerson then spoke about the incident that happened in Peterborough, where \$2.3 million was lost in an email scam. She said she has discussed this with Block 5, Kingston's information technology contractor, and also sent cybersecurity bulletins, provided by Primex, out to all employees.

Ms. Kenerson then spoke briefly on the American Recovery Act funds, saying it can include technology infrastructure. She said that the Town has paid \$61,000 since March 3 (which is the start date for reimbursable expenditures) on computer upgrade and support.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION

The Selectmen adjourned to non-public session for a pre-scheduled appointment.

MOTION: by Selectwoman Alessio, to adjourn to non-public session to discuss personnel hiring, at 10:17 AM.

SECOND: by Chairman Coombs

All in favor

MOTION: by Selectwoman Alessio, to return to public session at 10:28 AM.

SECOND: by Chairman Coombs

All in favor

Discussion of Departmental needs and expenditures eligible for ARPA funding

Ms. Kenerson was asked for an overview of what she has learned about the funds that are now available to the Town for eligible expenses. She said that obligations incurred between March 3, 2021 and December 31, 2024 are eligible, and must all be expended by December 31, 2026. Eligible expenses include new infrastructure and cyber security. She said she has reached out to the state for guidance on whether purchasing land for a water source would be an eligible expense; she is awaiting reply.

There was a discussion about whether the Town server will be relocated to the new fire station. As a new expense, this might be covered. A generator and other upgrades to the Town Hall are needed.

Chairman Coombs said that he would like to focus on items that the Town needs that the voters may not approve spending tax money on.

Ms. Bakie said she needs a new printer that can handle printing the tax bills, which she has priced at \$6,204 new (printer, scanner, fax machine). She also said she has looked into a folding machine which would save a lot of man hours. The old printer is still fine for regular printing and scanning, and may be given to the museum. A money counter would also be helpful, and Ms. Bakie had priced it at \$480. Lastly, she said the browsing

system is antiquated and newer software would be more efficient and safe; "Clerkworks" software, already in use for dog licensing, could be added for car registrations.

Mr. St. Hilaire said that finding property for wells, and hiring an engineer to develop it as a usable water supply would be a good use of funding. Ms. Kenerson said that professional services can be covered. Two properties that are being considered were briefly discussed. Chairman Coombs said that ultimately a long term plan could be to tie into a water system on Route 125. Additionally, the problem of PFAS contamination near the fire station was mentioned, in the context of developing a water source.

Other possible areas for the use of the funds mentioned were:

1. Meeting room acoustics
2. Remote access to meetings
3. Digitalization of town records
4. Solar investment at the closed Town landfill
5. Trash and recycling: a recycling area run by the Town, pay as you throw
6. Lap tops or iPads for all employees, to include all inspectors
7. Upgrades to networking at the Fire Station - may be done at old station and transferred to the new one
8. Roads or road replacement
9. Police tasers and bullet proof vests
10. Software at the Police Station
11. Upgrade of ventilation system at the Town Hall and Police station
12. UV lights in Town buildings

A list of all items mentioned as possibly eligible for funding will be compiled and sent to all for continued research and prioritization.

BOARD BUSINESS:

Chairman Coombs said the Board needs to ratify/reaffirm two decisions made at the meeting of August 13, as it was held via Zoom after the Governor's order allowing remote meetings had expired.

MOTION: by Selectwoman Alessio, to reaffirm the decision made on August 13, 2021, to reinstate the Cease and Desist on any outdoor music at the Saddle Up Saloon, until the Planning Board process is completed, and to require permission from this Board for any special events.

SECOND: by Chairman Coombs

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

MOTION: by Chairman Coombs, to reaffirm the decision made on August 13, 2021, to send a settlement counter-offer to Consolidated Communications, with the payment reduced to \$11,623 and half withheld until poles erected since 2015 are filed with the Town Clerk and fees per pole paid.

SECOND: by Selectwoman Alessio

All in favor

- An (annual) application for reimbursement to the Town for forest land to be processed by the State Dept of Revenue Administration was signed.
- A rate increase for the part-time Police Secretary who covers sick time, holidays and vacation time for the regular secretary, was approved.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION

MOTION: by Selectman Wilson, to adjourn to non-public session to discuss a personnel issue.

SECOND: by Selectwoman Alessio

All in favor; Meeting adjourned to non-public session at 11:50 AM

MOTION: by Selectwoman Alessio, to return to public session at 12:05 AM.

SECOND: by Chairman Coombs

All in favor

Adjournment:

Meeting Adjourned at 12:05 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Ayer, Administrative Assistant