

MINUTES

**SELECTMEN'S MEETING
TOWN HALL**

**April 15, 2024
6:30 PM**

ATTENDEES:

Select board members: Leon Rideout, Shane Beattie, Kathy-Jean Lavoie

Others in Attendance: Charity Baker, Michael Nadeau, Department Heads, Members of the Public, Zack D Video

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Selectman Leon Rideout

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

DEPARTMENT HEAD UPDATES:

Fire Chief Randy Flynn commented that everyone did a great job during the eclipse and he was very impressed that there was no trash left behind especially with the number of people that were in the area. He also mentioned there were no police, fire or EMS incidents during the event.

He reported during the month of March they responded to 93 transfers and 60 911 calls. In March 2023, they did 129 transfers and 49 911 calls. The total for the 1st quarter of 2023 was 537 and for 2024, 443. 2024 revenue collected to date is \$432,388 and last year was \$446,340. The reason for the difference is they were paid a little over \$65,000 in contracts last year at this time and have not received that as of yet for 2024.

Randy asked if the Fire & EMS department can be added to agenda of one of the work sessions to discuss town contract rates for both ambulance and fire services. The board will add that to the work session agenda on May 6th.

Police Chief Jon Woodworth reported since February 18, they had 628 calls for service, 8 were arrests, 12 motor vehicle crashes and 282 motor vehicle stops. Year-to-date they have had 1,654 calls for service, 40 of which were arrests, 35 were motor vehicle crashes and 606 motor vehicle stops.

The next Coffee with a Cop will be held at the Polish Princess on April 24th at 8:30 am.

Jon mentioned he has been working on updating some of the town ordinances and he would like to meet at one of the work sessions to discuss them and get the board's input.

Lt. Matthews put together information/proposal for a new K9 program for the board to review and decide if they are willing to move forward with the program. Woodlands Veterinary has agreed to take the dog on even though they are not taking on new customers and will give us a 20% discount. Jon and Lt. Matthews will attend the June 3rd work session to discuss the program in more detail. Robin asked Jon if they would like her to continue looking for funding for the program and Jon replied he is definitely in favor of that.

Librarian Barbara Robarts mentioned the repairs to the heating system are almost complete and the insurance company is going to cover it minus the deductible. They also had a major cost in repairing their automatic door and other than that everything is going okay.

Recreation Director Eli Vincent reported the father/daughter dance went well however the mother/son dance was not as well attended. Baseball/softball is up and running and he reviewed the number of sign-ups received. The grandstand is now gone. He is working with the police chief

on the Opening Day parade. Pre-registration for summer Safe Haven is out and filling up fast. They are happy to report they have a good amount of returning staff. He mentioned they now need to work on getting the pool up and running.

Kathy-Jean asked what the plan is for the space where the grand stand was. Eli mentioned in honor of Tom Southworth a pavilion will be built for seating and picnic space.

Shane is going to connect with Eli on a good time to stop by and visit.

APPOINTMENTS:

Tim Greene from Roberts & Greene, the Town's auditors was present to review the audit for year ending December 31, 2022. He is going to be scheduling the 2023 audit in the coming week.

He reviewed/explained the audit letter and any adverse opinions. The adverse opinion is because the town has not determined its liability and related balances for other post-employment benefits. The town would need to hire an actuary to determine the value of that every two years with an adjustment every year if there are large changes in interest rates. The cost of an actuary ranges from as low as \$33,000 for the service to much higher. His recommendation is definitely a cost savings. He recommends the board look at the town's long-term goals to see if they will be borrowing in the next 5 to 10 years and if so, they should talk to their local bank or the Municipal Bond Bank depending on where they will be borrowing funds to see if the adverse opinion will matter to them.

He reviewed the rest of the audit in detail for all the different types of funds for the town. He did mention the town does not have anything of significance as far as deficiency to report.

Kathy-Jean asked where they have been doing the town's audit for a few years, if they have any recommendations for the town and if there are deficiency that should/could be addressed. One thing he has noticed is the threshold for the purchase order requirement has changed and it may be that there was a revision in the purchasing policy. He also recommended a Rate of Pay form be used whenever there is a change in an employee's pay rate and that it be signed by the employee and management acknowledging the change. He also recommended cross training departments.

Kathy-Jean asked if it is required that financial staff take multiple weeks off at a time like in the banking world. Tim mentioned it is not necessary.

Rob Christie asked if the EMS transfer business could be broken out as a business type activity for future audits where it is funded primarily by user fees. Tim stated is certainly could be if that is the will of the board.

Rob also asked if the adverse opinion regarding the pension liability is common around the State. Tim mentioned there is a good mix around the State.

Rob noticed it mentions it is normal but not required to have a management review and that the town doesn't have one and asked if most towns don't. Tim mentioned a lot do not and some in the past, when the standard was first implemented, used a canned one.

Leon stated he wants to make sure the town is doing well in comparison with other municipalities. He feels Lancaster is doing pretty well. Tim agreed the town is doing well.

Kathy-Jean asked if Tim needed anything from the board. Tim said, he asks that if they ever have concerns individually or as a board collectively please reach out.

Rob Christie was present to revisit the discussion regarding travel reimbursement to committee/board volunteers and for the board to reconsider allowing the expense be reimbursed. He pulled together more information to help them realize that travel outside the area happens often and encourages the board to create a travel reimbursement policy. Kathy-Jean asked where the Connecticut Riverbend committee meetings are held and Rob mentioned they are held in Littleton, Bath and some locations in Vermont. Leon mentioned the board will add it to the policy discussions at the upcoming work sessions.

REVIEW OF MINUTES: March 18, 2024 work session & April 1, 2024 regular meeting minutes.

Motion made by Shane and seconded by Kathy-Jean to approve the March 18, 2024 work session minutes. All in favor. Motion carried.

Motion made by Shane and seconded by Kathy-Jean to approve the April 1, 2024 meeting minutes. All in favor. Motion carried.

SIGN VARIOUS PAPERWORK:

- Intent to Cut for Terry John Martin, Tax Map R17, Lot 42. 6.1 acres to be cut.
- Intents to Excavate for Paul Crane, Tax Map R13, Lots 66 & 68
- Gravel warrant for AB Aggregates, Inc., Tax Map R01, Lot 6 in the amount of \$2,837.24
- Warden Services Bill for training and permits issued by fire department personnel was signed.
- Deeds for the Depot Street properties transfer were signed. Properties formerly owned by Paul Richardson and taken by tax deed.

NEW BUSINESS:

Cathedral Ledge Distillery liquor license for the Farmer's Market. Shane asked if approving a liquor license application has been done in the past and who holds the liability insurance. Shane asked if the town can get an insurance binder from the Farmers Market and from Cathedral Ledge. Matt Treamer the head of the Lancaster Farmers' Market was present and stated they are a non-profit organization and they do have general liability insurance. Kathy-Jean asked if each vendor provides proof of insurance to the farmers' market. Matt mentioned they only require insurance for those vendors that sell food, beverages or stuff that is applied to the skin. They recommend everyone else carry insurance however they don't require them to. It was asked that the vendors have a certificate of insurance issued listing the Town of Lancaster as an additional insured and that it states the company will defend and indemnify the Town against any claims that arise at the Lancaster Farmers' markets. Matt will contact the vendors to request that they add the town. Kathy-Jean also mentioned she would like the town added to the market's insurance coverage as well.

Leon mentioned that once the certificate is received listing the town as an additional insured and proper language noted, the application can be signed.

Kathy-Jean asked if the application was approved for the winter market and both Leon and Shane said it is the first time they have heard of the request.

Matt believes within a week he should be able to get the paperwork requested.

Grant application submission – Land Use Coordinator Robin Irving presented information for the Lancaster Main Street Demo & Redevelopment III grant application and requested permission from the board to submit the application and appoint her as the authorized representative.

Motion made by Shane and seconded by Kathy-Jean to allow Robin Irving submit the Lancaster Main Street Demo & Redevelopment III grant application for 79 Main Street and authorize her to sign any and all documents. All in favor. Motion carried.

Robin mentioned the project will qualify the town for the affordable housing per unit funding.

Motion made by Kathy-Jean to submit an application for the per unit grant for 4 affordable housing units at 79 Main Street and to authorize Robin Irving to sign any and all documents. All in favor. Motion carried.

Robin also mentioned the deadline for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan is due May 31st and would like permission to submit that application as well. The funding would be for the water tank project. Leon asked if it is something that can be denied by the board if all other funding does not come together. Robin confirmed it can be denied.

Motion made by Kathy-Jean to submit the application to the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and to authorize Robin Irving to sign any and all documents. All in favor. Motion carried.

Rivard Tree removal estimate – Leon feels the removal of trees in the parks will need to go out for bid and he is hesitant to read out the amount of the estimate before an official bid process is complete.

Tricia Frenette went over what she and her group of volunteers have done over the last several years, placing planters, benches and swings throughout town to help beautify the parks. She mentioned former town manager Ben Gaetjens-Oleson asked her to do something in Drew Park and she expressed concern about several of the trees in that park with falling limbs. Tim Brown mentioned his crew can cut several of the trees however there are a couple large ones near the power lines that they will not be able to remove. Tricia spoke with someone from Asplundh and they mentioned Eversource is willing to pay to have Asplundh cut the 4 trees (2 in Cross Park and 2 in Drew Park) that need to come down near the power lines at no cost to the town. It was also mentioned the tree that is decorated at Christmas time should also come down. It was mentioned to do it sooner than later as Asplundh is currently working in the area.

Tricia would like to replant trees with the funds received through the beautification project. There was discussion to a fence by the dentist office and to also add a large chess set in Drew Park to be removed during the winter months. Leon mentioned he is in favor of the fence idea however the board needs to look closely at covenants of Drew Park's deed.

There was much discussion regarding the trees being removed and the types of trees and timing for replanting.

Motion made by Kathy-Jean and seconded by Shane to approve Asplundh cutting down the 4 trees (2 in Drew Park and 2 in Cross Park) at no cost to the town and the town crew will clean up after the trees are down. All in favor. Motion carried.

Peter Riviere mentioned the quote from Rivard Tree will need to be updated where the trees in Drew and Cross Parks are already being taken care of by Asplundh. A quote will still be needed for the trees that need to be removed in Centennial and Soldier's Parks. Leon stated the work will need to go out for competitive bid. The bid request will go out for 2 weeks in the Democrat and the deadline for submission will be May 17th.

Tricia confirmed that the board is ok with Tim Brown and his crew taking the other trees down in Drew Park and they were.

Ambulance transport rate changes for 2024 – Chief Randy Flynn shared that the transport rates will increase 3% for 2024. He is not sure how it will affect the town's revenue as most insurance companies follow Medicare rates. He stated the hospital to hospital transports will affect the revenue most.

Motion made by Shane and seconded by Kathy-Jean to accept the increase in ambulance transport rates as presented. All in favor. Motion carried.

Randy also submitted the transport contract for Country Village Nursing Home for signature. Leon mentioned it did not require a vote as it was already discussed at a previous meeting.

Kathy-Jean mentioned the board did not sign the audit contract for years ending 2023, 2024, & 2025.

Motion made by Kathy-Jean and seconded by Shane to sign the audit contract for years ending 2023, 2024, and 2025. All in favor. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS:

Fire Chief's position – Leon read a letter from Chief Randy Flynn rescinding his letter of retirement and mentioned a letter of support was also submitted.

Motion made by Kathy-Jean and seconded by Shane to accept Chief Flynn's retirement rescission letter. All in favor. Motion carried.

Assessing Contract – Alan Savage asked if the assessing services was put for competitive bid and it was mentioned it was not. Kathy-Jean mentioned she has a couple questions for assessor Jason Call and is not ready to approve the contract at this meeting and Leon mentioned he would like to compare it to last years' contract.

SELECT BOARD MEMBER REPORTS:

Kathy-Jean reminded everyone that No Mow May is coming up and she will be handing out signs at Centennial Park over the weekend.

Leon reported the Town Manager Search committee has met to get familiar with each other before interviewing and screening the candidates.

INFORMATION:

Leon reviewed the information that was provided in the packet.

- Notice of final tax bill date to BTLA
- Land Use permits
- Planning Board notice of decision
- Voluntary merger
- Zoning Board notice of decision

Robin asked who she would talk to regarding the Benoit enforcement issue where Atty. Frizzell will be sworn in as a judge. Shane mentioned he is not sworn in as of yet and Atty. Frizzell will reach out to the town to discuss moving forward once he is sworn in. Leon mentioned it stays business as usual for now.

PUBLIC INPUT:

Alan Savage asked about the road ban and asked why Four Season Landscaping was allowed to have a delivery of bark mulch and when Alan asked Chief Woodworth the chief stated with no sign he cannot do anything. He mentioned the board agreed the ban would include the compact streets in town and wants to know why a lack of a sign means nothing can be done. He feels there should be no exceptions and Shane stated Four Season is an existing business and there is an exception in the ban for that. Alan states they should have planned for the delivery before the road ban was put on. Leon mentioned the RSA is very specific as to what trucks can use the roadways during a road ban. There was much discussion regarding the road ban and what should be allowed on the roads.

Rob Christie asked if water rates will be updated. Leon mentioned they will be changing rates to cover costs.

Rob also wonders if after the project at 79 Main Street is complete if they will come to the town and apply for a 79-E exemption for the next 7 years. Leon stated they will review any application made and use the same criteria used with other exemptions granted. Rob also mentioned that 79-E applies to those buildings in a historic district and it is not fair for those not in an historic district.

Motion made by Shane and seconded by Kathy-Jean to adjourn. All in favor. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Board of Selectmen

Date: _____

Charity M. Baker

Leon Rideout

Shane Beattie

Kathy-Jean Lavoie