

Town of Londonderry, Vermont
Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
Monday, January 4, 2021
Meeting held remotely via online video with no physical presence

Board Members Present: Georgianne Mora, Thomas Cavanagh, Taylor Prouty, Vincent Annunziata, and James Fleming (via telephone).

Board Members Absent: None.

Others in Attendance: Town Officials – Town Administrator Shane O’Keefe (via telephone), Town Treasurer Tina Labeau, Town Clerk Kelly Pajala, Emergency Management Director Kevin Beattie, Planning Commission Chair Sharon Crossman, Town Moderator Doug Friant, Town Health Officer Richard Phelan, Road Foreman Josh Dryden (6:32 PM), Beautification Committee member Martha Dale. Others – Community Nurse Advocate Regina Downer, Residents Chad Stoddard and Jared Parker, Cherise Forbes (Chester Telegraph) and Darren Marcy (Manchester Journal).

1. Call meeting to order

Selectboard Chair George Mora called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM.

She noted that in response the Governor Scott’s January 20, 2020 declaration of a State of Emergency due to the spreading COVID-19 pandemic, and his “Stay Home, Stay Safe” executive order restricting and minimizing all unnecessary activities outside of the home, and in accordance with Act 92, signed into law on by the Governor on March 30, 2020, which allows for changes to the Vermont Open Meeting Law to protect the health and welfare of the public, that the meeting was being held entirely remotely with no physical presence.

She added that the meeting was being conducted entirely on Zoom meeting software and that the Board members and staff were participating by video except for Board member Jim Fleming, who was participating via telephone. She noted that the public was permitted to participate via video or telephone. And that the agenda posted on January 1, 2021, and still available on the Town’s website, provided information on how the public could participate in the meeting.

She noted a few matters of meeting process, including the requirement that all non-unanimous votes by the Board must be taken by roll call vote, with each member stating their name and vote.

Mora provided some technical guidance for participation by both phone and video. Each of the Board members than vocally identified themselves.

2. Additions or deletions to the agenda

None.

3. Minutes Approval – Meeting(s) of 12/21/2020

Tom Cavanagh moved to approve the minutes of the Selectboard meeting of December 21, 2020, seconded by Vincent Annunziata, passed unanimously.

4. Selectboard Pay Orders

Tom Cavanagh moved to approve the pay orders for payroll and accounts payable, seconded by Taylor Prouty, passed unanimously.

5. Announcements/Correspondence

Kelly Pajala mentioned that 2021 dog licensing has begun, and that she'll be mailing out renewal forms again this year.

Shane O'Keefe noted that the town-wide road erosion inventory has been completed and submitted to the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources by the Windham Regional Commission by the December 31 deadline. This work is required under the Town's municipal roads general permit, and is being paid for from a Better Roads Grant received by the Town.

He mentioned that he had earlier that day distributed to the Selectboard the results of a recent traffic speed count data for northbound VT Route 100 traffic entering South Londonderry village. The data shows that the average speed in the 40 mph zone is 44.5 mph, but there are quite a few instances of heavy speeding. The range of speeds was 20 mph to 75 mph, and 85% of all vehicles were travelling at or below 52 mph.

O'Keefe mentioned that the Town Hall parking lot was again plowed by a contractor hired by the Solo restaurant. The Town's plowing contractor, Hart's All Season Maintenance, would like to know whether to continue to try and plow it or let Solo's contractor do it. Mora noted that the decision for the Town to plow it was because Solo was closed to the public due to COVID-19, but it appears that the restaurant is providing pick-up/takeout service and has been plowing the parking lot on its own, as in the past. There was discussion about whether to allow Solo's plowing contractor to continue to handle the plowing. O'Keefe noted that the Harts are fine not doing the work, but he expressed concern about whether Solo's contractor had liability insurance protecting the Town. O'Keefe will work on this matter.

He also noted correspondence included in the Board's meeting packet was as follows:

- The equalization study results for 2020 from the Vermont Division of Property Valuation and Review, which again show solid figures for the Town's Common Level of Appraisal and Coefficient of Dispersion.
- A public outreach letter from Comcast, dated 12/21/2020.

6. Visitors and Concerned Citizens

Richard Phelan raised the issue of the number of Road Crew members, and it was explained that the Highway Department is now back to three members. He expressed his thanks to Road Foreman Josh Dryden for the Road Crew's efforts at all hours of the night.

Doug Friant suggested addressing the matter of a new position as a separate Town Meeting warning article. It was mentioned that this matter would be addressed later in the meeting.

Mora suggested moving item 11.a, regarding the My Community Nurse Project, to the next order of business so the presenters do not have to stay for the entirety of the meeting. There was no objection from the other Board members.

a. Presentation on My Community Nurse Project – Regina Downer

Regina Downer explained the My Community Nurse Project, a not-for-profit organization which launched in February 2020, and serves the towns of Londonderry, Weston, Andover, Peru and Landgrove. She mentioned that she is the only paid employee, working about 24 hours per week, and discussed the growth of her case load and described the various beneficial services provided, such as meal delivery.

Goal of the Project is to provide care, advocacy and in-home safety assessments for residents in its catchment area. She noted that the volunteers deliver medications and groceries, and bring people to medical appointments and assist with on-line appointments.

She mentioned the program is part of a larger program called the Upper Valley Community Nurse project, which includes nine people in Vermont and New Hampshire doing similar work.

She mentioned that she was seeking to make a modest request for funding from the Town. Tina Labeau noted that the deadline for funding requests has passed, and Pajala noted that the Selectboard has the discretion to adjust the Town Meeting warning to add additional matters for consideration. Mora suggested that Downer submit a funding request as soon as possible for Board consideration, and Downer stated that she would shortly.

Prouty added that the program provides an invaluable service, and the Board should try to provide support. Phelan asked if private donations were accepted, and Downer confirmed that they are.

It was the sense of the Board that a funding request would need to be added as a separate warning article.

Downer thanked the Board and left the meeting at 6:26 PM.

7. Town Officials Business

a. Emergency Management Director – COVID-19 response updates

Kevin Beattie noted that there is nothing much to report regarding COVID-19 other than that there was a large influx of visitors to the area over the holidays, which caused some anxiousness in town and hopefully there will be no significant impacts.

b. Emergency Management Director – Hazard Mitigation Plan

Beattie explained that the Town has received State funding to advance this project, and O'Keefe noted that because the cost would be over \$7,500 it requires Board approval of the Request for Proposals, and Beattie added that the funding source also requires the RFP process. O'Keefe noted that the Board must also authorize execution of the grant agreement with the Department of Public Safety.

Taylor Prouty moved to approve the Request for Proposals for Local Hazard Mitigation Planning Services, and authorize the Town Administrator to take all necessary steps to solicit bids for review by the Board, and further authorize the Town's Emergency Management Director to execute the grant agreement with the Vermont Department of Public Safety, which provides funding of \$7,612.50 for this effort with a 25% local match, on behalf of the Town, seconded by Tom Cavanagh, passed unanimously.

Beattie noted that the local match is not necessarily in the form of money and staff time can be applied for it.

8. Transfer Station/Solid Waste Management

a. Updates

Labeau noted that 2021 Transfer Station stickers are available and selling well.

9. Roads and Bridges

a. Updates

Prouty mentioned that the new Road Crew member has passed his CDL test and the Road Crew now at full strength, which is good news.

Josh Dryden noted the following usage for the month of December 2020, through there may be some inaccuracies due to computer issues:

| | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|
| Salt – 298 tons | Sand – 564 yards | Vehicle Fuel – 1,483 gallons |
| Heating fuel (gallons): | N/A | |

He added that with the new employee on board, there will be some process, inventory, supply and equipment work taking place right away, and a full load of vehicle fuel may be ordered soon. He discussed salt supplies, noting that half of the budget has been spent on 10 loads of salt and felt that the balance will be used replenish the shed, which he added has approximately 350-400 ton in storage now. He noted that the Town uses between 800 and 1,400 ton per year.

10. Old Business

a. Discuss alternatives for 2021 Town Meeting

Pajala noted that while the Legislature is not yet in session, there appears to be a good-faith effort to pass a bill that would allow towns to reschedule Town Meeting due to COVID-19 concerns. She added that the legislation needs to pass the quicky to address statutory Town Meeting timeframes. Mora added that she felt that the sense of the Board at the previous meeting was to hope for a rescheduling of the Town Meeting but to work on the original schedule nonetheless in case the bill was not passed. Pajala suggested that the Board wait a few weeks for the new law to take shape and then warn a special meeting of the Board to make a decision on how to proceed.

The last day for petitions is January 25th for the standard Town Meeting timeline (1st Tuesday in March), she added, and the Board must then finalize the Town Meeting warning soon thereafter. Labeau noted to get the Town Report to the printer the warning needs to be approved as soon as possible after January 25th, and by law no later than January 31st.

All deadlines would get pushed back if the Town Meeting is postponed, said Pajala. And it was noted that the Town can switch to an Australian ballot Town Meeting by vote of the Selectboard at any time, though the Town Meeting warning would have to so indicate and there would need to be an on-line public information meeting, but that no amendments to articles could be made. The only way to hold a Town Meeting in March and still meet the COVID-19 safety precautions would be to hold the Town Meeting by Australian ballot.

Pajala reiterated that the idea of postponing the Town Meeting would be to allow for the continued practice of floor voting but in an outdoor setting. There was general agreement to look to postpone the meeting, but to be prepared to switch to an Australian ballot Town Meeting if necessary.

b. Discuss proposal to establish new Highway & Buildings/Grounds position

Following up from the budget discussion at the previous meeting, Mora noted that O’Keefe had drafted and distributed a proposed job description for the combined position which makes clear the intention of the position. She spoke of the many buildings and grounds needs, both physical and planning, that require attention. It was mentioned that existing funds for parks maintenance and other Town plowing and sanding contracts can be eliminated and used to cover the budget for this position. She explained that it was a \$20 per hour full-time position, with benefits.

Tom Cavanagh expressed his concerns with the process for adding this position to the budget for consideration, noting that there had been no prior in-depth discussion by the Board on this and that there should have been. There was discussion about the budget drafting process.

Cavanagh stated that he opposed the hiring of the position and noted that it would be impossible to find someone that meets all of the qualifications, and cautioned against hiring a “jack of all trades and master of none”. He suggested doing one or two projects with contractors each year using the building reserve fund. On the Road Crew, he stated that a 3-person crew was sufficient for Town needs if they can work together and efficiently.

Pajala raised the issue of waning volunteerism, and it was noted that Town officials who in the past had been available to assist the Highway Department with its needs are no longer there. There was discussion about availability of existing Town officials for volunteering, and Cavanagh stated that he was willing to help out if asked.

Vincent Annunziata suggested that the position be included on the Town Meeting warning as its own article separate from the budget. It was brought up that this has been a difficult year for people and that the Town should look to pull together with existing resources and volunteers to complete projects.

Mora raised the alternative of hiring a part-time buildings and grounds employee. Cavanagh recommended that the Town consider hiring a caretaker to help address the needs of Town buildings.

Regarding the needs of the Highway Department, resident Chad Stoddard suggested that the Road Commissioner should have a CDL and be able to operate the Town’s equipment and fill in as necessary, and that another Road Crew member is not necessary.

Labeau spoke about the Town’s years of reactivity to the needs of its buildings, and the added expense of this approach as opposed to being proactive. And that having Road Crew members doing building maintenance work is an ineffective allocation of resources, as they should be addressing the Town’s highway issues. She mentioned that that was approximately \$24,000 of saving from other departments that could come from hiring this position, which she listed.

Sharon Crossman mentioned that the Planning Commission has been investigating structural components of the Town Hall for its eventual renovation, which could be addressed incrementally with the buildings reserve fund. She added that the Commission has also looked at the Town Office and has developed a preliminary design plan.

Alternatives for various grounds keeping responsibilities and approaches were discussed. Prouty noted that he felt that everyone was on the same mind with regard to the needs of the Town with regard to buildings and grounds, but that the means to end vary. He added that the community want to see its investments properly maintained.

Beattie supported handling this matter a warned article instead of in the budget. He expressed his opinion that it is most important to establish who is responsible, though job description, for the buildings and grounds work.

Jim Fleming and Cavanagh stated that they were available to volunteer to help out as necessary at the Town Office with maintenance. The matter of increasing community volunteerism was discussed.

Mora suggested tabling the matter to the next meeting to further discuss options.

Tom Cavanagh moved that the new position for buildings and maintenance and Road Crew be removed from the budget for the next year, seconded by Vincent Annunziata, passed unanimously.

Vincent Annunziata moved that the new position for buildings and maintenance and Road Crew, as well as ae job description, be added as a separately warned article for Town Meeting, seconded by Taylor Prouty.

O’Keefe suggested that the Board continue to consider how the position would be structured, full- or part-time. Friant suggested including offsetting expenses in the Town Meeting article.

It was agreed to table the discussion to the next meeting and *Annunziata withdrew his motion.*

Pajala asked to ensure that there be a mechanism in any Town Meeting article on this matter to ensure that funding of parks maintenance is intact. Friant made some suggestions on how to carefully craft the article.

There was discussion about what other communities do you provide these services.

c. Review and discuss proposed FY2022 Budget

Labeau reviewed with the Board the most recent version of the proposed budget. Changes of note include:

- Minor increase to the Planning Commission budget, with some changes to line items.

Martha Dale from the Beautification Committee inquired about plans to incorporate funds to support new or improved entrance signs to the town. O’Keefe noted that the Town can accept and carry over donations for a project like this. There was back and forth discussion on this, and the minutes from the December 7, 2020 minutes on this were read aloud, and it was agreed that design needs to be generated to help with further fundraising. O’Keefe agreed to assist the Committee on procurement efforts.

- Capital reserve funds were added into the budget as specific line items as opposed to being separate Town Meeting articles.

Beattie as a citizen mentioned that he disagreed with the idea of including the reserve funds in the budget and that they should be separate Town Meeting articles. It was generally agreed to do this.

He also suggested as EMD adding back into the budget the local match for the Hazard Mitigation Plan update.

- There were some other minor office expense changes.
- Tom Cavanagh confirmed that the \$11,000 in the Transfer Station budget was for a new compost dumpster.

d. Discuss 2021 Town Meeting appropriations

The Board again reviewed and discussed requested appropriations from various local and regional organizations. Changes agreed to were as follows:

- American Red Cross – eliminated, as no request was made
- Flood Brook Athletic Association – reduced to \$1,500
- Friends of the West River Trail – reduced to \$500
- Greater Northshire Access TV - reduced to \$1,000
- Londonderry 4th of July – Eliminated, and may become a community fundraising effort
- Moover Rockingham (The Current) - eliminated
- Windham County Historical Society – eliminated
- Champion Fire Company – will be contacted to see if amount can be reduced. It was noted that the Phoenix Fire does not make an annual request due to its fundraising
- Londonderry Conservation Fund – reduced top \$500
- Londonderry Historical Society – reduced to \$500
- South Londonderry Library Association – will be contacted to see if amount can be reduced

It was emphasized that any of the organizations can petition to have their requests increased or reinstated. Labeau said she'd contact to those with appropriation changes.

11. New Business

a. Presentation on My Community Nurse Project – Regina Downer

Addressed earlier in the meeting.

b. Review draft Town Meeting Warning

The Board reviewed a first draft of the Town Meeting warning, which assumes a March 2, 2021 meeting.

Labeau mentioned that the Town Officials positions of Grand Juror and Town Agent have been removed due to statutory changes.

The reference to the Vermont State Police was removed from the policing services article to allow for contracting with other agencies. The cost of policing services was discussed, and it was noted that the Town has VSP coverage but the article allows for supplemental overtime coverage.

The reserve fund articles highway equipment and Town buildings, previously removed, should be will be restored as they were removed from the budget earlier in the meeting. Each has been reduced by \$20,000 as to keep taxes down.

Appropriations are handled under two separate articles: one for municipal-type services, and one for all others. The two articles will be addressed sequentially in the Warning.

Adding an article establishing a 1% local option tax was discussed, and Mora noted that establishing this was the only way to take advantage of tax on eventual sale of cannabis. Pajala noted that Cannabis Control Board has yet to be appointed and there has been no rule-making as of yet, and suggested that the Town hold off until the rule-making process has taken place so the public is better informed. It was agreed that votes on opting in to retail cannabis sales and the 1% local option tax should wait until a special Town Meeting.

An article raising funds for radar speed signs was briefly discussed, and O’Keefe will provide additional information on the costs of these. It was agreed to seek approval for two of these units to see how well they can help with speeding.

Stemming from a discussion at the previous meeting, an article establishing a community economic reserve fund was reviewed and discussed. It would allow funding of economic development and revitalization efforts. It was decided only to establish the fund at this time and not raise and appropriate money to deposit into it.

A highway improvement reserve fund was reviewed which, similar to the highway equipment fund and the Town buildings fund, allows for non-lapsing funds to address larger expenditures, in this case Town road resurfacing and improvement efforts.

12. Adjourn

George Mora moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Tom Cavanagh, passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:51 PM. The next regular meeting of the Selectboard is scheduled for January 18, 2021.

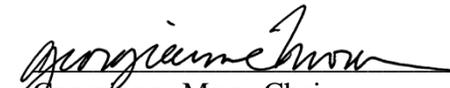
Respectfully Submitted,



Shane P. O’Keefe
Town Administrator

Approved January 18, 2021.

LONDONDERRY SELECTBOARD



Georgianne Mora, Chair