

Town of Farmington
Board of Selectmen – Public Meeting Minutes
Selectmen’s Chambers
356 Main Street

Farmington Board of Selectmen

Monday, December 22, 2014

Members Present:

Charlie King, Chairman

Paula Proulx, Vice Chairman

Brian St. Onge

Arthur Capello

Others Present:

Town Administrator Keith Trefethen

Police Chief Jay Drury

1. Non-public session:

Motion: (King, second Capello)to enter non-public session under RSA 91-A:3 II (c) Personnel matter passed 4-0 by a roll call vote (King, Proulx, St.Onge, Capello-yes) at 5:45 p.m.

Motion: (King, second Capello) to end non-public session passed 4-0 (King, Proulx, Capello, St. Onge-yes) at 6 p.m.

The board spoke to the Town Clerk about the resignation of the Deputy Town Clerk and agreed to a process to fill the position.

2. Call to order/Pledge of Allegiance:

Chairman King called the public meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Public Comment:

Vice Chairman Proulx said she wanted to let residents know that she is not happy about P.S.N.H.'s decision to no longer allow the town to hang Christmas lights from their utility poles in the downtown area. She commended Tom DeJulio's efforts to get the word out about the utility company's decision and wanted to let him know that she stands behind him. She added that it is a shame the company couldn't make an exception and said she would like to see if there is anything that can be done.

Chairman King suggested the town reach out to business and property owners in the area seeking their permission to connect the lights in an alternative manner next year. He said any agreement should include a release of liability for those property owners who allow their buildings or property to be used for the light display. He also asked for a layout of the area.

Selectman St. Onge said before the board makes any decision, they would also need to know if there are any regulations regarding how close the lights can come to the electric lines if the lights were to be strung house-to-house under the lines.

Town Administrator Keith Trefethen said P.S.N.H. informed the town in October that this would be the last year the lights would be allowed to be hung from their poles. He said he planned to include the issue on the January 12 agenda and ask Mr. DeJulio to attend. He said DeJulio has a layout of the area. He said he hoped the town could find a way to put up the lights and still appease P.S.N.H.

4.2015 Municipal Budget Review:

Selectmen continued their review of the proposed 2015 town budget including the Executive, finance, revaluation, legal, personnel, health agencies and welfare lines. Trefethen said the budget is up \$281,834 over last year. If the budget proposal remains as presented, this would result in a 64 cent tax rate increase which does not include any warrant articles, negotiated contract agreements or adjustments. The discussion included:

Selectman St. Onge asked why the Executive budget line had changed since the last review. Trefethen said the changes reflect wage increases previously approved. The line was adjusted to show the proper wages and benefits costs he said.

Selectman Capello asked why the amount budgeted for mileage is set at \$500 when it is over spent each year. Trefethen said this year's budget line was over expended due to his having to "ride the roads" more often while the Public Works Director was on vacation this summer. Normally, \$500 is a good bench mark number he said.

Trefethen said the Elections line is up for next year because of a personnel vacancy. He said he budgeted an additional \$14,000 for additional health care coverage should the new employee elect to receive a family plan.

Trefethen also stated that the Finance line was down following an employee departure last year, but he kept the full time salary and benefits cost in the budget and planned to increase the part time Assessing Clerk to a full time position. But Selectmen were not so sure they were ready to agree with his suggestion. Selectman Capello said he would need to be convinced there is an actual need to increase the clerk's hours. Chairman King said the town spent a lot of money to streamline the assessing procedure and wondered if the need for more hours means the department did not meet its goals for better efficiency. He said he is opposed to including the increase in the budget before the board approved it. Vice Chairman Proulx said the board needs to decide before it's loaded into the budget than to later say it wasn't necessary. Trefethen said he would ask the clerk to attend the next meeting to discuss the matter.

Health Agencies- Trefethen said the agencies have presented their annual request for funding to help cover costs associated with resident use. There are also new requests from the Red Cross, CASSA and A Safe Place. A consensus of the board showed the board favored level funding the agencies' requests (\$9,039) and to not include funding for the new agencies.

Patriotic Purposes-Trefethen said the \$1,500 increase reflects the projected cost to rent a bucket machine used to install the American flags and poles. The flags are donated by the American Legion and installed by the Public Works Dept. so the costs were previously included in the Public Works budget. Trefethen said that some of the flags have become somewhat tattered and suggested a meeting with a representative from the American Legion and discuss a plan to replace them with better quality flags.

Hay Day-The line item includes \$1,500 for fireworks during the celebration. Selectmen said they thought the reason for appointing a Recreation Committee was to handle fundraising for town events and questioned why the amount was included in the town budget. The board will discuss the matter with Recreation Director Rick Conway.

Coast Bus-Selectmen discussed whether to make any cuts to this line item, but decided to table the matter until they can obtain further information. Discussion included the lack of action by the bus company to move a downtown bus stop and address other concerns as agreed to at a previous meeting. Chairman King asked the Town Administrator to contact the company and ask them to send a representative to the next meeting to discuss how they will address the board's concerns.

Transfers to Capital Reserve Funds-Chairman King asked Trefethen to provide an updated list of fund balances at the next meeting in preparation for possible Warrant Articles proposals for Town Meeting.

Town Clock-Selectman St. Onge asked why this line is up \$1,200. Trefethen said that it has been determined that it is too dangerous to continue climbing up inside the clock to change the bulbs. The town must now rent a scissors boom to elevate an employee approximately 80 feet off the ground to complete the task he said.

School Rent-The board discussed plans for the unexpended funds in this line. Trefethen said the funds could be used at the municipal building to remove an underground fuel tank, fix a leak in the flat portion of the roof or make renovations upstairs to make it a more usable space.

Chairman King asked Trefethen to calculate the cost of raises to non-union employees equal to 8100 per percent of union raises.

The board then discussed how to proceed with the review of the remaining line items. The tentative schedule includes a review of encumbrances and revenues, proposed warrant articles, Coast Bus Company and department budgets with the department heads on December 29. Selectmen plan to meet with a Goodwin Library representative and Parks and Recreation Director Rick Conway at their January 5 meeting.

Selectman Capello asked the board give the Town Administrator some guidance in what they are comfortable with regarding the 2015 budget proposal. He said he is looking for no more than a 25 cent increase in next year's tax rate resulting from the town budget.

Chairman King said he hoped the town would see some relief from a tax rate increase on the revenue side of the budget.

Selectman St. Onge said he would not give a specific budget number, but would ask for a budget proposal that cut the budget to what is absolutely needed. He added that he did not favor seeing the Fire Dept. buying things that are nice to have which results in people being unable to pay their taxes. He added that he would like to see the budget figures passed for the town budget over the last few years and how much was actually spent last year and the previous year. He cited the School Board's ability to turn back to taxpayers over \$1 million each of the last two years as an example of over budgeting.

Selectman Capello replied that the town is getting burnt with the Fire Dept. budget due to false budget numbers and the "shenanigans" of the previous fire chief. We are now seeing it properly funded he added.

Trefethen told the board that a \$100,000 budget increase would equal a 23 cent tax rate increase.

Police Chief Jay Drury asked the board if they were considering placing a warrant article on the ballot at the 2015 Town Meeting to purchase a new cruiser. He said the dept. is experiencing an uptick in the number of outside details and the money for the vehicle would be raised through payment for detail work and would not come from taxpayer funds. He asked if the purchase could be made as soon as the proper amount of funds were raised to allow more flexibility in meeting the dept.'s needs and getting a better deal.

Selectmen said the article would need to be structured to authorize the board to spend the money for the purchase of a cruiser and state that the funding would come from detail money only.

5. Any Other Business: None

7. Non-public session:

Motion: (King, second Capello) to enter non-public session under RSA 91-A: 3 II (c) Police Contract passed 4-0 on a roll call vote (King, Proulx, St. Onge, Capello – yes) at 8 p.m.

Motion: (King, second Capello) to end non-public session passed 4-0 (King, Proulx, St. Onge, Capello –yes) at 8:05 p.m.

Motion: (Capello, second Proulx) to seal the minutes passed 4 -0.

6. Non-public session:

Motion: (Capello, second King) to enter non-public session under RSA 91-A:3 II (c) Auction Parcels passed 4-0 on roll call vote (King, Proulx, Capello, St. Onge- yes) at 8:05 p.m.

Motion: (King, second Capello) to end non-public session passed 4-0 (King, Proulx, St. Onge, Capello-yes) at 8:15 p.m.

The board discussed pending court action with Waterway Realty LLC on auction parcels they refused to close upon.

8. Non-public session:

RSA 91-A: 3 II (c) Teamsters Contract. The item was tabled.

9. Adjournment:

Motion: (St. Onge, second Capello) to adjourn the meeting passed 4-0 at 8:16 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Kathleen Magoon

Recording Secretary