

## Select Board Meeting

March 30, 2022

6:04 pm meeting called to order by Neil Oleson.

Select Board members present: Mike Bedini, Terry Green, Neil Oleson

Select board members absent: None

Others present: Jim White, Christine Dobbert, Vicki Winchell, Pam White, Donna Estes, Ryan Perkins, Ron Bosley, Cindy Bosley, Jon Oleson, Mia Chappell, Janet Bartlett, Tim Bartlett, Joey Therrien, Jake White, Greg Eastman, Heidi Dugal, James Brosnan, Seth Bean

Joint meeting with the Finance Committee

Pam White opened the joint meeting notifying the board that Wanda McNary gave a verbal resignation from the Finance Committee.

Terry Green made a motion to appoint Cindy Bosley to the Finance Committee. Mike Bedini Seconded. Unanimous.

Jon Oleson pointed out that as Moderator he should be the one appointing a new Finance Committee member however because the spot was open he was ok with the Selectboard doing so.

Misa Chappell & Terry Green, Library Budget Review Revisited:

- Terry abstained from discussions as a Select board member to present the Library budget, as a Library Trustee, with Misa.
- Library requested \$38,400. Recommended amount is \$34,300.
- Neil called for comments from the Finance Committee. Pam stated the Finance Committee recommended a 2% increase to the employee's rate vs 2 ½% which equated to a difference of \$130-\$140 (exact figures were not given) and that extra money could go towards supplies instead. Terry clarified in FY22 there was money in the budget to hire the new employees at a higher pay rate because expenses were lower due to covid. If The budget does not get approved for \$38,400 the Library expenses will go over based on the salaries but they can not decrease salaries. Donna asked what the amended budget was for FY22. Terry said they did not have to amend it. Because of covid they could not have people in the building thus lowering the hours open and reducing payroll expenses for FY22. Discussions continued calculating the employees at a 2% increase and the budget total with the 20% required spend down. Neil suggested they come in at \$35,000 or table the discussion to the next meeting in two weeks. The Finance Committee agreed with \$35,000 and CW Mars \$1050 but wanted to clarify the wages would only be a 2% increase. Terry said yes and wanted to table the discussion to the next meeting.

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### James Brosnan, Northern Berkshire Vocational Regional School District (McCann Tech) Budget Review:

- James discussed the sources of income flowing into the McCann budget and the changes and reasons from FY22 to FY23 and the growth. There were 26 more students in McCann this year from last year, 5 of which were from Florida.
- Pam asked if there was a contract between the school and town dictating a % of Florida students that should be admitted. James answered no. She then asked how do you decide how many children are accepted. James answered all students must apply and go through the admissions process. Neil asked if he knows the number of Florida students for next fall. James replied he does not as they are still in the admission process for next year. Heidi commented that all 8<sup>th</sup> graders were accepted but one, who is on the wait list.
- Christine asked if a contract for transportation has been locked in already. James replied yes there is a 5-year contract.
- Discussion held regarding some line items. James noted the school committee has just over a \$10,000 increase due to the memberships line increasing. Professional salaries increased due to the addition of several positions last year and a special education teacher being added next year as well as contractual 2% and step increases. Terry asked how many people make up the clerical salaries line. James responded 4.5. Paraprofessionals costs were reduced due to available grants. Several grants were used to update technology last year and this year therefore there is minimal technology expenses projected for FY23. Health insurance will be an 8% increase.
- Cindy questioned the school choice tuition line. There are 6 students at Taconic (none from Florida). They're calculated in the enrollments so town's X & Y each have 3 and their total is \$43,000. Part of the states Chapter 70 calculation includes those students. However, there is a cost of \$5000-\$7700 per student and that is the subtraction. McCann gets more in reimbursement for those students than the state subtracts in tuition reimbursement. The state puts the money in but takes it back.
- Neil called for questions and asked if the Finance Committee agrees with the McCann proposed FY23 figure. Finance Committee agreed. Select board agreed.

### Jim White, Highway Department Budget Review Revisited:

- Neil commented the only highway account that went up a bit was the Rental line item. Jim amended his request at the last meeting to \$15,000, up from \$12,000. The extra is in case he goes over in the rental use time. If he does not use it he can turn the difference back in to the town.
- There was clarification as to where the sick time pay is taken from. Christine clarified there is a separate line item for Sick Pay therefore it would not come out of the Road Maintenance account. Personal days and holidays were to be taken from the Road Maintenance or Snow, Roads and Bridges account, pending what time of year they were being used.
- Road Maintenance was requested and recommended for \$260,000.
- Snow, Roads and Bridges recommended \$245,000 and Jim requested \$240,000. Jim requested less because he turned money back in last year. Terry questioned why increase it if level funded and it is the only account you can deficit spend. Donna has requested Snow, Roads and Bridges be level funded at \$244,800.
- Tractor and Machinery up \$10,000 to \$105,000 due to the increase in parts expenses.

Jim White, Highway Department Budget Review Revisited:

- Waste Management increased \$10,000 to \$90,000. The WM expenses may come down this year.
- Neil asked if all agreed for Rental Equipment \$15,000, Road Maintenance \$260,000, Snow, Roads and Bridges \$244,800, Tractor and Machinery \$105,000 and Waste Management \$90,000. All Finance Committee members agreed. Pam abstained. All Select board in agreement.
- Terry asked about the line item for the new highway truck. Neil replied it was agreed on previously. The line item for the new truck will be on the warrant for \$170,000.

Seth Bean, Assessor's Budget Review:

- Pam asked Seth what he does as an Assessor. Seth replied the main part is to be sure everything is filed with the state as far as the tax rate, follow information on sales, keep track of new growth, building permits, work with the company that comes in to do assessments. Work in the Canvas System software. Pam asked if they do the cars as well. Seth responded they get the commitments from the state that is produced by the RMV based on what someone has registered with their insurance company as to where the car is garaged. They send out the bills as the state tells them to. They also do the abatements. This is all done by the Assessors and various contractors they hire. Terry asked once the Assessors get the commitments do they double check which vehicle is being garaged. Seth answered if a homeowner brings them proof that an error was done they will direct on how to correct it but as far as verifying each one, no. There is no data base available to them and really no way to double check each bill.
- Neil stated the only thing different from last year was Map Maintenance went up. Christine informed him she added the Assessor accounts in because they did not submit any requests. Everything else is level funded. Seth responded the only other change they would have is the Assessors Value Maintenance and Tax Bill line because is a recertification year. Christine added when they send everything out to cartographs for the maps that is usually another \$2000. Neil asked if \$22000 is a sufficient amount with that contract for Assessors Value Maintenance and Tax Bill. Seth replied yes. Christine added the other question is regarding the Assessors Hydro/Transmission Re-eval, she put in another \$20,000 for this. Are they still needing all those legal fees? Even though it is not settled out of court, there does not seem to be as many lawyer bills coming in. Seth responded it is advisable to put something in that account until it is done.
- Terry asked how much is in the Overlay account. Donna responded there is \$310,654.
- Neil called for questions. There were none. Finance Committee in agreement. Select board in agreement.

Pam asked if it is possible to get an actual breakdown on the Council on Aging Operating account. Neil suggested they talk to the Council on Aging. Pam was unaware they could as she thought they needed to request the information through the Select board. Neil responded they could request a breakdown. Christine asked what specific information she was looking for. The Finance Committee would like to see a breakdown of the salary expense, the hourly rate, how many hours worked, the expenses, just as the other departments have done with their budgets. Ron asked if that information is in the town reports.

Christine said yes, it is. The next available town report will be at the Annual Town Meeting. Christine will check with the Council on Aging. Terry asked if the finance committee could get a budget report showing line by line the operator account. Christine had already given them that.

Neil asked the finance committee if there were any other questions before the board resumed the regular meeting. Donna would like to sit with Christine to go over things. They will meet on April 6<sup>th</sup> at 6pm. Cindy asked if there is any information she would need as a new finance committee member. Christine said she will print everything out for her as there are over 100 pages.

Pam asked if there would be certificates that stated they were sworn in. Christine said yes, she just has not gotten to them yet. Terry asked when she would get hers from last year when she was sworn in. Christine said she hadn't gotten it done yet. An unknown audience voice stated she thought the town clerk prepared those. Neil clarified the Select board signs them and then the person is usually sworn in by the town clerk. Christine added it is in the minutes and the person has been sworn in so we are good. Cindy also asked if she would have to go through the Ethics class? Christine and Pam said yes.

Selectmen:

- Select board signed the Election Warrant. Election to be held on May 2, 2022, 10am to 8pm.
- Mike Bedini made a motion to approve the business license for Christadora Inc for their yearly license. Terry Green seconded. Unanimous.
- The board received a request for Executive Session. They will meet at 5:30 pm for their meeting on 4/13/22 to hold the Executive Session first.
- Terry asked that before they approve the minutes for the previous meeting that they now make a new process that all minutes are signed and every page is initialed and before being posted on the towns website they are in pdf form, not in word form. Mike agreed to this as did Neil.
- Terry Green made a motion to approve the minutes of March 16, 2022. Mike Bedini seconded. Unanimous.

Jim White, Highway Department Supervisor:

- Guardrail replacement to be done this year in four areas: Tilda Hill Road near Grace Chilson's and Chilson's pond, on Stryker Road near Dobbert's and Rick LeClair's. There was funding left in Road Maintenance this year to be used. The cost is approximately \$20,838 for all 4 jobs.
- Winter cleanup of trees and brush. Chipping and cleaning culverts.
- Plowing
- Dealing with ice and washouts
- Spent personal time searching Small Town Strap Grants. Needs to apply. Would like to have Whitcomb Hill reclaimed plus additional work. This expires in May so town needs to act soon. After that Jim would like to apply to get work done on River road. Christine applied last year but they did not get approved. Neil added to keep applying to get approved. Jim said it is out of his hands now and up to town hall to apply because they have all the paperwork needed. Terry asked when did town apply last year. Christine applied at the end of May last year. Terry requested to see the paperwork from last year to see why they were denied and what the requirements were as it would be helpful to understand the guidelines and the information.

Jim White, Highway Department Supervisor (continued):

- Jim would like to do something this year with Tilda Hill. Terry asked what is going on there. Jim replied the road is starting to break down. Christine added it's been about 10 years since they paved it.
- Terry informed Jim that when he is doing all this work on his own time, since he is an hourly rate, he should be submitting for that time. He is doing the job for the town and he should be compensated for it. Neil stated they have historically asked Jim not to do so much on his own time but also understands how difficult it is. Terry added she appreciates him and his hard work and the time he puts in. But it is not fair to not get compensated for it. Mike added he should be taking his vacation time as well. Terry added Jim is doing a great job and it does not go unnoticed. Jim thanked them and said the guys make him look good as well.

Christine Dobbert, Town Administrator:

- Working on getting the tax bills out. They should be mailed out tomorrow morning.
- Working with the state to get the Ethics stuff done. Terry asked what Ethics stuff. Christine replied the certificates stating everyone is up to date on their Ethics. Terry asked why is she hearing from other people and not Christine that the Ethics Board was called and as a Selectmen she should be notified. Christine responded she did not notify either of them and is bringing it up now, at the meeting. **Emails were sent to all staff asking them to please do the ethics test.** Terry said she had to hear second hand and she should know what's going on when she has people from the Library with questions. Christine did not notify any select board members, only staff, asking them to do their training. Terry was accidentally left off the email as a Library Trustee, in error. **Misa was confused as she had already completed the Ethics training, at Terry's direction.** Christine said it was not intentional but only because she thinks of Terry as Select board and forgets she is also a Library Trustee. She was dealing with the Ethics issue tonight with the board. **She was not intentionally trying to leave Terry out.** She did not realize that every single time she should notify the board. Every time something comes up in town she will let them know but thinks that is part of her job to take care of it and take pressure off the board and to keep things going smoothly. Terry said part of your job is notify us of what is going on in the town not for you to make that assumption and take care of these things. Christine thought part of her job was to take care of things as they came up. Terry added it is also to report these items to the board of Selectmen. Christine said she was doing that tonight because that is when the meeting is. Terry said the Ethics Committee is something that they should have been notified of before tonight. Mike added it was embarrassing to have people coming up to him about a test and he did not know anything about it. Christine reminded the board that emailing all 3 could be construed as a meeting. Terry said you can notify them and no one needs to communicate back with each other. **They can be notified as it is pressing.** Christine went to work on it right away and is almost done. Neil added it possibly would've been easier to notify the select board about what is going on with it but going into the next meeting is the normal way of notification. It could be good to get a head start and not blind-sided with questions. Terry said it is a priority thing. Neil responded it was being handled right away as a priority. Mike asked if they contacted the town. Christine answered yes. Terry asked what did they say.

Christine Dobbert, Town Administrator (continued):

Christine replied he requested a list of every position, with everyone's name and when they took the test and when they received the summary and he wanted a spreadsheet put together and sent down to him. Terry added she had addressed this with everyone previously, over a year ago, as well as all other things they are not doing as a town. Terry continued that there is nothing that is transparent. There are so many things done not by the guidelines of the state. Christine responded she won't agree on the transparent comment. She feels we are very transparent about everything. When anyone asks her about anything it is given to them. Every request is taken care of usually with 24-48 hours. Terry disagrees. Christine asked what do you feel we are not transparent on. Terry added her other issue is she had already turned her paperwork on her first day it disappeared. That are things that should be in place and the filing system and the organization needs to get better and you can not chalk it up to age. Christine responded you had said you gave it to Lisa. Terry said Yes, I gave it to Lisa and she is the keeper of records and that is supposed to be kept. Christine can not remember her bringing it in if she gave it to Lisa. Terry said yes but I also gave you all of the paperwork for the Library trustees that they did. I've had them do that and the paperwork just disappears. There needs to be more organization. There needs to be more accountability. Pam asked Christine if she date/time stamps paperwork when she receives it. Christine does not. Terry asked for that to change and added there are so many guidelines not being followed. She has brought up several things at meetings and feels like she is always pushed aside and it is disregarded. At the end of the day she has nothing to gain, no axes to grind, no personal financial gain. She is doing it because she wants the town to be run by the state guidelines and ethically. Terry also added people have tried to trash her name and her family's name. Christine replied she does not know what Terry is talking about. Terry said well you might. Mike added he has also had trashing on his name as well and it is not right. Terry asked Christine if she has an issue with the way things are done or the things she says then to bring it up at the meeting but don't trash her or her family. Christine does not remember doing this and asked what was said. Terry responded it was brought it up numerous times and she takes pride in our town and is working hard to make sure things are done the way they should be done. Christine said she does not know what she said that has made Terry upset or even know her family. Terry responded she is not going to tolerate the things that are being said and she will own that she did reach out to the Ethics Committee because every time she has asked for change it gets pushed aside. We do not have process and procedures, employee manuals. All these things should have been in place years ago. Christine responded but they weren't so how is that her fault and she follows the direction of the board. Terry responded that is your responsibility. Christine replied nobody said to me until you came on, we need this. Terry responded nobody should have to tell you that you need process and procedures. Nobody should tell you you need an employee's manual. It is state guidelines to make sure that everybody on the ethics finishes their classes and signs those papers when they come on a committee and you said at the last meeting that everybody was fine and up to date. Christine responded that most of them do. The school was basically done. Terry replied the school does it as part of the school. Christine asked what do you want from me? Terry responded she wants her to do your job. I want you to be accountable. I want transparency. Christine responded you have my two weeks' notice because I don't know how else to do it without direction from you. Pam reminded Christine that was said during an open meeting and minutes. Christine said yes you have my two weeks' notice and proceeded to leave.

Public Comment:

- Janet Bartlett asked how long was it that there was no finance committee. Pam replied it was two years they did not meet. Discussions continued to figure out exact dates of when finance committee had met in previous years.
- Pam would like to be able to find out when other boards meet. There is no information under "Agenda" on the town website. She would like to see this updated. Cindy asked if Vicki could post the agenda on the fb group. Mike added the agenda is public information. Vicki responded she does not have access to the agenda. Terry added anyone could post it anywhere they want to if they saw it and took a picture of it. Based on the bylaws it is supposed to be posted in 3 public places.
- Pam noticed the town website has the Select board minutes posted but she does not see any other boards minutes and no one has asked her for the finance committee minutes. Cindy added there is a problem with the website. Pam responded yes but if one boards minutes are posted any other boards minutes can be posted there as well. Cindy asked who posts them on there. Pam responded Christine posts them. Neil responded it isn't required to be put on there.
- Cindy asked if there is going to be an emergency meeting now? The board will meet Wednesday, April 6, 2022 at 5pm. to go over everything.
- Janet made a comment stating over the years the communications or updates from the town leaders has evaporated. It is really diminished. They use to get annual reports of what the town was having for incoming and the expenses and everybody's salaries. Neil replied it is all in the town report, isn't it? Several responded no it is not. Janet said the only way to find out what is going on is if you come here or contact somebody but it is a municipality, it is not a private business so she would really appreciate it if they could adjust to how they operate and she really appreciates everybody's time. Pam notified Janet that recently, after the meetings, Vicki would post the approved Select board minutes. They meet every other week so it is two weeks behind but at least it is opening the door that you are asking for for the select board's information to be out there and maybe we can start asking whoever will be taking the position to start posting the agenda on the fb page as well. Pam will start posting the finance committees agenda on to the fb page even though it is not a town page.

8:22 pm Mike Bedini made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Terry Green seconded. Unanimous.