

# **TOWN OF DEERING**

762 Deering Center Road  
Deering, NH 03244

## **Board of Selectmen Final Special Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, January 25, 2024

7:00 P.M.

Members Present: Chair Jill Smith, Selectman Roy Watson and Selectman Steve Diers  
Also Present: Town Administrator Meagen Kerris

### **Opening of the Meeting by the Chair at 6:37pm**

#### **Item 1: Nonpublic Session per RSA 91-A:3, II, (a)**

**Chair Smith made a motion to go into Non-Public Session at 6:30pm per RSA 91 A-3, II, (a). Seconded by Selectman Watson.**

**Vote by Roll Call: Chair Smith – yes, Selectman Watson – yes and Selectman Diers – yes**

The Board of Selectmen came out of Non-Public Session at 7:02pm

### **Opening of the Public Meeting by the Chair at 7:12pm**

#### **Pledge of Allegiance**

#### **Item 2: Highway Department – Review garage door opener solutions/quotes**

TA Kerris reported that calls were made to get two more quotes for the garage door openers. Raynor quoted that all 5 door openers should be replaced at a cost of \$9,420 which does not include wiring. She reminded the Board that Crawford only quoted 4 door openers because one was salvageable. The third company has not returned the call to quote the door openers.

Selectman Diers said he sent the Board a video of his suggested method to fix the issue. He then asked when the original quote was given, did they include door openers and did they look at the door openers and make recommendations?

TA Kerris said when Crawford quoted the doors they made a statement that while they were replacing the doors that they should replace the door openers as well but a quote for that was never included and it was assumed to be a sales pitch.

Selectman Diers asked do we know how long the door openers were working on the existing doors and had they malfunctioned at all with those doors? He also asked who is claiming that they are undersized and who is verifying they are undersized? If they were opening the previous doors for years then who installed them and why are they now undersized and the problem being reported seems like it has nothing to do with the weight of the door but a function of gravity. He went on to say that he is not a garage door technician or expert talked more about what he feels the issue is and how the pusher looks like it will fix the problem.

Selectman Diers asked if when the doors were installed, did someone say to us that we should replace them because they are undersized and won't work properly?

Chair Smith said the Department Head reported that the installer said that at the time of installation of the doors.

Selectman Diers asked does that mean that someone in the Town of Deering made the recommendation to not replace them?

Chair Smith said she is not going to put words in someone's mouth.

Selectman Diers asked when we talked to these door companies, have they suggested any alternative solutions to correct the problem? He also asked what kind of door openers are on the Fire Stations?

TA Kerris asked if those doors are as big as the Highway doors?

Selectman Diers answered they are close.

Chair Smith expressed her position is that the Department Head came to the Board with a problem and reported what happened at the time of installation and the issues they have experienced since then as a result which is that the door opener has an undersized motor for the door and that puts it before us to solve because our employees are at risk.

Selectman Diers asked if we have that in writing?

Selectman Watson said we have it in testimony from the Interim Road Agent.

Chair Smith said the Interim Road Agent's recommendation is to replace the door openers for properly sized ones and it is a large expense but looking at the Town's liability and risk she would feel most comfortable making sure the door openers are sized properly for the door.

Selectman Diers said he hasn't seen anything from an expert that states they are the incorrect door openers and asked if either of the companies gave documentation that the openers are undersized.

Selectman Watson said he takes the testimony that has been given and one pathway is one that we know will fix the problem which is to install new door openers and the other option is the pusher spring that may fix the issue. He said he appreciated him looking into saving money but likes the that we are being told that if we purchase new door openers that it will take care of all the issues.

TA Kerris said we still need one more quote to come in.

Selectman Diers said he is frustrated that they have been working on garage doors for a year and would like to know if there is any liability on the company that installed doors knowing that the door openers weren't sufficient.

Chair Smith said she is frustrated as well.

Selectman Diers asked when the doors were installed and when did we make a final approval to have the doors installed?

Chair Smith said we paid the invoice already and the best we can do now is move forward and fix the issue so that we don't have a safety incident or equipment destroyed. She suggested to allow TA Kerris to exercise the part of the Procurement Policy that where she can authorize an emergency purchase if she feels it becomes an emergency situation.

Selectman Watson agreed.

The Board agreed to move forward with a 2/3 consensus.

### **Item 3: 2024 Proposed Operating Budget – Review & work**

Chair Smith handed out a spreadsheet for the Fire Department as a suggestion after looking at other towns that have gone through a wage analysis for a Volunteer Fire Department. MRI did a report for Boscawen in 2021 which had tiers of Fire Fighter 1 and Fire Fighter 2. She said they also structured it with a base pay plus more for a Certified EMT and other certifications.

Chair Smith asked the Board if they would be ok with her giving the spreadsheet to the Fire Chief to review. They agreed.

Chair Smith suggested to start with looking over wages. She said the Town Administrator line has been updated to reflect the current wage. She said the Finance Administrator wages need to be discussed and a range decided.

TA Kerris said for the Finance Administrator position, she suggests a 40 hour per week salaried position ranging from \$55,000-\$65,000 depending on experience, qualifications and experience with municipal government in general.

Chair Smith calculated the low end of the range to be \$26.44/hour and high end as \$31.25/hour.

Selectman Watson asked if this position was already budgeted as a position with benefits?

TA Kerris answered yes.

Selectman Watson said he likes the salary aspect for the Finance Administrator position.

Chair Smith said they did verify that it does qualify to be a salaried position.

**Chair Smith made a motion to make the Finance Administrator a salaried 40 hour per week position with a high end rate of pay \$31.25 per hour. Seconded by Selectman Watson. Motion passed 3-0.**

Chair Smith asked if the Board wanted to remove the 3% increase in July for the Finance Administrator?

The Board agreed by consensus.

There was nothing to discuss or amend for wages on the Minutes Clerk or the Land Use Administrative Assistant.

Chair Smith said a budgeted amount needs to be put in for the Town Clerk/Tax Collector. She asked what the Board thought about leaving the wage the same or setting something lower?

Discussion ensued regarding the Town Clerk/Tax Collector's salary and benefits.

Selectman Watson said the current Town Clerk/Tax Collector receives health and retirement benefits.

TA Kerris said many towns are reviewing giving benefits as an option because filling the position has been difficult.

Selectman Watson said the current rate for the Town Clerk/Tax Collector is \$26.82/hour plus benefits.

Chair Smith pointed out that this is a salary versus hourly pay because the Town Clerk/Tax Collector is the only one that can set their hours.

Chair Smith suggested taking the current wage and reduce it to offset the health benefits.

TA Kerris said one option could be to grandfather current employees with a 90/10 for health insurance and any after would be 80/20.

Selectman Watson asked if the warrant article granting benefits to the Town Clerk/Tax Collector went with the position or the person?

TA Kerris said she believed it would be with the position.

Chair Smith said we can leave the benefits but should set a wage.

Selectman Watson suggested the median of the current Deputy wage of \$20.00/hour and the current wage of \$26.82/hour to be \$23.41/hour or a salary of \$43,800.

Chair Smith asked TA Kerris to research the carrying over of benefits to the new Town Clerk/Tax Collector.

Chair Smith said the Deputy Town Clerk/Tax Collector has been increased to \$20.00/hour and that a 4% merit was suggested but feels they should stick with the 3% they agreed with for the rest of the employees.

Selectman Diers said that after all the wage adjustments made in 2023, he is concerned with any increases in 2024.

Chair Smith said the Police Chief's new wage is in the budget correct plus his part-time suggestions.

Selectman Watson said since historically the police is one of the hardest to staff, he is in agreement with the Police Chief's recommendations.

Chair Smith asked if the Board would like to reduce the # of weeks to budget for the new officers since we won't have any in January or February?

Selectman Watson agreed to take out 8 weeks and save in this year's budget.

Chair Smith said the Administrative Assistant can be reduced as well. She also asked if the Board was in agreement with the wage of \$18.00/hour for the position? Selectman Watson and Selectman Diers agreed.

Chair Smith said if we bring down the current Patrol Officer's budgeted amount by 4 weeks then the overall wages for the Police Department would go down to \$221,500.

Chair Smith said it was suggested to change the Road Agent wages from salary to hourly and she agrees with that.

Selectman Diers said based on the ability to supervise, hourly makes more sense.

Discussion ensued as to what the high-end hourly rate should be.

Selectman Watson thought having int at \$40.00/hour to keep it under the Town Administrator's rate would be best.

Selectman Diers said he likes \$38.50/hour.

Chair Smith said that would be \$67,760/year with no increase in July and it does not include overtime.

Selectman Diers agreed with that.

Chair Smith said the Mechanic position would go back to \$28.00/hour with a 3% increase in July.

Discussion regarding the proposed overtime budget line of \$66,000. BAC proposed overtime budget line is \$20,000. 2023 overtime budget line spent was \$33,800.

Selectman Watson said the BAC proposed the amount expecting to have a full Highway Department roster.

Chair Smith said she is concerned the BAC proposal is too low especially with moving one position from salary to hourly.

Selectman Diers said most of the overtime comes from weather events and how aware is the Road Agent of the budgeted overtime amount.

Selectman Watson said that managing the staff and overtime is part of the Road Agent's duties.

Selectman Diers said overtime can be hard to predict for the Highway Department.

Chair Smith suggested asking the Highway and Fire Departments to go back thru their budget, considering the items that were purchased out of the 2023 budget and suggest any savings that could be found as well as looking at the current staffing and make sure the overtime is a good amount.

It was agreed that they should see the BAC's recommendations as well as any other notes.

Chair Smith brought up the Fire EMS Per-diem budget line of \$91,400 and said she would like to see it reduced using the ambulance revolving fund by using the amount received in 2023. She believes it is around \$26,000.

Selectman Watson & Selectman Diers both agreed with the suggestion.

Chair Smith said she needs to look into the execution of using the money from the fund and will report back.

Chair Smith said we need more on wages for the Fire Department and need the Chief to re-look at the wages in their budget.

The Board had a brief discussion regarding Selectman's attendance at elections as well as information being sent through email.

TA Kerris said she received an email from Mike Collins asking if a warrant article had been submitted correcting the statement for the All Soldiers Tax Credit.

Chair Smith said Deering does not have the All Soldiers Tax Credit but anyone could submit one as a petitioned article to see if the voters will approve it.

TA Kerris looked into the current vehicle tracker Deering has through Verizon Connect and the current contract is sunsetting at the end of the month. Currently we have 8 trackers at a cost of \$129.52 per month and we will now need 9 tracker at a cost of \$131.55 per month. She said this program was put into place by a previous TA to get a reduction in vehicle insurance. She said we need to decide to switch to the new program or decide to not continue using the trackers.

Chair Smith suggested finding out what Primex requires.

TA Kerris said she would look into it and find out if it is still a worthwhile program.

TA Kerris said she is looking into grants for the remining side of Town Hall as well as the railing.

**Selectman Watson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:55pm. Seconded by Selectman Diers. Motion passed 3-0.**

Respectfully Submitted,

*Wendy Baker*

Wendy Baker  
Recording Secretary