

# **TOWN OF DEERING**

762 Deering Center Road  
Deering, NH 03244

## **Board of Selectmen Final Meeting Minutes Thursday, January 4, 2024 7:00 P.M.**

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

### **Opening of the Meeting by the Chair at 7:00pm**

#### **Pledge of Allegiance**

#### **Item 1: Consent Agenda**

- Payroll – 12/27/2023 (\$11,128.35), 1/03/2024 (\$10,496.25)
- Accounts Payable – 12/22/2023 (\$423,207.12)

**Selectman Watson made a motion to approve the items in the Consent Agenda. Seconded by Char Smith. Motion Passed 3-0.**

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **Item 2: Petition for Special Meeting – Moderator Phillip Bryce**

Moderator Phillip Bryce met with the Board to prepare for the upcoming Special Town Meeting on January 13, 2023. He said a Special Town Meeting would be run the same as a regular Town Meeting and he ran thru the script accounting for any non-residents that may need allowance to speak during the meeting. He suggested posting the Rules of Procedure on the website as well as having Town Reports available at the meeting which also references it.

There was a discussion about having a sound system as well as whether to have speakers come up to one location or not. The Board agreed having a sound system with one location at the front to speak as well as a runner to bring a microphone to those that need it.

Chair Smith summarized clarification given from Town Counsel: Per 231:62-a, the term of an Elected Road Agent can only be changed at the Annual Town Meeting (and not at a Special Town Meeting). As a result, the approval of an elected Road Agent at a Special Town Meeting will only be for a one-year term. The change from 1-year to 3-year could be proposed at the 2024 Annual Town Meeting, which, if approved, would go into effect after the 2025 Town Meeting.

It was decided that bringing up this point should be voiced after the petitioner speaks.

P. Bryce said 5 voters can request to have a secret ballot in writing.

Selectman Diers asked if the Board is allowed to recuse themselves and speak as a resident? P. Bryce answered he believed yes but would look into that.

### **Item 3: East Deering Rd – Mr. John Thyng, Jr.**

John Thyng came to see the Board regarding a notice he received about a fence he constructed in the Right of Way. He said the purpose of constructing it was to make it safer in the areas where there is a steep drop off and guardrails were never installed as well as to keep his animals on the property.

Chair Smith asked how many feet from the road is the fence?

J. Thyng answered 3-4 feet from the road and behind the mailbox.

Chair Smith asked if the fence was within the right-of way?

J. Thyng answered that he did not feel it was.

Discussion ensued regarding the laws around roadways and where the right-of-way begins and ends.

Chair Smith said the area of travel includes ditches and if the fence is left up then he will be liable for damage to his fence as well as any damage to town equipment. She said the highway includes not just the pavement but the right-of-way as well.

There was more discussion regarding the dispute of where the actual right-of-way is.

Chair Smith said any issues should always be brought to the town first to fix and is not a resident's responsibility.

### **Item 4: Cemetery Trustees – ETF expenditure request**

Chair Smith said an item was pulled from the last consent agenda because of a procedural error and she asked if it was investigated whether the location had perpetual care or not?

Cemetery Trustee John Reynolds answered yes it was investigated and it does not have perpetual care.

Chair Smith explained that when they need to submit something to be expended from a trust fund, it should be sent to the Board of Selectmen first and they will send it to the Trustees of Trust Funds.

**Chair Smith made a motion to approve an invoice from Garry Kalajian for \$854.10 for work at Appleton and East Deering Cemetery to be paid from the Cemetery Expendable Trust Fund. Seconded by Selectman Diers. Motion Passed 3-0.**

### **Item 5: Budget Advisory Committee - Budget and Recommendations Review**

Chair Smith thanked the Budget Advisory Committee for the numerous hours they put in on the 2024 Budget.

Budget Advisory Committee member Michelle Johnson started with an overview of budget information. She said the 2023 Budget was 2.3 million before warrant articles, the proposed

2024 Budget was 2.7 million before warrant articles and the Budget advisory Committee is recommending a 2024 Budget of 2.5 million before warrant articles (11% increase).

M. Johnson addressed the rest of the 2024 Budget as follows:

**Warrant Articles:** 2023 \$452,000 and proposed 2024 \$885,000 with BAC recommending \$625,000.

**Police Department:** 2023 \$383,000 and proposed 2024 \$405,000 with BAC recommending \$404,000.

**Fire & EMS Department:** 2023 \$326,000 and proposed 2024 \$326,000 with BAC recommending \$322,000 (adjustments made in the equipment line).

**Highway Department:** 2023 \$769,000 and proposed 2024 \$1,044,000 with BAC recommending \$929,000 (adjustments mostly made in the maintenance line).

**Administrative Budget:** 2023 \$487,000 and proposed 2024 \$675,000 with BAC recommending \$624,000.

**Executive Budget:** 2023 \$210,000 and proposed 2024 \$259,000 with BAC recommending \$259,000.

**Assessing & Building Department Budget:** 2023 \$50,000 and proposed 2024 \$53,000 with BAC recommending \$53,000.

**Multiple Budgets including Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Treasurer, Elections etc:** 2023 \$123,000 and proposed 2024 \$144,000 with BAC recommending \$143,000.

**Multiple Budgets including Planning, Conservation Commission, Cemetery, Solid Waste, Welfare, Bonds & Notes etc:** Planning had an increase in professional services that they intend to use, Conservation Commission came in with an increase of \$15,000 which was suggested to be a warrant article, Cemetery some adjustments and suggested they use more of their trust funds, Solid Waste is our trash contract with Hillsborough which not much can be done with that, Welfare had a small adjustment and Bond & Notes is our Debt Services for the last year of the Town Hall renovation Bond and for the Fire Truck.

The last bit includes legal, general government, insurance and liability, advertising, dispatch and street light that comes to \$182,000 and relatively little increased.

**Warrant Article recommendations:**

Fire Department Building reduced from \$100,000 to \$75,000.

Road reconstruction should be set to zero since there is currently \$547,000 in the fund.

Highway Vehicle reduced from \$330,000 to \$250,000.

The Budget Advisory Committee also recommends the following:

- Update in wage and benefits study
- Update employee policies including what employees contribute to their Health Insurance and consider a Health Insurance buyout stipend.
- Look into changing the full-time hours to receive benefits.
- Policy on bid proposals and hold to it.

- Review policy on bids for fuel.
- Utilizing more grant programs especially for Highway.
- Utilizing unassigned Fund Balance on warrant articles.
- Work with Department Heads to review their budgets on a regular basis throughout the year.

The impact of the budgets proposed are as follows:

2024 Budget as presented 2.7 million will be an increase of \$1.61 on the tax rate

2024 Budget BAC recommended 2.5 million will be an increase of \$1.03 on the tax rate

2024 Warrant Articles BAC recommended \$625,000 will be an increase of \$2.55 on the tax rate

Chair Smith asked for clarification on their recommendation on reconsideration for Health Insurance.

M. Johnson said they would like all avenues for plans and employee contribution looked at and said the total cost currently for a family plan is \$30,000, for a 2 person plan \$22,000 and a single plan is \$11,000.

She also said the lowest wage in is \$17.00/hr at the Police Department and the highest wage is the Town Administrator at \$47.00/hr, most part-timer employees are in the \$20.00/hr range and full-time employees are over \$25.00/hr. She reiterated that 36 hours per week is considered full-time and that should be looked at.

Chair Smith asked if it is their recommendation to split the Town Clerk/Tax Collector's position.

M. Johnson answered yes, they feel it should be split.

Selectman Watson said the Conservation Commission rescinded their ask for a warrant article for water testing.

Selectman Diers thanks the Budget Advisory Committee for all of their hard work and great recommendations.

BAC member Lou Ellen Beard expressed that this year's process was painful and they didn't receive things in a timely manner and that it should have started earlier.

Selectman Diers said he agrees that meeting with departments about their budgets more often and having them look at it monthly is a good idea.

Selectman Watson reiterated all of the items the BAC are recommending, look at Health Insurance, wages, have monthly meetings with Department Heads and start budget process earlier.

L. Beard said it would be helpful to have the revenues, fund balance and budget narratives as well.

M. Johnson said monthly reports are important and it would be helpful to invite the Deering School Board Representative to a meeting to explain the school budget.

Chair Smith explained that when wages are set, they look at many factors and compare other town's of similar size as well as looking at the NHMA wage study but it does not have a date on it so it is hard to know that it is accurate.

The Board called a short recess.

#### **Item 6: Finance Administrator Job Description**

TA Kerris said the major change to the current job description is that the Human Resource portion will be taken out and moved to the Town Administrator's job description although some smaller HR tasks will remain.

TA Kerris read the duties on the proposed job description (see attached).

Selectman Diers asked if "other duties assigned" should be added?

TA Kerris answered yes she can add that.

Chair Smith said she would also like to see "creating and updating financial policies and procedures with an emphasis to bring them forward to the Board to review".

The Board agreed to move forward by consensus with the amended Finance Administrator Job Description.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

#### **Item 7: Minutes Approval – 12/7, 12/21, 12/27 (Public); 12/7 & 12/21 (Nonpublic)**

Chair Smith requested to amend Consent Agenda wording in the December 21<sup>st</sup> minutes to replace Cemetery Trustees in two places with Trustees of Trust Funds.

**Chair Smith made a motion to approve the December 21, 2023 public minutes as amended Seconded by Selectman Watson. Motion Passed 3-0.**

**Chair Smith made a motion to approve the December 7, 2023 and December 27, 2023 public minutes and December 7, 2023, December 21, 2023 and December 27, 2023 non-public minutes as presented Seconded by Selectman Watson. Motion Passed 3-0.**

#### **Item 8: Town Administrator Updates**

TA Kerris would like to encourage the Board to meet with Department Heads on a monthly basis at one of their regular meetings.

TA Kerris said she has been getting requests for a road plan.

TA Kerris said that she and Interim Road Agent Martin visited Don Super at his property and he has requested to lift the cease and desist so that he may add more gravel to the road.

Chair Smith said if the town received a plan with a timeline and it was held to, there could be consideration of lifting the cease and desist.

Selectman Diers said that any repairs to that road need to be approved by the Road Agent.

Selectman Watson said he would be ok with a written plan approved by the Road Agent.

The Board agreed by consensus that a specific timeline would be needed to raise the cease and desist.

TA Kerris reminded everyone of the upcoming Public Hearing on Zoning Amendments on January 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm.

TA Kerris said she has exhausted all avenues to find a road side mowing contract. She received another quote for \$85,000 and one for \$65.00/hr but they are not interested in traveling to Deering. It was decided to put a Bid out on the website one more time.

### **Item 9: Selectmen's Reports**

Selectman Watson said he has a Conservation Commission meeting coming this Monday and the Budget Advisory Committee meetings have concluded.

Selectman Diers said he is an advocate for having monthly reports and he sees that this has been slowly happening. He complimented TA Kerris on a job well done to get important updates on the website.

Chair Smith asked that the Public Hearing for the Zoning Amendments be publicized on the front page of the website.

### **Item 10: Public Comment (MAXIMUM-3 Minutes)**

*The Board always welcomes public comment and feedback. This is the only opportunity for public comment. If there is any need for the board's response a request should include an appointment on a future agenda, to include supporting documentation. Forward your request to the Town Administrator at least five business days beforehand. When speaking please state your name and address.*

John Thyng and Mike Stone both voiced that they would like to see more Police patrols on East Deering Road.

### **Item 11: Nonpublic Session per RSA 91-A:3, II, (a) & (c)**

**Chair Smith made a motion to go into Non-Public Session at 9:43pm per RSA 91 A-3, II, (a) & (c). Seconded by Selectman Watson.**

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

The Board of Selectman came out of Non-Public Session at 10:59pm

**Selectman Watson made a motion to seal the minutes. Seconded by Chair Smith, because it is determined that divulgence of this information likely would affect adversely the reputation of any person other than a member of this board.**

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

**Selectman Watson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:00pm. Seconded by Chair Smith. Motion passed 3-0.**

Respectfully Submitted,

*Wendy Baker*

Wendy Baker  
Recording Secretary

**Job Title:** Finance Administrator  
**Reports to:** Town Administrator  
**Department:** Administration  
**Salary:** DOE  
**Description:** Full-time Exempt, 40 hours per week

**Job Summary:**

The Finance Administrator oversees payroll, accounts payable and receivable, account reconciliation, and benefits paperwork. This position will also provide administrative support to the Town Administrator and will serve as the initial point of contact for the Town Office, responsible for answering phones and general inquiries.

**Duties/Responsibilities:**

- Process invoices and prepare voucher for Board Selectmen signature weekly. Once approved, cut and mail checks.
- Process weekly and monthly payroll. Ensuring that hours are correctly categorized, including vacation, sick, comp, and overtime pay. Print payroll reports for funding retirement accounts and creating General Ledger entries. Print and file appropriate documentation.
- Enter deposits from the Town Clerk/Tax Collector, ambulance, and building department. Print and file appropriate documentation.
- Approve bank transfers initiated by the Town Clerk/Tax Collector.
- Reconcile bank statements on a monthly basis.
- Set up new employees in the payroll system.
- Update employee pay increases as applied in the payroll system.
- Oversee benefits administration including medical, dental, and retirement participation.
- Answer the main phone line for the Town Offices, routing calls as appropriate to the Town Administrator, Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Assessing, Highway Department, Police, and Fire.
- Set up and maintain employees in the 457 retirement portal.
- Fund 457 retirement accounts using the online portal.
- Process New Hampshire Retirement contributions for police.
- Create monthly expenditure reports for department heads, committees, and the Board of Selectmen.
- Assist the Town Administrator with the annual report, budget preparation, and other administrative tasks.
- Work with the Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen to implement policies.
- Conduct year-end closeout which includes rotating and boxing up prior year records for storage.
- Setup new year in the financial software.
- Manage vendors, ensuring that they have W-9s on file.
- Complete and submit 1099 forms.
- Complete annual Primex employee profile reporting.
- Complete the DRA reporting by required deadlines.
- Collect new vendor information from Department Heads to enter in for payment.
- Coordinate with the Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer to sign checks and payroll.
- Assist with Bank Transfers.
- Assist in the successful implementation of new accounting software.



- Work with Financial Auditors to ensure successful completion of yearly audit.
- Accurately prepare bank deposits.
- Flexibility for additional hours/tasks, depending on the needs of the Finance Administration office.
- Order supplies as requested for departments.
- Monitor Expense reports.
- Strong attention to detail.
- Strong organizational skills.
- Ability to handle multiple projects due at the same time.
- Participate in trainings associated with the Finance Administrator office.
- Strong professional communication skills is a must.
- Working knowledge of General Accounting Practices.
- Bring updated Finance policies forward to the Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen.
- Other tasks as assigned by the Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen.