

TOWN OF DEERING

762 Deering Center Road
Deering, NH 03244

Board of Selectmen Final Meeting Minutes Thursday, February, 1 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 7:08pm

Pledge of Allegiance

Item 1: Consent Agenda

- Payroll – 1/24/2024 (\$16,510.64), 1/31/2024 (\$15,746.57)
- Accounts Payable – 12/31/2023 (\$13,369.60) 1/26/2024 (\$426,858.91)

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

NEW BUSINESS

Item 2: Highway Dept, Interim Road Agent Brett Martin

- **Calcium chloride alternative (Mag-Chloride)**

Frank Beliveau from Innovative Surface Solutions came in to talk to the Board about a Magnesium Chloride program.

Selectman Diers asked how many miles of dirt roads do we have to treat?

Interim Road Agent Martin answered 40 miles and we would treat all of them. He said the amount used is 800 gallons a mile and some roads that are narrow will use less.

Selectman Diers asked if there would be training?

F. Beliveau answered yes, he does the NH Local Technical Assistance program and it is at no cost.

Discussion ensued regarding application of the product.

Selectman Diers confirmed it is a 3-year contract and we own the equipment, but is there any price protection?

F. Beliveau said there is no guarantee but the quote is good for 2024.

Selectman Diers asked about the environmental aspect of the magnesium chloride.

F. Beliveau said it is the least corrosive.

Mike Thomas, member of the Conservation Commission talked about his concerns regarding the toxicity of magnesium chloride and that it has 15% more chloride.

A discussion ensued regarding the environmental issues.

Selectman Watson said Conservation Commission has studies that can be added to the minutes.

Chair Smith is interested about what the impact on the lake is and the solution for the dust.

M. Thomas said it would be good to keep everything away from the watershed protection area so that testing can be done first. He also asked if the town is using calcium chloride in the watershed protection area currently?

Interim Road Agent Martin answered yes.

M. Thomas asked if there are records of how much salt is being used?

Interim Road Agent answered only the end of year usage total, not an amount on each road.

F. Beliveau said his company could train the crew on how to calibrate the trucks to have a count for future on all of the roads.

Chair Smith asked if the Board had enough information to make a decision?

Selectman Diers asked if the Conservation Commission agreed on dust control on the roads outside of the watershed?

M. Thomas said as long as it is kept out of the watershed, signs put up for low salt usage and have the calibration training.

After discussion the Board decided to allow the Conservation Commission to work with the Town Administrator to have a workshop to identify additional areas that need the least amount of salt.

Selectman Watson made a motion to authorize the Conservation Commission to work with the Town Administrator to set-up a workshop with the Road Agent for development of road salt usage within the watershed area. Seconded by Chair Smith. Motion Passed 3-0.

Selectman Diers asked what we should do with the calcium chloride we currently have?

Interim Road Agent Martin said he could look into selling it but it wouldn't go to waste.

Chair Smith said it would be a good idea to still use on the roads not in the watershed protection area.

It was suggested that it could be mixed with the salt also.

Selectman Watson made a motion to authorize the Town Administrator and the Interim Road Agent to enter into an agreement with Innovative Surface Solutions of NY for supplying magnesium chloride and application systems to Deering at the agreed upon

terms of \$1.18 per gallon for a 3-year non-binding agreement starting before March 30, 2024. Seconded by Chair Smith. Motion Passed 3-1 (Diers Nay).

- **Garage door solution**

Interim Road Agent Martin said they did not hear back from the third company to quote the door openers and there is uncertainty that the pushers would work.

Chair Smith asked what Interim Road Agent Martin recommended.

Interim Road Agent Martin answered that he recommends the new door openers and his preference to purchase them would be through Raynor.

Chair Smith asked if Raynor had any concerns pairing their openers with these doors?

Interim Road Agent Martin answered no.

Chair Smith said after doing some research she feels Raynor has a more robust solution.

Selectman Watson made a motion to authorize an agreement with Raynor to purchase 5 garage door openers in the amount of \$9,420.00 funded from the Highway Building Expendable Trust Fund. Seconded by Chair Smith. Motion Passed 3-0.

Chair Smith said to move forward with the Airvac system, they need 50% upfront.

Chair Smith made a motion to approve paying a 50% deposit of \$16,587.00 for the Airvac Ventilation System funded from the Highway Building Expendable Trust Fund. Seconded by Selectman Watson. Motion Passed 3-0.

Highway Budget discussion and review moved up.

Chair Smith said Interim Road Agent Martin came back with areas that could be reduced due to 2023 purchases. She said the updated spreadsheet shows the original proposed budget in column E and the BAC recommendation in column F and previously discussed changes to wages have been incorporated into the spreadsheet.

The following line items were discussed and changes made are as follows:

Aggregate - \$40,000 original now reduced to \$15,000

Culverts – reduced to \$1

New Equipment – reduced to \$1

Equipment Maintenance - \$20,000 original now reduced to \$16,700

Vehicle Maintenance - \$32,000 original now reduced to \$30,750

Tires - \$10,000 original now reduced to \$7,000

Raw Steel – reduced to \$6,300

The BAC recommended \$16,750 for roadside mowing and do ½ this year and ½ next year.

A discussion regarding the line item for crack and chip sealing began and it was decided that this was more of a major road project that should be taken from Block Grant Funds and this line should be zeroed out.

As a result of zeroing out the crack and chip sealing line the Board agreed to rename the Cold Patch line to Hot Patch and Cold Patch and increase it from \$2,500 to \$7,500.

The BAC reduced the Vehicle Fuel line by \$320.

The BAC reduced the salt line to \$65,000 from \$70,000 and after the discussion regarding using the excess calcium chloride mixed with the salt, they can reduce it further to \$60,000.

The BAC reduced the Dust Control line from \$18,000 to \$11,000. Interim Road Agent Martin said it needs to be left at \$18,000.

The BAC reduced the Sand Screener/Box Screener Rental to \$9,000 from \$10,000. Interim Road Agent Martin disagreed and said the cost of rentals is still going up. The Board agreed to keep it at \$10,000.

Chair Smith recommended removing the seasonal position since we will be at full staff and it will save \$27,000 plus projected overtime. Full staff includes Road Agent, Mechanic, Foreman, 2 full-time and 1 part-time Operator.

Interim Road Agent said it is a valid option.

Chair Smith said we could use a seasonal position just for storms instead.

Selectman Watson said he feels if we eliminate the seasonal position and limited overtime with full staffing that would be sufficient.

Chair Smith said the BAC reduced overtime to \$25,000.

Interim Road Agent said cutting it in half is a mistake since our overtime is weather dependent.

A discussion regarding overtime continued.

Chair Smith reminded the Board that now we will have an hourly Road Agent we will need to have enough in the budget to cover that, 2023 actual was approximately \$33,000 and feels \$40,000 would be a good estimate. She also said the BAC reduced the line to \$25,000 and the Department estimated and requested \$66,000 so maybe a better number would be half-way at \$45,000.

Selectman Diers feels that \$40,000 would be a good number.

The Board agreed by consensus on \$40,000 for the Overtime line.

Chair Smith asked should we remove the Seasonal position?

Selectman Watson said he would like to see it reduced to an on-call position.

Chair Smith said on line 191 Part-Time Wages the BAC reduced it from \$59,585 to \$39,585.

The Board agreed by consensus to go with the BAC's recommendation for the Part-time Wages line.

Item 3: Zoski Road drainage – update

Interim Road Agent Martin said he met with NHDES, with TA Kerris as well, and the conclusion they came up with is that it is the wrong time of year to make any assessments and they will circle back around with their team later this year.

Interim Road Agent Martin proposes to go to the cross pipes in question and dig out the outlets as well as create a small check dam and wait to do anything downstream until they hear back from NHDES. He said NHDES said it is ok to service the pipes but he wants to reach back out and get some guidelines.

Chair Smith asked if we need permission from the landowner?

Interim Road Agent Martin said he would just clean out the front of the pipe and work with the landowner as well as work with NHDES so that all three agree. He went on to say that the system in place is not working and needs to be updated in the Spring.

Chair Smith asked if we have permission to do the work and we need to make sure we are not using public funds for a private benefit.

Item 4: Audit Report Draft – review, draft response to management letter, & approve

Chair Smith said the Audit management letter needs responses and the majority of the questions are from a finance perspective. She said TA/FA Kerris could put together a response and send a draft to the Board to review before the next regular meeting.

The Board agreed by consensus.

Item 5: 2024 Proposed Operating Budget – continued review & work

Chair Smith asked the Board if they wanted to continue going through the budget, finish it at the next meeting on the 13th, or schedule another separate meeting next week to finish the budget discussion?

Selectman Watson said he would prefer to be prepared earlier and would be willing to meet next week.

Chair Smith suggested to have a meeting on February 7, 2024 at 6:00pm to finish the budget discussion.

The Board agreed by consensus.

REGULAR BUSINESS

Item 6: Minutes Approval – 1/18/24 (Public) & 1/25/24 (Public & Nonpublic)

The Board agreed to wait until the next regular meeting to approve the above referenced minutes.

Item 7: Town Administrator Updates

TA Keris reported that they have 7 applicants for the Finance Administrator's position and interviews will begin next week. She said she also called in the Town Administrator from Swansea to help conduct the interviews with her.

TA Kerris said the 2023 Annual Report is coming along nicely and commended Nicole for putting in a lot of hard work into it.

TA Kerris said she contacted NHMA regarding an opinion on benefits for the Town Clerk/Tax Collector's position. The Attorney from NHMA strongly discouraged against removing benefits from the position since many Towns are having a hard time finding residents to fill the role.

TA Kerris said there are big things happening for 2023 in IRS reporting with the 1094B, 1095B and 1099's where everything has to be done electronically and with this it has caused a huge bottleneck. She said she is working on a solution and has reached out to payroll company ADP to use their services to process payroll. She will have more to update the Board on this soon.

TA Kerris reported that we have 2 regular AEMT & EMT's working and they are working out great as well as one is projected to get their AEMT in February.

TA Kerris said at this time we have not received any petitioned Warrant Articles for the ballot.

TA Kerris reported that the Fire Chief will be away from February 1st – 8th and Pat Murdough will be the contact in his place.

TA Kerris provided documents from the Fire Chief for preliminary suggestions for an ambulance rate increase and he will speak to it at a later meeting.

Chair Smith said she would like to have an understanding what the billing policy is. She said some residents weren't being charged and knowing why would help the Board determine new rates for the ambulance service.

Selectman Watson said we don't have a clear look at a pricing schedule as we could have. Prior Boards have made the decision to not vigorously enforce non-payment for Deering residents.

Chair Smith said we need a better understanding of the Medicare schedule allowed amounts and the current and projected rates could be above that.

Selectman Diers asked if the documentation the Fire Chief provided was based on rates of surrounding Towns and did he have those comparables for the Board to review?

TA Kerris answered she believed the Fire Chief took into consideration surrounding towns.

Chair Smith asked when we respond or another town responds for mutual aid calls, does Deering charge for us going to their town and do we have a policy on that?

Selectman Watson asked if the Fire Chief is looking for monies from accounts receivable and accounts payable for the ambulance service that might not be reflected in the metric provided?

TA Kerris said she will be out of town starting early Friday, February 2nd thru late Tuesday, February 6th and Wendy is out of town as well therefore there will be limited posting to the website.

Item 8: Selectmen's Reports

Selectman Watson announced that he did place his name on the ballot with the Town Clerk for the position of Selectman 3-year term.

Selectman Diers had nothing to report.

Chair Smith that we are getting a large resident response for the Road Agent Hiring Committee and asked if perhaps taking a different route to a Steering Committee would be more appropriate. She suggested not limiting the number of residents involved and allowing them access to all candidates to meet them and send back positive and negative feedback and rank them as well. This change would include that no applicants would be cut at that level but all feedback would be forwarded to the Board and the Board would choose the candidates they want to interview.

Selectman Watson said that wouldn't change the functions of the Board but would mean we would see more candidates and would give more community participation.

Selectman Diers agreed with changing to a Steering Committee.

Selectman Watson asked if there would be a specific number of members or just open it up and how long to allow people to send their interest.

Chair Smith answered, no limit and 2 weeks.

Chair Smith asked if the Board thought having TA Kerris be the facilitator would be appropriate?

Selectman Watson said someone is needed to make the appointments and agreed TA Kerris or a designee would be good.

Selectman Diers said someone needs to facilitate and make sure no inappropriate questions are asked.

Chair Smith said that is why it would be good for TA Kerris to do it since she knows all of the HR rules.

Chair Smith asked if the Board should authorize the Web Admin to write up a call for residents and post it on the website?

The Board agreed by consensus.

Item 9: 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.

A resident asked about the Road Agent Hiring Committee.

Chair Smith answered that the committee has not been stood up yet and now the Board is talking about having more of a Steering Committee instead.

TA Kerris let the Board know that Otis came out to assess the elevator and will be putting together a quote.

Chair Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:55pm. Seconded by Selectman Watson. Motion passed 3-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Wendy Baker

Wendy Baker
Recording Secretary