

TOWN OF DEERING

762 Deering Center Road
Deering, NH 03244

Board of Selectmen
Final Meeting Minutes
Thursday, March 7, 2024
7:00 P.M. – Public Session

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

Chair Smith announced that the printed Annual Reports are here at Town Hall and she expressed sincere appreciation to Meagen and Nicole for all of their hard work and effort to have it completed while not being fully staffed.

Item 1: Consent Agenda

- Payroll – 02/21/2024 (\$14,419.43), 02/28/2024 (\$11,496.03), 03/06/2024 weekly (\$13,098.13) monthly (\$2,515.21)
- Accounts Payable – 02/26/2026 (\$22,209.99), 03/05/2024 (\$56,443.76)

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

NEW BUSINESS

Item 2: Library: Warrant Article Review – Sue Thomas

Library Trustee Sue Thomas approached the Board to discuss why the Warrant Article they put forth was not on the Warrant and expressed how disappointed they are. She said the Library had a very reserved zero increase budget and the only thing they were asking for was a Warrant Article to move money from one trust fund to another and dissolve the one they couldn't use. She felt it was a major failure on the Board's part that it wasn't sent to the DRA and was too late and she would like to also talk about other funding options for their 2024 needs since the fund they needed the money from is not accessible.

Chair Smith asked if she would clarify what she meant about the trust fund not being accessible.

S. Thomas said that they were advised that they cannot access the funds for building maintenance and that its intent was only to build or expand the library. She said they only have the following options:

- Hold a Special Town Meeting to vote on the revised articles.
- Ask to have \$3,000 added to the line item in the budget at Town Meeting.
- Pay the painters from the general fund and reimburse the Town next year.
- Wait until next year to paint the interior of the library.

Chair Smith asked if she had any quotes for the painting?

S. Thomas answered no.

Chair Smith said there are other funding options such as ARPA or the Government Buildings Trust Fund.

There was a discussion on what is needed to move forward with either of these options.

Selectman Watson said he would be interested in moving forward with one of the alternative funding options.

Chair Smith apologized for the mis-steps that were made.

S. Thomas asked why the Warrant Article wasn't sent to the DRA after the November budget meeting?

Chair Smith said she wasn't aware that it could go to the DRA at that time.

Selectman Diers said with him also being new, he was unaware and struggled through the budget process and the Board did have two extra meetings to try to resolve the issue.

Item 3: Fire Department – Chief Bob Richards

Selectman Watson thanked the Chief for his weekly correspondence.

Chair Smith asked TA Kerris to work with Wendy to get the Fire Updates posted with the minutes.

- **Suggested increase in ambulance billing**

Chief Richards said he couldn't find when the last time ambulance billing was looked at and updated. He got the Department and the NH State averages and he suggested the following rates:

BLS Emergency Rate: current \$791.50 to \$1,050

BLS Non-emergency rate: he said we would never bill for this but suggests \$1,062

ALS Non-emergency rate: he said we would never bill for this but suggests \$1,277.75

ALS1 Emergency Base Rate: current \$1,270.87 to \$1,575

ALS2 Emergency Base Rate: zero increase stay at \$1,912.56

Mileage: current \$18.75/mile to \$26.50/mile

Chair Smith asked if there is a current document of how we bill and who is billed?

Chief Richards answered Comstar would have that.

The Board had a brief discussion regarding having more information from Comstar as well as a billing policy.

Chair Smith made a motion to tentatively agree on the new ambulance billing rates with Chief Richards obtaining information from Comstar and creating a Billing Policy.

Seconded by Selectman Diers. Motion passed 3-0.

- **Policy updates**

Chief Richards said he needs an Ambulance Ride Along Waiver since we have a Fire Fighter taking an EMT class and it would benefit him and the Town to ride along in the ambulance while training.

Chair Smith made a motion to authorize TA Kerris to work with Chief Richards to put an Ambulance Ride Along Waiver in place. Seconded by Selectman Watson. Motion passed 3-0.

Chief Richards explained that the Forest Fire Warden position needs to be filled, it is a State position where the Selectmen recommend someone and then the State appoints them.

It was decided to put language on the website to solicit interested candidates for Forest Fire Warden position.

Chief Richards said the Assistant Fire Chief position also needs to be filled.

Chair Smith asked if we need an Assistant Fire Chief?

Chief Richards answered yes the position is important.

Chair Smith asked TA Kerris if she had any feedback on the job description?

TA Kerris answered only to add “other duties assigned”.

Selectman Watson made a motion to post internally the vacancy for Assistant Fire Chief. Seconded by Chair Smith. Motion passed 3-0.

Chief Richards asked to go over the On Call Wage Chart he is proposing.

Chair Smith said she agrees it needs to be increased and asked if it could be a stepped system to be more sustainable for the budget.

Chair Smith shared a system she found that included a base rate with add on figures for certain certifications.

After a discussion the Chief was asked to look at what surrounding towns with volunteers have for pay scales.

Item 4: Town Meeting – Assigning motions

The Board discussed who would motion, second and speak to the Warrant Articles at Town Meeting and the following decisions were made by consensus:

Warrant Article #3: Chair Smith will motion, Selectman Watson will second and Chair Smith will speak to the article

Warrant Article #4: Selectman Watson will motion, Chair Smith will second and Selectman Watson will speak to the article

Warrant Article #5: Selectman Diers will motion, Selectman Watson will second and Chair Smith will speak to the article

Warrant Article #6: Selectman Watson will motion, Selectman Diers will second

Chair Smith said that the All Veterans vote that was held last year was shown in the recording but not reflected correctly in the minutes. She asked that TA Kerris ask the moderator where this should be brought up at Town Meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

Item 5: Minutes Approval – 2/13, 2/15, 2/20 & 2/26 (Public); 2/13 & 2/20 (Nonpublic)

Chair Smith asked to put the February 15, 2024 minutes approval on hold for more time to review them.

Chair Smith asked for the following edits to the February 13, 2024 minutes.

- At the bottom of page 4, remove the Fire and Rescue Fund verbiage as it is the same as the PPE Fund.
- On page 5 Master Plan Fund add the word “not” before additional funding.
- On page 5 Police Vehicle Fund add the wording “The Board decided not to add additional funds this year and to consider extending replacement out one year.”
- On page 5 add the header “**Article 5 Overall Consideration**” after Road Reconstruction Fund.

Chair Smith made a motion to approve the February 13, 2023 public minutes as amended and the February 20, 2024 & February 26, 2024 public minutes as presented and February 13, 2024 & February 20, 2024 non-public minutes as presented Seconded by Selectman Watson. Motion Passed 3-0.

OTHER BUSINESS

Item 6: Interim Town Administrator Updates

- Wendy starts on Monday. I am really looking forward to having someone in the Finance Office. One of the focuses we’ll be working together on are active lists to wrap up 2023 projects.
- The Annual Report is out. You’ll notice it looks a bit different. We went with glued spines this year to ensure they could be recycled.
- The 2022 Audit is finalized. Plodzik & Sanderson were wonderful to work with and the 2023 Audit is scheduled for June.

Chair Smith asked how residents could get a copy of the full audit report.

TA Kerris said there are copies in the office as well as a PDF will be published on the website.

Item 7: Selectmen’s Reports

Selectman Watson let the Board know that he would be absent the last week of March and first week of April.

Selectman Diers said the Solar Committee is planning to meet on March 20th. He said he also noticed a lot of funds going out in payables for the Highway Department and was concerned.

Chair Smith said a lot of what he is seeing are encumbered funds from 2023.

TA Kerris said we will be continuing monthly expenditure reports.

Chair Smith asked if the Perambulation has been completed?

Selectman Watson answered no that it was postponed until Spring.

Chair Smith thanked the Board for entrusting her with the Chair position.

Item 8: Public Comment (MAXIMUM-3 Minutes)

Public Comment is a time for the public to speak with no expectation of a Board response. To request an appointment to discuss a topic with the Board at a future meeting, email the Town Administrator at dministrator@deeringnh.gov. Requests should be made 5 days prior to the next meeting and include any relevant documentation for review. Maximum time 3 minutes per speaker.

There was no public comment.

Chair Smith made a motion to go into Non-Public Session at 8:25pm per RSA 91 A-3, II, (b). Seconded by Selectman Watson.

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

The Board of Selectman came out of Non-Public Session at 9:23pm

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, Selectman Diers - yes

Chair Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:25pm. Seconded by Selectman Watson. Motion passed 3-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Wendy Baker

Wendy Baker
Recording Secretary