

**Board of Selectmen
Regular Meeting
February 27, 2024
Minutes**

Present: First Selectman Dan Jeram, Selectman Alesia Kennerson, Selectman Mary Beth Greenwood; Superintendent of Schools Jeff Sousa, Executive Assistant Christine Hayward.

Others Present: Several virtual attendees

First Selectman Jerram called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

Operations Updates:

Miscellaneous

Dan informed the Selectmen that budget development is in the process. There is still work to be done on getting some final numbers, including the projected cost from the State for the 2nd Resident Trooper. The Audit document is not yet finalized and it should be available for next week. Dan mentioned that he has been spending a lot of time on “where New Hartford will bring their trash” once the contract with MIRA has expired. He stated that this is an issue that the general public is not aware of that will impact everyone in the next few years. Disposing of the trash needs to be investigated and alternatives need to be reviewed.

STEAP grant projects status – bathrooms and parking lot/fire access:

The free standing bathrooms at Brodie are coming along well. They will be a welcome addition to the park.

The Fire Safety access and parking lot improvement project will be going forward.

Registrar of Voters office:

The Registrar of Voters have returned to the office that was once theirs a few years ago. They have moved out of the Assessor’s office and into the space near the Town Clerk’s office. Jerram stated that it makes sense to have them closer to the Town Clerk since they work closely together.

Additional Resident Trooper:

Trooper Joshua Wedge will be the evening Resident Trooper. He begins full time on Wednesday. He will be a welcome addition to the coverage provided to New Hartford.

Surdam Property:

Surveying will be done on the Surdam property on East Cotton Hill Road. This land connects to the Antolini property and this will be surveyed as well. It will be good to have formal documentation of boundary lines.

Ordinance Update:

The Abandoned Premise Ordinance has been forwarded to Attorney Roraback for his review as well as the tax abatement proposed by the Volunteer Fire Department. Attorney Roraback has been told that the priority is the Volunteer Tax Abatement.

Sale of 531 Main Street:

The building across from the town hall has been sold (531 Main Street). A new owner took possession of the building last Friday. Jerram commented that he is hopeful that some renovations will occur to that property.

Water Subsidy Fee:

First Selectman Jerram informed the Selectmen that the town has received invoices from Aquarion for the subsidy that the town is providing to water users. Jerram stated that the funds from the proceeds from the sale will be used to pay these fees.

NWR7 Basketball recognition:

Northwestern Regional Girls Basketball player (and local New Hartford resident) Maddie Topa received 2nd place in number of votes for National Recognition in a poll recognizing high school basketball players.

Zoning Compliance Concern:

Kennerson stated her concern that there is more wood being placed in front of the house on Route 202. She does not think that this is compliant with zoning regulations due to it being advertised for sale and there isn't any approval for a home occupation on that site. She asked that the First Selectman mention this to zoning to see what can be done to stop this.

Discussion of New Hartford Elementary School Roof:

First Selectman Jerram introduced this topic by stating that the prior Superintendent of Schools had indicated that there needed to be consideration of a new roof on New Hartford Elementary School. There had been an original figure of roughly \$170,000 given to the Selectmen for the installation of a new membrane roof. Jerram stated that since that time, another roofer has inspected the roof and the entire roof needs to be re-done and the estimated cost is in excess of \$800,000. This project will qualify for state funding as a construction project. Superintendent Sousa will get written confirmation of this qualification. There is some ARPA funding set aside for this. Jerram stated that with the funding from the State plus ARPA funding, there is a remaining estimated liability of approximately \$200,000. This could be a cash project, funded with fund balance, if the Board of Finance approves.

Superintendent Sousa stated that the roof is currently leaking. Water comes through in many areas and there has been some loss of technology due to water damage.

The Selectmen agreed to have First Selectman Jerram prepare an RFP to get quotes for this project and proceed from there.

Board of Assessment Appeals – alternate?

Mr. Jerram explained to the Selectmen that one member of the Board of Assessment Appeals may not be able to participate in all of the appeal hearings due to some health issues. This member seems to be doing well right now, but there are a lot of appeals and it could be an arduous process. Jerram has spoken to the town attorney and has gotten confirmation that the Board is able to appoint an alternate should it need to. Mr. Jerram stated that he just wanted to keep the Board of Selectmen informed of this possibility in case future action needs to be taken.

Request for Tax Refunds:

CCAP Auto Lease	\$976.87
Ashley Cerruto	\$15.82

Lereta LLC	\$3,635.00	(Duplicate tax payment)
The MDC	\$67.96	
The MDC	\$15.35	
Christine Nelson	\$80.30	
Northwest Community Bank	\$6,724.09	(Duplicate Tax payment)
Sharon Poirier	\$220.84	
Glynis or Arthur Powers	\$7.30	
Ally Financial	\$252.31	

MOTION: by Kennerson to approve the tax refunds as presented by the Tax Collector, seconded by Greenwood.

First Selectman Jerram stated that the Tax Collector has presented documentation of miscellaneous tax refunds that have remained unclaimed for a period of 3 years. Attempts have been made to contact these taxpayers. They have either not filed within the Statutory timeframe or have not been able to be located. Statutes allow for the zeroing out (removing these from the books) after three years.

MOTION: by Kennerson to approve the zeroing out of the balances of the tax refunds as recommended by the Tax Collector, seconded by Greenwood.

Unanimous.

Capital Plan – review and approve:

First Selectman Jerram distributed the Draft of the proposed 5 year Capital plan to the Board members. He explained that year 1 (2024-2025) is the most important document for tonight. The other years are just “proposed and planning” and those can be changed. The Board of Finance needs to know what capital expenditure requests will be requested by the Selectmen.

Jerram explained that recreation capital expenses vary each year. The Program fund can often be used to supplement some of the projects, depending on the revenues received.

Downtown Improvements include changing the downtown island. It is very difficult to keep the garden in the island maintained. The plan is to remove some of the plantings and replace with hardscape and some planters. The Town Crew does not have the manpower to attend to this island. The budget cannot support the hiring of an outside contractor to tend to this. Volunteers can only do so much. This island is labor intensive. The plan is to keep it attractive by using colorful planters with some hearty plantings. Some decorative hardscape would limit the maintenance required.

Behrens Road and High Street Bridges will most likely be the bridges to get some work done this year. Engineering consultants will help develop the scope of work.

The furnace replacement project should proceed this year. The HVAC Consultant is getting some quotes together for 2 furnaces to be installed – this would allow for redundancy in case of malfunction. Jerram explained that if there is an issue with no air conditioning – it’s not a big problem; but if the heat malfunctions, there is a potential for freeze ups in the sprinkler system. It makes sense to have a back up furnace ready to perform when needed.

First Selectman Jerram explained that the Assessor has done a fantastic job of getting the GIS maps updated on the town's GIS site. 41% of the maps on file have been uploaded to the site. The Assessor has asked for additional funds so that she can keep moving ahead with the map project. Jerram stated that this mapping is also important so that the town can be compliant with mapping that will need to be completed for Stormwater management.

Jerram briefly reviewed the next 4 years of the capital plan, reminding the Selectmen that this is a plan for consideration. It allows the public to know that there is consideration of future needs.

Mr. Jerram explained that he hopes to have a meeting of the Capital Expenditures Committee to review the proposed capital plan and gain their approval. This will then move forward to the Board of Finance for their review and approval.

MOTION: by Kennerson to approve the Proposed Capital Plan and move it forward to the Cap EX committee for conceptual review, followed by consideration of the Board of Finance; seconded by Greenwood.

Unanimous.

Budget 2024-2025:

The Selectmen were asked to consider meeting for a special meeting to discuss the budget only and approve it to go to the Saturday, March 16 Budget workshop. They agreed to meet and a date will be selected. Jerram stated that there is still work to be done on the proposed budget and he would give a brief summary of where some line items stand this evening.

The First Selectman stated that the salary increases are as negotiated for Town Hall, Police and Highway personnel. The Health Care increase has been estimated at almost 12%. There are some savings in the pension line item. Kennerson noted that the library budget increased their request from the town, yet decreased what they will take from their endowment fund. Kennerson stated that the libraries are not part of the town - she appreciates what they bring to the community, but they need to do some fundraising and not rely so much on the town.

The Selectmen discussed Northwest Transportation. Mr. Jerram informed the Selectmen that when the Town chose to stop participating in the Northwest Transit district, there were only 2 individuals who reached out to the town to seek replacement transportation. These people are now regular users of the Senior Van. The Selectmen will consider not funding this line item as they have in the past. They would like to use the funds to increase the town's van line item.

Minutes – November 30, 2023; December 19, 2023:

Ms. Hayward informed the Selectmen that there was an error in the November 30 meeting minutes. The minutes fail to reflect that Polly Pobuda and Sabrina Stout were re-appointed to serve as members on the EDC. Their terms will end December 31, 2028.

MOTION: by Kennerson to amend the November 30 meeting minutes to include the re-appointment of Sabrina Stout and Polly Pobuda as members with terms to expire December 31, 2028, seconded by Greenwood.

Unanimous.

Prior to presenting a motion regarding the December 19, 2023 meeting minutes, Selectman Greenwood asked for clarification regarding the information in the minutes that pertained to the waterline item in the budget. Mr. Jerram replied that there is an existing line item that is the budget that is used to cover partial costs of the waterline that runs from Torrington on Whitbeck Road to Harwinton. The Town gets billed for this line because it is considered an asset for fire protection. An agreement was made many years ago during a prior administration that the town would add this line item to assist in covering the expenses of the line. The South End Fire District had objections to having to cover the entirety of the costs and the administration at the time agreed to contributing tax dollars to this expense. Jerram was asking the Selectmen at that meeting to consider offering this same arrangement to the Village Fire District. The minutes reflect that there was no action taken regarding this request.

MOTION: by Greenwood to approve the minutes of the December 19, 2023, Board of Selectmen meeting as presented, seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous

Opportunity for Public Comment on Agenda Items:

No Comments

Any Other Business that may come before this Board:

No other business

Executive Session for the purpose of discussion of real estate for trail; discussion of proposed tax abatement:

MOTION: by Kennerson to enter into Executive Session at 9:30 PM for the purpose of discussion related to real estate and for discussion of proposed tax abatement; seconded by Greenwood.

Unanimous

Jerram, Kennerson, Greenwood invited Hayward into Executive Session.

Executive Session ended at 10:30 PM

MOTION: by Greenwood to adjourn at 10:30 PM, seconded by Kennerson

Unanimous.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Christine Hayward, Executive Assistant*

No Attachments