

TOWN OF NEWPORT, NEW HAMPSHIRE
Board of Selectmen
Minutes for Meeting of March 16, 2020 6:30 pm
Public Hearing and Regular Business Meeting, Municipal Building
15 Sunapee Street, Newport, NH 03773

SELECTMEN PRESENT: Jeffrey Kessler, Chairman; Todd Fratzel, Vice Chairman; Barry Connell, William Wilmot, Jr.; John Hooper II

SELECTMEN ABSENT: none

STAFF PRESENT: Hunter Rieseberg, Town Manager; Paul J. Brown, Finance Director; Steve Yannuzzi, Fire Chief, Health Officer, Emergency Management Officer

COMMUNITY MEMBERS PRESENT: Bert Spaulding, Sr.; Jenna Darling, Newport School Board; Linda Wadenstein, Newport School Board; Branden Minnihan, Newport School Superintendent; Robert Scott

NCTV: John Lunn

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Kessler called the meeting of the BOS to order at 6:30 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA REVIEW: Add: NPS RSA 91-A:3 II (e) Litigation (Fratzel), **ADD: Action Items:** Budget Approval (Kessler), Warrant Article Approval (Kessler)

Selectman Hooper arrived at the BOS meeting at 6:32 pm.

Chairman Kessler stated that because of the outbreak around the world, Fire Chief/Health Officer/ Emergency Management Officer Yannuzzi, Superintendent Minnihan and two school board members were in attendance. They have been conferring with Town Manager Rieseberg on how to respond to the crisis in Newport. Chairman Kessler stated he had been in contact with state officials. The situation is changing daily. He asked each person to speak.

Town Manager Rieseberg said that the Town and Departmental staff has been actively in communication with their counterparts in the state, its emergency center and the governor's office. They have been staying up-to-date with the developments around the state. We have started to make changes to our activities and programming.

As of Monday, March 16, 2020:

- 1) The Town is going to shut down the recreational programs (unforeseeable future)
- 2) Staff will be assisting with community activities around Town (example: delivery of meals)
- 3) The library has closed. Books and items will be made available for pick up by patrons
- 4) Newport's restaurants and bars closed as of 3pm Monday, March 16, 2020

Additional information will be added to the Town website (www.newportnh.gov) throughout the day and weeks.

The Town plans to continue providing services. The only change will be with the Rec Department. Staff will be taking the additional safety precautions authorized by the government. The staff has been trained in the appropriate precautions to stay healthy and safe.

Emergency Management Director Yannuzzi stated the latest update (Monday, March 16, 2020):

- a) 17 confirmed cases of the Covid 19 virus in NH (he gave the counties they were in).
- b) Has been on conference calls for a month to get updates. Things are changing by the minute.
- c) Today he got out the Town's Emergency Operations plan; it was reviewed in case needed to open Emergency Center in Newport.
- d) Department Heads brainstormed involvement in case Newport got Covid19 cases.
- e) Discussed chain of command if Fire Chief and Police Chief come down with the virus.
- f) Discussed how to deliver services with potential staffing shortage
- g) Gave information to state of Newport's needs (listed personal protection equipment)
- h) Need consistent messaging from the Town (sign board is up)
- i) "211 for Covid 19 info" state phone line; NCTV for information as well
- j) He stressed the importance of social hygiene and social distancing

Emergency Management Director Yannuzzi said he felt there would be a spike in the number of cases (in the area) once more testing for the virus is done.

Town Manager Rieseberg stated that the Town's meetings today included the Newport school district and the Superintendent. The Town and school are doing this preparedness together. We have an opportunity to share information and help one another with our situations. Town Manager Rieseberg encouraged people to call 211 for Covid 19 information.

Chairman Kessler asked Emergency Management Director Yannuzzi, "If a person is feeling ill and they think they have caught the virus; should they call their PCP and if they don't have a doctor call 211"?

Emergency Management Director (EMD) Yannuzzi said the new guidance is if you feel sick, call your PCP. A person's doctor will guide their patients where to go for testing. If you don't have a PCP, the individual should call 211 and they will be directed where to go for testing. This is the current procedure. The procedure might change.

They discussed the rapid changes in the updates and procedures with this pandemic virus. Monday, Wednesday, Friday conference calls will be done in the BOS room by a group. Questions will be asked and hopefully answered.

Selectman Connell asked if Library included Library Arts Center (LAC). Town Manager Rieseberg stated that was his understanding. He also stated that most of the Town Clerk transactions can be done online.

John Lunn asked who people should contact if they want to get involved and help. EMD Yannuzzi stated it was a good question. He did not know if the school could use additional help (due to restrictions including background checks they could not).

Superintendent Minnihan stated there would be a meeting between Got Lunch! Newport, the Food Pantry, the School and PJ Lovely (Director of Rec Department) to combine their resources to assist in providing and delivering food to families. Through the combined efforts they might also deliver food to Meals on Wheels clients. The four groups have to find a time to get together.

Town Manager Rieseberg reiterated Superintendent Minnihan's statement that a few could become a group which is what all precautions are warning about. Limiting the number of people involved at this time is important. EMD Yannuzzi agreed with Town Manager Rieseberg.

EMD Yannuzzi stated that this is a very different time for us as Americans. We are not used to social distancing, not going out. We want people to take care of their homebound neighbors and themselves. If individuals are not feeling well, make a phone call (PCP or 211).

Superintendent Brendan Minnihan stated that the school district has Monday Wednesday Friday conference calls at the same time as the Town, although with different people. The Newport School District meets with the NH Commissioner of Education. He wanted to make the BOS and viewing public aware of four major items on the Newport school side.

1. Remote Learning. The Governor, Department of Education, and CDC announced that the state would be moving to a model of remote learning. This week (March 16-March 20, 2020) is a training week for the teachers and staff. The next two weeks are remote learning. After April 3, 2020 we don't know what will be done.

The Commissioners idea of remote learning is instruction plus remote support.

- a. Superintendent Minnihan explained the instructional side of things for students Pre-K through 12th grade.
 - b. Remote Support. The Commissioner filed for a waiver from the USDA to allow Newport to continue to provide meals. Because Newport has a summer food program, all students 18 years of age and under are able to be provided with breakfast and lunch for free. They do not have to be in a free or reduced lunch program. ALL students 18 years of age and under will be provided with breakfast and lunch for free. We will find out how many people are in need and get the distributions under way.
 - c. Technology. Students in need will be provided the use of a Chromebook for families that don't have the device or enough computers for their students. The Commissioner is looking into allowing those families without internet access free or low cost internet access during the pandemic.
 - d. Special Education. Services are being looked into on a child to child basis.
 - e. Calendar: all days with remote learning, including the March 16-March 20 week will be counted as school days. Students will still get April vacation, seniors will graduate on the appropriate date, if we are back to normal prom would still go on. We will figure out specifics as we go along.
2. If people go to the school website there is a link for Coronavirus Update as well as Remote Learning.
 3. The Wheeler Gym is closed to school and outside groups.

We respectfully ask if people do not have to attend School Board meetings, NCTV will be live streaming them for the general public.

Dr. Minnihan then introduced Jenna Darling and Linda Wadenstein of the Newport School Board who came with him to the meeting. Ms. Wadenstein thanked Chairman Kessler and Selectman Fratzel for the open communication between the Town and the School.

Dr. Minnihan suggested that at a future date Town and School representatives go on the radio together and state what the two parts of the Town are doing; how we are assisting each other at this time, especially the food insecure efforts and possible collection of homework from the students as well.

Chairman Kessler asked Dr. Minnihan to reiterate the eligibility of the food portion. Dr. Minnihan stated that free breakfast and lunch will be available to ALL Newport students 18 years of age and under. All they had to do was sign up.

Teachers and advisors would be communicating with their student's families to discuss school and home needs and if they would like to have breakfast and lunch provided for their children.

Chairman Kessler stated that Federal guidelines came down stating groups meeting should not be larger than 10 people. The BOS meeting was currently exceeded that limit.

Mr. Bert Spaulding, Sr. addressed Chairman Kessler and stated he had had a conversation with Eversource. If people were having problems, they should call the company.

Chairman Kessler thanked him for the information.

PUBLIC HEARING: Chairman Kessler read aloud the Public Hearing Notice: The Town of Newport will hold public hearings on Monday, March 16, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. in the Board of Selectmen meeting room, 15 Sunapee Street, Newport, NH to address the following issues coming before the Town at the Annual Town Meeting:

1. The 2020-21 budget in accordance with NH RSA 32
2. The issuance of estimated \$3,500,000 in bonds under RSA 33:8-a for the costs related to the construction of a new community center.
3. The issuance of \$30,000 in bonds under RSA 33:8 for the costs related to the continuation of the Town's Sewer Department Asset Management Project.

Chairman Kessler opened discussion on the 2020-21 budget in accordance with NH RSA 32. He said that the Town was looking at a proposed Operating Budget total of \$10,231,192. The previous year's budget had been \$9,693,694. Chairman Kessler stated they had directed the Town Manager to keep the budget at a 2% increase to be in line with projected inflation, to be able to continue the services the citizens expect, keep up the infrastructure the citizens expect and keep things level. Handouts were made available to the public in attendance.

Chairman Kessler gave an overview of the budget, listing major expenditures in the proposed budget.

Finance Director Brown stated there was:

- 1) 1.4% increase in health insurance (employees picked up an additional 2.5% of the premium).
- 2) No new employees, 2 part time employees from police department cut (grant funded)
- 3) \$250,000 in debt principals:
 - a. First, Second, Third, Fourth Project (General Fund, Water Fund, and Sewer Fund);
 - b. The Oak Street Bridge (General Fund);
 - c. Coon Brook Bridge (General Fund)
 - d. Asset Management Plan (General Fund and Sewer Fund)
 - e. SCADA Upgrade (Water Fund)

Finance Director Brown listed other items in the budget that accounted for the Proposed Operating Budget of fiscal year 2020-2021 including the purchase of:

1. One ton dump truck
2. A plow truck
3. Police cruiser
4. Computer maintenance for State compliance

Chairman Kessler asked, for clarification, that the current tax rate is \$11.74 and the proposed tax rate is \$12.03 (29 cent increase in the tax rate).

Chairman Kessler asked if there were questions on the proposed operating budget from the public. There were none.

Finance Director Brown addressed the Default Budget and listed the line items. He hoped to have all Bond numbers for the Deliberative Session. Currently the proposed Default Budget is \$9,890,939 with a tax rate of \$11.86 (12 cent increase in the tax rate).

Chairman Kessler asked if there were questions on the default budget from the public. There were none.

Finance Director Brown moved onto the ballot's Warrant Articles and read aloud and explained each one: Addition to:

Communication Capital Reserve	\$5,000
Ambulance Capital Reserve	\$60,000
Recreation Facilities Capital Reserve (Non-buildings)	\$10,000
Revaluation Capital Reserve (not passed '19)	\$50,000
District Court Roof Replacement (from cap res-withdrawal from Trust Fund)	\$22,500
Community Center (donations and bond)	\$6,500,000 (\$3,000,000 donations; \$3,500,000 bond)
Water Main engineering study (no tax impact)	\$100,000
Sewer Fund Asset Management Program (Sewer Fund)	\$30,000
WWTP Upgrade	\$4,500,000

Finance Director Brown explained that the BOS was the agent for the fund. If there was a necessity, they would be authorized to spend the money after holding a Public Hearing.

Town Manager Rieseberg addressed the Board and stated the Capital Reserves were an attempt to acquire money over time to pay for expensive items they knew the Town would have to purchase. They hoped to eliminate the need to lease or bond items.

Mr. Lunn asked if it would be a full revaluation this next time. Finance Director Brown said that at this time he did not know.

Mr. Spaulding, Sr. stated he had previously asked for Town leases. Town Manager Rieseberg said he would get them to him March 17, 2020.

Mr. Spaulding, Sr. asked what the Town portion of the Community Center was. He was told up to \$3,500,000. He asked: How many years would the bond be for. He was told in the Public Hearing they would discuss a 20 or 30 year bond. Mr. Spaulding, Sr. asked if the current drop in interest rates affect the numbers. Finance Director Brown explained his proposal to the Board percentage wise.

Chairman Kessler stated there was a separate hearing on the Community Center Bond. Mr. Spaulding, Sr. asked if he could speak to it now. The procedure was explained. Finance Director Brown stated he had numbers for a 20 year bond and a 30 year bond.

Mr. Spaulding, Sr. reiterated his question if the current drop in interest rates affect the numbers. Will the number go lower? Finance Director Brown stated he did not believe so. There was a discussion between Mr. Spaulding, Sr. and Finance Director Brown.

Sewer Fund Asset Management Program, the \$30,000 is to purchase a camera to find breaks and videotaping Newport's sewer system. Finance Director Brown explained the currently abilities that the water and sewer department is able and not able to do. There was a discussion of cost effectiveness between the Board and Finance Director Brown.

The total proposed Operating Budget is \$17,008,692. If all Warrant Articles pass, tax impact is \$12.32. The BOS needed to vote on two petition articles to recommend or not recommend:

TWO PETITION ARTICLES:

Visiting Nurse & Hospice of NH & VT	\$4,000
West Central Behavioral Health	\$5,000

Chairman Kessler asked if there were questions or comments from the public. There being none, Chairman Kessler closed Public Hearing One.

Chairman Kessler read aloud the Public Hearing Notice for Public Hearing Two. The Town of Newport will hold public hearings on Monday, March 16, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. in the Board of Selectmen meeting room, 15 Sunapee Street, Newport, NH to address the following issues coming before the Town at the Annual Town Meeting:

The issuance of estimated \$3,500,000 in bonds under RSA 33:8-a for the costs related to the construction of a new community center.

Chairman Kessler stated that one Warrant Article on the Town 2020 ballot will be for a \$3,500,000 Bond to pay for the proposed community center. The Town will need to raise at least \$3,000,000 in donations to construct a new Community Center on Meadow Road in Newport, NH. He acknowledged Finance Director Brown. Handouts were made available to the public.

Finance Director Brown reviewed the 20 year and 30 year bond scenarios for the proposed community center. The interest rate has been lowered on the 20 year bond to 3.5% for possible projection. It is the same proposal as last year; same community center building proposal, same financing proposal.

There was a short discussion on the Town paying off some long term expenses and the use of the extra money. Finance Director Brown listed the equipment that will be paid off in the next few years.

Mr. Spaulding, Sr. asked why the Town wouldn't go out for a bond.

It was explained that the warrant article reads that the \$3,000,000 in donations has to be collected before the Town bonds for \$3,500,000. The Warrant Article would need to be rewritten.

Mr. Spaulding, Sr. asked that the Town look into a percentage rate of 2.5% or 1.5%. They should go out for a new bid between the banks in the area. There was a discussion between Mr. Spaulding, Sr.; Finance Director Brown and the Board on the ability to better finance the project in these turbulent financial times. They also discussed the Board's preferred approach to paying and bonding the project.

Selectman Connell stated that the BOS has told the public that the Town would not do anything until we had raised the \$3,000,000 in donations. He was told that was last year (2019). There was a discussion among the Board concerning Selectman Connell's statement.

When asked, Chairman Kessler stated it would be a decision of the Board to change the Warrant Article and investigate alternative financial strategies. Selectman Fratzel stated the Town couldn't issue a bond

until after voter approval. The Selectmen can explain the situation and that there might be a better way to finance the proposed Community Center.

Finance Director Brown stated that he felt the percentage rates he had brought to the Board were worst case scenarios. There was a further financing discussion between Town Manager Rieseberg and Board and discussion on how to explain to the public.

Mr. Scott addressed the Board and expressed his opinion on how to present the Warrant Article on the proposed Community Center to the public.

Mr. Lunn addressed the Board and expressed talking points if the alternative measures passed and then the Town had a shortfall.

After general discussion, Chairman Kessler asked if there were further questions or comments. There being none, he closed Public Hearing Two.

Chairman Kessler read aloud the Public Hearing Notice Three: The Town of Newport will hold public hearings on Monday, March 16, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. in the Board of Selectmen meeting room, 15 Sunapee Street, Newport, NH to address the following issues coming before the Town at the Annual Town Meeting:

The issuance of \$30,000 in bonds under RSA 33:8 for the costs related to the continuation of the Town's Sewer Department Asset Management Project.

Chairman Kessler opened the Public Hearing and acknowledged Finance Director Brown. Handouts were made available to the public present.

Finance Director Brown explained the \$30,000 in bonds was for a continuation of the Sewer Department Asset Management Project. The money would be to purchase a sewer pipe video system and also asset inventory of the WWTP when we build and upgrade (in the future). We will get current equipment itemized, aged and assessed.

Finance Director Brown stated it was from a state revolving loan fund grant. The Town will be reimbursed 50% of the grant. He reviewed the projected bond costs and explained payments and explained the state revolving fund forgiveness would return \$3,000 to the Town.

Chairman Kessler asked if there were questions or comments from the public. There being none; Chairman Kessler closed Public Hearing Three.

MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING(S): March 2, 2020 - On a motion by Selectman Fratzel, seconded by Selectman Wilmot; *the Board voted to approve the minutes of the March 2, 2020 BOS meeting as presented. The motion passed 4-0-1(Connell abstained).*

NPS March 2, 2020 - On a motion by Selectman Fratzel, seconded by Selectman Wilmot; *the Board voted to approve the NPS minutes of the March 2, 2020 BOS meeting as presented. The motion passed 4-0-1(Connell abstained).*

CONSENT AGENDA: On a motion by Selectman Fratzel, seconded by Selectman Hooper; *the Board voted to approve the Consent Agenda of the March 16, 2020 BOS meeting as presented. The motion passed 5-0-0.*

OPEN FORUM: Mrs. Maura Stetson, President of the Newport Service Organization, read aloud a public notice from the NSO Executive Board which stated that the Newport Thrift Shoppe will be closed due to the pandemic. The Shoppe volunteers are in the highest risk category to contract the virus. Updates on the closure will be posted on the Newport Thrift Shoppe Facebook page for the general public. NCTV will also post closure information for those without access to a computer.

COMMUNICATIONS: Selectman Hooper stated that Newport is a compassionate Town. We all band together. He believed everything would turn out okay. He asked that people be compassionate but careful.

Selectman Wilmot agreed with Selectman Hooper. He said this will be an educational experience for us all. He stressed to the public to be safe.

Selectman Connell agreed with the Selectmen, stating no one knows how long this will last. From a financial standpoint, he worries for the people. He asked that we pray for the people who are suffering.

Selectman Fratzel thanked all the Town employees that are continuing their work, especially the First Responders and the people at the schools. We have to think hard on the sacrifices people are asked to make. He asked everyone to follow the recommendations of the CDC as they come out.

Chairman Kessler agreed with the other Selectmen. He stated we are in a time of crisis and that resources will be stretched to their limits for the first responders. He stated the importance of social distancing. Chairman Kessler stated on a different topic, there would be elections for the following positions this year: 2 Selectmen, 1 Trustee of the Trust Fund, 1 Moderator, 1 Supervisor of the Checklist, 1 Town Clerk, 1 Treasurer. If interested, sign up at the Town Clerk's office during business hours Wednesday, March 25, 2020-Friday, April 3, 2020. The Town Clerk's office will be open until 5 pm on Friday, April 3, 2020. People have until April 30, 2020 to register their dogs. He informed citizens that most work that needs to be done through the Town Clerk's office can be done online.

Mr. Spaulding, Sr. asked if the Town would hold their Deliberative Session. Chairman Kessler stated the Town would abide by the guidelines of the Secretary of State's Office. It will be a challenge to have it on the tentative date of April 8, 2020. There was a discussion between the Board and Mr. Spaulding, Sr. on alternative ways to hold the Deliberative Session with the current ban of no groups of more than ten people that is currently in place. Chairman Kessler stated that all plans are in flux due to the changing recommendations and restrictions on the population.

Mr. Robert Scott thanked the Board members for their service to the community.

INFORMATIONAL: none

ACTION ITEMS: Budget Approval - Selectman Fratzel made a motion *to approve the total operating budget of \$10,231,192 and a total appropriation of \$17,008,692 as presented.* It was seconded by Selectman Wilmot. *The motion passed 5-0-0.*

Selectman Fratzel made a motion *to approve the 2019 default budget of \$9,890,939.* It was seconded by Selectman Wilmot. *The motion passed 5-0-0.*

Petition Warrant Article Recommendations: West Central Behavioral Health - On a motion by Selectman Wilmot, seconded by Selectman Connell; *the Board voted to recommend the Petition Warrant Article of \$5,000 from West Central Behavioral Health on the 2020 ballot. The motion passed 5-0-0.*

Visiting Nurse and Hospice for VT and NH - On a motion by Selectman Connell, seconded by Selectman Wilmot; *the Board voted to recommend the Petition Article of \$4,000 from Visiting Nurse and Hospice for VT and NH on the 2020 ballot. The motion passed 3-2-0 (Hooper and Fratzel opposed).*

The Warrant Articles were passed out to the BOS. They needed a special BOS meeting to approve all the Warrant Articles.

There was a short procedural discussion on how to proceed with the Warrant Articles. The Selectmen took turns reading aloud the Warrant Articles. There were explanations as needed on wording as the Warrant Articles were read aloud. The Warrant Articles need to be posted Monday, March 30, 2020.

Finance Director Brown stated that they had missed the filing deadline for proposed Warrant Article 17 on sports betting. It will not be on the ballot.

There were three Articles that were not with the original Warrant Articles. Finance Director Brown read aloud the Warrant Articles for:

1. Selectmen negotiating a 10 year lease with the Newport Opera House Association
2. The Town adopting a new modification to the elderly exemption
3. The Town modifying the Exemption for the Disabled as set forth in RSA 72:37-b.

Selectman Fratzel made a motion *that the Board recommend all three Warrant Articles.* It was seconded by Selectman Hooper. *The motion passed 5-0-0.*

There was a short discussion on removing Warrant Article #17 (sports betting) and renumbering the remaining Warrant Articles.

APPOINTMENTS: none

On a motion by Selectman Fratzel, seconded by Selectman Wilmot; *the Board voted by roll call vote to enter into NPS pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II (a) Compensation and RSA 91-A:3 II (e) Litigation at 8:52 p.m. The motion passed 5-0-0.*

Present were Selectboard members Jeffrey Kessler, John Hooper, Bill Wilmot, Barry Connell and Todd Fratzel. Town Manager Hunter Rieseberg was also in attendance.

The Selectboard exited NPS at 9:15 pm.

No action was taken.

The Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Maura Stetson, Scribe

The next regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen is scheduled for April 6, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.

Approved on: April 6, 2020