

TOWN OF NEWPORT, NEW HAMPSHIRE
Board of Selectmen Minutes of February 21, 2022 – AMENDED & APPROVED
Regular Business Meeting, Municipal Building, 15 Sunapee Street, Newport, NH 03773
Remote Access: Zoom.com - Meeting ID: 899 6246 5148 Passcode: 931778
+1 (253) 215-8782 US (audio only, long-distance fees may apply)

SELECTMEN PRESENT: *BOS Room:* Jeffrey Kessler, Chairman; John Hooper II, Vice Chairman; Keith Sayer, Herbert Teller, Jr.; Barry Connell

SELECTMAN ABSENT: none

STAFF PRESENT: *BOS Room:* Hunter Rieseberg, Town Manager; Paul Brown, Finance Director; Newport Police Officers Paul Beaudet, Shawn Hallock, Alex Lee, Shawn Seymour, Alexander Marvin, Robert Selfridge

COMMUNITY MEMBERS PRESENT: Bert Spaulding, Sr.; Joanne Stone and Stuart Stone, Nancy and William Wilmot, Jr.; Todd Fratzel, Skip Rollins, Andrea Thurber, Steve Morris, Jeff North, Doug Reney, Tim Beard, Chris McIntyre, Ms. Selfridge, Chris and Kim Williams, *via zoom:* Mark Chase, Kathy Hubert

NCTV: John Lunn, Executive Director NCTV

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Kessler called the meeting of the BOS to order at 6:44 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA REVIEW: Chairman Kessler stated he would like to move Open Forum up to before minutes to accommodate the many individuals in attendance at the BOS meeting.

Chairman Kessler informed the public that under state law any Union negotiations with a municipality need to be approved by both sides by the deadline of March 8, 2022. If the Town reaches an agreement with the union on March 9, 2022; it did not count until 2023. March 7, 2022 is when the BOS is holding their last meeting before March 8th. March 7th is two weeks off and would be the best time for the BOS to approve the proposed contract; it could be discussed at a public hearing ahead of the deadline.

OPEN FORUM: (for full discussion, go to: www.nctv-nh.org) - Members of the Newport Police Force were in attendance at the February 21, 2022 BOS meeting. Community members were also in attendance in support of them. Officer Paul Beaudet, President of the Policemen Benevolent Association; addressed the Selectboard. He asked Chairman Kessler what the BOS plans are to provide the citizens of Newport police protection. He stated:

- 1) Six experienced officers have left the Newport Police Department in the last two years.
- 2) Three rookie officers have left within their first year of employment (with the Newport Police Department)
- 3) The force has an officer on medical leave with an unknown date if any to return to duty
- 4) Every officer from other duties has been pulled to cover patrols: School Resource Officer, drug task force officer and the entire detective division
- 5) Police Chief Wilmot routinely covers shifts at night and on weekends
- 6) For a period of time Newport had to cut back on overnight patrols; off duty officers were on call
- 7) Four more officers have announced their intention to leave the Newport Police Force.

He stated it was not a short term problem. It will not be “fixed” by the two recruits attending the police academy. Officer Beaudet stated the force has had zero applicants during the last application period and the officers intending to leave might be gone before the graduates are eligible to work on their own on July 1, 2022. He stressed this will leave two officers remaining on patrol in Newport. There is no way for two officers to cover the Town of Newport 24/7. Officer Beaudet said there weren’t additional resources to help support the Newport Police Department. More than a year ago the Benevolent Association warned the town manager that this situation was going to occur. Town Manager Rieseberg’s response was that employee retention was his problem and not of ours (police). Officer Beaudet stated the safety concerns of the police, business owners, citizens and school

administration in Newport. Concluding he said that the worst case scenario has arrived. He repeated his initial question: What is the BOS plan? Officer Alexander Marvin addressed the BOS and read aloud a letter on behalf of Detective/Lieutenant Buddy Rowe (17-year veteran) who left the Newport Police Department shortly after Town Manager Rieseberg's hiring.

Mr. William Wilmot, Jr. made a statement to the BOS in support of the Newport Police Department. He implored the Selectboard to listen to the police officers in the room; their statements are true. He then read aloud a letter from Timothy Lenihan who has worked as a juvenile probation officer in the Newport area for eight years. Mr. Lenihan told of the increased fights, drugs and truancies in the Newport schools he attributed to the results without their School Resource Officer (SRO).

Mr. Skip Rollins voiced his concern and support of the police force in Newport. He stated the new contract amount needs to be put in the budget so it can be voted on and passed.

Ms. Andrea Thurber addressed the BOS and informed them of a drug overdose at the high school and of fights in the school. Ms. Thurber gave these as illustrations for the need of the SRO back in the school.

Mr. Steve Morris addressed the BOS and stated the teachers and the police are having the same difficulties. He asked that the Town (people) fund them (police) and give them what they are due to keep us safe.

Mr. Jeff North addressed the BOS in support of the police officers. He stated that it needed to get dealt with; people are upset.

Chairman Kessler addressed Mr. North and stated that in 2021 the Town and police were in the same situation; no agreement was reached with the Police Union before the deadline set by the state. He explained the reasons for the impasse and their current problems in negotiations.

Mr. Bert Spaulding, Sr. stated the Town could not defund the Police. He said that last year they missed out on 1.5%. It was not the current issue. The issue was what will happen in the future. Continuing, Mr. Spaulding, Sr. said that the police officers deserve better. The BOS will lose them. He gave the example of Lieutenant Buddy Rowe. He asked how many more officers the Town had to lose. He directed financial questions on the tax rate to Finance Director Brown. Finance Director Brown stated \$12.18 is the final tax rate; a \$.16 increase. Mr. Spaulding, Sr. asked how much is raised with a \$1/1000 raise in the tax rate. Finance Director Brown stated \$445,000. Mr. Spaulding, Sr. asked about police raises and parameters of the negotiations contract.

Chairman Kessler told Mr. Spaulding, Sr. there were no negotiations in public session. Mr. Spaulding, Sr. reiterated the importance of police protection. He asked how many BOS members were on the negotiating committee. He was told only Town Manager Rieseberg. To clarify, Mr. Spaulding, Sr. said the Board was not represented except through Town Manager Rieseberg. Mr. Spaulding, Sr. stated that there were two weeks to the deadline; that meant there was one week for negotiations to be completed.

Mrs. Joanne Stone of Stone Auto Body and Towing had been in business for 40 years. When they were called out to an accident they want the police to be there. Continuing, she said she works for the NH Towing Association. She has never heard what has gone on tonight (at the BOS meeting).

Mr. Stuart Stone, owner of Stone's Auto Body. Stated it was common sense; currently they spend money to make the Town look pretty. Which do you (BOS) want; a pretty town or a safe town? Mr. Stone said that his vote was to have it safe.

Doug Rein spoke (fifteen years in emergency services in various towns). He stated Rule 101: take care of those taking care of you. If you don't have them, the town falls apart. He asked why the BOS was not proactive.

Selectman Hooper gave his opinion of the negotiations. He then stated he had heard of the 'hoard' going to the BOS meeting from a friend. He said no one had called him (with grievances).

Officer Paul Beaudet addressed Chairman Kessler and stated that three of the four negotiators for the police union were in the room. They had all requested that a Board of Selectman representative be present on the negotiations team. There has been no representation.

Mr. Todd Fratzel spoke against the way the police have used Facebook to spread their grievance messages. He stated when he was on the Board last year (2021) he did not receive any phone calls concerning the negotiations. He then spoke in support of the BOS and town manager.

Mr. Tim Beard said the police chief puts forth a budget every year; money had to be left over from unfilled positions. He stressed: there should be a BOS rep on the negotiations team; he argued that the BOS room was where the conversation should be. He stated that he had reached out to Board members. He would show them timestamped verifications. He asked how the BOS could know what was happening if they weren't in the (negotiating) room. He spoke further on the police force, it being short staffed and their number being inadequate for 24/7 coverage for the community. Concluding, he said that was why the group was there, they didn't want unreasonable things.

Selectman Connell said he wanted to get things done. He didn't know where the negotiators were in the process. Officer Beaudet told Selectman Connell that if he (Connell) didn't know where negotiations were, that was concerning. He said that on Thursday, they had contacted the town manager to set up mediations (5 days earlier). They have yet to hear back from him.

Town Manager Rieseberg addressed the Chair and public. He explained the process he went through when preparing and actively negotiating with any Town union.

Mr. Spaulding, Sr. addressed the Board and stated it was clear to him that:

1. The negotiating team needed one or two BOS members on it.
2. The BOS had one week to complete negotiations
3. If the federal mediator can't make it in time, meet alone
4. Both parties needed to get together

Town Manager Rieseberg explained about mediators in the negotiations and the timeframe for them.

For full discussion, go to: www.nctv-nh.org - There were additional statements by Chris McIntyre, Tim Beard, Johanna Selfridge, Mark Chase, Kim Williams, Chris Williams, Bert Spaulding, Sr.; Doug Rein and Officer Beaudet. Board members speaking were Chairman Kessler, Selectman Hooper, Selectman Connell and Selectman Sayer. Finance Director Brown and Town Manager Rieseberg also made additional statements.

Chairman Kessler stated he believed there were two meetings with the mediators the week of February 22-25. He said that he would make himself available before that time as requested. Mr. Spaulding, Sr. addressed the Board and stated that there was not a NPS scheduled at the end of the meeting. Chairman Kessler reminded Mr. Spaulding, Sr. that negotiation discussions were not held during NPS; the Board could hold a non-meeting at the end of the public meeting to discuss the negotiations as they stand and plan to move forward. Selectman Hooper made a motion *to provide each Selectman's schedules and availability to Town Manager Rieseberg in order to make a schedule to meet with these guys (police union)*. It was seconded by Selectman Sayer. *The motion passed 5-0-0.*

Mr. Doug Rein addressed the BOS and asked if they met with other Boards of the Town. It was explained that Town Boards had a BOS Representative on them. He thanked the Board.

MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING(S): February 7, 2022 - On a motion by Selectman Tellor, seconded by Selectman Connell; *the Board voted to approve the minutes of the February 7, 2022 BOS meeting as presented. The motion passed 4-0-1 (Hooper abstained).*

NPS of February 7, 2022 - On a motion by Selectman Tellor, seconded by Selectman Connell; *the Board voted to approve the minutes of the BOS nonpublic session of February 7, 2022 with the correction of Chairman Connell to Chairman Kessler in the opening of the minutes. The amended motion passed 5-0-0.*

Budget Review Session of February 10, 2022 - On a motion by Selectman Hooper, seconded by Selectman Connell; *the Board voted to approve the minutes of the BOS Budget Review Session of February 10, 2022 as presented. The motion passed 5-0-0.*

CONSENT AGENDA: On a motion by Selectman Tellor, seconded by Selectman Connell; *the Board voted to approve the Consent Agenda of the February 21, 2022 BOS meeting as presented. The motion passed 5-0-0.*

COMMUNICATIONS: Selectman Tellor had nothing to share at this time; Selectman Connell had nothing to share at this time; Selectman Hooper had nothing to share at this time; Selectman Sayer had nothing to share at this time; Chairman Kessler had nothing to share at this time; Town Manager Rieseberg had nothing to share at this time.

INFORMATIONAL: Community Center Update - Chairman Kessler stated there will be a \$4,000,000 Bond for the new Community Center. Information is on the Town website: www.newportnh.gov

Electronic Petitions - Town Manager Rieseberg addressed the Board and stated that there was a state legislative movement to authorize the use of electronically signed petitions (for submittal on ballots). The state, Newport Town Clerk and Town Manager Rieseberg were apprehensive about accepting (using) them. He asked the Board to recommend adopting live ink signature petitions only. After a brief discussion, on a motion by Selectman Hooper, seconded by Selectman Connell; *the Board voted to adopt the use of live ink signatures only for all petitions. The motion passed 5-0-0.*

ACTION ITEMS: Accept and expend ARPA DES Clean Water Grant in the Amount of \$2,000,000.00 and to authorize Town Manager Rieseberg to sign all related documents - On a motion by Selectman Connell, seconded by Selectman Hooper; *the Board voted to accept and expend the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Department of Environmental Services (DES) Clean Water Grant in the Amount of \$2,000,000 and to authorize Town Manager Rieseberg to sign all related documents. The motion passed 5-0-0.*

Newport Sunapee Solar Project-Options for Tax Stabilization - After lengthy discussion by Chairman Kessler and Town Manager Rieseberg, Selectman Tellor stated the action item had been voted on at the February 7, 2022 BOS meeting. It was in the minutes on page three with the Selectboard's decision.

APPOINTMENT(S): none

On a motion by Selectman Connell, seconded by Selectman Tellor; *the Board voted to adjourn at 8:59 p.m. The motion passed 4-0-0.*

Respectfully submitted,



Maura Stetson, Scribe

The next regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen is scheduled for March 7, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.

Approved on: March 7, 2022