

TOWN OF NEWPORT, NEW HAMPSHIRE
Board of Selectmen
Minutes for Meeting of March 15, 2021 6:30 pm
Regular Business Meeting
Municipal Building, 15 Sunapee Street, Newport, NH 03773
Remote Access:
Zoom.com - Meeting ID: 850 4921 9860 Passcode: 715918
+1 (253) 215-8782 US (audio only, long-distance fees may apply)

SELECTMEN PRESENT: *BOS Room:* Jeffrey Kessler, Chairman Todd Fratzel, Vice Chairman; Herbert Tellor, Jr.; Barry Connell, John Hooper, II

STAFF PRESENT: *BOS Room:* Hunter Rieseberg, Town Manager; Paul J. Brown, Finance Director

COMMUNITY MEMBERS PRESENT: *BOS Room:* Kurt Minick, *Via Zoom:* Malory Tetreault, Virginia Irwin, Town Moderator; Brenda Burns, Executive Director, Sullivan County Nutrition Services (SCNS)

NCTV: John Lunn, Executive Director, NCTV

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Kessler called the meeting of the BOS to order at 6:31 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA REVIEW: Add: Approval of final budget and Warrant Articles for signature after hearings (Brown)

PUBLIC HEARINGS: I. The Board of Selectmen of the Town of Newport, New Hampshire will hold a public hearing on Monday, March 15, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. at the Newport Town Offices at 15 Sunapee Street, Newport, New Hampshire to address the following issues coming before the Town at the Annual Town Meeting:

1. The 2021-2022 budget in accordance with NH RSA 32.
2. The issuance of \$700,500 in bonds under RSA 33:8-a for the costs related to the Road Reconstruction Project.
3. The issuance of \$1,330,000 in bonds under RSA 33:8 for the costs related to the upgrade of the water distribution system on Unity Road.

Chairman Kessler read aloud the Public Hearing Notice, noting that the public hearing was for the 2021-2022 budget.

The 2021-2022 budget in accordance with NH RSA 32 - Chairman Kessler acknowledged Finance Director Brown and asked him to review the budget (Appendix I. Town of Newport 2021-2022 Proposed Operating Budget). Finance Director Brown gave a summary of the operating budget to the Selectmen and public. He stated the total proposed Operating Budget is \$11,050,697 with a tax rate of \$11.79 (last year's tax rate was \$11.93). Finance Director Brown then reviewed the Town Warrant Articles (totaled \$13,266,197). He said one decision before the Board would be on Article 6, concerning the appropriation of \$1,330,000 for the Water System Upgrade. The BOS had two versions of Article 6 for their consideration. The administration would like them to choose which to include on the ballot. The Town would bring Article 6 back to the BAC for their consideration. Town Manager Rieseberg also explained the new version of Article 6 to the BOS.

Chairman Kessler explained that the road project is on as a Warrant Article. The Town sets aside \$250,000 annually for road work. It will be investing three years' worth of allocations to complete reconstruction of Barton Whitney, Blueberry Ridge Road and Breakneck Road. Finance Director Brown explained the projected Bond costs for the Road Project to the Board and public. When asked, he reviewed the three petition articles that will be on the ballot.

Chairman Kessler asked for public comment. There being none, Chairman Kessler closed the public hearing on the proposed operating budget.

The issuance of \$700,500 in bonds under RSA 33:8-a for the costs related to the Road Reconstruction Project - Chairman Kessler opened the public hearing, acknowledged Finance Director Brown and asked him to review the finances related to the road reconstruction project. Finance Director Brown complied and reviewed the projected bond costs over the three year period. It would not create a greater tax impact. Town Manager Rieseberg and Finance Director Brown answered all questions from the Board. Chairman Kessler asked for public comment. There being none, Chairman Kessler closed the public hearing on the road reconstruction project.

The issuance of \$1,330,000 in bonds under RSA 33:8 for the costs related to the upgrade of the water distribution system on Unity Road - Chairman Kessler opened the public hearing and stated there were large sections of the water infrastructure in need of repair. He acknowledged Town Manager Rieseberg who gave a synopsis of the project. When asked, Finance Director Brown stated that the state's bond interest rate was 1.3%. He explained the bond payments in full. There were no questions from the Board. Chairman Kessler asked for public comment. There being none, Chairman Kessler closed the public hearing on the water distribution system.

Finance Director Brown requested that Chairman Kessler return to the public hearing on the operating budget to review the default budget. Chairman Kessler reopened the public hearing on the operating budget and Finance Director Brown went over the default budget for the Board and public listening. There being no questions, Chairman Kessler again closed the public hearing on the operating budget.

II. The Board of Selectmen of the Town of Newport, New Hampshire will hold two public hearings on Monday, March 15, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. and Monday, April 5, 2021 at the Newport Town Offices at 15 Sunapee Street, Newport, New Hampshire to hear public comment on acceptance, by the Town, from Sunny Acres LLC of property on South Main Street known as Map 259 Lot 006.

Town Manager Rieseberg addressed the Board members and gave the history of the "net zero" solar energy goal in Newport. The Town of Newport has been pursuing an organizational "net zero" goal for several years now. In short, it is the Town goal to generate sufficient renewal solar energy from Town-owned property to offset our consumption of electrical power. This was initially going to be fully achieved on Town owned property located behind the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) until permitting and line capacity made developing a large enough array at this location impossible. The site behind the WWTP is now complete and operating at its full capacity providing about 1/3 of the Town's electricity consumption. In an effort to help facilitate the overall goal of becoming a "net zero" town, Norwich Solar Technologies (NST) offered to construct additional solar array capacity on the lot in question located on Turkey Hill thereby allowing Newport to supplement current production. Once completed, the Town will roughly generate the same amount of electrical power from renewable solar as it consumes on municipally owned property. Norwich Solar Technologies is offering to donate this property to the Town. The Town will enter into a Power Purchase Agreement with the same terms as it has established for the property behind the WWTP. This is the first of two public hearings required before acceptance of the property on Turkey Hill.

Chairman Kessler stated that comments were received from the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission. Town Manager Rieseberg concurred, stating RSA 41:14-a requires that the proposed donation be reviewed by them and the Boards give their recommendation to the Selectboard prior to official acceptance of the donated property. Included in the Board packet is a copy of the property card and statute for review. When asked, Finance Director told the Board the Town collected \$15,000 in taxes on the property.

Chairman Kessler asked the Selectmen for questions or comments. There were none. Chairman Kessler asked for public comment. There being none, Chairman Kessler closed the public hearing on the on acceptance, by the Town, from Sunny Acres LLC, of property on South Main Street (Map 259 Lot 006).

Mrs. Virginia Irwin entered the meeting via zoom. She had missed the public hearing on the operating budget. Finance Director Brown will email her a copy of the budget breakdown. Mrs. Irwin asked Chairman Kessler if the BOS has decided on the location for the Deliberative Session and Town voting. She was told Superintendent Minnihan had given permission to use Towle School for Deliberative Session. She also asked if the Town would be using the regularly scheduled meeting dates. Mrs. Irwin was told they would be on the same dates and that the Deliberative Session would be held at the Towle gym on Tuesday, April 6, 2021 at 6 p.m. They had not solidified the location for voting; hopefully it would be at the high school gym.

MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING(S): February 4, 2021 - On a motion by Selectman Teller, seconded by Selectman Fratzel; *the Board approved the minutes of the February 4, 2021 Board of Selectmen meeting as presented. The motion passed 5-0-0.*

Budget Review Meeting of February 8, 2021 - On a motion by Selectman Fratzel, seconded by Selectman Hooper; *the Board approved the minutes of the February 8, 2021 Board of Selectmen meeting as presented. The motion passed 5-0-0.*

Budget Review Meeting of February 11, 2021 - On a motion by Selectman Hooper, seconded by Selectman Teller; *the Board approved the minutes of the February 11, 2021 Board of Selectmen meeting as presented. The motion passed 5-0-0.*

February 18, 2021 - On a motion by Selectman Connell, seconded by Selectman Fratzel; *the Board approved the minutes of the February 18, 2021 Board of Selectmen meeting as presented. The motion passed 5-0-0.*

March 8, 2021 - On a motion by Selectman Fratzel, seconded by Selectman Connell; *the Board approved the minutes of the March 8, 2021 Board of Selectmen meeting as presented. The motion passed 5-0-0.*

CONSENT AGENDA: On a motion by Selectman Fratzel, seconded by Selectman Teller; *the Board voted to approve the Consent Agenda of March 15, 2021 as presented. The motion passed 5-0-0.*

OPEN FORUM: Mrs. Irwin stated, for clarification, that the Town has spoken to the school district about using Towle for the Deliberative Session. She asked if the Town has spoken to the school district about using Towle for voting. Chairman Kessler stated he did not know. She stated that as Town Moderator a courtesy would have been to involve her in the Town discussion.

Ms. Burns also asked Chairman Kessler how she could get the minutes of March 1, 2021. She asked if she was still on the list of recipients to receive BOS minutes. In particular she would like the section

concerning the Sullivan County Nutrition Services (SCNS) and the Senior Center and the Board's vote at the meeting to include them in the budget. Chairman Kessler was told that because the email has been down for over a week the Town Office has not been able to receive or send the draft minutes from March 1, 2021. Chairman Kessler assured Ms. Burns that the SCNS and the Senior Center are in the operating budget for 2021-2022. Ms. Burns thanked Chairman Kessler for confirming their inclusion. He asked that Ms. Burns call and confirm with the Town Office that she is on the distribution list.

Mr. Kurt Minick addressed the Board and gave his opinion on the country appeal of the roads in Town and the road reconstruction project. He gave his opinion about the increased speed that will occur with the newly resurfaced pavement. He thanked the BOS for the maintenance program for the roads and the forward thinking of the Town on saving for Capital Reserve Projects.

Mr. John Lunn stated he lived in North Newport. He has lived there through three reclamations on Blueberry Ridge Road. He said that over the years traffic has increased, regardless of speed. Continuing, he said that the road needed to be redone.

Selectman Fratzel addressed Mr. Minick and stated he appreciated his perspective, but they had a maintenance program for the roads, it was their turn. Mr. Minick agreed.

Mrs. Virginia Irwin addressed the Board and stated that people on Blueberry Ridge Road and Barton Whitney Road deserve a well maintained road. She commended the Board for addressing that part of Town. Ms. Brenda Burns stated she was a resident of Barton Whitney Road. She is looking forward to having the road reconstructed.

COMMUNICATIONS: Selectman Connell had nothing to share at this time.

Selectman Tellor had nothing to share at this time.

Selectman Fratzel had nothing to share at this time.

Selectman Hooper said he was impressed with how school voting went. He also informed people that the Peeps diorama contest will be this month at the LAC.

Chairman Kessler said he was also impressed with how smoothly the school voting went. He also informed people of new Covid money coming into the state and Newport schools.

Town Manager Rieseberg had nothing to share at this time.

INFORMATIONAL: none

ACTION ITEMS: Chairman Kessler stated the Board had two additional items: Approval of final budget and Warrant Articles for signature after hearings as requested by Finance Director Brown. In discussion, Chairman Kessler said that the Board would like to look at the draft warrant article wording. He asked when it needed to be posted. Finance Director Brown said March 29, 2021. Chairman Kessler asked if Finance Director Brown would like a vote on the proposed budget. He was told yes.

The Board went through the Warrant Articles and had discussions on the following:

Article 4. The Town did not have the completed wording on the amendment. It will deal with sheds and their terminology.

Article 5. There was a discussion on the italicized note addressing this Warrant Article and rewriting it.

Article 6. There was an explanation of the two versions. The Board discussed the use of the first Article 6 as opposed to the second version of Article 6 with Finance Director Brown. The Selectmen concurred to use the 1st version on the Warrant Article. *Any changes will be shown to the BOS and BAC before posting.*

Article 8. Warrant Article the Board discussed the possibility of the warrant failing. If it fails, \$.12 will be added to the tax rate. Selectman Fratzel asked that Article 8's italicized note be reworded. Finance Director Brown will look into it.

Article 10. There was discussion on the article. Chairman Kessler stated that if the Town did not acquire the grant, the Town would not be using \$100,000 from the General Fund. Town Manager Rieseberg stated it was a required (monetary) match.

Article 12. There was a typographical error on the numerals in the article. *Sum should be \$10,000; tax impact should be \$.02*

On a motion by Chairman Kessler, seconded by Selectman Fratzel; ***the Board voted to approve Town Warrant Articles 1-14; totaling \$13,266,197. The motion passed 5-0-0.***

Petition Articles: Selectmen voted whether to recommend or not recommend the petition articles on the ballot. Selectman Fratzel asked why the BOS and BAC have to recommend or not recommend the articles. He was told because they were money articles.

Article 15. After reading the petition article from West Central Behavioral Health Selectman Tellor made a motion ***to recommend Article 15.*** It was seconded by Selectman Connell. There was a short discussion by Board members. ***The motion passed 3-2-0 (Fratzel and Hooper voted no).***

Article 16. After reading the petition article from Visiting Nurse and Hospice for VT and NH Selectman Tellor made a motion ***to recommend Article 16.*** It was seconded by Chairman Kessler. There was a short discussion by Board members. ***The motion to recommend the article failed 2-3-0 (Hooper, Fratzel and Connell voted no).***

Article 17. After reading the petition article for the Sullivan County Transportation Program from Southwestern Community Services Selectman Connell made a motion ***to recommend Article 17.*** It was seconded by Selectman Tellor. ***The motion passed 3-2-0 (Fratzel and Hooper voted no).***

The Board completed its review of the Town Warrant Articles and Petition Warrant Articles. Selectman Tellor addressed Chairman Kessler and informed him and Mrs. Irwin that it stated in the preamble of the Warrant Articles for the 2021 Annual Meeting the time and place of the Deliberative Session and Town voting.

Neither Mrs. Irwin nor Chairman Kessler was aware of the information. Selectman Fratzel stated that only the Deliberative Session date, time and place were set; not the Town voting. Town Manager Rieseberg and Mrs. Irwin stated the Town had time to solidify the date, time and place for Town voting for inclusion in the preamble (before posting). When asked, she did not have a preference of location for Town voting; she recommended that the BOS meet with the school soon to discuss using their gym.

Chairman Kessler addressed Finance Director Brown and Town Manager Rieseberg and asked if they needed to meet before March 29, 2021 to solidify the warrant article document. Chairman Kessler asked if the BOS should tentatively approve the warrant articles or wait until March 29, 2021. After a short discussion between the Board and Town Manager Rieseberg, the Board decided to meet in the BOS room on March 29, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. for final approval of the warrant.

Mrs. Irwin stated there was one petition article coming (for inclusion on the ballot). Chairman Kessler stated it was now too late. In discussion it was clarified the last day for a petition article to be included had been March 9, 2021.

Selectman Fratzel made a motion *to tentatively approve the Town Warrant for the 2021 Annual Meeting*. It was seconded by Selectman Tellor. *The motion passed 5-0-0.*

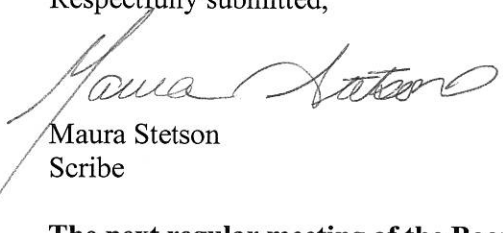
ACTION ITEMS (cont.): Extension of Lease Agreement Between the State of New Hampshire, 5th Circuit-District Division (Newport Circuit Court) and the Town of Newport - Town Manager Rieseberg explained that the lease agreement between the State of New Hampshire and Newport to house the 5th circuit court has expired as of February 2021. The State has asked for a one year extension to give time for a longer three-four year lease. Terms will remain the same except for a 1% increase in the lease payment. Selectman Fratzel made a motion *to approve the extension of the lease agreement between the State of New Hampshire, 5th Circuit-District Division (Newport Circuit Court) and the Town of Newport*. It was seconded by Selectman Connell. *The motion passed 5-0-0.*

Consider Updated Purchasing Policy - Town Manager Rieseberg stated the last update was in 1994. They would like some slight changes made to the policy under: 1) Categories and 2) Written quotations/proposals. The changes will bring the Town up-to-date on policy procedures.

On a motion by Selectman Tellor, seconded by Selectman Fratzel; *the Board voted to accept the updated (Town of Newport) Policy and Procedure for purchasing effective March 16, 2021*. In discussion it was explained that the following will be deleted from SCHEDULE A, #17. Assessing services. *The motion passed 5-0-0.*

On a motion by Selectman Connell, seconded by Selectman Fratzel; *the Board voted to adjourn at 8:04 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,



Maura Stetson
Scribe

The next regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen is scheduled for April 5, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

Approved on: April 5, 2021