

Town of Newington, NH
Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes
Tuesday November 14th, 2023

Present: Chair Bob Blonigen, Selectman Brandon Arsenault, Selectman Chris Wayss, Police Chief Mike Bilodeau, Police Commission Chair Brenda Blonigen, Police Commissioner Jack Hoyt, Police Executive Assistant Taylor Fiore, Fire Chief EJ Hoyt, Assistant Fire Chief Pat Moynihan, Building Inspector Jeremy Boston, Board of Fire Engineer Chair John Klanchesser, Board of Fire Engineer Ann Hyland Hebert, Board of Fire Engineer Jim Fabrizio, Recreation Committee Chair Rebecca Navelski, Recreation Committee Member Bill Wright, Recreation Committee Member Jessica Morgan, Town Administrator Martha Roy, Finance Director Sheryl Bagley and Eleanor Boy, Recorder.

B. Blonigen called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.

B. Arsenault moved to enter a nonpublic session at 5:30pm per RSA 91-A:3 II (a) personnel & (e) Legal. C. Wayss seconded the motion. B. Blonigen asked for a roll call vote: B. Blonigen-Yes, B. Arsenault-Yes, C. Wayss-Yes. All were in favor.

B. Arsenault moved to return to public session at 6:14pm, seconded by C. Wayss. B. Blonigen asked for a roll call vote: B. Blonigen-Yes, B. Arsenault-Yes, C. Wayss-Yes. All were in favor.

B. Arsenault moved to seal the minutes indefinitely. C. Wayss seconded the motion. B. Blonigen asked for a roll call vote: B. Arsenault-Yes, B. Arsenault-Yes, C. Wayss-Yes. All were in favor.

B. Blonigen called the public meeting to order at 6:14pm. Followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes Approval: B. Arsenault moved to approve the minutes of October 23, 2023. B. Blonigen seconded the motion. B. Blonigen and B. Arsenault were in favor, C. Wayss abstained. B. Arsenault moved table approval of the minutes of November 1st, 2023. C. Wayss seconded the motion. All were in favor. C. Wayss moved to approve the minutes of November 2, 2023. B. Blonigen seconded the motion. B. Blonigen and C. Wayss were in favor, B. Arsenault abstained. B. Arsenault moved to approve the minutes of November 7th, 2023. C. Wayss seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Manifest Approval: B. Arsenault moved to approve the manifest for \$205,080.25 dated 11/2/2023. C. Wayss seconded the motion. All were in favor. B. Arsenault moved to approve the manifest for \$33,777.28 dated 11/9/2023. C. Wayss seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Facility Use Requests:

B. Arsenault moved to approve the following facility use request;

Recreation Committee-70s Dance-TH Auditorium-7/20/23-1/26/24 Set Up, 1/27/24 Dance, 1/28/24 Snow Date/Clean Up

C. Wayss seconded the motion. All were in favor.

B. Arsenault moved to approve the following facility use request;

Police Department-Training-TH-12/27 & 12/28/23.

C. Wayss seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Police Commission and Chief Meeting-Budget/Health Insurance/Warrant Articles:

C. Wayss asked about the Vehicle Fuel budget line that showed only \$19,700 spent so far in 2023, but the 2024 budget is set at \$32,000. C. Wayss asked if this line could be decreased to \$27,000 or \$29,000 for 2024. M. Bilodeau said that he had tried to be conservative with the fuel line, because fuel prices are always erratic and hard to predict. C. Wayss asked if they could use the state gas when the new State shed is opened in Newington. M. Bilodeau said that they would. B. Arsenault asked if any projects or purchases could be done in 2023 to reduce the 2024 budget lines. The uniforms line has to remain the same because they will be getting three new officers in 2024 and will have to outfit them. B. Blonigen asked about the \$15,000 increase in the longevity budget line. M. Bilodeau said that the increase is due to the proposed new longevity program to retain their current officers that they discussed previously. B. Arsenault said that he was concerned about the longevity increase because last year they increase the police wages significantly and asked what other programs the Police department was doing to retain the officers. M. Bilodeau said that they offer outside training and leadership courses. These are all benefits when they are hiring or recruiting. Three or four officers took advantage of the training in 2023. C. Wayss asked about the increase in the equipment contract budget line. M. Bilodeau said that it is due to Rockingham County's new dispatch program. They are going to be paying for both programs in 2024 during the transition but eventually this change will result in a \$3,000 savings each year.

Discussion ensued about the Police Department's proposed warrant articles. The Selectmen would like to cut all warrant articles by 50%. M. Bilodeau said that all of their warrant articles are associated with 50/50 grants and doesn't want to come up short if they get approved for a grant and need to contribute 50% towards it. The cameras in cruisers would be applied for first and the Police would have to contribute approximately \$102,500. M. Bilodeau said that they are following the Governor's program for the cruiser cameras and it would be good for police liability and the community to have cameras in the cruisers. The revolving funds warrant article was discussed. C. Wayss asked when the last time the Police Department asked for this fund. M. Bilodeau said last year. The Town voted it down at that time. The Police Commission wants to put this warrant article to a town vote again. B. Arsenault disagrees with this type of revolving fund because any income that is raised by using

taxpayer money should go back into the General Fund to offset taxes. It seems like this is a lack of faith that the Town will use the money raised from police details to benefit the Police Department. B. Blonigen pointed out that when the Police Department does outside details for companies, the fees they charge are supposed to be used for cruiser maintenance and administration fees. C. Wayss pointed out that the Fire Department's ambulance fees go into the General Fund. M. Bilodeau said that there is a NHRSA that allows for the type of account. The money from this fund could be used to buy future cruisers and then they wouldn't have to be listed in the Capital Outlay budget. B. Blonigen thought that it would be a truer accounting for the money spent. B. Arsenault pointed out that the Police Department has never been denied or reduced money for cruiser maintenance. The Budget Committee has never even looked at that line. M. Bilodeau said that was a fair point.

Fire Department:

E. Hoyt said that they can reduce their Retirement budget line to the same amount it was in 2023, \$308,057. Discussion ensued about underspent budget line in 2023 and if any projects could be done in 2023 to save money in 2024. P. Moynihan explained the advantages to getting new inspection software for the Fire Department and the Code Enforcement office and asked that it not be cut from the 2024 budget.

E. Hoyt discussed his concern over staffing his department and would like to still include the Fire Department's warrant article for staffing. This warrant article can be reduced from \$278,686 to \$101,000. E. Hoyt said that they would also withdraw all other proposed warrant articles except the Replacement of the Town Ambulance warrant article for \$60,000 and the Replacement of Major Fire Department Equipment Fund warrant article for \$5,000. If the department receives the SAFER grant before the Town meeting, then the warrant article for staffing will be withdrawn.

Recreation Budget:

Discussion ensued about the Summer Camp budget line. Only \$40,000 was spent out of this line in 2023. The 2024 budget has \$90,000 in this line. J. Morgan said that she had spoken to the YMCA and they said that they would support offering weekly camp in Newington instead of having to sign up for all nine weeks. It would cost \$248 for a week. The camp could be opened up to employee's children.

B. Arsenault asked that the Recreation Committee meet and discuss the benefits to residents registering directly to the YMCA and outsiders being allowed to go to the Newington camp and then give their recommendation to the Selectmen.

C. Wayss asked if the Recreation Committee would have any warrant articles for 2024. B. Wright said that the facilities need attention but thought they could that they could skip their warrant article this year.

Appointment:

B. Arsenault moved to appoint Denis Hebert as an alternate to the Rockingham Planning Commission Transportation Advisory Committee. C. Wayss seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Fox Point Rental:

J. Boston said that he had done some research and found that \$2,800 was a fair rental price for a 3 bedroom/1 bath house in this area. \$300 would be taken off the rent each month in exchange for mowing part of Fox Point. B. Blonigen said that he thought the rental should be posted and accept applications. B. Blonigen asked about any repairs that would have to be done before the tenant could move in. J. Boston said that something would need to be done about the hot water heater before the renter moves in. Discussion ensued about the water heater and the different options for replacing it. J. Boston will do more research and bring different options back to the Selectmen. **B. Arsenault moved to accept applications until December 8th, make a decision by December 15th and have the tenant move in by 1/1/24. Rent will be \$2,800 per month, with a \$300 discount in exchange for the renter mowing part of Fox Point. C. Wayss seconded the motion. All were in favor.**

Health & Dental Insurance 2024:

Healthtrust's 2024 rates are 15.6% higher than the 2023 rate and the Harvard Pilgrim 2024 rates are 7.8% higher than the 2023 rates. The Town got a quote from Cigna. Those rates were higher than Harvard Pilgrim's rates. **B. Blonigen moved to stay with Healthtrust in 2024. B. Arsenault seconded the motion. All were in favor.** C. Wayss asked that the Board continue to work on reducing the health costs for the Town and should start working on this early in 2024 so the Board can have adequate meetings with department heads. M. Roy asked if she should add it to an April 2024 agenda for discussion. B. Blonigen asked M. Roy to find out the open enrollment dates for 2024.

2024 Budget Vote:

The Selectmen reviewed the budget cuts that were discussed at the 11/7/23 BOS Meeting.

The Board approved the following budget cuts:

Executive Office Safety Program reduced by \$300.

Executive Office Shredding reduced \$349.

Executive Office Equipment Maintenance reduced \$700.

Executive Office Computer Expense reduced \$1,055.

Accounting & Payroll Software Licensing reduced by \$310.

Town Garage-Garage door repair reduced by \$1,000.
Meeting House accent lighting reduced by \$1,500.
Fire Station painting line reduced by \$4,000.
Police Station budget reduced by \$9,000.
Stone School budget reduced by \$6,500. Funds to be taken out of their capital reserve fund instead.
Old Parsonage- only one side will have work done on it instead of two sides resulting in a \$2,500.00 reduction.
Assessing Services reduced by \$14,000
Trust Management Fee reduced by \$6,000.
Tax Map updates reduced by \$1,000.
Planning Board Legal Line reduced by \$5,000.
Planning Board engineering line reduced by \$5,000.
Code Enforcement contracted services reduced by \$1,000.
Highway contracted services reduced by \$30,000.
Highway Resurfacing (Paving) line reduced by \$12,000.
Recreation Summer Program reduced by \$45,000.
EDC wages reduced by \$3,000.
EDC FICA/MEDI reduced by \$229.
EDC marketing reduced by \$2,500.

B. Arsenault suggested cutting the Police Longevity line by 50%. B. Blonigen disagreed and said that the Town should do everything we can to retain the Police officers.

C. Wayss suggested reducing the COAST budget line by \$11,823. B. Arsenault and B. Blonigen agreed.

B. Arsenault suggested reducing the Pest Control line by \$30,650. C. Wayss and B. Blonigen agreed.

The following cuts were made to the Capital Reserve 2024 requests:

Fire Vehicle Replacement cut by \$220,000
Fire Vehicle Repair cut by \$50,000
Highway Vehicle Replacement cut by \$15,000
Major Road Work cut by \$25,000
Town Hall Computer Equipment cut by \$12,500
Police Body Worn Cameras cut by \$5,000
Police Radio/Electronics cut by \$2,500
Library Building Fund cut by \$20,000
Police Computer Equipment cut by \$5,000
Fire Full Time Position cut by \$177,686

Total Capital Reserve requests reduced by \$532,686.

Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

C. Wayss moved to enter a nonpublic session at 9:20pm per RSA 91-A:3 II (e) Legal. B. Arsenaault seconded the motion. B. Blonigen asked for a roll call vote: B. Blonigen-Yes, B. Arsenaault-Yes, C. Wayss-Yes. All were in favor.

B. Arsenaault moved to return to public session at 9:44pm, seconded by C. Wayss. B. Blonigen asked for a roll call vote: B. Blonigen-Yes, B. Arsenaault-Yes, C. Wayss-Yes. All were in favor.

B. Arsenaault moved to seal the minutes indefinitely. C. Wayss seconded the motion. B. Blonigen asked for a roll call vote: B. Arsenaault-Yes, B. Arsenaault-Yes, C. Wayss-Yes. All were in favor.

Adjournment: B. Arsenaault moved to adjourn at 9:45pm. C. Wayss seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted, Eleanor Boy, Recorder