

*BOARD OF SELECTMEN Thursday, February 29, 2024, 6:00 P.M.
Special Meeting MINUTES*

In attendance: E. Couture, E. Nunes, J. D'Angelo

Visitors: K. Auer, S. Ham, E. Unger-Pleines, M. Bekech, W. Linsley, A. Stirna, M. Nuhn, D. Mooney

- 1) Meeting began at 6:00 pm
- 2) The board began the meeting speaking with K. Auer about the requests made in the building department budget. K. Auer provided a walkthrough of the reasoning behind requests that were made.

K. Auer spoke to how some costs could be absorbed by increasing the permit fees and noted that the permit fees have not increased since 2006.

K. Auer spoke to the need for file preservation and how document scanning, and digital storage would protect town records.

Questions were asked regarding the proposed salary changes. K. Auer spoke to cost-of-living increases but did not have specific comparisons with other communities and adjustments made elsewhere.

E. Nunes asked questions regarding the implementation of OpenGov and the budgetary impact it would have. K. Auer spoke to the ability of the building inspector to call up relevant building information as needed at the site.

K. Auer spoke to the operations of the building department and its capacity for revenue and self-funding.

The board thanked K. Auer for his time and turned to S. Ham and M. Bekech for a discussion of the assessor's office.

S. Ham spoke to historical aspects of the Assessor's office and provided a historical accounting of the positions in that office.

S. Ham spoke to the requests being made relating to the importance of accurate assessment of property values to ensure accurate and equitable taxation in the town. She noted in accompanying documents comparisons to similar communities with respect to the positions, wages, and hours.

S. Ham spoke to the upcoming revaluation and the time commitment the revaluation requires. She spoke to the requested revaluation consultant, how to pay for it, and noted that it would allow for in house quality control of the revaluation.

M. Bekech spoke to the history and evolution of the Assessor's office since 2017.

The question was again asked as to whether the office is appropriately staff, comparing to other towns of similar size.

It was noted that the revaluation consultant would be focused on the revaluation. There would be potential cost savings by eliminating the need for an external firm to do some of the work.

The requested clerk position would be focused on administrative work and ensuring that the office is open when the Assessor is not available.

The board thanked S. Ham and M. Bekech for their time and took a five-minute recess starting at 6:55.

3) The board reconvened at 7:00 pm to discuss other budgetary matters.

The question was raised at the resumption of the meeting by E. Couture with regards to how the board felt about the context of the information received thus far.

J. D'Angelo asked that the minutes reflect his and the Board's appreciation to those who have sat with the board and provided information to the Board as it works to craft a budget.

J. D'Angelo spoke to where he felt the needs of the town sat.

There was consensus among the board that there did not seem to be a need for a new Trooper Full time.

J. D'Angelo and E. Nunes spoke to whether there needed to be two FTE in DPW. Question of if it was too soon for a decision on this matter and whether it was too early to institute such a change, especially with a new DPW foreman on the front-plate.

E. Couture spoke to the desire to improve the bandwidth of the department and ensure that there is enough flexibility to handle issues which crop up. Noted that there had been previous requests from the department to increase the number of positions in the department to handle business. Also spoke to the aging of staff in the department and need to ensure that new staff are inculcated into a positive staff environment.

J. D'Angelo and E. Nunes asked for more information about potential savings from contractor lines or elsewhere with regards to additional staffing in the department.

Consensus among the board was achieved around the request for a new town position by the Committee on Aging. While supportive of the need, there was a question of stepping up into that position. The need for programmatic support was recognized.

There was consensus on the board of keeping the Emergency Management line to \$7500.

There was consensus of the board to keeping the Parmalee Farm budget line flat.

On capital it was discussed that the focus be on public safety. As such the consensus was

that the requests from Parmalee, additional mulch-head attachment for DPW, and inflatable boat from the KVFC be excised.

It was also discussed that the board should work with the Board of Finance on understanding how best to finance capital expenditures, particular the Pumper (851).

Consensus was reached that salaried positions, exempting the selectpersons, be increased 3%.

It was also agreed that there is a need to address the needs of town hall staff, especially with regards to salaries. There was consensus that it be done without the pressures of the greater budget process later in the current year.

The board agreed to meet the following Monday to continue discussions and finalize work in preparation for the regular meeting being held the 11th of March.

- 4) The board adjourned at 7:47 pm.