

Minutes
CONWAY SELECTBOARD
Town Hall, 5 Academy Hill Road
March 28, 2017, 6:00 p.m.

Select Board members present: John O'Rourke, Chair; Robert Baker, Clerk; Bob Armstrong

Others present: Tom Hutcheson, Town Administrator; Lisa Turowsky, Assistant to the TA; Joe Zinan, FCAT, Jim Bosman, Finance Committee; Alan Singer, Finance Committee; Roy Cohen, Finance Committee; Tom Donahue, Finance Committee

John O'Rourke called the meeting to order at 6PM and determining that only FCAT was recording the meeting.

Minutes

March 21, 2017

- **On a motion from John O'Rourke to accept the minutes of March 21, 2017, seconded by Robert Baker, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

Meetings Attended by Selectboard Members

All three Selectboard Members attended Franklin County Selectman's Association at Berkshire East, as well as Incident Command System 700 class; Bob Armstrong and John O'Rourke are now certified at 100 level. Bob Armstrong attended Jeremy Rogers's talk at the Historical Society, Small Town Summit, and Frontier Budget hearing. Robert Baker met with Conway Grammar School principal to review school safety; Conway's safety plan has been a model for Whately, Sunderland, and Deerfield schools.

All three Selectboard Members went to the Commonwealth Conversations event in the Conway Town Hall this morning. The event was hosted by Senator Adam Hinds and attended by 14 state Senators as well as many members of the public. The state Senators listened to participants talk about rural challenges and opportunities. Originally the plan was to have the meeting at the church but as the church was damaged in the tornado, the meeting was moved to Town Hall. John O'Rourke stated that there were many more people than would fit in the first-floor General Purpose room so the meeting was moved to gym upstairs. Two wheelchair-bound people were turned away. John O'Rourke explained that this was his decision, and he has written a letter of apology to one of the two who were turned away. FCAT recorded the meeting and it is now online.

Citizens' Concerns

None.

Old Business

FY 2018 Town budget and annual Town Meeting warrant

Tom Hutcheson informed the Select Board that he is inserting a warrant article to cover a bill for \$452 from a prior fiscal year for EMT training. The Select Board agreed to include the item on the warrant.

Tom Hutcheson also removed the \$29,000 Frontier Regional High School article that was meant to fund roof repairs; FRHS has determined that the work can be done for less money that is already in their budget.

- Regarding Article 18, tornado relief, the Town's insurance is covering damage to the salt shed. There are trees down on the trail behind the Grammar School which will need to be moved off the trail, as well as trees down in the Endangered Species area. Those trees may or may not need to be removed, but this information isn't available yet. The \$25,000 in overtime costs can be covered by reserve funds. Tom Hutcheson stated that there is most likely no need for additional funding for Town-related tornado expenses.
- Non-money items: Regarding Article 5, referendum on borrowing for new highway garage – vote was unanimous in favor to recommend Article 5; Article 12, repurposing money already allocated to Frontier for moving costs – vote was unanimous in favor; Article 21, Right To Farm Bylaw – the Ag Commission, after public hearing, recommended this bylaw – the Select Board vote of no recommendation was unanimous; Articles 22 & 23, changes to protective bylaws regarding setbacks and definitions proposed by Planning Board – the Select Board vote of no recommendation was unanimous; Article 24, congregate housing, allowing for multiple units of age-restricted housing – Select Board vote in favor of recommending Article 24 was unanimous ; Article 25, Climate Change resolution – Select Board vote in

favor of recommending Article 25 was unanimous; Article 26, Campaign Finance reform resolution – vote in favor of recommending Article 26 was unanimous.

New Business

Discussion of FRCOG/IT grant/Community Compact: request for Town sponsorship: Tabled; FRCOG withdrew request

Items Not Anticipated

None.

Town Administrator Update

None.

Concerns of the Selectmen

None.

Mail

John O'Rourke received a letter from Lee Totman in support of a My Turn letter that appeared in the Recorder Department of Fish & Wildlife information re: priority habitat maps was received
Hampshire Selectboard invitation to March 30 meeting in Northampton
Conway Grammar School 5K run will take place on 5/21
Latest MMA comments on House and Senate FY2018 budget bills

Announcements

An excavator is now at the salt shed; work will start on dismantling the roof on Wednesday, March 29th.

JOINT MEETING: Finance Committee, 6:30 p.m.

- John O'Rourke distributed information on Medical Insurance Expenses that breaks out insurance expenses between Conway Grammar School and the Town. These expenses have traditionally been included on the Town side. The break-down for OPEB expenses shows that Town's share is 22% and the School's share is 78%. Roy Cohen commented that he doesn't see why we need to get more than one year ahead in budgeting for OPEB. Tom Hutcheson gave the history of OPEB being funded this way; the concern was with unfunded retirement benefits after the recession depleted pension funds of the larger towns. It is felt that the money that currently is slated for OPEB could be better spent on current needs. Roy Cohen believes that OPEB contributes to the financial crippling of Conway and would like the Legislature to be much more cognizant of this issue.
- There was a discussion of how the Collective Bargaining Agreement is negotiated on the Town side. Teachers and Instructional Aides are represented separately but concurrently. Roy Cohen said that he hears the charter schools being blamed but noted that the pay scale at charters is considerably lower than the public schools.
- Article 2 pay raises:
 - **On a motion from Jim Bosman to fund salaries at 2½% across-the-board, seconded by Roy Cohen, the vote of the Finance Committee was unanimous in favor.**

Robert Baker brought up the pay raise for the Town Clerk and the Highway salaries. Regarding the Town Clerk pay raise, Tom Hutcheson reminded everyone that this is the figure that the Human Resources study determined to be the benchmark level (mid-point of comparable towns) for FY2016. The position averages 30 hours per week, depending on whether it is a national election year. The goal is to bring the salary up to a reasonable level so the next person to fill the position will be willing to stay. Robert Baker expressed a concern with the availability of the Town Clerk to residents; there was a trial some time ago of having evening hours, but residents didn't avail themselves of these. Tom Hutcheson said he had polled the Small Town Administrators of Massachusetts; out of over eleven responses, only two had towns where the Town Clerk kept evening hours; a number of others had tried it and stopped due to lack of traffic. Also, the Conway Town Clerk offers meetings by appointment (as do most other Town Clerks). It was also clarified that the Town Clerk salary is not slated for a 2½% increase since a substantial raise is already included in the FY2018 budget.

Robert Baker also asked for clarification of the budgeted items for Highway Department salary and hourly wages. The increase in the hourly wages item reflects an increase for a new employee, highway

laborer, from \$12 to \$16/hr. There is also an increase creating a foreman position which, Robert Baker agreed, is important because that person is on the ground with the crew when the Superintendent is otherwise occupied. Tom Hutcheson stated that it is hoped that these increases will attract better applicants.

• On a motion from John O'Rourke to fund salaries at 2½% across-the-board, seconded by Robert Baker, the vote of the Selectboard was unanimous in favor.

- Article 3 is a borrowing article for the wastewater system in the village center. The Finance Committee did not recommend Article 3 at this time.
 - On a motion from John O'Rourke to recommend Article 3, seconded by Bob Armstrong, the vote of the Select Board was 2-1 in favor.**
- Article 4 would fund the highway garage stabilization account with money from free cash.
 - On a motion from Jim Bosman to recommend Article 4, seconded by Roy Cohen, the vote of the Finance Committee was unanimous in favor.**
 - On a motion from John O'Rourke to recommend Article 4, seconded by Bob Armstrong, the vote of the Select Board was unanimous in favor.**
- Article 5, a non-binding referendum on building the Highway Garage, does not require Finance Committee recommendation. Jim Bosman suggested that the moderator could be asked for a hand count at Town Meeting about this article to accurately gauge the Town's interest. Tom Hutcheson will discuss with the moderator.
- Article 6 is for the capital stabilization account. Tom Hutcheson stressed the importance of this article. There was a discussion of the tax rate which in FY2017 was \$17.75 but may increase by almost \$3.00/thousand if worst-case scenario happens (e.g. valuations and local aid don't go up).
 - On a motion from Jim Bosman to recommend Article 6, seconded by Roy Cohen, the vote of the Finance Committee was unanimous in favor.**
 - On a motion from John O'Rourke to recommend Article 6, seconded by Bob Armstrong, the vote of the Select Board was unanimous in favor.**
- Article 7 was unanimously recommended by Finance Committee and Select Board
- Article 8, Grammar School capital stabilization fund expenses, was unanimously recommended by Finance Committee and Select Board.
- Article 9, replacement of highway grader (formerly Article 10, renumbered):
 - On a motion from Roy Cohen to make no recommendation on Article 9, seconded by Jim Bosman, the vote of the Finance Committee was unanimous in favor of no recommendation.**
 - On a motion from John O'Rourke to make no recommendation on Article 9, seconded by Robert Baker, the vote of the Select Board was unanimous in favor of no recommendation.**
- Article 10 relating to installation of hard pack behind the Town Office building: Finance Committee recommends Article 10 3-1; Select Board recommends 2-0 with 1 abstention.
- Article 11 relating to new computer software for assessors: unanimously recommended by Finance Committee and Select Board.
- Article 12, a repurposing article transferring funds from roof repair to relocation account of Frontier Regional: unanimously recommended by Finance Committee and Select Board.
- Article 13, for Frontier library window repair, will be stricken from the warrant.
- Article 14 relates to operating expenses for Ambulance Department: unanimously recommended by Finance Committee and Select Board.
- Article 15 relates to recertification of property values on 5-year cycle: unanimously recommended by Finance Committee and Select Board.
- Article 16 is the required Town contribution to the library to maintain accreditation: unanimously recommended by Finance Committee and Select Board.
- Article 17, payment of bill from previous fiscal year in the amount of \$91: unanimously recommended by Finance Committee and Select Board.
- Article 18 concerns tornado-related expenses on the part of the Town. Since the Town's expenses can be absorbed by reserve fund, Tom Hutcheson recommended striking this article from the warrant.
 - On a motion from John O'Rourke to strike Article 18, seconded by Robert Baker, the vote of the Select Board was unanimous in favor of striking Article 18.**

- Article 19 concerns borrowing for wastewater study.
 - **On a motion from Roy Cohen to make no recommendation on Article 19, seconded by Jim Bosman, the vote of the Finance Committee was unanimous in favor of no recommendation.**
 - **On a motion from John O'Rourke to make no recommendation on Article 19, seconded by Robert Baker, the vote of the Select Board was unanimous in favor of no recommendation.**
- Article 20 is a repurposing article for use/improvement of Town field: unanimously recommended by Finance Committee and Select Board
- Articles 21-26: voted by Select Board as stated above

○ *In summary, the Select Board approved Articles 4,5,6,7,8,11,12,14,15,16,17,20,24, 25, and 26 with votes of 3 in favor and 0 opposed with the following exceptions:*

- *Article 3: 2 in favor, 1 opposed;*
- *Article 9: no recommendation;*
- *Article 10: 2 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstained;*
- *Article 19: no recommendation;*
- *Article 21: no recommendation;*
- *Article 22: no recommendation; and*
- *Article 23: no recommendation.*

The Finance Committee approved Articles 4,5,6,7,8,11,12,14,15,16,17,and 20 with votes of 4 in favor and 0 opposed with the following exceptions:

- *Article 3: no recommendation;*
- *Article 9 (formerly Article 10): no recommendation;*
- *Article 10: 3 in favor, 1 opposed; and*
- *Article 19: no recommendation.*

Documents and Other Exhibits Used at the Meeting:

Draft annual Town Meeting warrant

Sources and Uses: Money Articles FY2018

Medical Insurance Expenses

Next Meeting

- *Scheduled for Monday, April 3, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. at the Town Office, 32 Main Street*

On a motion from John O'Rourke, seconded by Robert Baker, the joint meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Baker, Clerk