

Minutes  
CONWAY SELECT BOARD  
Town Hall, 5 Academy Hill Road  
January 30, 6:00 p.m.

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

Others present: Tom Hutcheson, Town Administrator; Lisa Turowsky, Assistant to the TA; Joseph Zinan, FCAT; Andy Castillo, Greenfield Recorder; Pixie Holbrook, Housing Committee; Ellen Lomastro, Housing Committee; Roy Cohen, Finance Committee; Jim Bosman, Finance Committee; Tom Donovan, Finance Committee; Robert Stone, Finance Committee; Joe Strzegowski, Planning Board; Dave Chichester, Planning Board; Lee Whitcomb, Assessors Office; Gemma Vanderheld, Ambulance Department; Virginia Knowlton, Town Clerk; Ron Sweet, Highway Department; Town Residents Emmet Vandriesche, Will Cote, Ruth Bowman, Justus Conant

John O'Rourke called the meeting to order at 6:02PM

*Minutes*

- **On a motion from John O'Rourke to accept the minutes of January 23, 2017, seconded by Robert Baker, the vote was unanimous in favor.**

*Meetings Attended by Selectboard Members*

Bob Armstrong attended a Small-Town Summit, where attendees discussed special issues and proposed legislation. Senator Adam Hinds was also in attendance. Bob Armstrong also attended the Housing Committee meeting on 1/30.

*Citizens' Concerns*

None.

*Old Business*

*Housing Committee: sign amendments to contingencies related to the intent to offer for Sheehan property –*

John O'Rourke noted that he has recused himself for all further deliberation concerning this matter. Robert Baker led the discussion. Pixie Holbrook explained the Housing Committee's request that this item be tabled. The Housing Committee, having had time to reflect on communication issues with abutters/town residents, and on larger issues related to the purchase of non-town-owned property such as 5-acre-minimum concerns and preference for Town residents/workers, asks that the Select Board not sign the addendum at this time. Joe Strzegowski related that Town Counsel advised him that a change to the Town's bylaws would be needed to facilitate the construction of a project such as the one the Housing Committee has proposed. There were also questions raised about the status of the Wastewater Treatment Committee's work. Tom Hutcheson thanked those who raised these questions related to the further consideration of senior housing and asked that any questions be related to committees or to him in writing or by email, or by coming into the Town Office to discuss them with him. Ultimately, questions and answers will be posted on the Town website so that all interested parties can see them.

*New Business*

**6:30 JOINT MEETING WITH FINANCE COMMITTEE: FY 2018 BUDGET**

Tom Hutcheson presented notes on selected budgets as follows:

- 131 – Finance Committee; 132 – Reserve Fund. The Finance Committee and Select Board agreed that FY2018 request for Finance Committee in the amount of \$300 was reasonable; and that the Reserve Fund FY2018 request should be level-funded at \$40,000.
- 135 – Audit. Tom Hutcheson and Jan Warner want to recommend annual audit for the Town as it constitutes a best financial practice. If the Town decides to borrow money, Tom Hutcheson further explained, it would be necessary to have an audit for the year in which the vote took place, which could require a special Town Meeting to fund it. There were questions from the Finance Committee about the practices of other towns similar to Conway, and Tom Hutcheson reported that a lot of comparable towns do an audit biannually, as Conway has been doing. The Town has good internal financial controls but an

audit would be an external evaluation. Some staff would like the protection of an annual audit. The Finance Committee is going to further study the issue.

- 900 – Employee benefits. Increases in the costs associated with health and retirement benefits have necessitated an increase in requested funding for FY2018 of \$58,286. Tom Hutcheson noted that these increased costs are the result of people living longer and of health benefits rising substantially.
- 141 – Assessors. Many of the line items are being level-funded or seeing only slight increase; these were not discussed at length. The clerical line item has been budgeted for a small increase, from \$40,746 to \$41,171, but reflects the same number of hours for each employee as the FY2017 budget, including 2 hours per week for travel throughout town to keep up with cyclical inspections. In the area of assessor software support, the state is changing the valuation system from the system formerly supported by DOR to an independent source. There will be additional hours required to handle that project but not until FY19 and FY20. Generally, the state's support of the conversion is expected to help the towns substantially. There is no impact on the FY18 budget.
- 231 – Ambulance. Gemma Vanderheld reported that the hourly employee requested amount has risen as a result of an increased number of service hours. The requested increase in training is the result of the cost of continuing education for more EMT's. Licensing/exam fees will go up because of the new policy of pre-payment for these items for anticipated 5 new EMT's, with the restriction that they must complete a year of service or pay back the cost to the Town. Transfer fees will increase because the Town's population is ageing.
- 192 – Building Maintenance is level-funded, no discussion of this item.
- 422/423 – Highway. Level-funded except for the following: department head's salary was misreported for FY2017; the budgeted amount should be \$61,503, with FY2018 amount level-funded; hourly wages increased as a result of hiring new laborer; and there is an increase in repairs of approximately \$40,000, reflecting the cost of replacing the grader transmission. Ron Sweet reported that since submitting his budget he learned that this work could be done at a cost of \$85,000, a smaller increase of \$35,000. If the Capital Planning Committee approves purchase of a new grader, the Highway Department FY2018 budget will not contain this much of an increase for repairs.
- 161 – Town Clerk. Virginia Knowlton, Town Clerk, distributed a Job Description. Tom Hutcheson noted that the request for FY2018 for an increase in the Clerk's salary is based on a compensation study from FY2016. The Human Resources consultant looked at what other similar towns were paying their Clerks and the increase in our Town's salary was spread over two years, FY2017 and FY2018. The resulting salary reflects what a qualified candidate might expect coming into the Clerk's position based on the Job Description. If FY2018 amount is approved our Town Clerk would be at the benchmark level (halfway between low and high ends of the range that was reported in the compensation study), not even taking into account the many years of experience that she has.
- 150 – Town Administrator. This item is not final as the Town Administrator's salary is under negotiation. Some increases for hourly wages are requested to improve retention in the Assistant position. Telephone costs have increased because two instruments had to be replaced. Increases in the costs of Town Report and Supplies are based on real figures for FY2017.
- 151 – Legal. This item is level-funded.
- 292 – Dog Officer/Animal Control. Salary is increased based on survey of area officers. There are more responsibilities than in FY2017 because of state mandated annual training.
- 294 – Tree Warden. Slight increase in this budget reflects membership in professional association and attendance at annual conference.

*Items Not Anticipated*

None.

### *Town Administrator Update*

#### **Departments**

Tom Hutcheson learned that Conway received a proposed 6.9% increase in unrestricted general government aid, along with a very slight decrease in its state assessments (charges), for a total increase of \$71,119. The average increase in unrestricted general government aid across the Commonwealth was 3.9%. Even if this is adjusted through the legislative process, it is good news for Conway's FY 2018 budget.

Transition to a new phone system took place over the weekend, with only minor glitches. It should be substantially less expensive than the former system, and Tom Hutcheson expects that the Town will receive excellent customer service. There is a new extension menu, but everyone has their old extension (except Ron, who now has his internal extension, 10, as his external extension as well). Tom Hutcheson reports that the outgoing message will be refined over the next couple of days, but it's 99.9% functional.

Tom Hutcheson has consulted with Joe Colucci about next steps for the problem dogs on Graves Road. He proposes scheduling a nuisance dog hearing in two or three weeks, probably at a regular Select Board meeting, with all stakeholders invited.

**Other**

Eversource will be doing some transmission work in Conway. The work will entail replacing two existing lattice structures with two weather steel pole structures. The impacted street in Conway is Bardswell Ferry Road. The work is expected to begin March 1, 2017 and continue through August 2017. The Town Administrator's office should be contacted with any questions.

*Concerns of the Selectmen* None.

*Mail*

*Announcements* None.

*Documents and Other Exhibits Used at the Meeting*

Town of Conway, Massachusetts Job Description – Town Clerk

Notes on Selected Budgets

Explanation of FY2018 Franklin Regional Retirement System assessments/July 1, 2017 COLA information

Town of Conway Budget Input Sheet FY2018 (supplied by Assessors Office)

- **On a motion from John O'Rourke, seconded by Robert Baker, the Select Board voted to go into Executive Session at the Town Office thereby to adjourn immediately from open session at 8:00PM**

*Next Meeting*

- *Scheduled for Monday, February 6, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. at the Town Hall, 5 Academy Hill Road*

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Baker, Clerk