

**TOWN OF FRANCONIA
BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, AUGUST 29, 2022 AT 5:30PM AT TOWN HALL**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Jill Brewer, Dan Walker, Eric Meth

OTHERS PRESENT: Kim Cowles, Jenny Monahan, Chief Mac Cashin, Mary Grote, Pat Garvin, Monica Laflamme, Virginia Mike, Dawn Steele, Paul Hayes, Mike Jacobs, Robert Sacks

The meeting was called to order at 5:30pm.

APPOINTMENTS/WORK SESSIONS

5:30pm – Non-Public Session – RSA 91-A:3, II(a)

6:00pm – Jennifer and John Opalinski – Ice Rink: The Opalinskis discussed the idea of equipping the ice rink with sustained refrigeration which would allow the skating season to be extended from approximately Thanksgiving through March. They said they would like to find funding and gather information and present to the board at a later date. Selectman Walker suggested they research maintenance and upkeep costs as well as purchase and installation. The board stated their support and thanked the Opalinskis for their assistance.

6:15pm – Joselle Presby – Pathways Pregnancy Center (PPC): On behalf of PPC, Joselle requested that the organization's Family Fun & Movie Night event be advertised on the town website and the sign at Peabody & Smith Realty. Town Administrator Cowles said what appears on the sign is ultimately up to Peabody & Smith and PPC would need to ask them if they may utilize the sign. There followed a brief discussion about the mission of PPC as a 501©3 Christian pro-life organization and controversial politics surrounding abortion rights. The board decided it would not be appropriate to advertise the event on the town website.

6:30pm – Short Term Rental Committee – STR Community Impact & Permitting Recommendations: Planning Board member Pat Garvin read the committee's summary of findings and recommendations to the board (see attached for report summary).

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comment was taken from Virginia Mike, Monica Laflamme, Tina Betley, Mary Grote, Dawn Steele and Mike Jacobs.

TO SIGN/APPROVE

The August 29th, 2022 transaction report was reviewed and signed by the selectmen.

The minutes of August 8th, 2022 were approved as amended.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

Town Administrator Cowles deferred a portion of her update to planning board member Pat Garvin. Pat said the planning board learned that North Country Council potentially has a grant opportunity coming up through a program called Housing Ready. The purpose is to aid communities in identifying and assessing housing needs and opportunities with the goal of improving housing options and increase municipal knowhow on development and review. The application period opens in October. Pat said the planners would write the application but it would be submitted on behalf of the select board and asked if the selectmen would like to pursue this opportunity. The board agreed that the

town should pursue the opportunity to take part in the program.

Town Administrator Cowles said the transfer station received the new storage container and a NH The Beautiful grant of \$1,056 was awarded to the town towards the purchase of the container, which was about \$5,700. She also said solutions to alleviate the springtime mud issue are being discussed, and a quote for paving in front of the transfer station was about \$38,000. She said this should be considered for a warrant article.

Town Administrator Cowles said the current use application for Ron Perkins that she has been researching has been deemed as eligible for current use. The selectmen signed the application.

In regard to the Franconia Soaring Foundation, Inc.'s application for tax exemption submitted this year (not the one submitted last year that is currently being decided in court), Town Administrator Cowles said counsel recommend that the board officially deny the application.

Chairman Brewer made a motion to deny the application for tax exemption as an educational facility from the Franconia Soaring Foundation, Inc. Selectman Walker seconded the motion with all voting in favor. **Motion passes.**

Town Administrator Cowles said she and Selectman Walker met with Cannon General Manager John DeVivo and a representative from the NH Div. of Forests and Lands at Mittersill Road to discuss the issues with maintaining the parking area there and try to decipher where responsibility falls. The fire station there was also discussed, of which the town has had a lease on for many years but the lease is contingent on using the building as a fire station and the building is primarily used for storage at this point. The water department is using part of the building as well. This was an informational discussion only and no decisions were made.

With the approaching 250th celebration of the town's founding happening next year, Town Administrator Cowles recommended increasing the Patriotic Purposes budget.

The first CIP meeting happened today and Steve Plant accepted the position of chairman. Today's meeting was held primarily for organization and planning out the rest of the season.

Correspondence: None

The selectmen discussed the next meeting will be on September 12th.

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 7:22pm on a motion from Selectman Chairman Brewer and a second from Selectman Walker with all voting in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jenny Monahan
Administrative Secretary

Short-Term Rental Report Summary

Since the full report is available I'll summarize the main points. Let me start by saying that STRs refer to rentals that are less than 30 consecutive days. We also

recognized that Franconia has always been a tourist destination and second home community and we are not trying to change the character of the town. We're just trying to balance the needs of the community as a whole.

The working group consisted of 3 Planning Board members (Monica Laflamme, Mark Hesler, myself) and 3 volunteers (Larry Plate, Tina Betley, Jayne O'Connor).

This report is in response to the 2021 Master Plan Survey that identified the proliferation of STRs as one of the primary concerns. The concern is that when these former residential homes are no longer available to potential residents, they may be responsible for the following effects on the town:

1. The Lafayette School enrollment numbers have declined and the cost per student has risen.
2. Safety services volunteers have declined, forcing the town to contract EMS services with Littleton.
3. Available housing for area workers and families is difficult to find.
4. Available volunteers for the town's programs and events are reduced.
5. The ability of young people to remain in the town in which they grew up has declined.

The working group interviewed local business owners, visitors, a state tax assessor, local school administrators, the town's administrator and building inspector, in addition to reviewing regulations in other NH towns.

We also utilized research conducted by Dawn Steele and Virginia Mike which identified over 50 properties in town currently used as STRs, only 2/3s of which have permits as required. We recognize that this list is not comprehensive, so the actual number of properties is not fully understood.

The working group's first priority was to look at Franconia's current permit process. A second priority, to be done at a later date, will be to review current zoning and potentially recommend changes.

For the STR issue, we made recommendations regarding edits to the current permit process, the most significant are:

☒ Only property owners can apply for the permit and non-owner occupied properties must provide a local point of contact or manager.

☒ Increase in annual fees to cover town administrative and municipal services costs. A safety inspection fee is included as part of the fee.

☒ The fee will be up to the select board but we suggested what seems to be one night's average rental of \$300 initially, with \$250 for a renewal.

☒ Multi-unit properties need a permit (and pay fees) for each unit being used as a STR.

☒

We also had 4 action recommendations:

1. Send out updated permit, fees, and safety inspection requirements to all identified STR property owners, both those currently registered with the Town and those on the list which are not currently registered.

2. Current registrations will expire on Mar 31, 2023. New permits and renewals for 2023 will be required by April 1 of each year and will not be issued unless the safety inspection has been completed.

3. Information should go out to all property owners notifying them of STR requirements.

4. Legal advice should be obtained regarding penalties for noncompliance with STR permit requirements.