

**TOWN OF FRANCONIA
BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 14, 2020 AT 3PM HELD REMOTELY VIA ZOOM**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Eric Meth, Jill Brewer, Jeff Blodgett.

OTHERS PRESENT: Kim Cowles, Jenny Monahan.

The meeting was called to order at 3:00pm.

APPOINTMENTS:

3:00 – Town Clerk/Tax Collector Budget Review: There are few changes to this budget for next year. Carol is requesting a wage increase, a decrease in Lien/Mortgage Search from \$800 to \$600. More income was taken in than anticipated. The Election Expenses line is over but a grant was received of \$900 that will offset the overage.

Personnel Administration Budget Review: The Health Insurance line has been increased by 4% due to the 6.4% increase from HealthTrust. The Employee Retirement line is under spent due to the town not having a town administrator for a few months. Town Administrator Cowles proposed increasing the Employee Retirement match to 11% to match what New Hampshire Retirement System (NHRS) contributes. She said that adding NHRS for all employees was voted down last year at town meeting, but it seemed this was due to a lack of voter confidence in the NHRS system. The 11% match would increase the retirement line to \$29,486. Selectman Meth commented that he is in support of the increase and would like to see the town reevaluate NHRS for its employees in the future as the program offers other benefits than just the pension. Chairman Brewer said she is in agreement with Selectman Meth.

TO SIGN/APPROVE:

The December 14, 2020 transaction list was reviewed and signed by the Selectmen remotely.

The December 7, 2020 minutes were approved as amended.

TO DISCUSS/REVIEW:

Warrant Article Review: Town Administrator Cowles said she spoke with the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) about funding the proposed sidewalk replacement on the south end of Main Street and learned that funds from the unassigned fund balance can be used for the project. She noted that there is also about \$100,000 in the Sidewalk Capital Reserve Fund that could also be used and combining those funding resources would prevent having to raise the money through taxation. The fund balance is currently 1.3 million dollars, or about 17%, which is the high end of the DRA's recommended percentage.

Town Administrator Update: Town Administrator Cowles said the town is being audited by the Department of Labor on Wednesday the 16th.

On Thursday she will meet with Jan Leichner of Better Bookkeeping for assistance with issues we are having with payroll liabilities in Quickbooks.

Town Administrator Cowles said the town audit will be from February 22nd through the 24th.

Public Works Director Scott Leslie and Buildings & Grounds Supervisor Corey Rush would like to purchase a spreader for the truck Corey uses. Town Administrator Cowles said purchasing the new spreader would make it easier to load the tractor by using the current spreader as a hopper at the maintenance garage and require less employees and time.

After a brief discussion, Chairman Brewer made a motion to allow Scott or Corey to use up to \$6,628.90 from the Buildings & Grounds Department budget to purchase a stainless steel spreader. Selectman Meth seconded the motion. All were in favor. **Motion passes.**

Town Administrator Cowles also said that it looks like we will come in under estimate for the services of Municipal Resources Inc. The annual estimate was \$20,000 but it's looking like a range from \$10,000 to \$15,000 instead with Kim and Jenny doing some of the tasks they were contracted for.

CORRESPONDENCE: None.

OTHER DISCUSSION: Chairman Brewer said developing Covid numbers in the area show that there is significant community spread happening. She suggested writing a letter to local restaurants asking them to consider not offering indoor dining until the infection numbers are under better control.

Selectmen Blodgett and Meth said they share Chairman Brewer's concerns and Selectman Blodgett said he would draft a letter to Franconia's restaurant owners and send to the other selectmen for their review.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Cable Consortium: Selectman Meth said he had a discussion with Representative Tim Egan about regional community internet connectivity. Tim is planning to speak with the NH Finance Authority about the way towns fund installation of internet infrastructure and trying to make it more affordable.

Chamber of Commerce: Selectman Blodgett said the Chamber is having a virtual meeting on Thursday the 17th.

Conservation Commission: No update.

Energy Commission: Selectman Meth said the next meeting is tomorrow the 15th via Zoom at 4:30.

Planning Board: Selectman Meth said there is a meeting scheduled for December 29th at 7pm via Zoom for an application for a Wireless Telecom Facility.

CIP: Selectman Blodgett said CIP is putting together their recommendations. There is no meeting scheduled currently.

PUBLIC INPUT:

Dawn Steele commented that there was an issue with the Zoom link on the website.

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 3:47pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jenny Monahan
Administrative Secretary