

TOWN OF FRANCONIA
BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2021 AT 6:00PM AT TOWN HALL

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Kim Cowles, Jenny Monahan, Dawn Steele, Mary & Peter Grote, Lucy Golden, Dr. Ginny Jeffryes, Larry Plate, Karen Foss, Karen and Ed Kovac, Dale Fage, Chris Dube, Virginia Mike

The meeting was called to order at 6:03pm

APPOINTMENTS/WORK SESSIONS

None

TO SIGN/APPROVE:

The December 20, 2021 transaction list was reviewed and signed by the selectmen.

The December 13th, 2021 minutes were tabled until next week as the selectmen only received them just prior to the meeting.

2021 Equalization Municipal Data Certificate (Pink Slip) was given to the board for review.

A Supplemental Tax Warrant for a Park View Drive property that had been tax deeded, then subsequently repurchased by the family, was signed by the board.

TO DISCUSS/REVIEW:

Correspondence: A former resident wrote to the board requesting a refund of her car registration fees as she was only in the state for three weeks prior to moving. It was noted that the town only refunds in such instances if the state has refunded their portion of the fee. The board decided that a letter could be sent to her informing her to let the town know if she is refunded by the state.

Town Administrator Update: Town Administrator Cowles said she and Janice Cole did some more work on the Norther Pass Donation Fund and learned that all donated funds and warrant article funds were used for Northern Pass Legal Defense. The remaining \$26,956 in the Northern Pass Defense Fund needs to go back to the Legal Fund to reimburse the funds that were spent. Town Administrator Cowles said two warrant articles will need to be created; one to close the Northern Pass Defense Fund with all remaining funds to the General Fund and the second article to transfer the funds from the General Fund to the Legal Fund. The board and Town Administrator Cowles thanked Janice Cole for her assistance with the research.

Town Administrator Cowles said the auditors came for one day last week to prepare for the audit which is scheduled for February. As recommended in previous audits, Town Administrator Cowles has been working on cleaning up the employee PTO policies. She said that per the auditors, there are employees who have accumulated vacation hours and these hours should be paid out so they do not continue to

accumulate and cause financial liability to the town going forward. She said there is approximately \$31,000 to be paid out in accumulated vacation hours. Going forward, employees will only be able to carry over half of their PTO accumulated annually and if they do not use the other half, the hours will be lost. It was discussed that this is a good year to rectify this as funds are available in wages. The board approved paying those employees out for their accumulated PTO.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Broadband Initiative: Selectman Meth said the North County Communications District (NCCD) met by Zoom on Wednesday the 15th. He said they have been discussing plans for funding the “middle mile” portion of the project and contracting with the New Hampshire Broadband Initiative (NHBI) for assistance with mapping, grant writing, etc. He said the NCCD also discussed forming subcommittees of Template, Infrastructure and Governmental.

Chamber of Commerce: Selectman Walker said there is a Zoom meeting tomorrow morning at 11am.

Conservation Commission: Chairman Brewer said the CC had their year-end meeting last Thursday. They discussed the Fini lot, which is on Route 18 and is currently for sale. They are trying to determine if this is the lot with the beaver colonies on it and have been told by abutters that it is very active with wildlife. There is also an easement on the parcel that provides access from the road to the town’s forest. The CC would be interested in acquiring the parcel.

Energy Commission: Selectman Meth said the EC met Wednesday the 15th and discussed EV Chargers and possible placement for them, the Welcome Center and the potential for solar panels on the roof, Community Choice Aggregation and a possible energy audits for some town buildings. Selectman Meth said the EC also has a prospective new member, Chris Dube. Chris was present and spoke to his background and interest in joining the Energy Commission.

Selectman Meth made a motion to appoint Chris Dube to the Energy Commission. Selectman Walker seconded the motion with all voting in favor. **Motion passes.**

Planning Board: Selectman Meth said the Planning Board met but did not have a quorum or any agenda items.

CIP: Karen Foss said Corey Rush and Jeremy Hall met with the CIP last week and reviewed the estimates for vehicles are scheduled to purchase.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Dawn Steele asked if the Equalization Form is on the website under the Budgets section.

Mary Grote commented that it is wonderful that the meetings have been moved to 6pm as more people can attend but there is still a problem with people being able to hear people that meet with the board and sometimes the selectman themselves and urged that something be done to improve the situation.

Lucy Golden said that after the significant Covid outbreak in town, and with the presence of Omicron and school vacation approaching, if it wouldn’t be appropriate to reinstate a mask mandate. The board discussed this at length and more residents commented on area hospitalizations being problematic and it was decided to schedule a special meeting for Wednesday, December 22nd at 6pm to discuss a town

wide mask mandate.

Virginia Mike asked if the “missing” \$400,000 was located. She was advised that it was an accounting error and funds were never missing.

Larry Plate commented that he too has a tough time hearing what is going on during the meetings as well. Larry also asked if the Welcome Center RFP is posted on the website.

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 6:57pm on a motion from Chairman Brewer and a second from Selectman Walker with all voting in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jenny Monahan
Administrative Secretary

These minutes of the Town of Franconia Select Board have been recorded by its Secretary. Though believed to be accurate and correct they are subject to additions, deletions and corrections by the Select Board at its next meeting when the Board votes its final approval of the minutes. They are being made available at this time to conform to the requirements of New Hampshire RSA 91-A:2.