

**TOWN OF FRANCONIA
BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, DECEMBER 6, 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, Lynn Terres, Dr. Ginny Jeffries, Virginia Mike, Duffi Pratt, Aaron Johnson, Janice Cole, Karen Foss, Carol Walker, Mike Betley.

The meeting was called to order at 6:04pm

APPOINTMENTS/WORK SESSIONS

6:00pm – Trustees of the Trust Funds – Northern Pass Legal Defense Fund & Safety Services Building Fund: After meeting with Town Administrator Cowles and consulting with town counsel to learn more about these two funds, the trustees, Karen Foss, Janice Cole and Carol Walker met with the selectmen to discuss the accounts. In regard to the Safety Services Building Fund, Town Administrator Cowles said the account is officially closed and the funds can be deposited into the General Fund. Janice said the Northern Pass Legal Defense Fund is more complicated because it was started with \$10,000 from a warrant article appropriation, then after the town overspent its legal fund, moneys from the warrant article, the town's legal capital reserve fund and private donations were combined together. She said \$23,000 to \$25,000 of the fund are private donations, but returning the donations could be problematic for the donors themselves as the donations may have been claimed on their taxes, some donors may have changed addresses, etc.

After a brief discussion with the selectmen, Janice recommended that an accounting of the spending is done to determine what has spent towards Northern Pass legal defense, and how much was spent from each contributing fund and then donors should be contacted to see if they would like to donate their contribution back to the town towards another interest or if they would like to be refunded. Janice said there is approximately \$27,000 in the fund.

TO SIGN/APPROVE:

The December 6, 2021 transaction list was reviewed and signed by the selectmen.

The minutes of November 29th, 2021, were approved as amended on a motion from Chairman Brewer and a second from Selectman Walker with all voting in favor.

TO DISCUSS/REVIEW:

Property Assessing Contract: Chairman Brewer briefly reviewed that two proposals were received in response to the town's RFP for an assessing company, and three meetings were held to discuss and compare them. The board stated its support for continuing with Avitar Associates and thanked Dawn Steele for her assistance with the new contract.

Correspondence – Mascoma Bank – Authority to Open Deposit Account: Mascoma Bank sent a form to the town asking that the board confirm that Chief Mac Cashin and Treasurer Steve Plant can be signers

for the Police Special Fund, which currently has about \$442 in it. With the boards support, Chairman Brewer signed the document from the bank.

Town Administrator Update: Town Administrator Cowles asked the board to approve some fund transfers for the Trustees of the Trust Funds. Chairman Brewer signed a document to approve the following fund transfers from the Capital Reserves to the General Fund:

- \$50,000 from Firefighter Equipment Fund
- \$5,500 from the Highway Heavy Equipment Fund
- \$12,000 from the Sidewalk Fund
- \$2,000 from the Property Revaluation Fund
- \$12,000 from the Highway Improvement Fund.

Town Administrator Cowles let the board know that Chief Cashin obtained a quote for a new cruiser and will be meeting with the CIP committee to review the quote on Wednesday December 8th.

After a brief discussion about holiday scheduling the board decided there will be no meeting on December 27th.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Broadband Initiative: Selectman Meth said he and Margo Connors met on December 1st with Carol Miller (former NH Broadband Technology Director) and as previously discussed, she has advised the town that Sugar Hill and Franconia can join the New Hampshire Broadband Investment Planning Network, which is a collaboration between the New Hampshire Municipal Association and the National Collaborative for Digital Equity, and the two towns can hire Carol Miller together for a total of \$7,000 instead of \$5,000 each. Carol is going to work with the towns providing research, grant writing and applying for funds. He said the Grafton County Broadband Committee (the organization installing the broadband spine) has selected 17 towns in Grafton Country that will be able to access the first installation of the spine and 22 towns that will be able to access the second installation of the spine which is anticipated to be this spring. Selectman Meth also said the North Country Communication District is meeting December 17th via Zoom and will be discussing funding and other details surrounding this project.

Chamber of Commerce: No update at this time.

Conservation Commission: Chairman Brewer said the CC is working to confirm the meeting date of December 16th at 4pm.

Energy Commission: Selectman Meth said the EC is meeting either the 15th or 22nd at 4:30pm at town hall but the date is not yet confirmed.

Planning Board: Selectman Meth said the Planning Board next meets Tuesday the 14th at 7pm at town hall.

CIP: Selectmen Walker said the CIP meets this week on the 8th and Chief Cashin is scheduled to present the estimate for the cruiser. Jeremy Hall and Corey Rush will attend the meeting on the 15th and have obtained the requested quotes as well.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Janice Cole asked Selectman Meth how the broadband spine will be accessed and how far it will extend out of town. A lengthy discussion ensued about the broadband spine project.

Dawn Steele asked how much money was in the Safety Services Building Fund. (\$2,328)

Dawn Steele asked if a motion should be made to accept the contract with Avitar.

Chairman Brewer made a motion to accept the contract with Avitar Associates. Selectman Meth seconded the motion with all voting in favor. **Motion passes.**

Dawn Steele asked that the RFP for the Welcome Center is posted to the website.

Mike Betley asked if there have been any changes from the board about a town wide mask mandate and requested it be discussed at the next meeting.

Mike also asked if issues brought up by the auditors last year have been corrected in advance of their visit tomorrow.

Dr. Jeffryes responded to Mike Betley's comments about a mask mandate and recommended that the board reinstate the town wide mask mandate.

Peter Grote and Mary Grote commented on the effectiveness of masks and that many are willing to wear them when asked.

Dawn Steele commented that she has observed that many employees in businesses are not wearing masks but that it is a difficult position for small businesses as well as small businesses.

Chairman Brewer suggested that the town provide signs to businesses stating that the Town of Franconia recommends masks when in public buildings and a discussion about the proposed wording ensued.

Selectman Meth commented that wearing a mask wearing is a shared sacrifice that is a good thing you can do for your community and said he would like to revisit the mask mandate next week.

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 7:13pm 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.