

TOWN OF FRANCONIA
BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, JANUARY 24, 2022 AT 6:00PM AT TOWN HALL

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Kim Cowles, Dawn Steele, Peter & Mary Grote, Jan Cole, Carol Wills, Jim Fitzpatrick, David Strange,

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm

APPOINTMENTS/WORK SESSIONS

6:00 Carol Wills – Town Clerk/Tax Collector Budgets Review: Carol said the Town Clerk budget is primarily the same as last year but reflects an increase in wages to \$25 per hour for this year. The Tax Collector budget is also the same as last years but also reflects the increase in Wages to \$25 per hour.

6:15 Jim Fitzpatrick – Town Solar Array: Jim and David Strange advised the select board that the Energy Commission intends to put forth a warrant article this year asking voters to partially fund a ground mount solar array. The cost is being estimated at \$55,000 for an array that could power the town hall, library and the skating rink. They are still working on the details for funding. The select board said the Energy Commission could present information to the public about the proposal at the Public Budget Hearing on February 7th.

6:15 Chief Rick Gaudette – Fire Department Budget Review: Chairman Brewer noted that the SCBA Bottle Replacement had occurred and that line is now at \$0. The telephone line is proposed to increase so a cell phone can be funded for the Fire Department since that department is not always staffed at the Safety Services Building and non-emergency calls could go directly to Chief Rick Gaudette or Assistant Chief Tyler Gaudette. Town Administrator Cowles said that Training/Prevention hasn't been fully spent because trainings and prevention events have been held less frequently due to Covid but they would like to keep those lines intact. The funds from the Cleaning line (\$4,200) were moved to the Supplies line as the Fire Department has been doing the cleaning themselves and can purchase cleaning supplies and paper goods that way. The Fuel line is unchanged from last year in spite of increased pricing because we are able to lock in pricing through the state. Vehicles/Equipment is requested to stay the same. Town Administrator Cowles noted that Engine 2 is probably not going to pass inspection next year according to the mechanic that inspected it this year. The Fire Hose line was unspent and those funds (along with the SCBA Bottles and Turnout Gear lines) will be put in an expendable trust instead of staying in the operating budget, at the suggestion of Janice Cole. Difficulty finding volunteers was briefly discussed. Selectman Walker asked if Chief Gaudette would support having a full-time employee for the Fire Department, and Chief Gaudette said yes, he thinks the town will have to move in that direction as their efforts to attract new recruits have been unsuccessful.

The **Forest Fire Budget** was unspent and Chief Gaudette said that budget has not been used in years. The selectmen discussed also creating an expendable trust for Forest Fire and making Rick an agent to expend. The selectman agreed this would be a better way to manage those funds and help with

management of the Unassigned Fund Balance.

Chief Gaudette said he has proposed purchasing a new rescue pumper truck to the Capital Improvements Plan committee. He would like this on the warrant for this year and says that is the only way he can move forward with that in spite of there being a potential lead time of at least 18 months because financials cannot be worked out with a dealer unless the funding is approved.

6:45 Dawn Steele – Short Term Rentals: Dawn said she had some communication with Senator Erin Hennessey about SB249, which seeks to stop cities and towns from enacting zoning restrictions or passing local ordinances prohibiting the use of private properties for short term and vacation rentals. Dawn said it seemed that Hennessey's position was that from her perspective, towns want to prohibit STR's all together and they do not support the fees being assessed for registration and inspections by some towns. Dr. Ginny Jeffryes also shared concerns about the bill and asked that the board send a letter tonight to Senator Hennessey expressing its opposition to the bill and also urged residents to send in a statement on the state's legislative webpage. Selectman Meth said he had received a letter that made very good points and that may be useful in drafting something this evening.

TO SIGN/APPROVE

The January 24, 2022 transaction report was reviewed and signed by the selectmen.

The January 10, 2022 minutes were approved as written on a motion from Chairman Brewer and a second from Selectman Walker.

A Septic Application for Map 14 Lot 153-3, Iron Foundry Road, was approved by the selectmen.

TO DISCUSS/REVIEW:

Correspondence: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Broadband Initiative: Selectman Meth said there is a Zoom meeting of the North Country Communications District on January 26th at 5pm.

Chamber of Commerce: No update at this time.

Conservation Commission: No update at this time.

Energy Commission: Selectman Meth said that in addition to the discussion about the warrant article for the solar array they reviewed the town report submission and created a mission statement.

Planning Board: Selectman Meth said the next meeting is in February and he will not be able to attend PB meetings for the next eight weeks as he will be taking a course on Tuesday evenings.

CIP: Selectman Walker said the CIP met Thursday. The Highway Department was the main topic of discussion.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 7:06pm on a motion from Chairman Brewer and a second from Selectman Meth with all voting in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jenny Monahan
Administrative Secretary