

TOWN OF FRANCONIA
BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, JULY 26, 2021 AT TOWN HALL AT 3PM

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Kim Cowles, Jenny Monahan, Mara Roosevelt, Mary Opalinski, Phil Krill, Senator Erin Hennesey, Mary Grote, Dawn Steele, Peter Grote, Lynn Terres

The meeting was called to order at 3:02pm.

TO SIGN/APPROVE:

The July 12, 2021 transaction list was reviewed and signed by the Selectmen.

The minutes of June 28th were approved as amended. The minutes of July 12th were approved as written.

Two Franconia ArtWalk Association 3-Party Agreements were signed by Chairman Brewer.

A sign permit application for Peabody & Smith was reviewed and approved by the board.

APPOINTMENTS/WORK SESSIONS:

3:00pm – Jerry Zoller, Project Engineer, NHDOT: Mr. Zoller joined the board via Zoom. He said The Department is painting a number of I-93 bridges, bundling a few at a time for each year.

The current project is (Bundle 7) Project 43105, Franconia.

The bridges involved are:

Site 1 Franconia Bridge No. 128/104 US 3 SB Ramp over I-93 at Exit 35

Site 2 Franconia Bridge No. 116/110 I-93 NB, 116/109 SB over NH 141 at Exit 36

Site 3 Franconia Bridge No. 078/116 I-93 NB, 077/115 SB over Coal Hill Rd, Gale River

Part of the project will include removing lead paint from the bridges prior to repainting. Work will commence in 2022.

3:30pm – Phil Krill & - Franconia Area Heritage Council – Semi Quincentennial: Through research, the Council has discovered that Franconia was not founded in 1772, but instead the spring of 1773. Next year will be Franconia's 249th Settlement Anniversary, not the town's semi-quincentennial. They said this information is supported by Sarah Welch's "A History of Franconia, NH" and Phyllis Herbert's "The Early History of Franconia, NH" and is consistent with state archives. The board discussed celebrating the semi-quincentennial in 2023 and replacing or updating the sign that says 1772.

3:45pm – Scott Leslie – Highway Department Budget Review: Scott first gave the selectmen an update on the sidewalk construction. He said the granite curbing will be arriving in town at the beginning of next week and will begin laying it on Thursday of next week. Central Paving will be coming behind directly after the curbing is finished. Once the sidewalk paving is complete the process of repairing lawns can commence.

Scott said his budget is in good shape but his Vehicle Repair line is almost depleted, so he may need to access the Heavy Equipment Capital Reserve Fund for future repair expenses. Town Administrator Cowles said once all the bills are in for the repairs happening currently, the selectmen can authorize an amount from the CRF.

He said the \$50,000 in the Highway Improvement line is being used to chip seal Lafayette Road.

Some other minor road improvements were discussed.

DISCUSS/REVIEW:

Town Administrator Update: Town Administrator Cowles said the art installations at both the library and the Heritage Museum have been purchased and donated to those facilities.

Town Administrator Cowles said Secured Network Services has requested to have alcohol available at their company picnic.

After a brief discussion, Chairman Brewer made a motion to allow Secured Network Services to have BYOB beer and wine at their company picnic at Dow Park on August 14th from noon to 5:00pm. Selectman Walker seconded the motion with all voting in favor. **Motion passes.**

Town Administrator Cowles said that Town Clerk/Tax Collector Carol Wills is having an issue with the company that handles noticing properties that are held in mortgage of liens. Due to illness, the company missed the deadline for sending the notices. She said there are only a few properties in Franconia that were affected and has consulted legal counsel about available options and was advised to wait another year before noticing them.

Town Administrator Cowles said she would like to put radar speed signs in three locations: North and south Route 18 and south on Route 116. She has two quotes for the signs currently. The selectmen authorized Town Administrator Cowles to consult with NHDOT for permission to place the signs. She will update the board when she has more information.

Town Administrator Cowles said she, Selectmen Meth, Chief Cashin, Chief Gaudette and a representative from North Country Council met with NHDOT last week to discuss the intersection in town and possible ways to increase safety there. She said they discussed a raised median going over the bridge to narrow the travel lanes and slow traffic (it would be a painted median until they are able to schedule the work for the raised median). They also discussed adding a crosswalk at Academy Street but that would be at the expense of the town. They discussed a stop sign that is illuminated by LED lights along the border and adding a "Stop Ahead" sign as well. A roundabout was discussed but it was determined that it was not feasible in that spot due to the close proximity to the store and gas station. She is expecting a letter from NHDOT for the selectmen to sign if they agree with the suggested improvements.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Town Administrator Cowles said Franconia Soaring Foundation wrote to inquire about a specific reason for the denial of their Property Tax Exemption application. She said Dave Woodward is writing a letter for the selectmen's review with an explanation for the reason it was recommended that the board deny the application.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Broadband Initiative Committee: Selectman Meth said there is a meeting on Friday July 30th at 5pm. At the most recent meeting of the North Country Communications District they changed their name to the Northern Grafton County Communications District. They had a Zoom meeting on July 20th and there was a speaker from New England Electric Co-op, Michael Licata and he spoke with them about what they are doing in other communities to install broadband. Senator Erin Hennessey added that the state will have funds to disburse for projects due to federal grant money.

Chamber of Commerce: Selectman Walker said the Chamber met Wednesday the 21st. Some topics they discussed were the Welcome Center, the semiquincentennial, bringing their annual celebration back and the current issue businesses are experiencing of being understaffed while having plenty of business.

Conservation Commission: Chairman Brewer said at the June meeting it was discussed that the Mascoma Bank account that had \$577 for town beautification was closed due to being assessed a monthly fee and the funds moved to the General Fund for town plantings. They also discussed a 65 acre parcel that has part of the Meadowbrook Trail and part of the Middle Earth Trail that was recently purchased and the new owners plan to build which may cause the trails to need rerouting.

Energy Commission: Selectman Meth said the EC met on July 15th at the pavilion at 4:30pm and continued working on Solar Ordinances. They also continued discussion about the Welcome Center.

Planning Board: Selectman Meth said the Planning Board met July 13th at 7pm at town hall and continued working on the Master Plan and town wide survey. The next meeting is August 10th at 7:00pm.

PUBLIC INPUT:

Mary Grote asked if the Auditor's Report has been received yet. Kim said it was just received and she will post it to the site. Mary also asked if the \$400,000 discrepancy from the Treasurer's Report is still being investigated.

Peter asked if the Auditor's Report can be made available today. Town Administrator Cowles said there is not time today due to the meeting after this one but she will get it on the site this week.

Mary Opalinski asked that the board meets during a time that is more accessible to the public. She also asked about finishing the sidewalk on Dow Ave for the trick or treaters.

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 4:41 pm on a motion from Chairman Brewer and a second from Selectman Walker.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jenny Monahan
Administrative Secretary