

**TOWN OF FRANCONIA
BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2022 AT 6:00PM AT TOWN HALL**

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Kim Cowles, Jenny Monahan, Peter Grote, Mary Grote, Dawn Steele, Virginia Mike, Lynn Terres

The meeting was called to order at 6:02pm.

APPOINTMENTS/WORK SESSIONS

6:00pm – Steve Plant – Treasurer's Update – Steve said there were no issues with balancing for September. He said the Police Special Fund is in the process of being closed as previously approved by the board. There is one outstanding check and as it has been more than six months since it was issued it will need to be processed through the Lost & Abandoned Property system in Vermont. Steve said he today initiated a transfer of funds into the Conservation Commission's Land Use Fund of money collected from Land Use Change Taxes levied on properties removed from current use. He said MRI has been timelier in delivering their reports which has been very helpful to the reconciliation process.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comment was taken from Lynn Terres, Dawn Steele, Mary Grote and Virginia Mike.

TO SIGN/APPROVE

The November 14th, 2022 transaction report was reviewed and signed by the selectmen.

The minutes of November 7th, 2022 were approved as amended.

The selectmen signed the 2023 property tax warrant.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

Town Administrator Cowles said that the compactor at the transfer station began failing on Saturday the 13th so the decision was made to close the transfer station for Sunday. On Monday the repairs were made (piston, cylinder and heat pump replacement) and the station was up and running at about 2pm. As it was closed Sunday, the transfer station will be open on Tuesday this week.

The 2023 quote for the PAYT bags is \$18,289, a decline from last year's price of approximately \$22,000. As the tri-town meeting planned for this week was postponed, Town Administrator Cowles asked that the selectmen take a vote to accept the quote so she can move forward with Sugar Hill and Easton.

Selectman Walker made a motion to accept the quote of \$18,289 for PAYT bags for 2023. Chairman Brewer seconded the motion with all voting in favor. **Motion passes.**

Town Administrator Cowles said the town received notice from Casella that hauling rates are more than

doubling beginning in May. This will be discussed in greater detail with the tri-towns.

At the North Country Public Safety Foundation awards ceremony this past weekend, Franconia Firefighter Stan Sherburn was awarded the Firefighter of the year award. Stan has served on the town's fire department for 51 years. The board joined Town Administrator Cowles in congratulating Stan and thanking him for his years of service.

DISCUSS/REVIEW

2023 Tax Rate: Town Administrator Cowles said the 2023 tax rate is \$12.20, a decrease of .75 cents from last year. She said she spoke with the Dept. of Revenue Administration to verify the tax rate as there was a miscalculation on their behalf last year and has been assured that the components of the rate have been verified.

2023 HealthTrust Insurance Rates & Dental Proposal: Town Administrator Cowles said the proposal from HealthTrust for adding dental insurance for employees would cost \$46.25 per individual, \$89.37 for two people and \$160.27 per family per week. She suggested employees pay 25% of the cost. She said HealthTrust Benefits Advisor Andrew Struth attended an informational meeting with employees at town hall last month to answer questions about the proposed dental plan and the employee medical plan, which is increasing by 11% this year (after an 8% decrease in rates last year.) She said enough employees are interested in the dental plan that the town would qualify through HealthTrust to offer the plan. This may be proposed to voters on the 2023 warrant.

There was also discussion on changing the town's alternative health plan offering from the current LUMENOS plan to the ABSOS25/50/3KDED, as Site of Service plan, which costs less weekly than the LUMENOS plan but offers similar benefits and deductibles. There is no change in costs to change the alternative offering.

Town Administrator Position – Part-Time to Full-Time: Town Administrator Cowles said she averages about 40 hours a week in the part-time town administrator position with her hours in the recreation director position being worked in addition. It was discussed that the town administrator position has always been a full-time one but the town was not successful in attracting a FT administrator while attempting to hire one back in 2020, so instead contracted with MRI for financial support and the position was offered at part-time. Town Administrator Cowles said the town's reliance on MRI's services has decreased each year and said they could be phased out completely after 2023. She proposed step increases over the next two years to adjust her salary to full-time compensation.

The board discussed that Town Administrator Cowles recent annual review was very favorable and agreed that the administrator position is a full-time position. There was a brief discussion on the previous administrator's salary and what may be a comparable salary today.

Other Discussion: After a brief discussion, the selectmen decided to schedule a public hearing for Monday, December 12th to discuss contracting with the town of Littleton for EMS services.

FAHC Request to Repurpose 1972 Commemorative Coins: The selectmen continued the discussion on allowing the Franconia Area Heritage Commission to turn in leftover commemorative coins from the town's 1972 anniversary to be repurposed into commemorative coins for the 2023 250th Celebration.

The selectmen agreed they did not wish for the historical coins to be destroyed, and would rather see them sold as is if possible. Town Administrator Cowles will check to find out what they sold for in the past.

With no further discussion the meeting was adjourned at 7:18pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jenny Monahan
Administrative Secretary