

**TOWN OF FRANCONIA
ASSESSING PROPOSALS REVIEW AND
BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2021 AT 5:00PM AT TOWN HALL**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Dan Walker, Jill Brewer

OTHERS PRESENT: Kim Cowles, Carol Wills, Sally Small, Dawn Steele, Mary & Peter Grote

The meeting was called to order at 5:00pm

APPOINTMENTS/WORK SESSIONS

5:00pm – Work Session to Review Assessing Contract Proposals: The committee met briefly and discussed some additions to the assessing contracts. Dawn will redraft the RFP to include monthly review of property sales on a real estate website, providing a copy of their certificate of insurance and a guarantee to hold public hearings to discuss assessments with taxpayers. The work session was adjourned at 5:25pm.

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Kim Cowles, Jenny Monahan, Dawn Steele, Mary & Peter Grote, Duffi Pratt, Aaron Johnson, Dr. Ginny Jeffryes, Steve Plant, Jim Garvey & Jessica Vaughan, Karen Foss, Paula Herbert, Tim Cowles, Jayne O'Connor, Mike & Tina Betley, Virginia Mike

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm

APPOINTMENTS/WORK SESSIONS

Paula Herbert – Small Acts Communities: Paula said that the town of Bethlehem recently became the first town to become a Small Acts Community and read an email from their Select Board Chair Bruce Caplain explaining what being a Small Acts Community means. The Small Acts Standard of care is:

- Respect each other's perspectives, everyone brings something to the table.
- Reach beyond what you think is possible.
- Celebrate all successes.
- Learn from failed attempts.
- Listen to all voices without judgement, be curious and share what you learn.

Small Acts Communities are also asked to promote the following: We are a community that believes that our strength is based in the kindness we show to one another; We believe that a helping community is a happy community; No act of generosity is too small or inconsequential to count – every act matters.

The organization also invites businesses and organizations to participate by way of placing signs/stickers for the public to see on their properties and offers to provide gift cards to facilitate the small acts/offset expenses for patrons.

After a brief discussion, Chairman Brewer made a motion to adopt Small Acts on behalf of the Town of Franconia and be proactive and creative on ways to promote Small Acts within the community. Selectman Walker seconded the motion with all voting in favor. **Motion passes.**

Treasurer Steve Plant – Treasurer’s Report: Steve said he recently completed the quarterly report for September and found that he needed to make about a half dozen corrections in the reconciliation between the bank and Quickbooks. He said none of them were large amounts but they were predominantly due to oversights by Municipal Resources Incorporated (MRI). His main concern is the length of time it is taking them to reconcile monthly and asked if the town could adapt the monthly contract with MRI so that he and Town Administrator Cowles would do the monthly reconciliations instead. However, they would like to clear this with the town’s auditors first to make sure there are no concerns first. They will do this when the auditors visit in December.

Steve also said that he added the Police Special Fund to the Treasurer’s Report so that people are aware of its existence. He said it is a non-interest-bearing account and won’t see much activity and has about \$442 in it.

Duffi Pratt – Noise Ordinance: Duffi met with the board because she is concerned that the portion of the Noise Ordinance that included the state’s Agricultural Exemption (RSA 432:32) was removed from the ordinance draft. She said Jenny sent her the audio from both hearings and did not hear where a request was made to remove that portion. Chairman Brewer said her notes from the November 1st hearing indicate that it was requested that that line be removed. Duffi suggested that Agricultural RSA 432:32 could be added as a definition if it is not directly stated as an exemption in the proposed ordinance. Chairman Brewer said there will be another hearing on the ordinance before it is brought to town meeting for vote and suggested that would be the ideal forum to discuss adding that additional language.

TO SIGN/APPROVE:

The November 29, 2021 transaction list was reviewed and signed by the selectmen.

The minutes of November 15th, 2021, were approved as amended and the minutes of November 22nd, 2021 were approved as written on a motion from Chairman Brewer and a second from Selectman Walker with all voting in favor.

TO DISCUSS/REVIEW:

Town Wide Mask Mandate: Chairman Brewer suggested that a mask mandate be reinstated for town buildings. Deputy Health Officer Dr. Jeffryes stated that she supports this measure and added that a police officer was in the post office with no mask over the weekend and she thought this was inappropriate for an employee on the clock interacting with the public in an indoor space. Dr. Jeffryes also stated that she would support reinstating the town wide mask mandate as well. Dr. Duffy is meeting with Town Administrator Cowles to discuss Covid-19 tomorrow. Selectman Meth said he would support both a mask mandate in town buildings, for employees on the clock at indoor public spaces and to recommend that businesses strongly encourage mask wearing. He would like to revisit the topic after Dr. Duffy speaks with Town Administrator Cowles.

After the discussion, Chairman Brewer made a motion to instate a mask mandate for all town owned

public buildings and for all employees to wear masks while on the clock in any public indoor spaces. Selectman Walker seconded the motion with all voting in favor. **Motion passes.**

Correspondence: Cornelia Loritzen wrote to the board to express her disappointment that a curb cut was not installed in front of her business when the sidewalks were redone. Town Administrator Cowles said Cornelia had originally requested this before the sidewalk project began and she consulted NHDOT about it and learned that the spot does not meet their criteria for a curb cut and crosswalk.

Town Administrator Update: Town Administrator Cowles said she spoke with the Trustees of the Trust Funds and there are two capital expenditures that do not have board approvals reflected in the minutes. After a brief discussion, Chairman Brewer made a motion to use \$5,586.11 from the Highway Heavy Equipment Fund towards repairs on the Highway Department's F550 and \$10,705.66 from the Highway Improvement Fund for road work at Mittersill. Selectman Meth seconded the motion with all voting in favor. **Motion passes.**

Town Administrator Cowles said tax bills were mailed last weekend and she is currently working on getting updated department budgets posted to the website and preparing to meet with department heads for budget work.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Broadband Initiative: Selectman Meth said he received an email from the Grafton County Broadband committee stating that they have hired a contractor to begin building the broadband spine. 17 towns will be able to access the spine after this phase. The work will continue in the spring and add access for another 22 towns to the spine, including Franconia. He said the town will need to figure out how to connect to that network. He received another email from Carol Miller, the state's former Director of Broadband Technology regarding the collaboration between the NH Municipal Association and the Northern Collaborative for Digital Equity that asks towns to put up good faith money to be able to access the spine. Carol said that Franconia and Sugar Hill can take part as one town and together join for \$7,000 instead of \$5,000 each. Selectman Meth recommends that the town find the funds to join the collaborative and thinks this is an excellent opportunity to obtain expanded broadband access for the town. The selectmen discussed what the timeline is and would like to confirm that American Rescue Plan Funds can be used for such a project. Selectman Meth will look into this further and report back.

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 EC has not met since his last update and the next meeting is planned for December 15th.

Planning Board: Selectman Meth said the Planning Board has not met since his last update. The next meeting has not been confirmed.

CIP: Selectmen Walker said the CIP did not meet last week and next meets December 1st. Karen Foss said the CIP has met with all department heads and is working on scheduling another round of follow up interviews.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Dawn Steele requested that a date for the next public hearing on the Noise Ordinance, Keeping of Poultry Ordinance and Sign Ordinance be finalized. After a brief discussion, the board chose the date of December 20th at 7pm at town hall.

The board entered non-public session at 7:03pm for reasons of personnel.

The board left non-public session at 7:30pm.

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30pm on a motion from Chairman Brewer and a second from Selectman Meth with all voting in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jenny Monahan
Administrative Secretary