

**TOWN OF FRANCONIA
BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2021 AT 6PM AT TOWN HALL**

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Kim Cowles, Jenny Monahan, Mary Grote, Dawn Steele, Lynn Terres, Meredith Pratt, Aaron Johnson, Mike & Tina Betley, Janice Cole, Tim Cowles, Mark Hessler, Thad Presby and Officer Kaitlyn Barnum.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm

TO SIGN/APPROVE:

The October 4, 2021 transaction list was reviewed and signed by the selectmen.

The minutes of September 20th were approved as written on a motion by Chairman Brewer and a second by Selectman Meth with all voting in favor.

The minutes of September 27th were approved as amended on a motion by Chairman Brewer and a second by Selectman Walker with all voting in favor.

APPOINTMENTS/WORK SESSIONS:

6:00pm – Meredith Pratt – Breach of Peace Ordinance: After distributing some handouts from the New Hampshire Municipal Association (NHMA) about Local Regulation of Agricultural & Horticultural Operations and Nuisance & Right-to-Farm, Meredith talked with the board about her concerns with the proposed changes to the Breach of Peace Ordinance. She said her main concern is separating farm animals from dogs and domesticated animals in the proposed updated ordinance. She said her farm has been registered with the state for two years and wondered if there should be an exemption in the ordinance for established farms. She said she currently has 35 hens and three roosters, which was just reduced today from five roosters, which she said she did begrudgingly in order to try improve the issue for her neighbors. Meredith said she is wondering whether the issue at hand should be a town issue or a personal issue and that her main concern is with keeping the peace with her neighbors and protecting each other's interests. Selectman Meth asked Meredith if she feels that RSA 432:33, which addresses agricultural operations having protection from nuisance claims by neighbors applies to her and she said yes, she feels it applies to her operation. Meredith next referenced NHMA's publication "Knowing the Territory" chapter 13 that addresses ethical behavior of government employees, avoiding conflicts of interest and the proper use of authority in local government, and wondered whether this issue should have been brought to the board. Selectman Walker said that the board is mainly gathering information at this time and trying to address an inadequate noise ordinance. He said that a taxpayer and resident raised an issue and that person is also a town employee but their employment does not exempt them from acting on their concerns as residents. He said there has been much input from residents and there will be more hearings in the future. Chairman Brewer thanked Meredith for providing information and speaking with the board.

DISCUSS/REVIEW:

EV Charging Station RFP: Chairman Brewer said Chris Thayer of the Appalachian Mountain Club alerted her to a program through the Dept. of Environmental Services that is accepting applications from towns for Electric Vehicle Charging Stations and the New Hampshire VW Trust will cover up to 80% of the associated costs as well as manage the stations. She said the Appalachian Mountain Club has already installed them on their own and the town may want to consider applying for them for the proposed Welcome Center. The applications are due January 7, 2022. Selectman Meth and Walker said they support Chairman Brewer looking further into the topic and Selectman Meth said he will let the Energy Commission know about the program.

Property Assessing Company RFP: Town Administrator Cowles sent the proposed RFP that was created with the assistance of resident Dawn Steele to the board for review prior to the meeting. Town Administrator Cowles said the RFP will be sent to approximately twenty qualified assessing companies throughout the state.

Town Hall Front Lawn: Town Administrator Cowles said that the newly redone sidewalks and walkway in front of town hall emphasize the height difference between those areas and the slate walkway that runs perpendicular to the town hall between the two large oak trees. She said the slates can be removed and reset in a better fashion or removed entirely and the area changed into regular lawn. After a brief discussion, the board suggested resetting the slates to retain some of the historic charm. Town Administrator Cowles said replacing the light fixtures and lamp post in front of town hall is also being investigated and the hand rail along the new walkway is in the works.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Principal Johnk of Lafayette Regional School sent a letter commending Chief Cashin's and the police department's response to a recent incident at the school involving a suspicious person as well as their daily presence at the school and positive influence.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE:

Town Administrator Cowles said she is waiting for confirmation from the sister towns about the date and time of the Transfer Station and Recreation budget reviews, and Monday October 5th at 6pm is the proposed date. The board also discussed the Ordinance Hearings (solar, sign and noise) and after a brief discussion proposed the dates of November 1st and 15th at 7pm.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Broadband Initiative Committee: Selectman Meth had no update but expects the next meeting to be held October 29th at 5pm via Zoom.

Chamber of Commerce: Selectman Walker said the next meeting is November 20th at Woodsville Guaranty.

Conservation Commission: No update at this time.

Energy Commission: Selectman Meth said the next meeting is tentatively scheduled for October 19th at 4:30pm and he expects the meeting location will be at town hall rather than the pavilion.

Planning Board: Selectman Meth said the PB meets next on October 12th at 7pm and is working on the updated ordinances.

PUBLIC INPUT:

Prior to Public Input, Mary Grote asked how Meredith Pratt disposes of the chicken's droppings.

Tina Betley asked if the updated ordinances will address conflict resolution steps.

Janice Cole asked about the proposed Welcome Center costs and next steps as well as asked about meetings of that committee and whether they are made available to the public.

Dawn Steele asked if the board knew how many farms are in town.

Janice Cole asked about the town's posted financial policies and whether they are in final form. Janice said she had 60-70 questions and was invited to come to town hall and chat with Kim.

Regarding the proposed Welcome Center, Mike Betley said he would recommend that the board keep working on the Welcome Center plans rather than waiting until spring to continue so they would be better prepared to move forward when spring comes. Mike also said that he thinks taxpayers really want to have a say in the Welcome Center plans and discuss its feasibility more. Mike also said he supports the installation of the EV Charging Stations and maybe different locations in town could be discussed so the project was not necessarily attached to the Welcome Center.

Tina Betley commented that she would like the board to keep the public abreast of what's happening with the Welcome Center project as it progresses before fully bringing it back to the table in the spring.

Mike Betley suggested changing the name of the Welcome Center to Multi-Purpose Building as that may attract more visitors to it.

Meredith Pratt commented that Littleton has a much larger population than Franconia and the board should look at towns of similar size Noise Ordinances as well.

There was no further public input. Chairman Brewer made a motion to enter non-public session at 6:55pm for reasons of personnel. Selectman Meth seconded the motion with all voting in favor.

The board left non-pubic session at 7:09pm. With no further discussion the meeting was adjourned at 7:09pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jenny Monahan
Administrative Secretary