

TOWN OF FRANCONIA
BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 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, Peter Grote, Karen Foss, Lynn Terres, Virginia Mike, Janice Cole, Larry Plate, Karen Plate, Mike Betley, Tina Betley, Chief Mac Cashin.

TO SIGN/APPROVE:

The September 13, 2021 transaction list was reviewed and signed by the Selectmen.

The minutes of August 30, 2021 were approved as written on a motion by Selectman Walker and a second by Selectman Meth with all voting in favor.

Septic Permit Application –Melisi–Map 21 Lot 11-5 - Approved by the board.

Septic Permit Application – Fox Hill Cooperative – Map 13 Lot 43 – Site 132 - Approved by the board.

Septic Permit Application – Cohen – Map 22 Lot 11.1-9 – Approved by the board.

APPOINTMENTS/WORK SESSIONS:

5:30pm Non-Public Session (RSA 91-A:3,II(c)) A non-public session was held from 5:32pm to 6:03pm.

6:03pm Chief Cashin - Chief's Update: Chief Cashin said the department's policy updates are still in progress and he is very pleased with what he has received thus far.

Chief said there are several investigations currently ongoing and the department has made many traffic stops. He is grateful to have Officer Pomeroy working part-time and he has been a huge help during Sgt. Jarvis' deployment.

Town Administrator Cowles and Chief Cashin have been working together with NHDOT to obtain and install radar speed signs and NHDOT recently approved the locations they selected. Speed signs will be installed on Main Street near Chef Joes, on the North end of Main Street near the antique store and on Route 116 next to the cemetery. Town Administrator Cowles said \$7,000 of funds in the sidewalk project proposal were earmarked for the speed signs, but the quotes she has received average \$8,400.

Chairman Brewer made a motion to authorize Town Administrator Cowles to spend up to \$8,700 towards the radar speed signs. Selectman Walker seconded the motion with all voting in favor. **Motion passes.**

Chief Cashin said his budget is okay but getting a little tight. The Dodge Charger needs a new exhaust and that expense won't leave much of a buffer for the remainder of the year.

DISCUSS/REVIEW:

Welcome Center RFP Bid Opening. The town received one bid for the Welcome Center project. The selectman took the bid home to review.

Unassigned Fund Balance (UFB) Policy : Janice Cole updated the board on her progress with the UFB policy. She added the changes to the policy that were previously discussed with the board. Janice said she has been in communication with Jamie Dow of the Dept. of Revenue Administration regarding how the Fund Balance can be used and learned that it can be used to offset warrant articles approved by voters, emergency expenditures or to offset the tax rate. Janice will add this to the procedures in the policy. The policy recommends a UFB target balance level of 12%, as the selectman previously said they were comfortable with. She said she doesn't think anything dramatic needs to be done this year to achieve the 12% level. Janice will add a few changes to the policy and return the draft to the board for review at the September 20th meeting. The selectmen thanked Janice for her assistance with the policy.

League of American Cyclists – Bike Friendly Community: Chairman Brewer said she received an email from Bruce Caplain of the Bethlehem Select Board asking the board to consider being supporters of a Tri-town Bike Friendly Community Certification that would include Bethlehem, Littleton and Franconia. Their mission statement states, "For the towns of Bethlehem, Franconia and Littleton to collaborate to attract visitors to our towns through cycling which will enhance our business establishments, increase property values by making it even more of a desirable place to live, creating a safe environment for residents and visitors to ride road, gravel, mountain and fat tire bikes and by doing so reduce vehicle congestion thus helping the environment and making people healthier. The League of American Bicyclists Bike Friendly Community Certification organizes a path to follow to achieve these objectives." Chairman Brewer added a statement from the slide show that states, "What is a bike friendly community? A bike friendly community welcomes bicyclists by providing safe accommodations for bicycling and encouraging people to bike for transportation and recreation. Making bicycling safe and convenient are keys to improving public health, reducing traffic congestion, improving air quality and improving quality of life." Chairman Brewer said this is something in which she believes strongly and would like to have the town support the certification. The board was supportive of the town seeking the certification. She will attend a meeting of the committee that has been formed and report back to the board.

CORRESPONDENCE:

A resident wrote to the board urging the reinstatement of the town wide mask mandate. The board would like to revisit this topic at the September 20th meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Broadband Initiative Committee: Selectman Meth said the Northern Grafton Communications District is going to have a Zoom presentation tomorrow, the 14th at 5:00pm by Nick Coates and Kevin Glynn of the Grafton County Broadband Committee. On the 17th, there will be a follow up meeting to discuss the presentation and they plan to invite representatives from the New Hampshire Electric Co-op, the organization that is working towards installing a spine of broadband connection in Grafton County.

Chamber of Commerce: No update at this time, the Chamber next meets on Wednesday, September 15th.

Conservation Commission: Chairman Brewer said the CC meets Tuesday the 21st at the Dow and then will walk the proposed trail on the Lawrence property.

Energy Commission: Selectman Meth said the EC next meets on Thursday the 16th at 4:30pm at town hall. They plan to finalize the Solar Ordinance.

Planning Board: Selectman Meth said the Planning Board meets tomorrow at 7:00pm to continue work on the Master Plan. At their last meeting, they heard a lot line adjustment and worked on the Master Plan.

PUBLIC INPUT:

Karen Foss said that in the final audit, the same comments from the auditors have appeared in their findings for the past four years. She urged the board to add these items to an agenda so they can report on them weekly and resolve by the end of the year to avoid the same comments being in next year's audit.

Mary Grote reminded the board that they cannot vote in non-public session and must return to public session for any votes.

Regarding a Request for Proposal for assessing companies, Dawn Steele said she spoke with the Municipal Property Division at the Dept. of Revenue Administration and they said there are five assessing software systems used in New Hampshire and you don't have to use the same company as the software you use. In other words the town could use Avitar software but use a different assessing company. She also asked if the town pays a fee to Avitar monthly for their software. The answer was yes.

Karen Betley asked if the estimate of \$8,700 for the radar signs included all three signs. The answer was yes.

Mike Betley asked if the board should disclose the amount of the bid proposal. The board said they would like to review the proposal prior to publishing it. Mike also asked if the sidewalks will receive another layer of asphalt before they are complete. The answer was yes. Mike lastly asked the board how the Bike Friendly Community project would increase property values.

Virginia Mike commented that the Breach of Peace Ordinance does not seem complete compared to other towns. Virginia also commented that she has had issues with bicyclists on town trails and roads and would like the board to consider pedestrian safety as well.

Mary Grote commented that there is a chronic safety issue with bicyclists on Easton Road and asked how people could be made safe on that section of the road. There followed a discussion about ways that road could be made safer for bicycles, pedestrians and motorists.

Dawn Steele asked for an update from the Fire Department of their current payroll costs.

The board entered non-public session for reasons of personnel at 7:16pm in for reasons of reputation. The board left non-public session at 7:44pm.

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 7:44pm on a motion from Chairman Brewer and a second from Selectman Walker.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jenny Monahan
Administrative Secretary