

**TOWN OF DEERFIELD
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
November 9, 2020
MINUTES**

Call to Order

5:30 pm – Chairman Robertson called the meeting to order

Present: Andrew Robertson, Chairman; Richard Pitman, Vice Chairman, Fred McGarry, Alden Dill, and Cynthia McHugh, Selectmen.

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Chairman Robertson asks all to rise and pledge allegiance to the Flag

2021 Budget Review: Highway Department – Page 44-51

Chairman Robertson stated that the first order of business was to conclude the 2021 budget. What they had left outstanding is a portion of the Highway Department budget and that is pages 44-51 and he was showing a total of \$388,133.00 for this section and John, his understanding is essentially, the budget that they had last year with the increases that the Board had approved previously.

Mr. Harrington stated that this was correct and all the other line items are left, level funded from 2020.

Chairman Robertson stated that they needed a motion for the \$388,133.00.

Motion: Vice Chairman Pitman moves to approve the Highway Department budget as presented for \$388,133.00 that wasn't previously approved.

Second: Selectwoman McHugh

Discussion:

Vote: Yea 4, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Chairman Robertson stated that he would note that this enables them to get things rolling towards the budget committee but they are free to come back and make any changes that the MBC recommend or at the deliberative session so it is not actually cast in stone.

Moving on, they have Longevity Awards.

Longevity Awards: Patrolman Alex Molet – 5 years; Patrolman Roger St. Onge – 20 years; Peter Lemay – 5 years.

Chairman Robertson stated that he had certificates and envelopes for those three and thank them for their time spent with the town and glad to have them.

Regular Business:

Outstanding Minutes of November 2, 2020

Motion: Vice Chairman Pitman moves to approve the minutes of November 2, 2020

Second: Selectman Dill

Discussion:

Vote: Yea 4, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Chairman Robertson stated that at this point, before they go too far, he is going to note that Nick Lawrence wanted to discuss something with them.

Nick Lawrence – Parks and Rec

Chairman Robertson stated that he had a note there that Nick wanted to talk about the traditional Santa event that has typically been held in the town hall.

Mr. Lawrence stated that this was correct and in lieu of doing it inside the town hall, he was looking on getting the blessing of the Board and conduct it out at the gazebo this year where they could obviously maintain social distancing and do it in a safe manner.

Chairman Robertson asked how the Board felt about it and the vice chairman stated that he had no problem with the gazebo.

Chairman Robertson stated that the Board was in general agreement that the gazebo is fine. He would caution that they are still under state RSA that if he anticipates having over 100 people or more gathered, everyone is supposed to be masked.

Nick stated that he knew that and also added that in the past, this hasn't been a problem except for one when they had it in the building so he didn't anticipate that being at the outdoor either.

Selectwoman McHugh asked Mr. Lawrence if he had any ideas as to what he would be doing?

Mr. Lawrence stated that if that was the way that they were going to do it is that they would just have Santa at the gazebo and have it roped off. They would have chairs where they could sit and talk to him and have those meaningful discussions with him and play that up but obviously, not have the physical contact of it.

Chairman Robertson thought that it sounded good and the Board is in general agreement so he would have him proceed.

Mr. Lawrence thanked the Board and told them that he appreciates it.

Vouchers/Payroll Manifest/Accounts Payable Manifest:

Accounts Payable Manifest - \$1,015,040.30.

Obviously, a large chunk is going to the school district.

Motion: Selectman Dill moves to approve the Accounts Payable Manifest of \$1,015,040.30

Second: Selectman McGarry

Discussion:

Vote: Yea 4, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Signatures/Correspondence:

Chairman Robertson stated that from the Assessor's Office, they have a Timber Tax Levy.

Timber Tax Levy – Michael and Melissa Yurek, Old Centre Road - \$278.71

Motion: Vice Chairman Pitman moves to approve levying the timber tax in the amount of \$278.71

Second: Selectwoman McHugh

Discussion:

Vote: Yea 4, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Chairman Robertson stated that they also had the deed transfer, the signature page to the deed, and this is for property sold at auction to Norman Launier and Ann Launier, Tax Map 405, Lot 76. This is off of North Road.

Motion: Selectman Dill moves to sign the deed transfer for property located on Tax Map 405, Lot 76 to the Launier's

Second: Selectman McGarry

Discussion:

Vote: Yea 4, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Chairman Robertson stated that the tax collector had received a call from a title search company seeking information on a parcel release that should have been filed with the Rockingham County Registry of Deeds. This is for parcel Map 409, Lot 31-1. The property is located at 4 Wild Turkey.

This is simply a housekeeping matter of signing a new original so that the paperwork can be officially released at the Registry of Deeds. There is no new, additional money being assessed or collected.

The vice chairman asked if they needed a motion to which the chairman stated that they did and this is for the property owned by Robert and Ellen DeSisto.

Motion: Vice Chairman Pitman moves to signing a new original deed for the above-mentioned property

Second: Selectman Dill

Discussion:

Vote: Yea 4, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Chairman Robertson stated that they had a letter from Avitar Associates with their preliminary "DRA Assessment to Sales Ratio", a closeup of the Assessment to Sales Ratio Analysis for the Town of Deerfield for 76 qualified sales using DRA's normal criteria. The preliminary analysis indicates a median assessment to sales ratio of 99.7 percent and a co-efficient of dispersion 4.2.

With the Board's permission, he will forward this information electronically to the DRA for the department's use in establishing the final ratio.

The selectman will need to sign the pink certification form and the chairman continued that they would need a motion from the Board to accept the 99.7 sales ratio with the co-efficient of dispersion 4.2.

Motion: Selectman McGarry moves to approve the numbers provided by Avitar Associates

Second: Selectman Dill

Discussion:

Vote: Yea 4, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Chairman Robertson stated that this completed the Signature Folder.

He continued that in the Correspondence File, they had minutes and what basically is going on with the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Adjustment for their review.

They had a Town of Deerfield Management Letter and the chairman asked the town administrator if it requires action as it is a draft.

Mr. Harrington stated that it is a draft that the Board needs to approve. He put responses in there to the questions that they had and if the Board is okay with that, he can get back to Melanson-Heath so that they can finalize the letter.

Chairman Robertson stated that this was address to Mr. Harrington and Ms. Sinnamon and this is a draft responding to the audit that there had been two questions.

One, they wanted to know about improvement to impact fee accounting and reporting and they wanted to know about improvements to departmental procedures and John has put together a response for both of these.

The chairman didn't know if people wanted to approve this at this time or did, they want a chance to review this before they do. It is primarily a housekeeping issue.

Vice Chairman Pitman asked the chairman if he was comfortable with it to which he replied that he was.

Motion: Vice Chairman Pitman moves to approve the draft letter presented to the Board

Second: Selectman McGarry

Discussion:

Vote: Yea 4, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

The chairman stated that he didn't think that it required a signature and it was confirmed it did not.

They have a letter from Kate Bertoncini in which she sent a formal request about a parking ticket that she got several weeks ago during the "Taste of the Fair" event at "The Lion".

Several cars were ticketed. This is the only response that they have gotten asking for some relief from said ticket so he thought that his response would be to forward it to the police department but he did check on the spot and she actually called him as well and told him where she was parked and there are clear, no parking signs on that side of

the road, including where she was parked. He will leave it to the police department. He didn't think that they should be involved in waiving tickets. Others on the Board agreed.

Selectwoman McHugh asked if the police department send her to the Board to which the chairman stated that he didn't so. She had emailed or called him; he didn't remember which.

Mr. Harrington stated that the email came in from the web email, "Contact Us". That is how they got it.

The chairman stated that they had a check for \$73.59 from Standard Power of America and Mr. Harrington added that this is the town's power agreement, hydropower agreement that they had.

Town Administrator's Report:

Mr. Harrington stated that he had one item this evening and that was to point the Board's direction to an agenda item, Tax Rate Setting, and stated that he did have the town clerk joining them this evening for any questions that they might have when you get to that.

He stated that he did have some information to help them make a decision.

Chairman Robertson stated that they would address it at this point. He knew that two weeks ago, they said that they would consider it even though he thought that the motion was more like to consider it more like towards the 15th or later although there was some discussion as to whether that would impede the town clerk in getting tax bills out. He didn't know what the Board's pleasure was as to whether they wanted to wait another week until their next meeting to do that so that they could see what they had left in the till.

Vice Chairman Pitman asked if that is when they would decide on how much they wanted to hold back and the chairman stated that they would definitely have to decide to do this before December to keep in the good graces.

Mr. Harrington stated that there are two things that can change in the tax rate setting. One is the balance which is technically what they anticipate having left over from the current year budget and the second is Overlay which the town puts aside for any abatements you may be giving in the next year. That money would come out of that fund there.

He continued that he could give them some budget estimates for balances. Based on week ending last week, there was \$984,773.00 in the budget. Estimated expenses by end of year, and again, this is just an estimate. Pete can estimate how much payroll is going to be. Accounts Payable is a variable. He estimated as of two weeks ago, about \$800,000.00 and that has dropped only \$15,000.00 with this weeks' Accounts Payable. That would be an estimated end of year expenses and still anticipating \$784,960.00 leaving a balance of about \$199,000.00 so it is pretty close this year. That doesn't include any unanticipated other than usual accounts payable and payroll.

He did do some other calculations for them based on that \$199,000.00. If they were to put \$50,000.00 in the fund balance line, that would drop the tax rate to \$19.74. It is currently \$19.80 without adding any money in there.

If they were to put a \$100,000.00 in the fund balance, that would drop the tax rate to \$19.67.

A \$150,000.00 added to the fund balance would drop the tax rate to \$19.60.

His recommendation would not to go any higher than that.

Vice Chairman Pitman asked how much would be needed to make it \$19.60 to which Mr. Harrington stated that it would be \$150,000.00 out of an anticipated \$199,000.00 left over at the of the year.

Selectman Dill asked what the number was for the \$50,000.00 and the chairman stated that it was \$19.74 for the \$50,000.00 and \$19.67 for the \$100,000.00.

Motion: Vice Chairman Pitman moves to go with the tax rate of \$19.60

Second: Selectwoman McHugh

Discussion: Chairman Robertson stated that would be using the \$150,000.00 in the fund balance.

Selectman Dill stated that he was going to recommend the \$100,000.00 fund balance and he didn't know how everyone else feels about that.

He thought that it was cutting it a little close for this year and not knowing what they are getting in for revenue.

Vice Chairman Pitman stated that they have had an easy, early winter this year and they have almost made it through November.

Selectman McGarry stated that he tended to feel the same as Alden to getting low on that balance

Chairman Robertson added that he felt he was comfortable with shooting for the middle also for the seven-cent tax difference.

Vice Chairman Pitman asked if that was all it was is seven cents to which multiple people agreed it was.

Chairman Robertson stated that he could call for the vote.

Vote: Yea 0, Nay 4, Abstained 0 – Motion Fails

Motion: Selectman Dill moves to use the \$100,000.00 fund balance and set the tax rate at \$19.67.

Second: Selectman McGarry

Discussion:

Vote: Yea 4, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Selectman Dill asked if they set that rate now, does the tax clerk think she would have time to get them out in December or what are they looking at?

Ms. Roberts stated that she is still thinking that it is going to be a mid to late January due date because what needs to happen is after the tax rate is set, it will then need to go assessing. Once assessing is done with their part of the data entry and software functions, I will upload the information to the tax collector's software and begin creating the bill; and testing it. Once that is complete, she sends it to the printer who mails it. The printers need a good week or two to do their work. I am also required to give 30 clear days for people, by law, to pay before the due date. At this point we are looking at a mid-late January 2021 due date for the 2nd half 2020 tax bill. It will go out on time for the summer.

Selectman Dill stated that he just wanted her to explain that whole process to everybody when they were complaining that the town had set the tax rate and they hadn't seen their tax bills so he thought that it was an excellent, excellent explanation.

Chairman Robertson asked if Mr. Harrington had anything else for his Town Administrator's Report to which he stated that he didn't.

Unfinished Business/New Business/Unfinished Business:

Selectman Dill stated that he had a bunch and would take them one at a time.

He just wanted to thank everybody who came out and voted the other day and more importantly, everybody who volunteered to help that take off. It went exceptionally smooth for an election. We were one of the first towns in the county to get our numbers into the county.

He also thinks, as a Board, make a motion to thank the fair for using their facilities and John Tobbe, for really going above and beyond.

The chairman agreed with Selectman Dill. If they could prepare something for the Fair Association, Mr. Harrington.

Selectman Dill continued that it is looking like they may have a shot in doing the town election there as well so if the Board could ask them at the same time, it would make sense.

Chairman Robertson stated that given the huge part of the crew that took part in this was new, too, very first time that they worked as an election official, and Selectman Dill added that there was an incredible number of new volunteers that they hopefully are going to keep and get them back. It went very smooth.

Mr. Harrington stated he wanted to just add to this conversation. Dan (Holdridge) has already reached out to the Fair Association, Don Wyman, to try to set up possible usage for the Deliberative Session and the March election.

Just to confirm with them, they are already beginning the discussion on how to organize for the deliberative and set up the building if it is available to the town.

Vice Chairman Pitman stated that when you write a thank you note, you don't include what they wanted also.

Mr. Harrington stated that Dan, and he wanted the Board to know, is handling that part. The letter is strictly going to be a thank you.

Selectman McGarry asked if the town was providing any compensation to the fair for the use of the building as well as electricity and the heat and Mr. Harrington stated that he wasn't aware of any.

Vice Chairman Pitman stated that they wouldn't ask but they wouldn't turn down a donation.

Chairman Robertson asked Mr. Harrington if he would reach out and come up with some idea of what to do.

Vice Chairman Pitman stated that the letter should be addressed to the president of the fair and the Board of Directors and that way it will come from them not the Board wondering.

Selectman Dill stated that he had one other thing and it is not election related.

He didn't know if anyone from the Board have taken a left out of Church Street onto Route 107 lately but something has changed about that site distance. You cannot see any cars coming until they are well past the Lazy Lion.

Chairman Robertson stated that he thought what has changed is that there are two, large trucks parking in at the apartment building to which the vice chairman agreed.

Selectman Dill stated that he thought that was what it was. They have to do something as he has had two, close calls the other day and you can't wait until its dark so that you can see headlights coming. You can not see vehicles coming up Route 107 there. He thought that they were asking for an accident there.

He did think that it was that blue Dodge out front now.

Vice Chairman Pitman stated that there was a black pickup and a blue one.

Selectman Dill said that you are coming up the hill on Church Street and looking left even with his truck, he can't see anything.

Selectwoman McHugh asked if they could just send them a letter asking not to park there and the chairman added that they could send a letter to Bob asking if he could address parking keeping an eye to keeping vehicles out of the sight line of the road there.

Selectwoman McHugh added that he has cars that are parking this way or angled which isn't how it used to be.

Selectman Dill stated that he was glad that it wasn't just him but he asked Cindy and she said the same thing.

He stated that this is all that he had.

Chairman Robertson stated with regards to unfinished business, he would note that he talked to Attorney Michael Corbin last week. They had a quick chat in the morning and Michael is going to be the lead attorney on the property situation that they were working with and he is going to rely heavily on James Raymond as well. He is an attorney that they have dealt with on a number of land issues in the past. They are going to move forward with that team.

Mr. Harrington stated that he believed that Ms. Roberts was still on the line and he thought that she might have something to say.

Ms. Roberts stated that she just wanted to talk about a couple of things and also wanted to jump on with Selectman Dill regarding the election and how smooth it went.

I would like to start by wrapping up the 2020 General Election cycle by thanking everyone involved in the process. Deerfield did an amazing job, and if I do say so myself, we were the poster child of preparedness! The amount of time, energy, resources, and careful planning that went into this was so impressive, when I look back at it – I am truly astounded we pulled it off. What I love about this Town, is when it matters and when it counts, we are able to come together as a community and get things done. We should all be proud of our little town!!!

There was over an 84% voter turnout for the General Election. 3246 ballots were cast. 253 new voters registered to vote on Election Day. We now have a total of 3850 registered voters.

The Clerk's Office processed 1007 Absentee Ballot Requests – A HISTORIC RECORD!!! Of those requests, 977 were cast – that is a 97% return rate, which is incredible! It is unheard of and haven't seen that before.

I would like to extend a special appreciation to Dianne Kimball, and Joanna Waring for stepping up and helping with the elections, and in particular helping us with the absentee ballots. There is no way we could have done what we did without them! The amount of work that goes into one single request would be shocking for people to learn. Multiplying that by 1007 for a little town like ours is just staggering! Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart! You guys have been wonderful.

Scanning and cataloging all lien books to PDF Which brings me to my next topic. I have a part-time line in my budget. I typically use this up on a per-diem basis for special projects. Aside from my day to day stuff, I have a lot of projects and goals for my department, and since COVID hit, those have taken a back burner. I would like to continue to use Dianne and Joanna on a per diem basis to work on these projects.

She stated that she has about \$3,400.00 in that line that she can use for this.

These projects include:

- Organizing the archive room
- Organizing permanent records
- Managing records during their retention schedules
- Cataloging contents in the archive room
- Sorting through 1,000s of documents and boxes

Scanning and cataloging all minute books to PDF

Ultimately, this will make all of our lives a lot easier. We will all benefit from this as a community, and will make research 100 times easier and faster and more efficient.

A very important role of the Clerk is being the keeper of the record. My goal is not only to preserve and protect them, but to catalogue them in a way where

1. We know what we have
2. We know what is missing.
3. We can research them in a much more efficient manner.

So, I want to be upfront with the Board, and gain your support for this massive, gigantic project. I would like to continue to utilize both Dianne and Joanna on a per diem basis for this purpose, and I will keep the Board updated as to our progress and wanted to know how the Board feels about that.

Chairman Robertson stated that he didn't know how the Board feels exactly but the money is in your budget, in the appropriate lines.

Selectman McGarry stated that it sounds like she has plenty of stuff to do.

Chairman Robertson asked if there were other comments or concerns.

No one did and the chairman added that he thought that the Board was generally in favor and as he said, she could probably make a case even if they weren't because she has the money in your budget and it was appropriated for that purpose.

Ms. Roberts stated that she just wanted them to know what she was doing so that they knew and the chairman stated that they appreciated that and she also wanted them to know what was going on and what they were working on.

Ms. Roberts stated that she knew we just got off the heels of the General Election, but I have already started working on the 2021 Town and School Election and Deliberative Sessions. This will be approaching rapidly, as the next couple of months will be broken up around the holidays, time off and vacations. Right now, I am focused on calendaring – and ask that the BOS confirm a venue for the Deliberative Session, sooner rather than later. There is lots of work to be done.

Chairman Robertson stated that it was helpful and they appreciated it.

Ms. Roberts stated that this was all she had.

Vice Chairman Pitman thanked Kelly and told her that she did a great job.

Chairman Robertson asked for other business or new business and hearing none, moved to Citizen's Comments.

Citizen's Comments:

None

Motion: Vice Chairman Pitman moves to adjourn at 6:00 pm

Second: Selectwoman McHugh

Discussion:

Vote: Yea 4, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Next Meeting: Monday, November 16, 2020 at 5:30 pm

*The Minutes were transcribed and respectfully submitted by Dianne L. Kimball, Recording Secretary
Pending approval by the Board of Selectmen*