

**Town of Freedom
Selectmen's Meeting
Tuesday, January 19, 2021**

Present were Selectmen Leslie Babb, Ernest Day, Jr. and Alan Fall, and Ellen White, Town Administrator, who recorded the minutes. This meeting was held at the Town Office.

Chairman Babb called the meeting to order at 7:30 AM.

Preliminary Operating Budget Review:

Review took place. At first glance, noted increase is made up primarily of change in health insurance plan for one department, wages for Deputy Town Clerk, transportation of trash and inclusion of full ambulance contract cost that was split into a warrant article for its ratification in 2020. Discussion on unreserved fund balance available (\$1,320,063) and the retainage percentage (16.45%) after \$100,000 was used to reduce the tax rate.

An emergency expenditure estimated at \$33,000 for the cleanout of a property under a health order was reviewed. Discussion on how to proceed with funding. White will contact Michelle Clark at NH DRA for guidance.

Capital Reserve fund balances were reviewed. Day recommends adding \$10,000 to the department funds. Following additional discussion, it was decided unanimously to increase the Capital Reserves as follows: Highway Equipment CRF - \$20,000; Transfer Station CRF - \$10,000; Town Hall & Town Office CRF - \$10,000; Fire Equipment CRF - \$10,000; Police Equipment CRF - \$10,000. All to be funded using unreserved fund balance.

Fall stated the importance of holding at a 2-3% increase per year while it is becoming more difficult to maintain with the costs of services increasing. Babb also stated importance in building Capital Reserve funds to help with the impact of major purchases. Day stated that the Town portion of the tax rate has remained level for his terms as Selectman.

Discussion on purchase of two highway trucks this year. Encumbrances from projects put on hold due to the uncertainty of the pandemic were approved to help offset the cost impact. Babb stated that he would like to see what is available for trade value for the plow/dump truck being replaced. Both trucks will be proposed to be purchased through taxation.

The Public Safety Building will be paid off in 2021.

Proposals for the resurfacing of the tennis courts and replacement of the bleachers at the ballfield were reviewed. Both are to be proposed as Warrant Articles for \$10,000 each. White informed the Board that there is an active insurance claim for the bleachers which may cover the replacement less the deductible.

Discussion:

Discussion on the Danforth Bay Bridge project expenditures and availability of funds to be reimbursed through State Bridge Aid. Based upon change orders already approved and what has been proposed for additional change orders, the funds available for the Town's-portion are questionable. It was agreed by all to add \$20,000 to the Infrastructure CRF which will allow for up to \$100,000 in proposed change orders to be submitted and covered. Further discussion on additional costs incurred due to

flawed bridge design & calculations. A total will be calculated when the project expenditures are finalized. Additional costs will be requested from the school for detouring as well as the additional costs incurred by the highway department to stage material and equipment on the west side of the bridge for winter maintenance.

Fall reviewed the status of the Swett Hill Road wetlands permit which is expiring but Josh Bouchard from CMA Engineers has confirmed that it can be renewed one additional time.

White informed the Board she is only aware of a petitioned Warrant Article coming in from the Freedom Historical Society. Discussion on a Warrant Article for the requested increase in the Town Clerk's salary.

White stated Eaton Selectman Dick Fortin has reached out regarding the cost of the fire service contract. Chief Rob Cunio has reported average call volume of 15-20 annually which calculates to approximately \$650/call based on the current \$12,000 contract. Babb stated that with the improvements made to the Public Safety building and equipment over the years, the cost per call should be increased to \$1,000/call. Day and Fall were in agreement.

Discussion on nominees for the dedication of the Town Report. Two candidates were reviewed and recommendation was approved. Babb made a motion to memorialize Ernie Day, Sr. Fall seconded. Day abstained from voting. Majority vote carried.

Babb made motion to approve the minutes from the Selectmen's Meeting held on Monday, January 11, 2021. Day seconded. All in favor, the motion passed.

Non-Public Sessions:

Babb made a motion to enter into a non-public session at 9:00 AM pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (a) for personnel. Fall seconded. Roll call vote was taken: Babb-yes, Day-yes, Fall-yes. All in favor, the motion passed. Babb made a motion to reconvene public session at 9:26 AM. Day seconded. All in favor, the motion passed.

Dates for the budget hearing were reviewed. Petitioned Warrant Articles are due Tuesday, February 2. The Board agreed to hold the Public Budget Hearing at 4:00 PM on 2/2/2021.

Being no further input, Day made a motion to adjourn. Babb seconded. All in favor, the motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:32 AM

Respectfully submitted,
Ellen White, Town Administrator

Approved by the Board of Selectmen on _____:

Leslie R. Babb

Ernest F. Day, Jr.

Alan G. Fall