

Board: Board of Selectmen/ Water Commissioner's Meeting
Date: Monday, February 24, 2020
Location: Town Hall, 12 East Main Street, Erving, MA 01344

Selectmen Present: William Bembury, Peter Sanders, Jacob Smith
Finance Committee: Benjamin Fellows, Charles Zilinski, Debra Smith, Daniel Hammock (via phone at 7:04 PM)
Also, Present: Bryan Smith, Christopher Blair, Robert Holst, James Loynd, Matthew Morin, Kelly Loynd, Mary Flanders Aicardi, Nick Creigle, Brandon Owen, Jacquelyn Boyden
Press: Kathleen Nolan, Montague Reporter

At 6:37 PM **Chairman Smith** called the meeting to order.

Library Construction Project Update

The Board reviewed a project update from the Town's Owners Project Manager. **Selectman Bembury** asked when the end caps are being ordered for the Library shelving. Jacquelyn Boyden, Building Committee Co-Chair, explained that the end caps still need to be ordered. Jacquelyn added that the decisions and work on the landscaping is expected to be completed in the spring with volunteers. The Board discussed the PCOs. The Board wants to wait to review the official request from the painter before deciding on the PCO.

Millers Falls (IP) Papermill- Hazardous Materials Clean-up Project Update

The Board reviewed a memorandum from Bryan Smith, Administrative Coordinator, regarding the procurement process that is being followed for the asbestos and hazardous materials abatement project. The procurement was made publicly available on February 5, 2020. A mandatory site visit was conducted on February 11, 2020. Bryan explained that bids are due and will be publicly opened on Tuesday, February 25, 2020. The bids will be presented to the Board on Monday, March 02, 2020 with a recommendation. The Board expressed no concerns.

Administration of Oath to Officer Matthew Morin

Christopher Blair, Police Chief, introduced Matthew Morin, Patrolman, to the Board of Selectmen. Richard Newton, Town Clerk, administered the oath of office to Officer Morin. The Board welcomed Officer Morin to the community.

Pole Hearing Petition for Poplar Mountain Road- Eversource Custodian

Bryan explained that the Town has received an application for a pole hearing from Eversource under the provisions of Chapter 166 of the Massachusetts General Laws.

At 6:48 PM **Chairman Smith** called the pole hearing to order. **Chairman Smith** read the following description:

To the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Erving, Massachusetts

EVERSOURCE ENERGY AND VERIZON NEW ENGLAND, INC. request permission to locate a line of poles, wires, cables and fixtures, including the necessary sustaining and protecting fixtures to be owned and used in common by your petitioners, along and across the following public way:

Poplar Mountain Rd: Install new joint (Eversource custodian) pole (27/1 M) on southern side, 13' from centerline of Poplar Mountain Rd. 192' south east of existing pole 15/32M1. 43' north west of pole 27/1

Reason: Pole is required for new solar interconnection for customer at 151 Northfield Rd.

Nick Creigle introduced himself and explained that he will represent Eversource for the purpose of the hearing. **Selectman Bembury** asked for an explanation of the size of the project. Nick explained that the connection is for a large-scale solar project. Nick was asked if underground wires would be installed and if so where. Nick clarified that the plans call for overhead installation of wiring.

Chairman Smith asked if any other parties that wished to speak regarding the petition. Seeing none. At 6:52 PM the public hearing was closed. **Chairman Smith** made a motion to approve the Petition for Joint or Identical Pole Locations as written for the installation of a new pole (27/1M) on Poplar Mountain Road. **Selectman Bembury** seconded. **Vote:** Unanimously approved.

Review of Town Clerk Fee Schedule Requested Changes

The Board discussed the request from Richard Newton, Town Clerk, to consider revising the dog licensing and other Town Clerk fees. **Selectman Bembury** discussed general support for amending the fees as recommended by the Town Clerk. **Selectman Sanders** expressed agreement. **Chairman Smith** asked to have the Town Clerk formalize the request in writing with supporting documentation for the Board to reviewed at the next meeting. The Board expressed agreement.

Review of Meeting Minutes for January 27, 2020

The Board passed over this agenda item.

Review of Meeting Minutes for February 10, 2020

The Board passed over this agenda item.

Discussion & Appointment of Cook/Kitchen Manager Search Committee

The Board discussed the search process for the Cook/Kitchen Manager position at the Senior & Community Center. As of the deadline to apply, only one (1) application was received. **Selectman Bembury** volunteered to work with Paula Betters, Senior Center Director, to review the application and to determine if an interview is warranted. The Board expressed agreement and will review the topic again at the March 02, 2020 meeting.

2020 Business License Application- Annie Goes To

The Board reviewed a business license application from Cynthia Bussey and Raymond Johnson doing business as Annie Goes To, at 14 Prospect Heights Lane, for the purpose of creating children's books. **Chairman Smith** made a motion to issue a business license to Cynthia Bussey and Raymond Johnson at 14 Prospect Heights Lane, doing business as Annie Goes To, with an expiration of December 31, 2020. **Selectman Sanders** seconded. **Vote:** Unanimously approved.

Review of Draft Town Employee Compensation Report- Joint Meeting of the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee

At 7:02 PM **Chairman Smith** called the joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee to order.

Chairman Smith gave an overview of the classification and compensation project and the work to date on the proposed implementation plan for the compensation adjustments. **Chairman Smith** discussed a goal of establishing an implementation plan for April 6, 2020. Copies of the draft implementation plan were shared with the public and employees present. Bryan explained the approach to the draft implementation plan.

Selectman Bembury asked about proposed changes to job descriptions. Bryan explained that the proposed changes to the Municipal Clerk and Administrative Coordinator positions are only title changes while the proposed changes for the Highway Superintendent and the Principal Assessor and appointments to new positions to recognize changes in duties. Jacquelyn Boyden, Assistant Assessor, asked about the fairness of doing the work prior to a change in the position and starting at step 1. **Chairman Smith** discussed the previous conversations on this issue and the goal of focusing on an equitable approach. **Chairman Smith** challenged assumptions that have been made and discussed the merit raise that had been supported by the Board of Assessors being held for FY2020 pending the outcome of the classification and compensation study. **Chairman Smith** explained that the resulting proposal is to now promote the position with a new title and to grade the position with similar department heads. Jacquelyn explained that she respectfully disagreed. **Chairman Smith** reminded all that a 2% cost of living adjustment (COLA) was approved for all employees for July 1, 2019 and additional compensation adjustments are now being proposed. Daniel spoke to his feeling that the proposed implementation for the Principal Assessor position is not fair and advocated for an additional step. **Selectman Bembury** discussed general support but cautioned that it needs to be evenly applied to all positions.

Brandon Breault, Firefighter II- EMT, asked for an explanation about how much influence the department heads had in the drafting of the proposed compensation schedule and discussed a concern about having his job description revisited. **Chairman Smith** explained that all department heads were presented with the draft report to understand if there were questions or concerns that needed to be addressed before it was discussed publicly. Bryan discussed the job description review process that was used during the project. Mary Flanders Aicardi spoke of the approach used by the UMass Collins Center to review position descriptions and to recommend grading. Mary discussed the option to revisit under-classified positions. **Chairman Smith** discussed employee perception of compensation and thoughts on value. **Chairman Smith** discussed the challenge about setting compensation for a position that is perceived as individual value. Brandon raised the concern about the Town losing firefighters to other communities and discussed the issue of market parity with other communities. **Chairman Smith** noted the concern and discussed the reality of Erving's size and complexity. **Chairman Smith** explained that it would be unrealistic to be compared to a departmental model with a community like Greenfield. As it pertains to the Fire Department, **Chairman Smith** discussed the model for the daytime staffing of the Department that was established and that was proposed to the Erving citizens to compliment the call force. **Selectman Bembury** raised his concern about the starting point of an inadequate pay scale and discussed his understanding of the goal for the project. **Selectman Bembury** raised the concern of making arbitrary decisions. Bryan discussed the need to work on the revisions of the personnel policy and to ensure that there is clear guidance on how adjustments happen going forward. Brandon advocated for an educational incentive for Fire Department personnel of approximately 8%. Bryan discussed the possibility of considering a policy proposal for educational attainment in the personnel policy that would impact all Town staff. **Selectman Bembury** expressed support for educational attainment and discussed the importance of hearing from employees. **Chairman Smith** expressed agreement. **Chairman Smith** discussed the goal of retaining employees but acknowledged that the Town does not have the means to meet or exceed the compensation of a larger community.

Daniel spoke to the importance of the Town taking care of Town employees. Daniel discussed the need to implement the compensation adjustments. Daniel cautioned against arbitrary placement of individuals on the schedule and the need to be fair. Daniel noted that he was not sure where to place people. Daniel discussed support for the Town to maintain a merit system and discussed a need recognize years of service. **Chairman Smith** asked Daniel for clarification, explaining that it was a stated goal to remove the merit system from the compensation process. **Chairman Smith** discussed the importance of needing department heads to supervise and manage their staff. **Chairman Smith** discussed the continued use of annual performance reviews and to discipline poor performance but to not tie the performance evaluation to compensation.

Robert Holst proposed that the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee utilize and implementation plan that considers the years of service of an individual.

At 8:10 PM Daniel left the meeting.

Bryan explained caution about assumptions that individuals may be making on when reviewing the proposed classification and compensation schedule. Bryan explained that while the grade and step system proposes an annual adjustment, the market study is based on information collected in the last six (6) months and has been further adjusted as positions with similar complexities were graded together to achieve internal equity. Bryan explained that the proposal to increase rates of compensation were informed by the market study but was further driven towards internal equity. Mary explained the internal equity goal. Mary discussed the suggestion of an implementation scenario that considers years of service. Mary suggested that an implementation policy could offer a bonus step for years of service. Mary cautioned the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee about overanalyzing and delaying implementation with the reminder that the Town needs to compensate positions not people. Mary emphasized the need to work towards internal equity with the passage of the Pay Equity Act and assessing for comparable work. Debra raised the concern about bumping employees and reducing room to grow within the step system. Debra expressed agreement with the need to decide on implementation and to continue to work towards addressing policies. Mary discussed the proposed grading system of Town employees and the corresponding steps for each grade. Jacquelyn advocated for the Principal Assessor position to be placed at step 2 because of years of service in the position. Jacquelyn expressed thanks for the work on the project.

Chairman Smith asked the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee members about how they would like to proceed. **Chairman Smith** discussed the need to finalize the FY2021 budget and prepare for the Annual Town Meeting. Benjamin discussed general agreement and asked that there be a 2-year moratorium on changes to the compensation schedule to allow the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee to get additional policies in place. The Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee discussed the need to amend policies to address impacts of minimum wage adjustments and COLA.

Chairman Smith revisited the implementation plan of the proposed compensation schedule for April 06, 2020. **Chairman Smith** asked how to address proposed compensation schedules for elected officials who work a regular schedule. Debra discussed the elected official compensation schedule. Bryan explained that the proposed changes would need to be presented at the Annual Town Meeting and voted on by the voters. Bryan suggested that the Board of Selectmen may want to reconsider the scheduling of the Annual Town Meeting and Town Election. The Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee discussed the need to differentiate between elected board/commission stipends from appointed officials. **Selectman Bembury** cautioned against setting a compensation schedule for boards/commission stipends. **Chairman**

Smith agreed and suggested that the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee need to work towards setting a limit for stipends. The Board and the Finance Committee expressed agreement.

Bryan asked the Board and the Finance Committee for further guidance and expressed a concern about the timeline and the need to finalize the FY2021 draft budget for the Board to review. **Chairman Smith** explained that he would like to review an implementation scenario with years of service considered. Mary clarified that the implementation scenario would be applied to all positions regardless of performance by the individual in the position. **Chairman Smith** expressed agreement. **Chairman Smith** suggested the implementation scenario would provide 2 additional steps for 10 or more years of service in the current position and 1 additional step for 5 to 9 years of service in the current position. Debra asked about reviewing the classification of full-time and call force firefighters. **Chairman Smith** explained the proposal and agreed to have the scale revisited with Chief Wonkka.

The Board agreed to look at implementation scenario that considers years of service. The scenario will provide 1 step increase for 5 to 9 years of service in the current position, and a 2 step increase for 10 or more years of service in the current position. and 10+. Bryan will review the proposed Fire personnel compensation schedule again with Chief Wonkka and Mary. The Board agreed that the FY2021 budget will be updated to include a 2% cost of living adjustment (COLA) for all elected boards and stipend positions. The Board will review again with the Finance Committee on March 02, 2020.

At 9:32 PM **Chairman Smith** made a motion to adjourn the joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee and to continue with the Board of Selectmen meeting. **Selectman Sanders** seconded. **Vote:** Unanimously approved.

Review of Curbside Collection of Solid Waste & Recyclables IFB Results

The Board reviewed a memorandum regarding the procurement for curbside collection of solid waste & recyclables. As of the February 19, 2020 deadline of 2:00 PM, two (2) responses were received from:

- Casella Waste Management of Massachusetts of Auburn, MA
- USA Waste & Recycling of Enfield, CT

Bryan reviewed the proposals that were received. **Chairman Smith** discussed his perspective that the bid from Casella represented the least price increase to the Town with the least amount of change to the residents. The Board expressed agreement. **Chairman Smith** made a motion to award the curbside collection of solid waste & recyclables to Casella Waste Management of Massachusetts of Auburn, MA with disposal at Community Eco Power of Agawam, Ma and Springfield MRF of Springfield, MA for a term of three (3) years with the option to extend for two (2) 1-year terms. **Selectman Sanders** seconded. **Vote:** Unanimously approved.

Discussion Regarding Springfield MRF Contract & FY2021 Solid Waste

The Board discussed whether or not to sign with the agreement with the Springfield MRF for a five (5) year term. **Selectman Bembury** stated his preference for the Town to communicate to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (Mass DEP) about the Town's objection to the agreement and to copy the Town's legislators. The Board discussed the potential risk of not signing. Bryan explained the considerations the Town would need to address if the agreement is not signed. **Selectman Bembury** cautioned against placing the Town at risk but expressed his concerns with the agreement that the Mass DEP negotiated and that he would like to strongly object to the terms. **Chairman Smith** made a motion to sign the dual stream designated community contract with the Springfield MRF and the Massachusetts

Department of Environmental Protection, commencing July 1, 2020 for a term of five (5) years, pending annual appropriations. **Selectman Bembury** seconded. **Vote:** Unanimously approved.

Review of Proposed Structured Tax Agreement with French King Solar LLC

The Board reviewed the draft structured tax agreement between French King Solar, LLC, and the Town of Erving. Bryan explained that the proposed structured tax agreement was drafted with the Board of Assessor's office and the Town's consultant and is very similar to the other structured tax agreement the Town engaged in for a solar project. The Board expressed no concerns. The Board requested that the draft agreement is sent to Town Counsel for review and to prepare the Annual Town Meeting warrant with an article to authorize the Board to sign the structured tax agreement.

Review of the FFY2019 Emergency Management Performance Grant

The Board reviewed the FFY2019 Emergency Management Performance Grant received by the Emergency Management Department. **Chairman Smith** made a motion to authorize Bryan Smith and Philip Wonkka to sign the FFY2019 Emergency Management Performance grant. **Selectman Bembury** seconded. **Vote:** Unanimously approved.

Selectman Bembury raised a concern about call out rate, specifically the concern about safety for employees and the risk of burnout. **Selectman Bembury** explained that he would like to discuss the concern with Chief Wonkka and to establish hours of rest between shifts. **Chairman Smith** discussed a general safety concern with call back for all essential staff. **Selectman Sanders** asked about strategies for covering the short fall in staffing. **Selectman Bembury** raised a concern about the Fire Department call force staffing and the need to employ strategies to develop and maintain the Fire Department call force. The Board agreed to discuss this topic with Chief Wonkka at a future meeting.

Adjournment

At 10:28 PM **Chairman Smith** made a motion to adjourn. **Selectman Sanders** seconded. **Vote:** Unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,



Bryan Smith
Administrative Coordinator