

**Town of Boscawen
Select Board
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, October 26, 2023, at 6:00 PM**

In Attendance: Matt Burdick, Lorrie Carey, Bill Bevans, Katie Phelps, Kate Merrill, Kellee Easler & Tim Kenney

Guests: Lyman Cousens, Tama Tillman, Caleb Jacobs, & Amy Jacobs

Roll Call: completed and guests introduced.

Chairman Matt Burdick called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Consent Agenda Items:

- P&L, Balance Sheet, Check Manifest & Payroll
- Nonpublic/Public Minutes for Approval—10/19/23

Selectwoman Lorrie Carey noted grammatical changes to the 10.19.23 public minutes.

Selectman Bill Bevans motioned to approve the Consent Agenda as amended. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. All in favor. None opposed.

Scheduled Guests & Hearings: On behalf of the Trustees of the Trust Funds, Town Treasurer Tama Tillman presented a request for a Warrant Article to the Select Board. The Trustees of the Trust Funds requested to use a certified third-party professional to keep the books for the town. Treasurer Tillman explained that it has been difficult for the Trustees to find interested individuals to serve on the trustees. The current members are older, and they were concerned that if they don't bring in a professional firm to handle the books, it would be harder to find people to serve in the future. Treasurer Tillman noted that she currently does the books for the Trustees. She said if they hired a firm that made enough extra money to pay the fees they charge, then it would be worth it. To date, the accounts at the bank were doing well with interest, but the bank does not do the books. Due to the rules of the State of New Hampshire, they can't have fees taken out of the earnings of Capital Reserves unless the town approves it. Treasurer Tillman suggested that the Trustees explain at the Town Meeting the reasoning behind why the third-party professional would be important. Overall, the Trustees don't have volunteers willing to do the books. If a third-party firm provided these services, they would give the Trustees reports and complete state filing forms. Selectwoman Carey asked if there would be a contract between the Trustees and the third-party used. Treasurer Tillman confirmed there would be a contract.

Mr. Lyman Cousens, a Trustee of the Trust Funds, gave history on how they concluded their request to bring in a third-party professional firm. In 2021, all funds were in CDs at Franklin Savings Bank, earning 1% interest. They moved the funds to Independence Financial Advisors, a subsidiary of Franklin Savings bank, and the investments went through Fidelity Investments. In

2021, the investments did well at the end of the year, and in 2022, they also had a good return on investments. Mr. Cousens said 2023 was a disaster due to the bond market. The return was about 10% which led to speaking with third-party professional firms. At that time, Treasurer Tillman and Chair of the Trustees, Ms. Polly Dawson, attended a Municipal Association meeting that provided a presentation from the Three Bearings Fiduciary Advisors. Three Bearings does the bookkeeping at a yearly fee of \$5,000, and files state returns (MS-9 and MS-10) on behalf of the Trustees. Mr. Cousens said last year they found out that they were illegally charging the Capital Reserves account for the fees associated with Independence Financial Advisors. The Trustees were impressed with the Three Bearings presentation, so Mr. Cousens reached out to several different towns that used them and received positive feedback. The proposal was also reviewed by Tristram Millard, the owner of Gulf Point Advisor in New Orleans, LA and his input was positive. The Trustees were concerned about having one firm submit a proposal at Town Meeting, so they brought in a few other firms to compare. Mr. Cousens spoke with the Arcadia Investment Advisors out of Manchester, NH but they were not competitive or interested after hearing the fees associated with the Three Bearings company. Mr. Cousens reached out to Bar Harbor Bank and Trust in order to compare. Bar Harbor Wealth management was the bank's subsidiary, formally known as Charter Trust Company. Mr. Cousens noted their fees were not as competitive as Three Bearings. Bar Harbor handles 40 town accounts while Three Bearings handles 80. Currently, the funds are in a money market account at Franklin Savings Bank. Mr. Cousens noted that previously, when CDs were paying 1% to 2% interest, Franklin Savings Bank was involved with an association of banks to pay 4% on CDs in which they received a good deal for the current year. Mr. Cousens mentioned that funds would remain in the money market account until they're able to pass the Warrant Article in March. After the Town Meeting, if approved, then the Trustees would decide what to do with the money. One option would be to leave it at Franklin Savings Bank, or another would be to sign a contract with the Three Bearings Fiduciary Advisors or Bar Harbor Bank and Trust. Mr. Cousens noted both firms would handle investments, bookkeeping, and file state requirements. Chairman Burdick asked if the requested proposal was written by the Three Bearings. Treasurer Tillman explained that the original proposal was written by Three Bearings but legal reviewed it and the Trustees agreed with legal's recommendation to shorten it. Chairman Burdick inquired whether the Trustees would be at Town Meeting to explain the Warrant Article. Treasurer Tillman confirmed that at least one Trustee would be present to explain the purpose to the townspeople. The main purpose would be the importance of getting a professional, who knows how to do the bookkeeping and investments. Treasurer Tillman reiterated that Mr. Cousens and herself were getting older and wouldn't be able to handle the bookkeeping and investments forever. It has already been shown to be hard finding individuals to join the Trustees of the Trust Fund. Treasurer Tillman said part of the reason was due to the limited things they can do while serving. She noted that the professional firms they spoke to, were trained with state legislation on what they were allowed and not allowed to do. Laws change all the time, and it was important to have someone who could keep up with the rules and regulations of the law. Treasurer Tillman noted that it was a major investment for the town, with \$1.5M in the Trust to date. She also mentioned that both firms would be willing to help get the perpetual care money released back to the town. Overall, the goal would be to choose a firm that has a good return on investments to make more than enough to pay the fees associated and have additional income coming in.

Chair Burdick motioned to approve putting the charges for professional banking and brokerage assistance for the Capital Reserve funds on as a Warrant Article for Town Meeting. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Department Head Updates: Town Administrator Katie Phelps presented the sealed Technology Services proposals for Board review. The date and time received has been noted on the envelopes. Chairman Burdick stated the Select Board would open the proposals, name them, and review them for a week before making a decision. Selectwoman Carey suggested numbering the proposals (1, 2 and 3). TA Phelps noted that she had a conflict of interest with the proposals, so she will be excluding herself from the process. Finance Director Kate Merrill and Planning and Community Development Director Kellee Easler have been asked to be involved in the process. The Board opened the proposals and deferred the decision to next week's meeting.

Finance Director Merrill presented the GASB 75 Actuarial Valuation Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The town's 2-year contract ended so they must renew a two-year contract to continue services. TA Phelps clarified that it pertained to post-employment benefits and figuring out the cost associated. FD Merrill clarified that it was required to provide post-employment liability costs for employees. FD Merrill asked the Board to authorize TA Phelps to sign the MOU between Jefferson Solutions, Inc. and the town of Boscawen.

Chairman Burdick motioned to authorize Town Administrator Phelps to sign the MOU between Jefferson Solutions, Inc. and the Town of Boscawen, on behalf of the Select Board. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Last week the Board asked FD Merrill to find more local indexes on COLA. She found that nationally, Social Security had a 3.2% COLA increase. She reached out to NHMA, and they noted the most accurate figure would be the Consumer Price Index for the Northeast region. Over the last year, it showed a 3% increase. FD Merrill reached out to Merrimack County, who also used the Consumer Price Index, however, their contracts run differently, so they looked at the past 3 years. Merrimack County went with a 5% COLA increase for their next contract. FD Merrill also reached out to CAP, one of the places that request funding in the Capital area, Belknap area, and Merrimack County area, but she did not hear back. The wage scales the Board just recently approved have a 2.9% increase annually, with a 5% increase on employees' 5th year. Chairman Burdick's initial thought was the COLA would be the difference between their annual increase and the standard goal. For example, the annual increase would be 2.9% and Social Security would be 3.2%, so the additional increase would only be .3%. Selectwoman Carey asked FD Merrill for her opinion on having a differential between annual increases, Social Security, and COLA. FD Merrill noted that a step increase and COLA should not be tied together. They should be looked at separately. FD Merrill said employees voiced concern that their step increase would just be a COLA increase, and that they wouldn't really be getting a step increase for years of experience. Selectwoman Carey asked what other communities decided for COLA. FD Merrill said the other communities she reached out to had not decided yet. Chairman Burdick considered last year's discussion, as COLA was not perceived well on top of other

conversations amongst the actual voting public. Selectwoman Carey clarified that if they gave employee's step increases, it would be based on experience and performance. The COLA mitigated the economic conditions that exist. Selectwoman Carey questioned whether the Board would like employees to stay stagnant or progress in their careers. FD Merrill noted another important factor would be the wage schedule and ensuring it would be kept up to date. She said for example, a position with a starting step of \$18/hr with no COLA increase over time, most likely will not be an appropriate starting rate for that position multiple years down the line. Selectwoman Carey said the COLA increase should be tied to what happens in the region. If CPI was roughly 3%, then she was in favor of a 3% COLA increase, separate from the wage schedule. Selectman Bevans had no issue with the 5.9% increase because employees have to make a living. He noted with the economy costs today, it was hard to make a living. Families are looking at \$700 more a month in expenses than last year. Selectman Bevans said it was important to give people a working wage, but they also have to look at it from the town side. A 5.9% annual increase would be big and although they don't want to lose employees, they also have to consider that residents pay for these increases and vote at Town Meeting. TA Phelps stated it was important for the Select Board to approve an increase that they feel comfortable in supporting at Town Meeting. From an employee standpoint, they want to rely on the Select Board to support the decision. TA Phelps suggested approving a COLA that the Board will support rather than approving a COLA and changing it later. The Board decided if they approve a COLA that they need to support it all the way through this year. Discussed ensued. The Board decided on a 3% COLA increase based on the CPI annual increase.

Selectwoman Carey motioned to approve a 3% COLA increase. Seconded by Selectman Bevans. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

FD Merrill asked the Board to approve the tax anticipation note up to \$4 million for a term of 1 year at 5.25% interest, with funds being used only if needed.

Selectwoman Carey motioned to approve a tax anticipation note, up to \$4 million for a term of 1 year at 5.25% interest, to be used only if needed. Seconded by Selectman Bevans. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

FD Merrill deferred the budget line transfer request to next week's meeting.

Planning and Community Development Director Easler presented a Board of Health update for 20 High Street. She put together a package and had the changes reviewed by the Building Inspectors and Fire Chief Tim Kenney. It has also been reviewed by legal. PCD Director Easler will update the package with final edits. She noted they were updating it so that anything that has been done was reflected and the new owner would understand where to go moving forward. Once the package is finished, PCD Director Easler will present it to the court to assess. Selectwoman Carey clarified that the current owner has an understanding of what needs to be done which the previous owner did not make clear to them.

FD Merrill gave an update on tax rate setting. She said the Merrimack Valley School Administrative Unit (SAU) said they should have all the information into DRA by the end of the week.

FD Merrill noted budget presentations will start next week.

FD Merrill will be updating the wage schedule to add an additional step to fix a correction. As she started putting the wage schedule into use, she noticed that the accounting started year 1, as the first step, when an employee starts and then step 2 would be the 2.9% increase after a year of employment. Due to that, employees would get their 5% increase a year earlier than expected. FD Merrill will be adding a step in between to fix the error.

TA Phelps presented a task order from Credere Associates for an Archaeological Survey at the Commercial Street properties. She noted that the EPA Removal Program has completed their work, and we are now in the clean-up process. The next order of business will be to conduct an archaeological survey of the area. The total cost for the task order is \$9,600. TA Phelps said the expense would be reimbursed by EPA Cleanup grant funds. She asked the Board to authorize her to move forward with the task order by signing the document. TA Phelps noted they anticipate having it completed in November.

Selectwoman Carey motioned to authorize Town Administrator Phelps to sign the Archaeological Survey task order document. Seconded by Selectman Bevans. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Selectwoman Carey inquired whether they were moving forward with the EPA grant or if they would need to do another RFP. TA Phelps said they will need to do a new Request for Proposals (RFP) for their Environmental Engineer because the status of the Commercial Street site has changed dramatically since the Removal Program took all the buildings down. TA Phelps will be working with Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC) on a new document to send out and then they will need to choose an Environmental Engineer. Dorrie Paar at EPA said the town could use Credere Associates to conduct the archaeological work. Selectwoman Carey questioned how long it would take the RFP to process. She further asked if the town could begin their contribution of removal from that site. TA Phelps did not know how long the process would take but she said they could begin because there has been a clear stop with removal. TA Phelps noted she requested a reimbursement for all their outstanding costs associated with the project. There are approximately \$9,000 in reimbursable expenses related to the Cleanup Program that the town will be receiving.

TA Phelps presented the winter parking ban on behalf of Police Chief Jason Killary. The parking ban will begin November 1st. She clarified that on street parking would not be allowed from 11PM to 7AM for plowing purposes.

TA Phelps received a formal complaint for the Treasure House. She asked the Board if they would like to take any action towards the complaint. Selectwoman Carey noted the complainant

indicated while they appreciated the work done to keep the Treasure House clean and orderly, unfortunately, it no longer felt like a Treasure House. The complainant felt that when towns people donated items, the individuals running the facility picked through the materials first before anyone else had a chance to look at items. The complainant witnessed one of the individuals pick out an item they liked and put it in their truck before anyone else had a chance to look at the items. The Treasure House was not a large room and when three individuals are constantly in there, it can feel confined. The complainant witnessed the individuals toss out items in which nothing was wrong with them. The last few times the complainant went to the Treasure House, there was nothing there. The complainant was uncomfortable donating items as they felt they would be thrown into the compactor. The complainant provided a solution. Instead of the individuals spending the whole day at the Treasure House, they proposed allowing them to come the last hour that the dump was open and go through what was donated to the Treasure House. It would give townspeople the opportunity to leave items and then the individuals can take what they want from what would be left or to put them on the shelves for others to look at. TA Phelps noted that Public Works Director Dean Hollins was in favor of the suggestion. The Select Board was in favor of the proposed suggestion. Selectwoman Carey suggested limiting the volunteerism at the Treasure House to the last two hours that the dump was open. TA Phelps will relay the message to PWD Hollins so that he can make the individuals aware.

Selectman Bevans motioned to approve limiting the volunteerism at the Treasure House to the last two hours that the transfer station will be open for all three days. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

TA Phelps gave a shoutout to Matthew St. Onge and Jeff Abbe. Mr. St. Onge painted the Weir Farmstead Kiosk and Mr. Abbe supplied the materials to complete it. The kiosk looks great.

TA Phelps presented a nomination form for the Boston Post Cane. The town has not formally solicited nominations yet. They received a form for Ms. Lottie Hanks, a resident on Corn Hill Road. The person who completed the nomination form said Ms. Hanks was still living in town with the assistance of her son and daughter. Selectwoman Carey suggested getting more information on Ms. Hanks and producing a formal request to submit nominations for the Boston Post Cane. TA Phelps will post the request and find more information on Ms. Hanks.

Chairman Burdick opened public comment at 7:00 PM.

Mr. Kaleb Jacobs of Eagle Network Solutions introduced himself and wife, Amy, to the Select Board. They submitted one of the RFP bids for technology services.

Chairman Burdick closed public comment at 7:01 PM.

Non-Public Sessions:

Chairman Burdick motioned to enter a nonpublic session at 7:01 PM under RSA 91-A:3 II(C). Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Selectwoman Carey motioned to exit a nonpublic session under at 7:26PM under RSA 91-A:3 II(C). Seconded by Chairman Burdick. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Selectwoman Carey motioned to seal the nonpublic minutes under RSA 91-A:3 II(C) as it would adversely affect the reputation of any person other than a member of the Board. Seconded by Chair Burdick. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Selectwoman Carey motioned to enter a nonpublic session at 7:27 PM under RSA 91-A:3 II(C). Seconded by Selectman Bevans. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Selectwoman Carey motioned to exit a nonpublic session under RSA 91-A:3 II (C) at 7:40PM. Seconded by Selectman Bevans. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Selectwoman Carey noted there was no need to seal the nonpublic session as it was informational. All concurred.

Chairman Burdick motioned to enter a nonpublic session at 7:42PM under RSA 91-A:3 II(C). Seconded by Selectman Bevans. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Selectwoman Carey motioned to exit a nonpublic session under RSA 91-A:3 II (C) at 8:02PM. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairman Burdick noted there was no need to seal the nonpublic session as it pertained to an employee review.

Selectwoman Carey noted that the Library Director at the Boscawen Public Library suggested putting a bike rack out for the children that come to the library. The kids are currently bringing them into the library because they are afraid that their bikes will get stolen. Selectwoman Carey suggested putting the bike rack by the Police Station.

Selectwoman Carey motioned to approve putting a bike rack at the Police Station and/or Library area. Seconded by Chairman Burdick. All in favor. None opposed.

Next Meeting: Thursday, November 2, 2023, at 6:00 PM.

Chairman Burdick motioned to adjourn at 7:19PM. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. All in favor. None Opposed.

Respectfully submitted by Hannah Gardner