

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE STRAFFORD BOARD OF SELECTMEN
March 18, 2015

Members of the public body present: Brent Cadwell, John Freitag, Brian Johnson, Steve Marx, Toni Pippy

Other active participants: Lisa Kendall, Town Clerk, Jon MacKinnon, Road Foreman, Courtney Hardy, Administrative Assistant, Jennifer Brown, Herald of Randolph Reporter, Chris Gex, Steve Gex, Janet Hardy, Jane Prescott, Martha Walke

Meeting called to order in the Town Office at 6 p.m.

Adjustments were made to the agenda to include correspondence.

1.) Public Concerns: Janet Hardy expressed concerns over rumors of where possible cuts might be made to reduce the budget as passed at Town Meeting. John explained that the purpose of this meeting was to explore all options and no final decisions would be made until next Wednesday at the March 25 meeting. She suggested possibly cutting police services. Brent explained that the \$33,000 Police Services budget is divided with \$23,000 going to the Orange County Sheriff's Dept. and \$10,000 for Constable Ed Eastman. John noted that the amount budgeted for police services is level funded from last year.

2.) Minutes: Brian moved and Steve seconded to adopt the minutes of March 11. John noted the omission of the appointment of Miriam Newman as a Harris Library Trustee to fill a vacancy until the next Town Meeting. The minutes were then approved with this change.

3.) General

Budget Discussion - John opened the floor to ideas on how to reduce the budget by \$30,444 as decided at Town Meeting. Brent presented a list that he, Jon, and Lisa prepared. It included Town Highway cuts of \$20,000 and a number of cuts to the General Fund. Toni then went over areas of the budget where she had questions. Steve and Brian also had suggestions. John then added a list of possible areas in the General Fund where he found increases from last year. There was general discussion on the pros and cons of each of the many items. Over the next week there will be time to research further and to think over the proposed cuts. At the March 25 meeting items will be voted on until the needed reduction in the budget is made. From the floor, Lisa Kendall spoke about the increased needs of her office and why more hours were justified. Jane Prescott talked about the dedication of the road crew and the fact that during the winter they were on call 24/7. Steve Gex pointed out that the Town is facing a similar situation as the State where hard financial decisions to reduce expenses must be made to balance the budget. Brent will contact Steve Willbanks regarding questions the Board has on the Solid Waste line item and if any savings can be found there. John will check with Mike Tisdale regarding computer upgrades. Toni will meeting with Lisa on Monday to better understand the compensation and insurance line items in the budget.

Vermont League of Cities and Towns Pay and Classification System Compensation Project - John passed on that he had found in his correspondence with the VLCT that we have not signed a contract for this study which is estimated to cost no more than \$5,000. There is a good deal of flexibility on their part as how to proceed. There was general discussion if this might be a good area to cut and appoint a sub-committee of the Board to do a study of our own. Brent offered to share work that he and Lisa had done on the issue last year. Steve Marx showed interest in chairing this committee, Martha Walke said that Tori Lloyd who had while she was on the Board done some work on this issue would be willing to serve on a committee. Martha also offered to be on the committee. A final decision will be made on this at the March 25 meeting as well.

4.) Correspondence

Brent reported on follow ups with Jill Michael and abutters to the Farley bridge project.

John said that he would follow up with a letter from Marie Ricketts regarding how Lyme has informal meetings on Selectboard issues. At the suggestion of Chris Gex, rather than a letter, he will just follow-up with a phone call.

5.) Other

Brent offered to put together specs for the Common and Town House mowing and Evergreen Cemetery bids. John suggested that Brent contact Bob Murray who had done the Town House and Common up to this year for his input on specs. John also noted that according to statues, the Cemetery Commission must be the one to award and supervise the Evergreen Cemetery work. Brian will contact Dick Josler from the Cemetery Commission to see about putting out a joint bid. Brent will report back to the Board at the March 25 meeting with a request for bids. Brian volunteered to be the Board liaison with the Cemetery Commission.

The Board signed the Town Officer Appointment of Sue Coburn for a term of one year.

Brian made a motion to adjourn and it was seconded. All approved and the meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Next Meeting:

Regular Board Meeting March 25 at 6 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Toni M. Pippy