

Selectmen's minutes of meeting April 27, 2020

Members present: Mark Newman, Brian O'Rourke, George Riley by remote, Joanne Grybosh by remote, Dolores Harasyko, Admin. Asst.

Called to order at 7:02 p.m.

Participation by remote information provided.

Minutes of meetings reviewed and signed
Purchase orders reviewed and signed

Motion by Brian, second by George, passed unanimously to accept the letter of resignation from Billie Anderson Pachulski from the Recreation Committee.

Discussed amending Chapter III, Section 6 of the General Bylaws regarding the Finance Committee.

George explained that the Finance Committee instructions should not be part of the bylaw, they should be included in the Fiscal Policy Manual.

George rewrote and presented a draft of his version of the bylaw removing articles 1 through 5 and leaving article 6.

Brian suggested that we do need to come to a better process. Brian read aloud the revision and stated that we are already following the process. The Finance Committee is scrutinizing the budgets in lieu of making recommendations.

George responded that a vast majority of the questions are directly related to the budget submissions.

Brian responded that the Finance Committee is an advisory board.

George would like the Finance Comm. to present a draft to the Selectmen after all questions has been asked of all boards.

Brian responded that the previous budget process did that and that it was volatile and needs to be streamlined between boards and committees. Too much was placed on the Town Manager. It is the role of the Finance Comm. to review the budget for errors and omissions once the selectmen submit it to them.

Brian is concerned that if we adopt this bylaw change at this time then we have to have another bylaw to amend it in the near future. He would like to have time to review the bylaw and the fiscal policy and come to a document that we all can agree on.

Dolores asked if the process George is recommending starts with the Finance Committee which is a volunteer committee is it still the responsibility of the selectboard to prepare all budget documents, send them out to all boards and then the Town Manager would compile them to send to the finance committee. George responded that it would be a corroborated process between the selectmen, finance committee and town manager. He stated that if it is not specified in the bylaw then we can just adjust as we see fit.

Nina Carr stated that she has observed over several years that the Finance Committee has overstepped their power. She feels strongly that the elected officials have the power to oversee

our budget not the appointed officials. The finance committee is appointed and is simply and advisory committee.

Joanne has given this a lot of thought, it has been a very painful process and agrees with George. She feels the bylaw needs to be vague so that the selectboard can adjust the process. Her opinion is to rescind the current bylaw and rewrite it.

Steve Harasyko agrees with Brian that the bylaw shouldn't be vague. He feels the selectboard are elected by the people and represent the people.

Brian suggested striking the first sentence of the 2nd paragraph "It shall be the duty of the Finance Committee to present a draft budget to the Select Board with recommendations in accordance with the Town's budget timeline". He agrees that the process needs to be fixed but may not happen tonight.

Kathy Jacobs agrees that the bylaw has processes that shouldn't be there. She gave a history that in 2017 the finance committee gave ownership of the budget to the selectmen. She agrees that they are only an advisory board and does not want the finance committee to own the budget.

Brian reiterated that the finance committee would not be in favor of submitting the draft, Kathy agreed.

Brian asked how within the fiscal policy the budget would be prepared.

George responded that the process should be in the fiscal policy. Kathy does not accept the duty of creating the draft, she wants to know who is going to do all the prep work and come up with the draft of the budget.

George asked Kathy to explain their role.

Kathy responded that they review the departmental budgets to present to town meeting.

George said that it is exactly their roll but to present to the selectmen not town meeting.

Mark and Brian are not ready to vote on the change of bylaw at this time. They realize a change needs to happen but more thought needs to be done. George suggested tabling discussion.

Brian agreed that we need to do more research to come up with a process that is less confrontational. We put a lot of time and energy into the process but the questions keep coming back. Kathy said when questions go back it is because they feel the submittal is lacking.

Nina asked Kathy why she doesn't want to prepare the draft if she is not happy with the product.

George agrees that the questions go around and around too late in the process.

Mark said that at this time we will table further discussion.

Motion by Mark, second by George, all in favor to table.

Discussed the annual town report book. George would like the book with the committee and department reports to be completed for the annual town meeting. He feels boards and committees have ample time. Mark responded that all town buildings are closed and that boards and committees cannot access their information or hold meetings.

George doesn't agree.

Dolores responded that she has been the person putting the book together for the last 22 years. On March 25, 2020 when the board voted to postpone the annual town meeting and election they also voted to put off the creating of the annual town report. Our bylaw mandates that the warrant be mailed to every registered voters household. Dolores agreed to do this. She also stated that the town has furloughed half of the staff, all the assistant clerks and support help, boards cannot hold meetings to draft their reports and they cannot access their information that is in town buildings. She said that she fully intends to do a book at some time but it is impossible

at this time. We are short staffed and she and Terry are the only people working at the Town Hall at this time. Jackie comes in one day a week and everyone else is working from home. She has had to pick up the work that was done by the assistant clerk, is checking the mail for all departments and is overtasked at this time.

Brian suggested a target date of August 15, Dolores agreed as long as the Covid-19 State of Emergency is over and things return to normal.

Motion by Brian, second by Mark, passed unanimously to extend the time to create the Annual Town Report Book to August 15, 2020 pending the State of Emergency.

Joanne asked about some boards that have reached out to her to schedule meetings. She has allowed the Assessors to meet in the parking lot as long as they practiced social distancing guides. Brian said that the Board of Selectmen voted that no meetings were to be held except for the Selectmen and Board of Health during this emergency.

Town Manager updates:

Joanne continues to get calls regarding residents needing food. She is referring them to the school and to Kendra Rybacki. Nina asked if canned goods could be left at the back door of the Town Hall Annex. Brian responded that they do not want food left outside and that the building is on lockdown. Joanne stated that Kendra has a good handle on this issue.

Joanne continues to work on the Transfer Station. She is applying for reimbursement from the grant.

The U.S. Census is happening now, she has placed information on the website and Connect Sandisfield.

She continues to work with the Cemetery Committee on rules and regulations.

She is posting the bid for the parking lot for Yanner Park on Combuys and in a local paper hoping to get bids this time. We could have the bid opening on May 18, 2020.

She has been reviewing insurances with MIIA.

She continues to participate with Covid-19 updates.

She will be sending out monthly reconciliation documents to all departments.

She called into the schools budget hearing.

She has been contacted by MBI, they would like to supply a temporary hotspot on town property.

Mail reviewed

Warrants reviewed and signed

Meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Mark Newman

Brian O'Rourke

George Riley