

**TOWN OF ENFIELD
ENFIELD BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES DECEMBER 20, 2021**

TIME: 6:00 PM
LOCATION: Public Works Facility & Zoom videoconference
74 Lockehaven Road, Enfield

PRESENT

Board of Selectmen: Meredith Smith, Katherine D.P. Stewart, John W. Kluge

Administrative Staff: Jack Wozmak, Interim Town Manager; Alisa Bonnette, Assistant Town Manager; Emily Curtis, Recording Secretary; Jim Taylor, Director of Public Works; Roy Holland, Chief of Police, Kurt Gotthardt, Sharon Beaufait, Dr. David Beaufait

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Smith called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

6:00 pm to discuss the proposed water/sewer rates and the acceptance of donations for Mascoma Lakeside Park of \$22,000 in aggregate.

Mr. Kluge made a motion to open the Public Hearing to discuss the water/sewer rates. Ms. Stewart seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (3-0).

Mr. J. Taylor stated that Lebanon has adopted a 7.2% increase to the wastewater treatment charge. He stated that the costs for Enfield have gone up and Enfield typically raises rates for wastewater by 8%. He noted that the sewer fixed costs would not change, and the water side would go up 5% to continue to accomplish the projects as outlined in Town Meeting regarding infrastructure. He noted that the reductions to the sewer deficits are on target.

Ms. Stewart inquired as to where we were regarding sewer deficits.

Ms. Bonnette stated that, at the end of 2021 we will have a deficit, but we are on target with paying it down.

Mr. Wozmak requested to clarify that the fees being proposed are an 8% increase in sewer fees, and 5% increase in water fees, which is only regarding usage fees and not the fixed costs associated with water.

Mr. J. Taylor noted that the usage fees are going to remain the same.

Ms. Smith inquired about updates for the replacement of water pipes which were approved at Town Meeting.

Mr. J. Taylor stated that the engineers are behind on completion of the project, but the surveying has been completed and he believes construction will begin in the fall of 2022 or the spring of 2023.

Ms. Smith inquired if there were any further comments on the proposed water and sewer rates.

With no comments, Ms. Smith moved on to the public hearing regarding the donations to the Mascoma Lakeside Park Trust Fund in the amount of \$22,000.

Ms. Smith opened the Public Hearing to discuss the acceptance of Mascoma Lakeside Park Donations in excess of \$10,000.

Ms. Stewart inquired if the donations went towards the Land and Water Conservation Fund matching grant.

Ms. Smith confirmed that they will go towards the matching grant funds.

Ms. Smith requested comments from the public regarding the public hearing. With no comments the public hearing was closed.

Mr. Kluge made a motion to close the Public Hearing. Ms. Stewart seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (3-0).

Ms. Stewart made a motion to approve the proposed table of water/sewer rates as presented. Mr. Kluge seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (3-0).

Ms. Stewart made a motion to accept the donation in excess of \$10,000 for the Mascoma Lakeside Park improvements as presented with thanks. Mr. Kluge seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (3-0).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

November 20, 2021, Non-Public/Sealed & December 6, 2021

Ms. Stewart made a motion to approve the slate as printed/amended. Mr. Kluge seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (3-0).

Ms. Stewart noted that that the nonpublic minutes from November 20, 2021, minutes were to be sealed for 30 days from the date of the meeting held.

BOARD REPORTS

Budget Committee

Mr. Kluge stated that the Budget Committee met and there was a contentious discussion regarding raises for specific positions as well as the proposed wage increase for the next budget year. He stated that the Committee approved of raises for various positions and agreed that the combined cost of living and merit raise would be set at 3%.

Mr. Wozmak stated that employees expressed that they would have appreciated the discussion regarding COLA take place in a public meeting. He stated that there are a number of employees that would like the Budget Committee to reconsider the discussion and have it held in public session. He noted that there were many employees that would request the reconsideration of the decision made and the discussion to be held publicly.

Ms. Stewart stated she received a lot of feedback regarding the non-public session held by the Budget Committee. She stated that she received communication that employees were uncomfortable with the lack of transparency. She stated that, unless discussing the employee's performance, which is out of the purview of the Budget Committee, wages should be discussed in public to be transparent. She stated that not all places are giving the full COLA increase, however, there are a number of employers that are giving the full COLA amount. She noted that employees are paying more into their benefits this year in addition to facing the increase in market costs just as everyone else is, and that needs to be acknowledged.

Mr. Wozmak presented a chart which reflected the monetary tax impact between a 3%, 4%, and 5% increase in COLA. He noted that going from a 2% to a 3% increase adds \$10,815 to the budget in gross wages. He noted that a 4% COLA increase would add about \$15,000 to the gross wages, which averages about \$6 in taxes per \$200,000 worth of property, and a 5% increase would average about \$10 for \$200,000 worth of property. He stated the relative impact is not large and is deserving of further discussion.

Mr. Kluge stated the figures were not available for the Budget Committee discussion and his sense was that there was no way the group would go to the 4%, adding that some members were really pushing hard for a 2% increase.

Ms. Smith inquired how we are comparing with similar towns.

Ms. Bonnette stated that Lebanon is giving a 3% increase for cost of living, with an additional merit raise, whereas our percentage is inclusive of the merit raise.

Chief Holland stated that he has spoken with the full-time department heads, and he believes a lot could have been added to the conversation about what local towns are doing. He stated he has spoken with other department heads and will be requesting time at the next Budget Committee meeting to discuss valuable information to make an informed decision on what the increase should be.

Mr. Kluge agreed and stated that it was cost effective to try to retain employees and paying to train new employees is expensive. He agreed that a public meeting would ideal, and he supported it.

Ms. Stewart stated the cost of turnover and the time lost when someone leaves, and then incoming staff need to be trained needs to be considered and noted she would rather scrape funding out of the budget in other areas versus personnel wages.

Mr. Kluge stated that the Board of Selectmen can also present their own budget and it is within their authority to be able to do so.

Chief Holland stated he would like to approach the Budget Committee first in the hope for everyone to come together.

Mr. Kluge agreed with Chief Holland.

Planning Board

Ms. Stewart stated that the Planning Board worked on zoning amendments related to signage and she encouraged Board of Selectmen feedback regarding proposals received regarding the Shed Street property.

Mr. Wozmak stated he wanted time for the BOS and the Town to discuss and develop clear intention of what to do with the town owned property on Shed Street.

Mascoma Lakeside Park

Ms. Smith stated that there was a successful gathering at Lakeside Park for the tree lighting.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Wozmak stated he did not have anything specific to report. He stated that he had received communications from Bread Loaf regarding January 24th and 27th to host public meetings regarding concepts for Whitney Hall. He stated a mailing will be sent out to all postal patrons in Enfield and Enfield Center to begin the dialogue for the proposal. A warrant article will be prepared to ensure that there is language to present. He noted that a warrant article can always be pulled if the public feedback does not support the ideas brought forward.

Ms. Smith requested any further questions or comments. With no further inquiries, she moved on to the next agenda item.

BUSINESS**Snowmobile Use on Town-owned Property (Grafton Pond Road/Bicknell Brook)**

Mr. Wozmak stated that he reviewed the meeting in which it was discussed as well as the language regarding the conservation land. He stated he wanted it to be clear that the easement does not prohibit snowmobile use on the conservation land. He noted that previous discussions indicated that it does, but it is the Selectboard that gets to decide if snowmobiles can access the property or not. He noted there were other discussions regarding trees being cut as well, but the reconsideration is being brought forward specifically for the snowmobile use on the property.

Ms. Stewart stated she believed that there was an endeavor to post it and encouraged snowmobiles being prohibited from using the land.

Mr. Wozmak stated that he understood that the BOS did not approve of snowmobiles being used on the land but wanted to be clear about the legal elements of the decision being made regarding what the easement states and what the BOS can decide for land use.

Ms. Stewart made a motion to reaffirm that the Selectboard does not wish to allow motorized vehicles, snowmobiles, or ATVs on the Grafton Pond/Bicknell Brook conservation area. Ms. Smith seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (3-0).

Ms. Stewart stated that the tree cutting is related to timber trespass which has a specific protocol which would involve the police department.

Ms. Smith wished to publicly thank Paul Currier and his group of helpers with the fence put up to guide people on where to drive their snowmobiles at Mascoma Lakeside Park. She stated that sometime between Wednesday and Thursday it was removed, and the new access was roped off, and Paul and other volunteers returned to repair and put it back up. She stated that the path helped keep snowmobilers safe and try to keep people from riding their snow mobiles through the pavilion.

Ms. Stewart stated that a game camera could be used in the area again if necessary.

Year-end Encumbrances

Ms. Bonnette presented a list of encumbrances and invited questions from the BOS. She stated that there is money in the budget for all encumbrances, but there are instances where a vendor has not been lined up to invoice and complete the work due to COVID.

Ms. Smith inquired about the money for the logo package for the Mascoma Valley Parks and Recreation (MVPR) should be listed as a design for the Enfield Recreation Department and not the regional position.

Ms. Stewart confirmed that the logo package was quoted for the Enfield Recreation Department and that the project is being performed under the MVPR umbrella to finish out the current budget year.

Ms. Stewart made a motion to approve the encumbrances as listed. Mr. Kluge seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (3-0).

Capital Improvement Program – Fuel Management System Upgrade Proposal

Mr. J. Taylor stated that the proposed project to replace the gas tank has not been completed due to many factors. He stated that, while waiting for the replacement of the tank, the pump system which delivers and tracks department fuel usage has failed. He stated the system was purchased second hand from the Concord Hospital, and there have been difficulties with it before and it runs on an antiquated DOS system. He proposed to take the gas tank money and use it to replace the pumping system and quickly deliver and manage the use of the fuel at a departmental level. He stated the current system to get by involves writing fuel use on a clip board which is not effective.

Ms. Bonnette stated the item was not on the CIP plan for this year, but had been on the approved plan for 2020, but did not make it forward to 2022.

Ms. Stewart inquired if there is a battery back up planned for the new system.

Mr. J. Taylor stated that it uses the same conduits that utilize the backup generator system for the entire facility. He stated that the system does utilize Wi-Fi, which will need to be tested, and the vendor believes they have a way to work around if necessary.

Ms. Stewart made a motion to accept the proposal for the fuel delivery system as presented. Mr. Kluge seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (3-0).

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

Property Tax Abatements (Town, Shapiro)

Ms. Bonnette stated that one abatement is related to three parcels taken by tax deed and need to be abated to level the books. She noted that the other abatement was related to a property being charged for too many bedrooms.

Ms. Stewart made a motion to abate the four properties listed. Mr. Kluge seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (3-0).

OTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Public Comments

Ms. Smith requested any further comments to come before the BOS.

Motor vehicle use on Conservation Land

Mr. Gotthardt stated that the conservation easement is silent on off road vehicles and the decision remains with the property owner to allow off road vehicles or not and thanked the BOS for reaffirming not allowing motorized vehicle or snowmobiles on the Bicknell Brook property.

Resolution with Regard to Face Coverings

Mr. Kluge requested to clarify the current state of the mask resolution, whether the BOS wanted to pursue another mask ordinance, or if signage should be re-issued for area businesses.

Ms. Stewart stated that copies of the current resolution could be redistributed via Listserv, Facebook, and printed copies to educate the public.

Ms. Smith stated that the term 'resolution' was not strong enough and area businesses are not encouraging mask wearing.

Mr. Kluge inquired about the Emergency Management opinion on the matter.

Chief Holland stated that there is confusion for members of the public regarding the current resolution. He stated that a mask ordinance may not accomplish more compliance and may just create more civil disobedience. He stated that Hanover and Lebanon both have mask ordinances and there are a substantial number of people who are not complying with the ordinance. He stated that while people may not be required to wear a mask, something can be posted to support individuals wearing masks. He noted he has been tracking the numbers and the infection rate in area towns is not directly correlated with a mask ordinance.

Ms. Stewart stated that the schools have high mask compliance, but it is not stopping the spread because it is being passed around in social events outside of the school setting.

Chief Holland stated that it should be noted that Enfield has hosted vaccination clinics and we are almost at 70% vaccinated.

Ms. Stewart suggested a sign stating the requirement to wear a mask, while also listing resources, and express as a leadership group that the best way to stay healthy is to get vaccinated, get appropriate boosters, and limit social contact.

Mr. Kluge agreed with Ms. Stewart but expressed that he did not believe the word 'required' should be used.

Chief Holland expressed we should keep using town resources to put information about vaccination clinics and support proactive measures. He stated that there are currently 450 people hospitalized with COVID in NH and only two were vaccinated.

Ms. Stewart stated the sign should encourage the community to show support for medical and emergency personnel.

Chief Holland stated that he and Chief Neily posted the original ordinance, and they would be happy to visit area businesses and post the informational posters.

Dr. Beaufait recommended to use the word 'urge' instead of strongly recommend, and to urge people to wear masks at all indoor gatherings.

Mr. Gotthardt inquired what happens if a store owner requires patrons to wear a mask and an individual refuses.

Chief Holland stated that if a store owner asks someone to wear a mask or leave and the patron does not comply, they can call the police department and it will be handled as criminal trespassing.

Ms. Bonnette stated, to be clear, that masks will be required in public areas only and not required inside the municipal office space where staff works.

Members of the BOS agreed with Ms. Bonnette's statement.

Ms. Stewart stated that mask wearing needs to be required in the Community Building and signs can be put on the door to convey such.

Members of the BOS agreed with Ms. Stewart.

Mr. Wozmak stated that he would prepare a draft of an informational flyer to be sent to members of the BOS for approval prior to distribution.

Wage Discussion

Ms. Beaufait stated she supports the employees of Enfield, and she supports the need to keep salaries competitive, and she understands the challenges to losing and training employees. She stated that as a taxpayer on a fixed income, she is wondering what other items will be in the budget that will add money to the tax base. She noted we are all facing inflation, and she did not want to see people leaving Enfield because they cannot afford to live here.

Ms. Stewart stated that it is important to recognize that the additional amount is for the entire year, and we need to consider how expensive turnover is and how much that would also impact taxpayers.

Mr. Kluge inquired as to how one might initiate the Budget Committee to revisit the conversation.

Mr. Wozmak stated that a motion to revisit could be made by the Budget Committee to open the conversation.

Chief Holland stated that he will be requesting the Budget Committee Chair to hold a public discussion which will give the opportunity to publicly discuss the impact to employees, comparing local wage increases, and give employees the opportunity to listen to the discussion. He stated that, even if it reaches the same conclusion, at least it is open and transparent.

Ms. Stewart stated that, as a process improvement point for all board and committees, it would be prudent to remind the public that when a board or committee enters nonpublic session, the public is welcomed back after the nonpublic session is closed and decisions made in nonpublic will be stated.

With no further comments, members of the BOS moved on to adjournment.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS – NO ACTION REQUIRED

- NH DES Notice of Closed File: No Conclusive Evidence of a Violation, File #2021-03169, 19 Bridge St., Map 32, Lot 6 (Batchelder)
- Dredge & Fill Application (Tabur Residential Development Project) 84 George Hill Rd. (complete application available for viewing)

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Kluge made a motion to adjourn at 7:17 pm. Ms. Stewart seconded. Vote unanimous in favor of the motion (3-0).

The meeting was adjourned at 7:17 pm.

Meredith C. Smith, Chair

John W. Kluge

Katherine D. P. Stewart
Enfield Board of Selectmen