#### FARMINGTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN Tuesday, January 11, 2022 6:30 P.M.

The conduct of the meeting will include remote access by telephonic, video, and electronic means. The public may attend in person or by viewing the live stream at <u>http://mtbluetv.org/program-live-stream-farmington-selectmen.html</u> or Facebook at <u>https://www.facebook.com/MBTV11/</u> or by calling 778-5874

Chairman Matthew Smith called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M. with the following members present: Stephan Bunker, Michael Fogg, Joshua Bell, and Scott Landry. Town Manager Christian Waller, Executive Assistant Nancy Martin, Budget Committee Chair Clyde Ross, Budget Committee Member Judith Murphy, High Peaks Alliance Executive Director Brent West, Mt. Blue TV camera operator Tom Martin, and members of the press and public were also present. Members of the media and public participated remotely.

#### ITEM 1: Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

#### ITEM 2: To Discuss the American Rescue Plan Act Funds (ARPA)

Christian Waller reported that the federal government issued a final rule regarding the Compliance with Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF). Mr. Waller provided a copy of the four-page statement from the U.S. Department of Treasury regarding the final ruling dated January 6, 2022. Mr. Waller stated that upon looking at the final rule, it does not expand the potential uses of ARPA funds. The final decision minimizes and streamlines the process of applying for the funds and what type of justification is needed. As requested by Michael Fogg in a previous meeting, Mr. Waller reported that he did take the opportunity to scale down some of the Selectboard's thoughts and created a list of potential uses:

- 1. Public Engagement education/notice to the public, public input, forms, process, awardspercentage of funds/dollar amount
- Potential ARPA Projects behavioral health/Tri-County Mental Health, Negative public health, or related impacts, addressing negative economic impacts from COVID, addressing learning gaps, premium pay for essential workers, economic challenges, domestic violence, necessary investments (water, sewer, and broadband), actions to decrease the spread of COVID, flexibility on fund use to best meet the needs of our community (tailored to Town of Farmington needs), homelessness and affordable housing.

Mr. Waller confirmed that he met with Franklin County ARPA Coordinator Sue Pratt who offered insight and is willing to share information with the Town. From a process perspective, the Town has some things to consider. Ms. Pratt is going to share copies of the forms she created and the research that she has gathered for the County. We can review her efforts and decide what we want to use. Mr. Waller stated that the Town should receive the broadband study from Casco Bay Advisors, LLC within the next two weeks. Franklin County Commissioners are welcoming suggestions from the public and then making decisions, would the Board like to do the same? Keep in mind that Franklin County's ARPA funds are much higher than the Towns. He asked the Board for their thoughts on determining the projects, and how they would like to decide on a list. Joshua Bell stated that the Community Center needs a new air exchange system and roof. Mr. Waller stated that the air exchange system probably qualifies for ARPA funding. Mr. Waller stated that air exchange issues in the Municipal Building could also be addressed. Mr. Waller reported that the final rule included examples of broadening the scope of the infrastructure, to improve better public health services. In response to Mr. Bell's question, Mr. Waller stated that confirmation of project eligibility could be obtained by reaching out to SLRP@treasury.gov. Stephan Bunker reminded the Selectmen that the Community Center is an emergency shelter, and

#### ITEM 2: To Discuss the American Rescue Plan Act Funds (ARPA) (continued)

this could qualify the center for ARPA funding. Mr. Bunker stated there are four projects that he would like to discuss further. With the lack of a homeless shelter in the region, he would like to get assistance from Franklin County Commissioners. He spoke with Sue Pratt regarding a homeless shelter, and she expressed sustainability concerns, once opened where would funding resources come from. Mr. Bunker stated he would like someone to put together a homeless shelter proposal. If bricks and mortar are all they need for support, and they would staff and manage the shelter, that is a sustainable project. Mr. Bunker stated that he would love to see joint funding with the County for a homeless shelter. Tri-County Mental Health services pique his interest, he would love to help them out with the staffing shortage, but what happens in year two? Where is the funding stream to keep the staffing needs going? Whoever we decide to help, will they come back next year and ask for additional funding? Another area concern is domestic violence, there is an outreach program here, but sheltering is a major issue for their clients. They must go out of town for shelter. They do have a facility, that with some rehabilitation, would be a suitable shelter. Mr. Bunker reported that he is looking to have someone pull together the funding needs and make a presentation. He would also like to consider funding expanded broadband services for the area. Another topic Mr. Bunker would like to review further is hazard pay/premium pay for essential workers. Premium pay would be a gesture to current employees, and he hopes would aid in retention. Scott Landry agreed with Mr. Bunker, shovel-ready projects are important, but the Selectboard needs to see some numbers. The homeless shelter is important. Mr. Landry stated that Premium pay is number one on the list; take care of the people who are taking care of us. Michael Fogg stated that recognizing employees who stuck with us and worked through COVID feels right, it is the right thing to do. A lengthy discussion ensued. Mr. Waller agreed to put together a "good, better, best" list of premium pay for employees for the Selectboard to review and decide on.

Mr. Bell requested a "Request for Proposal" (RFP) for replacing the Community Center roof. He stated that the Selectboard needs actual costs for big-ticket items. Mr. Waller noted that the Town needs to engage an engineering study to get the cost of a new roof. He estimated that engineering costs would range between \$10,000 - \$20,000 and could be paid for with ARPA funds.

Joshua Bell moved to authorize the engineering and design services for the Community Center roof and air exchange system, and an air exchange system for the Municipal Building to be paid for with ARPA funds; Stephan Bunker seconded.

## VOTEAFFIRMATIVE5MOTION CARRIED

#### ITEM 3: To Discuss Mask requirements in all Town buildings/locations

Christian Waller stated that while it is nice to be rated top three in the nation in some categories, COVID infection rates are not one of those times. Unfortunately, Franklin County peaked at number three (3) in the nation and currently ranks at number five (5) for the percentage of COVID-19 infection rates. Every department has been impacted by COVID. Due to the measures, we have in place we have been able to weather the storm. From public safety, workplace safety, and continuity of operations, it would be prudent to implement a masked mandate while inside all buildings on Town property. A mask is a straightforward way to protect yourself, fellow employees, and the citizens we serve. Matthew Smith stated that he saw on the news that at 63%, Franklin County is the least vaccinated county in Maine.

Michael Fogg moved to authorize the Town Manager to mandate that masks be required in all town buildings and/or locations; Stephan Bunker seconded.

ITEM 3: To Discuss Mask requirements in all Town buildings/locations (continued)

VOTEAFFIRMATIVE5MOTION CARRIED

#### ITEM 4: The Rail Trail Bridge Project Update

High Peaks Alliance Executive Director Brent West provided an update on the Rail Trail Bridge Project. Calderwood Engineering completed the preliminary design report for the multi-use bridge over Sandy River. The original cost of the project was estimated at \$2.8 million, however, the revised estimated costs came in at \$2.5 million. If we are successful in building it, the 336' bridge will be the longest pedestrian bridge and the longest single-span snowmobile bridge in the State of Maine. Six feet longer than the current longest bridge. The proposed bridge is a cablestayed design, with seven (7) 48-foot long steel truss, welded together and suspended by cables. The steel structures are to be hot-dip galvanized to protect them from the elements and ensure a long-lasting structure. To protect the structure deck below from snowmobile traffic, a sacrificial timber wearing surface will be employed. The State Bureau of Parks and Lands Joe Higgins at the snowmobile department reviewed the design and it is up to his standards. The new budget requires \$380,000 overall to finish the project; this includes the remaining \$200,000 match for the grant, project management costs, and the long-term maintenance fund. Mr. West asked the Selectboard to vote in support of a \$200,000 gift from the Town. A vote to approve the \$200,00 gift would allow High Peaks Alliance (HPA) to move forward with the grant request. He reported that HPA is receiving a lot of regional support for the Sandy River Bridge. Ten local snowmobile clubs have written letters of support, and he hopes to obtain a letter of support from the Wilton Selectboard next week. Mr. West reminded the Selectboard that the University of Southern Maine (USM), conducted an economic impact study on the proposed bridge, and they estimated that the project would create twenty-five new construction phase jobs; \$1.5 million in regional spending during the construction phase; tourism (trail traffic) would bring an estimated \$861,000 annually to the local economy; and thirteen new permanent jobs to the area. Mr. West stated that if USM's figures are accurate, the \$200,000 gift is a good economic development investment for the downtown region. He reviewed the Town's Downtown Development Plan from eight years ago, and the Town was considering a \$330,000 match requirement, the \$200,000 match is much lower. The State will be responsible for the long-term maintenance costs; the Town will not be responsible for future maintenance and repairs. Mr. West answered the Selectboards questions. A lengthy discussion included County support, ATV access, parking, trail width, and public safety.

# Scott Landry moved to authorize the use of \$200,000 to match for the Rail Trail Bridge project; Joshua Bell seconded.

Roll Call Vote – Matthew Smith: Yes, Stephan Bunker: Yes, Michael Fogg: Yes, Joshua Bell: Yes, Scott Landry: Yes

### VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

Mr. West thanked the Selectboard for their vote of confidence and encouraged the Selectboard to call him with any questions.

### ITEM 5: \*To Approve the Minutes of December 28, 2021

The minutes were not available; Item 5 was tabled.

#### ITEM 6: To Discuss Other Business

**A.** Christian Waller noted that the Budget Committee meets tomorrow night and the Selectboard will hold a special meeting on January 25<sup>th</sup> to review the 2022 Budget with department heads.

There being no further business to come before the Board, Stephan Bunker moved to adjourn at 7:45 P.M.; Scott Landry seconded.

VOTEAFFIRMATIVE5MOTION CARRIED

Minutes respectfully submitted by Nancy L. Martin.

Michael J. Fogg - Secretary