

FARMINGTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Tuesday, February 22, 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 <http://mtbluetv.org/program-live-stream-farmington-selectmen.html> or Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/MBTV11/> 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, and Joshua Bell. Michael Fogg and Scott Landry were unable to attend. Town Manager Christian Waller, Executive Assistant Nancy Martin, MBTV Executive Director and Camera Operator Andre Cormier, and members of the press and public were also present. Safe Voices Executive Director Elise Johansen, members of the media and public participated remotely.

ITEM 1: Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

ITEM 2: To Allow MBTV Executive Director Andre Cormier to address the Board.

Andre Cormier reviewed his MBTV Executive Director Report 2022 and the MBTV 2022 Fiscal Year Operating Budget with the Select Board. MBTV collaborates with community non-profits, local businesses, and community programs to help foster collaborative opportunities. Membership supporters include United Way of the Tri-Valley Area, Farmington Rotary, Origin, and Hight Family Dealerships. They fostered relationships with the Farmington Historical Society, the Norlands Living Center, ArtsFarmington, and the Nordica Homestead Museum to name a few. MBTV is committed to covering community events: local select board meetings, Franklin County Commissioner meetings, the 4th of July parade, the Wilton Blueberry Festival Parade, Veterans Day Ceremonies, and Chester Greenwood Day. They also live-stream MBHS football games, soccer, field hockey, wrestling, cross-country ski meets, baseball, and softball games. Mr. Cormier reports that MBTV partnered with UMF to cover some college sports as well. MBTV increased its studio show content and programming. Talkin' Maine is closing in on 400 shows and the Simple Gourmet has relaunched. They worked with Western Maine Story Tellers and the Peace Alliance to produce an eight-part series with storytellers and peace activists. MBTV is currently collaborating with the Maine Professional Guides Association to produce a show called Go Guided. In 2021 MBTV produced over 200 content pieces and 200 live-streamed events, including Our Short Film Show, Audubon Society Meetings, Community Connections Series, Maine Menu, and Trail Songs. The Citizen Camera Crew Initiative (CCCI) training program teaches community members the basic skills needed to access the resources of our station and studio space to create programming. Mr. Cormier encouraged anyone interested in the CCCI training program to call him. He reported that MBTV's standard

ITEM 2: To Allow MBTV Executive Director Andre Cormier to address the Board. (continued)

revenue stream from PEG Media Funds and the Franchise Fee funds has been decreasing and trending with about a 3% decrease over the last four years, which equates to \$10,000 less funding for the year. The trend of people dropping cable and streaming services for content is a contributing factor. Mr. Cormier provided the following table which shows the decrease in Franchise Fee Funds (cable advertising sales).

Farmington					
Year	2021	2020	2019	2018	Difference 2018 to 2021
<i>Broadcast Service</i>	\$337,704.92	\$342,523.92	\$348,469.22	\$345,368.44	-\$10,764.30
<i>Basic Service</i>	\$366,818.10	\$363,327.69	\$384,701.69	\$415,603.54	-\$17,883.59
<i>Premium Channels</i>	\$31,041.78	\$26,958.00	\$34,790.89	\$40,227.83	-\$3,749.11
<i>Advertising</i>	\$26,136.30	\$174,907.49	\$88,240.42	\$88,626.83	-\$62,104.12
Total	\$761,701.10	\$907,717.10	\$856,202.22	\$889,826.64	-\$94,501.12

Mr. Cormier answered the Select Board’s questions.

ITEM 3: To allow Safe Voices Executive Director Elise Johansen to address the Board with a request for an allocation of \$10,000 in ARPA Funds.

Elise Johansen provided an overview of Safe Voices Housing Continuum Vision, emergency safe housing, and comprehensive resource center program expansion into Franklin County. Safe Voices is converting its current 3,9110 square-foot building in Farmington into the first and only emergency shelter for survivors of domestic violence and sex trafficking and exploitation in Franklin County. In addition to up to six (6) emergency safe housing beds, the building will include two (2) one-bedroom apartments and a comprehensive resource center to assist survivors in navigating services and receiving support to stay safely and stably housed. The project cost of the renovation is approximately \$1.9 million with funding coming from several resources. Maine Housing is committed to providing housing vouchers for the next forty years which will allow people to move into the apartments. When they elect to move out of the Safe Voices apartment, they will take the housing voucher with them, and Maine Housing will issue a new voucher for the incoming tenant. Stephan Bunker stated that this shelter project suits the needs of our community, there is none like it in Franklin County. Ms. Johansen reported survivors who want to flee and require a secure location will often stay in the home where they feel unsafe. Or they flee to Androscoggin County which is not where their home is. They want to stay in Franklin

ITEM 3: To allow Safe Voices Executive Director Elise Johansen to address the Board with a request for an allocation of \$10,000 in ARPA Funds. (continued)

County near their natural support system, their children’s schools and near their employers. Safe Voices has been around since the 1970s and has developed partnerships with other service providers in Franklin County. Last fiscal year, Safe Voices received 290 requests for shelter and were able to shelter 106. The remaining 184 were referred to other shelter programs. Due to the 2020 closure of Western Maine Homeless Outreach’s shelter, there are no shelter beds in Franklin County. Ms. Johansen stated that they have sought funding from ARPA recipients, CDBG, the State of Maine, Maine Housing, and HUD. Because they are going to be pet friendly, they are also receiving funds from a national organization for survivors of domestic violence. In addition to housing survivors of domestic violence and victims of sex trafficking, Safe Voices provides services for hundreds of people each year. Ms. Johansen answered the Select Boards questions.

Stephan Bunker moved to table Item 3 until a later date; Joshua Bell seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 3 ABSENT 2 MOTION CARRIED

Fogg/Landry

ITEM 4: To Discuss the American Rescue Plan Act Funds (ARPA)

At the Board’s request, Christian Waller provided a “Good, Better, Best” analysis of ARPA expenditures for the following projects:

ARPA PROJECT/USE	Good	Better	Best
Behavioral Health/Tri-County Mental Health	\$10,000	\$25,000	\$50,000
Negative public health-related impacts	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Addressing negative economic impacts from COVID	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Addressing learning gaps	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Premium pay for essential workers	\$1,500	\$83,000	\$124,500
Economic challenges	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Domestic violence	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$15,000
Water	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Sewer	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Broadband	\$698,490	\$371,990	\$50,000
Actions to decrease spread of COVID (Community Ctr roof)	\$50,000	\$300,000	\$525,490
Homeless and affordable housing	\$ 10,000	\$25,000	\$50,000
Total	\$814,990	\$814,990	\$814,990

Joshua Bell opened a discussion on the need to replace the Community Center’s roof; he recommended any remaining ARPA funds be set aside for the new roof and once the the roof is completed, any remaining funds could be applied to other agencies. Matthew Smith stated he would like to hold off making any commitments until the

ITEM 4: To Discuss the American Rescue Plan Act Funds (ARPA) (continued)

Town receives the engineer’s cost analysis for the Community Center roof. Christian Waller reported Parks and Recreation Director Matthew Foster reached out to the engineer who said the original analysis report from 2001 is still correct regarding the work that needs to be done and is roughly accurate regarding the cost. Mr. Waller questioned the accuracy of the 2001 cost estimate because, in the last four months, building material costs have increased significantly. He believes the final cost to replace the roof will range between \$650,000 and \$950,000. Mr. Waller stated he would request a cost analysis from a second engineering firm. The Select Board recapped previously approved ARPA expenditures; approximately \$117,000 in ARPA expenditures were approved, leaving approximately \$703,000 to replace the Community Center roof.

Project	BoS Mtg	Estimate
A broadband feasibility study by Casco Bay Advisors, LLC	11/23/21	\$4,800
Engineering study for Community Center roof replacement	01/11/22	\$10 - \$20K
Premium/Hazard pay for essential workers	02/08/22	\$93,000

Stephan Bunker agreed with Mr. Bell, the biggest impact from a taxpayer’s viewpoint is applying ARPA funds towards the replacement of the Community Center roof. Applying ARPA funds to the cost of the roof will decrease the bond amount which will lessen the need to increase property taxes. Mr. Bell stated that in a worst-case scenario the Town would need to hold a special Town Meeting to allocate additional funds to cover the cost of the roof not covered by ARPA funds.

Joshua Bell moved to allocate all remaining ARPA funds to use towards the replacement of the Community Center roof; Stephan Bunker seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 3 ABSENT 2 MOTION CARRIED

Fogg/Landry

ITEM 5: To Review and Approve the 2022 Ballot Referendum Warrant for March 28, 2022, Town Meeting

Christian Waller provided a copy of the 2022 Ballot Referendum Warrant and a sample ballot. The voters will assemble at the Community Center at 127 Middle Street on Monday, March 28, 2022. Voters will elect two Selectmen for a three-year term and two RSU#9 School Board Directors for a three-year term. Michael J. Fogg is running for re-election and Dennis E. O’Neil is running for his first term on the Select Board. There are two spots where voters can write in the candidate of their choice. Alexander H. Creznic is running for a three-year term on the School Board and there are two spots where voters can write in the candidate of their choice.

ITEM 5: To Review and Approve the 2022 Ballot Referendum Warrant for March 28, 2022, Town Meeting (continued)

Matthew Smith moved to approve the 2022 Ballot Referendum Warrant for March 28, 2022, Town Meeting; Stephan Bunker seconded.

**VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 3 ABSENT 2 MOTION
CARRIED
Fogg/Landry**

Two original copies of the warrant are available at the Town Office for the Select Board to sign.

ITEM 6: To Review and Approve the Warrant for April 25, 2022, Annual Town Meeting

The Board reached a consensus to table Item 6 until the full Board could meet.

Joshua Bell asked the Chair and Vice-Chair why the Select Board did not meet on Tuesday, February 15th. A consensus to meet and discuss the 2022 Budget was made at the February 8th meeting. Chairman Smith said he chewed on the 2022 Budget for quite some time and the Board's greatest disagreement was wage increases. He stated after having done some research he learned that the last pay increase across the board was twelve years ago. He stated unfortunately, the Select Board created this problem, and he is ready to fix it. Mr. Bell reiterated that the consensus was to meet, and the Select Board voted to meet. Chairman Smith said he does not have a problem with the budget or the pay increases. He heard from the other Board members and they do not have an issue with the budget. Vice-Chair Bunker stated he took the warrant articles under strong consideration again and after a lot of soul searching, he had nothing different that he wanted to discuss or offer up. He felt another meeting Board meeting was not going to change his mind and he withdrew his support.

Joshua Bell moved to table Item 6 until Thursday, February 24, 2022, at 6:30 P.M.; Stephan Bunker seconded.

**VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 3 ABSENT 2 MOTION
CARRIED
Fogg/Landry**

ITEM 7: To Approve the Minutes of February 8, 2022

Joshua Bell moved to approve the minutes of February 8, 2022; Stephan Bunker seconded.

**VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 3 ABSENT 2 MOTION
CARRIED
Fogg/Landry**

ITEM 8: To Discuss Other Business

- A.) Christian Waller reported that Public Works received a fresh supply of cold patch. The PWD crew will be out filling in potholes.

- B.) Matthew Smith said he was approached by a couple of employees who asked if the mask mandate could be lifted in the Municipal Buildings. Mr. Smith completed a very informal survey with the employees upstairs, and they are not opposed to lifting the mandate, however, they would like to wait another month to see how COVID-19 cases trend. Christian Waller based upon the recent death of a family member due to COVID, asked that the mandate not be lifted at this time. He would like the Board to revisit the mandate after the Town Meeting in April. Stephan Bunker said he is attentive to CDC guidelines and willing to listen on a meeting-by-meeting basis. Joshua Bell reported he too was approached by employees regarding the mask mandate and he understands both sides of the argument. The Town, hospital, schools, and a few businesses are about the only ones requiring a mask indoors. Mr. Bunker said we are in an interesting predicament with the employee/employer relationship, at this point he will listen to the science. A brief discussion followed. The Board agreed to leave the mandate in place, and they will relook at the mask mandate at future Board meetings as conditions change.

- C.) Matthew Smith noted that UMF President Edward Serna is leaving; he is moving back to South Carolina. The Board wished Mr. Serna well.

- D.) Matthew Smith asked that everyone keep Ron Smith and his family in their prayers; they have some hard days ahead of them.

- E.) Matthew Smith wished his wife Wendy Smith a happy 51st birthday.

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Stephan Bunker moved to adjourn at 7:37 P.M.; Joshua Bell seconded.**

**VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 3 ABSENT 2 MOTION
CARRIED**

Fogg/Landry

Minutes respectfully submitted by Nancy L. Martin.

Michael J. Fogg - Secretary