

FARMINGTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Tuesday, January 24, 2023

The meeting was conducted through remote access by telephone, video, and electronic means. The public could attend by viewing the live stream at <http://mtbluetv.org/program-live-stream-farmington-selectmen.html> or Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/MBTV11/> and calling 578-7395

Chairman Matthew Smith called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M. with the following members present: Stephan Bunker, Joshua Bell, and Scott Landry. Byron Staples was unable to attend. Town Manager Christian Waller, Executive Assistant Nancy Martin, Police Chief Kenneth Charles, Parks and Recreation Director Matthew Foster, Public Works Director Phil Hutchins, Public Works Foreman Jim Kiernan, Budget Chairman Judith Murphy, James Andrews, and the Mt. Blue TV camera operator were also in attendance. Berry Talbot and Royer Certified Public Accountant Marc Roy, Members of the press and public, participated remotely as authorized by PL 209, c.617.

ITEM 1: Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Chairman Matthew Smith led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

ITEM 2: To introduce to and request confirmation of the Town Manager’s appointment by the Select Board of Tammy Bureau as the new Treasurer.

Christian Waller introduced Tammy Bureau. Ms. Bureau is scheduled to start on Monday, February 13, 2023. Ms. Bureau said her municipal experience started in 1997 as a counter clerk for the City of Lewiston. During her twenty-one years with Lewiston, she held the following positions: Sr. Account Clerk, Finance Technician, Investment Officer, and Deputy Tax Collector. In 2018 Ms. Bureau accepted the position of Grant Accountant for the Lewiston Public School system. The Selectboard welcomed Ms. Bureau to the Town of Farmington.

Stephan Bunker moved to appoint Tammy Bureau as Treasurer; Joshua Bell seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 4 ABSENT 1 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 3: To approve and authorize the Town Manager to sign a Memorandum of Understanding between the Town of Farmington and Franklin County to reimburse the County \$24,339.19. The cost represents \$17,373.40 allocated to the fee for licensing and upgraded public safety and informational services, \$6,365.79 to the cost of maintaining the upgraded services and \$600 allocated to the subscription fee for upgraded services.

Chief Charles reviewed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the importance of upgrading public safety and informational services. If authorized, the Town agrees to reimburse the County \$24,339. \$17,373.40 would be a one-time fee that covers licensing, upgraded services, and equipment. \$6,365.79 would cover the cost of maintaining the upgrade. And \$600 would be an annual subscription fee. Should the Board approve the MOU, the deadline for reimbursing the County is December 31, 2024. Chief Charles and Fire Chief T.D. Hardy answered the Selectmen’s questions regarding the upgrade and its cost. The following items were discussed: Annual fees vs. one-time fees, participation of other Franklin County towns, is every town paying their fair share, why aren’t the large costs absorbed by the County’s communication budget as part of their core operation costs, how our system works now...

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The Board asked Christian Waller to follow up with the Franklin County Commissioners and ascertain the cost breakdown for the County and participating towns and the reasoning for the breakdown.

Stephan Bunker moved table Item 3 until February 14, 2023; Joshua Bell seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 4 ABSENT 1 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 4: To appoint Sierra Powers to the Conservation Committee as an Associate Member for the term of one year.

The Board reviewed Sierra Powers' application. Ms. Powers, an Energy Services Coordinator, was raised in Farmington. She frequents the network of trails in Farmington.

Joshua bell moved to appoint Sierra Powers to the Conservation Committee as an Associate Member for the term of one year; Stephan Bunker seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 4 ABSENT 1 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 5: To accept the resignation of Wayne Kinney from the Town Report Committee.

The Board reviewed Mr. Kinney's letter of resignation.

Joshua bell moved to accept the resignation of Wayne Kinney from the Town Report Committee and thank him for his service; Stephan Bunker seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 4 ABSENT 1 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 6: To table approval of the January 10, 11, 17, and 18, 2023, Minutes.

Joshua bell moved to table approval of the January 10, 11, 17, and 18, 2023, Minutes; Stephan Bunker seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 4 ABSENT 1 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 7: To discuss other business

No other business was discussed.

ITEM 8: Retention Analysis

Christian Waller reviewed the financial impacts of retaining versus not retaining staff. Mr. Waller stated, "In this budget, we are looking to adjust that in a reasonable way and keep the good talent that we have. Some of the decisions related to the turnover were due in part to last year's budget process and the way that various pay adjustments were able to be made."

ITEM 9: Compensation Adjustments

Christian Waller provided the Board with a spreadsheet showing individual pay adjustments.

ITEM 10: Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)

Christian Waller provided the Board with a spreadsheet showing individual pay adjustments. Discussion included: the need for step changes, merit-based pay raises, longevity pay, pay scale review, wage calculations by fiscal year versus 25/75 split (increases effective on April 1st), and the effect of various COLA percentages on the budget. Mr. Waller answered the Selectmen’s questions.

The discussion morphed from COLA into an overall budget discussion. Joshua Bell questioned the cause of the drastic increase from 2022’s budget to 2023’s budget. He remarked that the other night the budget increase was 17.9% (without the roads). He asked where the additional 15.9% came from. Mr. Waller stated that it’s divided out amongst the remaining capital items... Mr. Waller asked Marc Roy to provide an “apples to apples” comparison to the former and tonight’s budgets. Mr. Roy stated he did not have the latest version. The version he has is from the last meeting. Last year’s budget, as it appeared in the warrant, was \$7,605,052. The Town Manager/Department Head budget was \$9,836,568 (a 29.3% increase). With the adjustments for the Capital Reserve that the Board approved last meeting, the Board’s budget is \$9,211,995 (21.1% increase). Mr. Roy stated that the Board needs to consider that the budget they are reviewing has \$3,602,000 or total wages. The total wages budgeted for 2022 was \$3,452,000; \$150,000 less than the \$3,602,000. Mr. Bell asked Mr. Roy about the drastic increase from the 2022 and currently proposed 2023 budget...are we calculating a January 1 pay increase for employees or an April 1st through December 31st increase? Mr. Roy said he assumed that January 1st through December 31st was used. Mr. Waller reported that the wage increase was calculated for the calendar year. Fire Chief T.D. Hardy stated that previously, the department heads budgeted wages based on a fixed COLA amount, using April through December. Mr. Bell stated that budgeted wages should be calculated with adjustments in April. He is trying to determine where the extra 18% comes from; the roads program only equates to 3%. Mr. Waller indicated that the extra 18% comes from the roads program, Capital Improvements, fuel costs, and other things...he stated that he would break down the increases for the Board. Matthew Smith stated that he, too, struggled to determine exactly where the increases were coming from because nothing was glaring. He wondered if it’s a matter of nickels and dimes turning into quarters, and before you know it, you have a whole pile of them. Mr. Bell requested that the wage worksheet and budget be updated to reflect the April through December wage adjustments. Stephan Bunker noted the impact of inflation on each department: health insurance, worker’s comp, retirement, heat, electricity, telephone, postage, general supplies... Joshua Bell asked Nancy Martin if the Town had received a 2023 invoice from Central Maine Power; the Board would like to know the increasing percentage of electricity. Ms. Martin agreed to provide the Board with the projected increase. Mr. Smith asked Mr. Waller to update the budget worksheets to show a line item breakdown and percentage of increase from 2022 to 2023. In response to Stephan Bunker’s question, Mr. Waller provided a list of items cut from Capital Improvements during the last budget meeting: roads (averaged over five years), ladder truck, rail trail bridge, and PWD equipment reserves.

Joshua bell moved to reduce the Assessor’s Revaluation Reserve account appropriation from \$50,000 to \$30,000; Scott Landry seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 4 ABSENT 1 MOTION CARRIED

A consensus was reached to table the 2023 Budget review until tomorrow night; Christian Waller will provide updated figures for the next BoS/Budget meeting.

ITEM 11: Capital Improvement Plan/ How to Handle Capital Budget items

ITEM 12: Discuss General Administration Budget

ITEM 13: Discuss Treasurer/ Town Clerk/HR Budget

ITEM 14: Discuss Code Enforcement Budget

ITEM 15: Discuss Assessor Budget

ITEM 16: Discuss Committees and Events Budget

ITEM 17: Discuss Municipal Building Budget

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Scott Landry moved to adjourn at 7:48 P.M.; seconded.**

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 4 ABSENT 1 MOTION CARRIED

Minutes respectfully submitted by Nancy L. Martin.

Byron T. Staples - Secretary