

FARMINGTON SELECT BOARD

Tuesday, January 23, 2024

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

Chairman Matthew Smith called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M. with the following members present: Stephen Bunker; Joshua Bell; Byron Staples; and Dennis O'Neil. Erica LaCroix, Town Manager; Police Chief Kenneth Charles; Deputy Police Chief Shane Cote; Director of Parks & Recreation Matt Foster; Director of Public Works Phil Hutchins; Assistant Director of Public Works Leia Durrell; Fire Chief TD Hardy; Code Enforcement Officer Steve Kaiser; Treasurer Tammy Bureau; Town Clerk Diane Dunham; Planning Assistant Cindy Gelinas; Leah Giusti, Executive Assistant; MBTV Camera Operator; and members of the press and members of the public were also present. 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 hold a Public Hearing re: Community Development Block Grant – Avesta Housing/Edgewater Project

Chairman Matthew Smith opened the Public Hearing under Item 2 at 6:33 P.M.

Avesta Housing Project Manager Lauren Turner introduced herself and stated one of the funding sources is through CDBG Housing Assistance funds this is part of the second round of the process for a two-story 25-unit affordable senior housing for ages 55 and up on Willow Springs Drive. Fen Fowler complimented the Brookside project for utilizing green energy and he asked if this project would also implement the same. Ms. Turner said our goal is for it to include solar and it will be built solar ready for when we have the funding to install panels through grants.

Chairman Matthew Smith closed the Public Hearing at 6:35 P.M.

Selectman. Bell asked if the age limit was 55 or 62. Ms. Turner said different funding sources have a different age definition for senior. Selectman Bell asked when the projected start date was for the project. Ms. Turner said we are closing on funding in the spring 2024 with construction beginning soon after. Selectman O'Neil asked if this was a stand-alone project. Ms. Turner said yes. Selectman O'Neil asked what the function of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CDAC) members was they were approving. Mrs. Gelinas said establishing a CDAC is a requirement for CDBG funding, the developer will do a presentation to the committee who can ask questions and make comments or concerns regarding the project that will go on record. Selectman. Bunker confirmed, other than getting the Town's support and encouragement for this, the Town does not bear any financial responsibility. Ms. Turner said that is correct.

Joshua Bell moved to approve the Community Development Block Grant for \$500,000 to Avesta Housing/Edgewater be administered through the Town; Dennis O’Neil seconded the motion.

Chairman Mattew Smith said he appreciated bringing this project into the community and it is greatly needed, and it will be nice to see.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 3: To hear Request from T.I.F. Advisory Committee to remove a member of the Committee

Buzz Davis addressed the Select Board. He stated the adjustment needs to be made. There is no fixed number of seats on the committee and there are no term limits.

Selectman Bell made a motion to remove the member from the T.I.F. Advisory Committee; Selectman Bunker seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 4: To hear from Public Works re: \$25,000 donation from Domino’s for snow removal and plowing efforts

Phil Hutchins and Leia Durrell approached the Select Board. Domino’s is having a campaign called “Plowing for Pizza.” Mr. Hutchins had a video conference with Domino’s national corp. They are trying to help municipalities with anything to do with winter operations. Domino’s is giving away a total of \$500,000 this winter. Farmington would be the 8th municipality countrywide. All they ask in return is a brief description of what the funds are used for and a few photos for their website. They would be generic pictures of the town. Mr. Hutchins would like to see the funds go towards a new sidewalk machine. The town was nominated, but Mr. Hutchins does not know by whom.

Selectman O’Neil made a motion to accept the \$25,000 donation from Domino’s; Selectman Smith seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 5: To authorize Town Manager to send letter in support of Community Concepts

Town Manager Erica LaCroix addressed the Select Board. Community Concept is asking for a letter of support for their program. They provide assistance for first time homebuyers/low-income housing through USDA Rural Development. There is no obligation for the town, they just add the town to the names in support of their efforts for their application. They help finance

new construction. It is a part of their annual drive to support their application to USDA Rural Development. It is a form letter amended as we wish.

Code Enforcement Officer Steve Kaiser added that we probably have a handful of these properties in town. The Code Enforcement Office has helped them in their planning and zoning efforts. They are well done and well taken care of.

Selectman Staples made a motion to authorize the Town Manager to send letter in support of Community Concepts; Selectman Smith seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 6: To review Downtown T.I.F. Advisory Committee Application of Patty Haggan

The Select Board reviewed the application.

Selectman Bell made a motion to approve the Downtown T.I.F. Advisory Committee Application of Patty Haggan; Selectman Bunker seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 7: To reappoint Code Enforcement Officer and Plumbing Inspector

The Select Board reviewed the application.

Selectman Bell made a motion to reappoint Steve Kaiser as Code Enforcement Officer; Selectman Bunker seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

Selectman Bell made a motion to reappoint Andrew Marble as LPI; Selectman Bunker seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 8: To sign letter granting Blanket Approval to American Legion Post #28

The Select Board reviewed the letter.

Selectman Bell made a motion granting Blanket Approval to American Legion Post #28 for Games of Chance and Beano/Bingo for 1/1/24 – 12/31/24; Selectman Staples seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 9: To present the 2024 Budget

Selectman Smith states tonight is just an overview. Budget meetings will start next week.

Selectman Bunker noted that this is only a preliminary budget, and no numbers should be listed in the papers.

Town Manager Erica LaCroix opened with an overview before getting into details.

Regarding tax commitment, these are preliminary numbers as they cannot be committed until done by the assessor in August with new valuations, valuations must be as of April 1 by state law. Looking at a mil rate increase of .73 which is a lot better than anticipated. Overall up by 5.3%. Cost increases just like everyone else.

Breakdown: county 8.5%, education 46.3%, 47.9% for municipal operations.

General Government/Administration

Total increase, without education, is 3.8%.

The numbers for school and county are placeholders as they are on a fiscal year budget. The administration budget up is mainly due to the town manager salary. 3% COLA was authorized by the Select Board. Some wage adjustments had been made prior to authorized increase. More money was needed for office supplies. Legal up a little with the new attorney. Application software dropped as well as contractual services.

Selectman Bunker noted he still believes moving the Town to a fiscal year is work talking about.

Capital

ADA reserve stay at \$1,500. Legal was depleted, requesting \$14,000 in order to satisfy deficit.

Assessing

Normally assessor would be doing this portion of the budget. The new assessor will be coming in at a slightly lower salary than the previous assessor. Half of the salary for assessing counter clerk moved to assessing to make it more equitable. In future years budgets will start putting away for future. Health insurance is based on worst-case scenario.

Worker's Compensation

Finally going back down after the 2019 event.

Treasurer

Tammy Bureau, approached the board. Personnel costs are down. There is a salary drop as AP clerk moved from salary to hourly. Operations mostly stayed the same, office supplies were brought up due to overspending in the previous year. Part-time wages pulled from election workers. No longer paying accounting firm, which is a savings of \$36,000. Software costs are for Trio and Adobe.

Municipal Building

Decrease in wages due to custodial hours being over. Cleaning supplies down, electricity overbudgeted by a lot. Would like to do a deeper dive townwide in the future. Capital -

\$22,771, asked for \$10K for building-wide fire system.

Code Enforcement

Code Enforcement Officer, Steve Kaiser, approached the Select Board. Salaries and wages increasing 3% for COLA. Legal advertising up.

Public Safety

Police Chief Ken Charles approached the Board. Part-time wages are being removed due to nonuse. Overtime increased by \$5,000 based on actual usage last year. Incentive line item for \$14,980 – under new contract, officers are awarded a stipend for fitness incentive. Motor fuel has up. Several different projects with IT to clean up server closet. Application software – livescan fingerprinting system along with cost increases for the year. In terms of Capital – money going directly into reserves for 2 vehicles. Historically they have budgeted for 1.5 a year, but he does not believe it is a sustainable rate. Officers drive 12,000-17,000 miles a year, and 100,000-120,000 miles is a good time to look at replacement. They have three 2014 vehicles that are aging out. three are over 10 years old, four have over 120,000 miles, one is over 160,000 miles. He would like to replace at least two this year, and would like to see over time two a year to replace. More sustainable overall. \$124,000 for vehicle reserve, \$10,000 for parking lot pavement, and \$10,000 for computer equipment reserve for office and vehicles.

Fire Chief Hardy approached the Board. They have added 43 hours a month for shift coverage with staff gaining more vacation time. Health insurance decreased as one employee switched from family coverage to buyout. Operations training increased for hazmat training costs. Fuel increased based off last year's actual cost, same with telephone. Vehicle maintenance increased, and they have a couple projects going on. Computer hardware and software are separated out. Contractual services increased \$2,500 to provide cardiac and cancer health screenings. About \$325/person.

Capital - \$1,800 for computer equipment, left \$150,000 for future apparatus purchase. \$8,275 for facilities – living quarters improvements and layout adjustments.

Ambulance service increased \$3,000. The current contract runs through June, new contract begins in July.

Public Works

Public Works Direct Phil Hutchins and Assistant Direct Leia Durrell approached the Board. New positions and 3% COLA increased salaries and wages. Office supplies increased. Motor fuel increased. Street signs increased to \$5,000. The cost of materials going up and weather events were major factors. For future storm events, new accounts will be created until paid back by FEMA. Salt has been stable but cutting edges has been going up. Heat and electricity are slightly up. Vehicle repair and maintenance increased from \$90K to \$110K due to inflation. Equipment rental increased slightly as it goes hand in hand with capital roads.

Cemetery maintenance - three-year mowing contract with S. Bartlett. Was told to expect \$10,000 increase on next bid. Selectman Bell inquired as to whether there should be a separate budget line for headstone maintenance. This past year spent \$5,000 for repairs but it came out of standard operating and maintenance.

Recycling – 0.84% overall increase.

Municipal landfill – they purchased used backhoe, believes they should now focus on the facility itself.

Public Works equipment - \$67,000 remaining, requesting \$115,000. They are looking to purchase a sidewalk machine, a Multihog. It is much easier to operate than what they currently use. Selectman Bell asked if there may be another piece of equipment that would do a better job. Mr. Hutchins stated that the Multihog costs \$165,000. Prenoth is another unit, at \$190,000 but it can only be used on snow. The machines are abrasive, service aspect is important. They also need a bucket truck.

Public Works facilities has a remaining balance of \$208,000. Mr. Hutchins is requesting an additional \$50,000. They need to fix the parking lot and add sleeping areas.

Public Works Roads – LRAP projection was accounted for twice in last year's budget, which underestimates what needs to be raised in taxes. Cannot appropriate to expenditures. It was an accounting error that has been fixed.

Sidewalk reserve account – asking for \$20,000 for any special sidewalk projects.

Parks & Recreation/Community Center

Director of Parks & Recreation, Matt Foster, approached the Select Board. Thanks Mr. Bunker for his decades of service to the Town.

Part-time wage increases are mostly due to minimum wage increase. Overall looking at a 0.08% increase.

An insurance check from the Hippach Field lights fire in 2022 was received in 2023, leading to a revenue increase of \$27,000.

Community Center same increase in wages with parttime workers.

Looking for an additional \$5,000 for Hippach field and other park improvements.

The Community Center parking lot needs a lot of work.

Debt Service

Fire truck and police building all that are left, should be completely paid off by 2030.

Farmington Public Library

Jessica Casey from the Farmington Public Library addressed the Select Board.

Regular increases include electricity, water, etc. They used less fuel oil than anticipated.

Increase to the book budget as prices are going up.

The largest change is in personnel. Budgeted for an extra 13 hours of staff time. Three more hours on Friday afternoons when they are generally understaffed, and 10 hours for programming, in particular for teens. Endowment is down significantly. Staff time is generally not included in grant funds.

General Assistance – trying to get more reimbursement from the state.

Fixed assessments – these are placeholders due to fiscal year budgets.

Revenues are projected to increase somewhat. Property taxes are always budgeted at the prior year's rate.

ITEM 10: To accept Resignation of Selectman Bunker and have Nomination Papers for his seat available 1/24 – 2/23

Selectman Smith made a motion to accept resignation and have nomination papers available 1/24-2/23; Selectman O'Neil seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 11: To approve minutes of 1/9/24

Selectman O'Neil would like the discussion regarding stipends at the end of other business as well as the vote for the executive session. Selectman Bell was the one who requested quarterly expenses.

Selectman Smith made a motion to approve as amended; Selectman Bunker seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 12: To Discuss Other Business

Steve Millett, Head of Wastewater Treatment Plant, addressed the Board. They lost two trucks in the December flood. He received one bid he would like to reject as it would be a 4-5 month wait.

He has since received two quotes on trucks and a Skid Steer. Insurance will cover the Ford, but have not responded on Chevy or Skid Steer.

Mr. Millett stated that he reached out to Bangor, Westbrook, and others but these are the only ones who have responded. It needs to have a plow package and they need to get a truck as soon as possible. Insurance is covering \$34,000, the remainder will be covered by vehicle reserve.

Selectman Bell stated that Mr. Millett should put the vehicles back out to bid with wider parameters

Selectman Bell made a motion to put skid steer and trucks back out to bid without specifications as to the make of the vehicle; Selectman XXXX seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

Town Manager Erica LaCroix advised the Select Board that she has received a signed letter of agreement for the assessor candidate, but he does not want to announce it until he works with his current employer. We have also received a lot of candidates for the counter clerk position.

The Select Board agreed to meet again to discuss the budget further with department heads on Tuesday, January 30, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.

Selectman Bell made a motion to adjourn at 8:58; Selectman O'Neil seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

Minutes respectfully submitted by Leah Giusti.

Byron Staples - Secretary