

FARMINGTON SELECT BOARD
Tuesday, February 13, 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.

Selectman Matthew Smith called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M. with the following members present: Stephan Bunker; Joshua Bell; Byron Staples; and Dennis O’Neil. Erica LaCroix, Town Manager; Fire Chief Tim Hardy; Matt Foster, Director of Parks & Recreation; 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

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

ITEM 2: To accept bid for replacement SCBA Compressor and Fill Station

Chief Hardy approached the Select Board. The monies for this are from an AFG grant, received \$75,000. Got a range of bids based on different versions. Most of the lower bids were low-end compressors, researching bigger 6,000 psi compressors. Chief Hardy is recommending the 7,000 psi system at \$77,635. It is a better, simpler unit. They can reuse the rack of their current system, getting the total down closer to the \$75,000 mark.

Selectman Bell asked if any electrical work would need to be done. Chief Hardy stated they just need an electrician to hook it up. The compressor comes with a two-year warranty. They hope to get about 20 years out of it. The last compressor was purchased in 2004.

Chief Hardy noted that only two vendors make 7,000 psi compressors. Chief Hardy asked for options in the bid specifications. The vendors that had 7,000 psi compressors gave pricing on both. Selectman Bunker noted that the lowest bid is not always the best bid.

Selectman Bell made a motion to accept the bid for replacement SCBA Compressor and use \$4,196.34 funds from the reserve account for same; Selectman Staples seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 3: To grant permission for Fire Department to Sell old SCBA Compressor and related equipment

Chief Hardy stated this is an excess compressor and fill station from an out-of-service truck. He

is seeking permission to put it up for sale to get rid of them and get some return back. He already looked into trades and believes they will get more from selling outright. Estimates they could get between \$3,000 - \$5,000 for it.

Selectman Bell made a motion to grant permission for Fire Department to Sell old SCBA Compressor and related equipment; Selectman O’Neil seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 4: To discuss Community Center Roof

Director of Parks and Recreation, Matt Foster, addressed the board. He has started discussions with a few organizations. He has received pricing back from one which is significantly less than the \$1.7 million bids received previously. That same company said there is a possibility to have a “roof over,” leaving the current roof intact and installing a new roof on top of it, for \$900,000. That has not been cleared by engineers yet. The other two organizations have not yet provided pricing. He believes this year will be a little better than last, more companies seem interested. Ms. LaCroix noted that the past two years, ARPA money has been flooding the industry and that is starting to dry up.

Selectman Bell asked about putting in an air exchange. Mr. Foster stated that it has been a problem for nearly 20 years. As the Community Center is a voting facility, they were able to receive a \$150,000 grant which was going to be used for rooftop air exchange units. When Mechanical Services came to inspect, they had concerns about the roof and recommended that the roof be looked at by a structural engineer. That recommendation was not taken, which leads up to where we are today.

The roof over would leave the beams in place. The new roof would be rated at 90lb per square foot, well up to code. Mr. Foster believes he could have a contract by this summer. One of the organizations would not be able to start until October, at that point may be worth putting it off until the summer of 2025. Once a contract is signed, they’ll have two years to complete the work.

Selectman Bell asked if companies needed to obtain bonding. Mr. Foster stated that it is strongly recommended given the cost of the project. Ms. LaCroix noted that it depends on funding – no state law sets the limit, it is up to the community. The funding source may require a level of bonding. primarily for liability reasons.

This project meets the obligations for the ARPA funds and does not impact this year’s budget.

More discussions with engineers and construction firms are needed.

ITEM 5: To discuss ARPA funds

Ms. LaCroix stated that the ARPA funds are hinging on the roof decision. The contract must be in place by December 31, 2024, to obligate the funds. If it is decided that a roof over is a viable option, there will have to be a special town meeting to appropriate the funds. If for some reason we cannot make it happen, we should consider what else the funds can be used for. We cannot spend the money on lowering the budget or paying wages. The funds can be used on anything with regard to infrastructure.

ITEM 6: To discuss Parks & Recreation Budget

The big change to this budget overall is the \$25,000 for building reserve.

The pipes running under the community center are copper in concrete and they are eroding. They will need to be replaced. The chimney in the upper right-hand corner was water leakage. The boiler needs to be replaced before the chimney can be capped and replaced.

Selectman O'Neil inquired about the time frame for the heating system. Mr. Foster stated that the roof needs to be done first. The community center will be able to do a lot more programming and rentals with a roof heating/cooling unit.

Selectman Bunker asked if they could do the roof without doing the chimney. Mr. Foster stated that ideally, if they get rooftop units they can just take the chimney down.

Selectman Bell asked what the balance in vehicle reserve was. Mr. Foster stated that it is \$8,825. He believes they can get another 3-4 years out of their truck.

Selectman Staples asked why the \$100,000 Judy Bjorn donation was added to the FY23 appropriation line. This is because it was appropriated in 2023, it was part of the budget and approved at Town Meeting. The Bjorn money is in a trust, it is not part of this year's budget.

Selectman Bunker asked if there were any flooding issues at Walton's Mill. Mr. Foster stated that a lot of sand was dumped at the base of the path and a bit of erosion on the bank, but overall it held up very well.

ITEM 7: To review remaining Bids for Wastewater Treatment Plant Vehicle Replacements

Steve Millett addressed the Board. The first truck was received today with a plow. Skid Steer will provide a free loaner. The claims company is picking up the truck and Skid Steer on Thursday. The out-of-pocket cost is \$128,713.12 for all 3 vehicles. Costs not covered by insurance will be covered by vehicle reserve and special projects. They were able to salvage one plow. Both trucks will be F-250s. They will \$9,200 off the second truck for using the salvaged plow.

Selectman O'Neil made a motion to \$66,000 for Skid Steer; Selectman Staples seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE MOTION CARRIED

Selectman O'Neil made a motion to \$49,751.56 for Truck; Selectman Staples seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 8: To discuss Town Tree Ordinance

Both the Conservation Commission and the Code Enforcement Office drafted proposed Town Tree Ordinances. The essence of both was largely the same. The code enforcement version includes more definitions as well as exhibits containing recommended and prohibited species.

Selectman Bell noted that he likes the structure of the Conservation Commission's version. Selectman Bunker likes the level of detail in the Code Enforcement version. Selectman O'Neil asked if the extensive section on the conservation commission is necessary. Ms. LaCroix noted that the Code Enforcement version does spell out fines, which should be incorporated.

The Select Board will revisit the ordinance after the Conversation Commission reviews it.

ITEM 9: To Authorize Town Manager to Signed Agreement for Services with Franklin County Animal Shelter

Ms. LaCroix addressed the Select Board. This is a renewal; we are required to have an agreement with the animal shelter. There have been no changes in terms of service or cost

Selectman Bunker made a note that the per capita fee is based on the 2020 census and should not include students who are not allowed to have pets.

Selectman O'Neil made a motion to approve; Selectman Bell seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 10: To review Recreation Committee Application of Katie Fournier

The Select Board reviewed the application.

Selectman O'Neil made a motion to accept the Recreation Committee Application of Katie Fournier; Selectman Smith seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 11: To review the Renewal Application for On-Premises License for Lotus Blossom

Selectman O'Neil noted that the application lists the Mallet School as the closest school/place of worship when there are other places closer.

Going forward, the Town Clerk will deal with renewals as voted on by the Select Board in 2021.

Selectman Smith made a motion to approve the Renewal Application for On-Premises License for Lotus Blossom; Selectman Staples seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 12: To approve minutes of 1/23/24

Selectman Bunker made a motion to approve the minutes; Selectman Smith seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 13: To discuss Other Business

Ms. LaCroix made a note that the budget this year for town only - not counting school and county - is down -1.2%. Regarding the county we are anticipating that it will go up, the problem is that it is up from the number budgeted not the actual bill, the town under-budgeted last year by \$150,000.

Ms. LaCroix advised the Select Board that Avesta Housing is seeking a Credit Enhancement Agreement for their Edgewater Project. Details would be subject to negotiation. She is looking for the Select Board to think about what they would like to recommend, if anything. Ms. LaCroix noted that if they came to an agreement, it could help with their financing.

Selectman Bell stated that it sounded like they were having struggles with the cost and asked what the estimated tax bill would be. Ms. LaCroix noted that Dirigo Assessing said that building construction costs multiplied by the mil rate came to \$122,000.

Selectman O'Neil stated that although he understands that subsidized housing is hugely important, he needs more information. Selectman Bunker noted that he had limited experience with CEAs and would also like more information. Selectman Smith asked that someone from Avesta Housing come to the next Select Board meeting to discuss the Credit Enhancement Agreement.

Fen Fowler addressed the Select Board. When the previous unit was built 10 years ago, it was at a cost of \$4 million, and they promised net zero energy. He would hope for that amount of money going into this project, the town would demand net zero energy on this project as well. If utilities are not carbon-friendly, costs will continue to go higher and higher.

The Budget Committee hoping to complete their process at Thursday's meeting.

Ms. LaCroix stated that the town attorney has confirmed that the Select Board is authorized to set the fiscal year as there are no documents that take that power away from the Board. The only excess cost would be the overhaul of Trio. The Treasurer says it is just a matter of plugging in the dates.

Fen Fowler noted that the Budget Committee sent questions to the town manager, and appreciates that she took the time to answer. Hoping to come back with a recommendation from the Budget Committee. He has learned a great deal and is hoping for a positive net return to the town.

Selectman Smith made a motion to enter executive session pursuant to 1 MRSA § 405 (6)(A) at 8:05 p.m.; Selectman Staples seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 14: To hold an executive session pursuant to 1 MRSA § 405 (6)(A) to discuss a personnel matter

The Selectboard exited the executive session at 9:05 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Leah Giusti.

Byron Staples - Secretary