

**SELECTBOARD, FINANCE COMMITTEE AND
BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING
Due to COVID-19 Public Participation is by Zoom
November 23, 2020**

PRESENT:

Selectboard: Chair Rich Kuklewicz, Vice-Chair Michael Nelson, Clerk Chris Boutwell; Town Administrator Steven Ellis

Board of Health: Chair Al Cummings (*plus Chris Boutwell and Michael Nelson*), Director of Public Health Dan Wasiuk; Finance Committee: Chair Jen Audley, John Hanold, Fred Bowman, Francia Wisnewski, Greg Garrison, Jennifer Waryas, Chris Menegoni; Others: Police Chief Chris Williams, FCRHRA Director of Community Development Brian McHugh, Town Planner Walter Ramsey, Airport Manager Bryan Camden

Recording Link: <https://vimeo.com/483085316>

Meetings are opened:

- Selectboard Chair opens the meeting at 6:30 PM, including announcing that the meeting is being recorded and roll call taken.
- Board of Health Chair opens the meeting, roll call taken.

Approve Joint Selectboard and Board of Health Minutes of November 16, 2020

Minutes not available at this time

Public Comment Period: Individuals will be limited to two (2) minutes each and the Board of Selectmen will strictly adhere to time allotted for public comment

None

Personnel Board

- **Authorize the transfer of 111F payroll expenses for October and November to the 111F Insurance Fund**
Boutwell makes the motion to authorize the transfer of 111F payroll expenses for October and November to the 111F Insurance Fund. Seconded by Nelson, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Nelson - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye
- **Authorize subsequent payrolls (beginning with the payroll dated 12/4/2020) for Lee Laster to be charged directly to the 111F Insurance Fund**
Boutwell makes the motion to authorize subsequent payrolls (beginning with the payroll dated 12/4/2020) for Lee Laster to be charged directly to the 111F Insurance Fund. Seconded by Nelson, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Nelson - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Brian McHugh, FCRHRDA

Approve extension of contract between the Town and Sciaba Construction Corporation for the Spinner Park Restoration Project to June 1, 2021

Boutwell makes the motion to approve the contract extension between the Town and Sciaba Construction Corporation for the Spinner Park Restoration Project to June 1, 2021. Seconded by Nelson, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Nelson - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

COVID-19 Updates and Action Items

Review of any Updated State Guidance or Orders

- There are now only three states that are deemed lower risk: Massachusetts, Vermont, and Hawaii.
- Requirements related to travel are required for other states; some exemptions apply.
- The Board of Health has approved the swimming program at the Parks and Recreation Department.
- Wasiuk reports that posters and signs with regard to mask use were placed at public places.
- More signs are being made in conjunction with the Franklin County Regional Council of Governments.
- Since March 1st there have been 51 total cases; in the last week, there have been three positive cases; between November 1st and November 14th, there were 13 positive cases.
- Ellis explains that we are in the boundary between gray and green (the two lowest risk categories).

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Boutwell makes the motion to adjourn the Board of Health. Seconded by Nelson, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Nelson - Aye, Cummings - Aye

Flower Power Growers, Inc.

Proposed Cannabis Cultivation and Processing Facility at 180 Industrial Boulevard, (Map 17, Lot 58)

- Ellis explains that the Selectboard has granted an option to Josh Goldman to purchase land in the Industrial Park for a cannabis grow facility.
- There will be a community outreach meeting tomorrow evening.
- The Planning Board will review and consider the granting of a special permit, which is required for cannabis-related operations.
- Josh Goldman gives an overview of Flower Power Growers, Inc.'s Cannabis Cultivation and Manufacturing project.
- In response to a question by Nelson, Ramsey states that the property on the left side of the map is developable.
- In response to a question by Nelson, Goldman gives examples of ways the facility can manage odors should that be a problem.
- Ellis expresses concern regarding having a ready plan that could be executed to address issues where time is of the essence; Goldman says they would be happy to commit to having a contingency plan in place.
Audley opens Finance Committee Meeting at 7:15 PM, roll call taken: Present: John Hanold, Fred Bowman, Francia Wisniewski, Greg Garrison, Jennifer Waryas, Chris Menegoni and Jen Audley
- In response to a request for a timeline by Audley, Goldman states that building will take place in the summer of 2021 and operation will begin in quarter 3 of next year. Phase 2 will take place about one year after commencing operations.
- In response to a question by Jeff Singleton, Goldman explains how the basins are designed to prevent water runoff.

Walter Ramsey

Request extension of Judd Wire, Sandy Lane Parking lot until April 1, 2021, \$600/year

Discuss Judd Wire intent to purchase in 2021

Boutwell makes the motion to approve the extension of Judd Wire, Sandy Lane Parking lot until April 1, 2021, \$600/year. Seconded by Nelson, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Nelson - Aye, Cummings - Aye

FY21 Tax Classification Hearing

Review of Excess Levy Capacity Impact on Tax Rates

Ellis: Because it's our second year carrying what we call "excess capacity," I want to make sure that everyone understands that this sits behind our tax rate. The decision to tax to the levy limit was a very important strategic decision which was made by the Selectboard and Finance Committee last year to move away from a policy which was voted annually to reaffirm it. Under Prop 2 ½, we have certain opportunities to raise a tax levy, which can raise to 2 ½% on an annual basis, plus any new growth that may occur, and of course excluded debt which always sits on the side as basically temporary borrowing.

Ellis gives an overview of the Summary of Rationale and Impact of Decision to Carry Excess Levy Capacity:

- From FY13 through FY17 our growth had accelerated from where it had been in the past (in the \$120,000 range) to an average of about 2 ¼.
- Last year it became apparent that if we made use of that new growth (that often times is not reported by Utilities until very late after the fiscal year has expired and into the new fiscal year), it would have an adverse impact on the tax rate. And so we carried \$300,000 in our FY20 budget of excess capacity. This is money the Town could've used for taxation, but did not levy.
- This past year as we planned our FY21 budget, there was a minimum commitment established in that budget to maintain that \$300,000 in excess capacity. As the Special Town Meeting was being prepared, the Assessor's Office received confirmations of value that showed that we were going to have a higher growth than was forecasted. Instead of \$250,000, we had \$404,000. Seventy-four percent of that total growth was in personal property. Because we had already set our budget and our estimated revenues, we were able to increase the amount of excess capacity that we will carry in FY21 to \$509,000.

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- If we carried no excess capacity, the residential tax rate would've risen to \$17.90 from \$17.57. With our original budget plan, with \$300,000 in excess capacity carried, it would've been at \$17.63. At excess capacity of \$509,000, it would be in the vicinity of \$17.46.

Discussion:

- Hanold: This recognition of \$500,000 is something that will not disappear. It becomes part of our tax base.
- Ellis: It would mean that the Town would have the ability to levy additional resources in an emergency circumstance without an override, but it would also mean that if in the long term, we don't want to take the approach of going with excluded debt in order to finance a project, but rather want to build it into the general operating budget, it would afford the opportunity to bring those expenses out of excluded debt and into the general fund.
- In response to a question by Singleton, Ellis states that this would be a decision that is made for the current fiscal year, so the school budget as voted is not affected in any way by this decision.
- Hanold states that with a lower tax rate, collections will be less over the next year, which means that there may be a depressive effect on free cash in the future.

Boutwell makes the motion to reaffirm the decision to carry \$509,000 in excess capacity in the current year. Seconded by Nelson, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Nelson - Kuklewicz.

Hanold makes the motion to reaffirm the decision to carry \$509,000 in excess capacity in the current year. Seconded by Bowman, unanimously approved. Hanold - Aye, Bowman - Aye, Garrison - Aye, Menegoni - Aye, Wisniewski - Aye, Waryas - Aye, Audley - Aye.

FY2021 Tax Classification Presentation

Karen Tonelli reviews the FY2021 Classification

Discussion:

- In response to a question by Kuklewicz, Tonelli states that apartment buildings fall into the residential class. Our system will code buildings that are both commercial and residential as a Mixed Use, so that the tax bill is broken down in such a way so that the value of the residential floors are taxed at the residential rate, and the commercial floors are taxed at the commercial rate.
- In response to a question by Wisniewski, Tonelli explains that the valuations for the residential homes as well as the residential properties were increased based on actual sales. The commercial valuations are based more on an income/expense approach.
- In response to a question by Boutwell, Tonelli states that the rates do reflect the Highway Garage coming in. In addition, Ellis explains that approximately 85% of our debt for the Highway Garage project is already accounted for in the present rates.
- Tonelli: What was said at Town Meeting was that it was estimated that the tax rate would increase by 75 cents. We didn't know that the residential assessments would go up as much as they did. So a \$17.44 tax rate does not reflect what we had anticipated in terms of the 75 cent increase. The overall increase in valuations is substantial enough to have an effect on that.
- Ellis: I was able to go back to last year's decision. That .8478 factor was based on a CIP shift of 1.30 as opposed to the 1.31 that the 0.8466 represents this year. So it is a change in the CIP shift, but it tends to maintain the previous residential factor.
- In response to a question by Hanold, Tonelli explains that the single family residential component alone will see an increase of \$27 million. So as the residential component increases, a larger part is shifting from the commercial to the residential.
- Tonelli states that the property cards will not be up to date until after the beginning of the new year. The property record card shows not only the current assessed value but the historical assessed value as well.

Boutwell makes the motion, based on the presentation, to accept the residential factor rate of 0.8466, which would set the residential tax rate at \$17.44 per thousand and the commercial rate at \$26.98 along with personal property and excise tax at \$26.98. Boutwell -Aye, Nelson, -Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

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Tonelli reviews the Open Space Discount, the Residential Exemption, and the Small Commercial Exemption.

Kuklewicz makes the motion to recommend a No vote that the Selectboard endorse the Open Space Discount option of 25%, the Residential Exemption which would not exceed 20%, and the Small Commercial Exemption which allows for a 10% discount. Seconded by Boutwell, unanimously approved. Kuklewicz - No, Boutwell - No, Nelson - No

Bryan Camden, Airport Manager

Airport Commission acquisition of Pioneer Aviation property: Update and business plan

- Camden reviews the Pioneer Aviation Purchase Projected Revenue as well as the Expenditures, which would require appropriating funds to operate the facility from the date of purchase until the end of FY21. Even with the proposed increase for FY21, the Airport should still exceed it with its revenues. He gives a rundown of some of the things that would need to be done to the Airport in the first two months. Lastly, he reviews the draft of the FY22 budget.
- In response to a question by Hanold, Camden states that there is no definitive date as to when this purchase will occur. They are in the process of trying to secure funds and getting appropriations in place. Realistically, they are looking at the middle of February.
- Camden explains the Solar Revenue item.
- Camden: With the purchase of the three additional acres and the potential to have some industrial development in there, we will eventually see an increase in tax revenue.
- Much of the front-end expenditure is due to deferred maintenance as Mass Aeronautics does not hold the same State safety standards or fueling systems for private corporations.
- In response to a question by Garrison, Ellis states that whether any debt service is required would be determined by the terms of any grants that may factor into this. He and Camden are working with KP Law to make sure that when we come to the Town with a proposal, it is clear and fully articulated.
- In response to a question by Garrison, Camden states that he believes the revenues are safe and secure.
- In response to a question by Kuklewicz, Camden states that the FAA is intending to eventually "walk away" as they have no interest in continuing to operate a business. The Town, however, can apply for any interest accrued and legal fees associated with the project as part of the FAA reimbursement.
- Hanold feels it is important to make distinctions between revenue from airport (which should be used to cover the airport's expenses) and revenue from non-aviation use (which would be used for the Town's benefit).

Request to provide services to charity; use of Airport truck with donated trailer to pick up wreaths for "Wreaths Across America 2020: from December 12th - 16th

Boutwell makes the motion to provide services to charity; use of Airport truck with donated trailer to pick up wreaths for "Wreaths Across America 2020: from December 12th - 16th. Seconded by Nelson, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Nelson - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye

Menegoni makes the motion to adjourn the Finance Committee meeting. Seconded by Bowman, unanimously approved. Menegoni - Aye, Bowman - Aye, Waryas - Aye, Wisnewski - Aye, Garrison - Aye, Hanold - Aye, Audley - Aye

Town Administrator's Report

- **Request by Franklin County Sheriff's Dept. for use of Town Hall Annex Shed for storage**
Boutwell makes the motion to approve the request by the Franklin County Sheriff's Dept. for temporary use of Town Hall Annex Shed for storage, and to have the Town Administrator write an agreement indicating that the Sheriff's Dept. is responsible for securing and maintaining the area and that the Town is not liable for any of the items stored. Seconded by Nelson, unanimously approved. Boutwell - Aye, Nelson - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye
- **Update Regarding FRTA Plans for Montague Business Facility**
Ellis states that FRTA intends to build their maintenance facility behind the Judd Wire parking lot in the vicinity of Sandy Lane, in front of the solar array. The State and Federal Government did not provide the amount of funding that they had expected. They have come up with a construction cost that would be under

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\$10 million, and are in the process of bidding for a new designer. Hopefully they will be able to award a contract by the first of the new year, and bid construction this summer for a Fall start.

- **Topics not anticipated in 48 hour posting**
None

Other/Survey

Nelson announces that the Police Advisory Community Engagement Group has a survey on the Town's website and Facebook page. Individuals in and around Town are encouraged to participate in the survey.

*Boutwell makes the motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:49 PM. Seconded by Nelson, unanimously approved.
Boutwell - Aye, Nelson - Aye, Kuklewicz - Aye*