

Selectboard Minutes
November 1, 2022

Present: Andy Artimovich
Jenn Jones
Robert Mantegari
Russ Kelly
Jon Morgan

Artimovich called the meeting to order at 6pm.

The Board reviewed payroll and AP. The manifest was signed.

Mantegari motioned, seconded by Jones, to allow Morgan to attend remotely. Artimovich – aye; Jones – aye; Mantegari – aye; Kelly – aye.

Jeremy Lougee, SELT representative, was present to talk about the Game Farm Conservation. He explained there was executory interest in the Conservation Easement. The documents Lougee provided to the board need board signatures, as well as an initial on every page of the document. He recommended the board vote to allow the Chair, Artimovich, to initial on behalf of the board.

Bob Stephens, Conservation Commission, was present to discuss the documents presented to the board by Lougee. Stephens explained the Conservation Commission are not experts of deed review, but that Town Counsel had reviewed the deed documents. He explained the town had voted at the last Town Meeting to conserve land using a \$140,000 warrant article. Stephens stated the plan was for the land to be open to hunting, however, this conserved land will not be open to hunting per the request of residents.

Mantegari motioned, seconded by Jones, to approve Artimovich as the signature authority to initial each page on behalf of the board. Artimovich – aye; Jones – aye; Mantegari – aye; Kelly – aye; Morgan – aye. The board signed the signature pages. Artimovich to initial each page of the packet following the meeting.

Mantegari motioned, seconded by Jones, to sign the consent agenda. Artimovich – aye; Jones – aye; Mantegari – aye; Kelly – aye; Morgan – abstained.

Julie Velevis, Lyford Lane, addressed the board by stating she was not at the previous meeting. During her address, Velevis, referring to COLA, claimed it was the second time something was discussed at a meeting that was not listed on the agenda. She stated she personally believes in raises, as she served as a manager in the past. Velevis states raises would be a hit to residents personally and questioned if there were other options for raises. She suggested a stipend. Velevis stated she believes the board needs to be more transparent.

Artimovich responded that he was elected to the Selectboard fourteen years ago. Prior to his tenure, employees had not been a priority and as a result it was a “revolving door”. Artimovich explained after he was elected, he vowed to support the employees. He stated he understands the tax burden. Artimovich explained that last year, the increases in pay were a market adjustment. It was an attempt to bring employees into the median of surrounding towns with employees of similar titles and responsibilities, he explained. Artimovich admitted the agenda could use some improvement. He explained that items are not intentionally hidden – the meetings are held in public, video recorded and livestreamed. Artimovich reminded those in attendance about the budget process. He explained after the budgets are presented to the Select Board, they move on to be presented to the Budget Committee and the final say occurs at Town Meeting.

Morgan stated he agrees with Artimovich and supporting employees. He stated he also agrees with Velevis that the COLA item was in the notes and not on the agenda. Morgan reminded those in attendance that agendas are required to be posted 24 hours ahead of the meeting. He explained posting agendas in advance of the 24 hour mark, there could be confusion if more items are added or items are removed.

Mantegari stated the Selectboard unanimously agreed to a 5% COLA increase. He added that Social Security is increasing 8.7% which is higher than employees will receive even if they receive the additional 2.5% merit. Mantegari hopes to provide a living wage for the employees.

Kelly explained that for at least a decade, the agenda has been handled the same way. He explained adding COLA discussion to the notes was not done to avoid transparency or to intentionally deceive residents.

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Jones stated she requested it be put on the agenda but understood that that is not how it had been handled in the past. She added there is no tax impact to taxpayers this year, as ARPA funds will cover the increases. Jones also explained she has requested a number of changes since she has joined the board, including the consent agenda.

Lois DeYoung, Crawley Falls, read a prepared letter. A copy of the letter can be found at the end of the minutes.

Artimovich questioned the reference to the 91-A law and stated the meeting was posted as required.

Clement responded the amount needed to cover possible increases was derived at during the meeting using the average payroll multiplied by 7% and then multiplied by thirty-nine weeks. Clement further explained ARPA funds can be used for any expense already in the budget. She stated the money must be allocated by December 2024 and spent by December 2026.

Mantegari responded that he served on the Budget Committee for nine years. He explained there were some years COLA was given across the board. Other years, the raises were done based on merit, according to Mantegari. Referring to last year, he explained the increases were based on market adjustments. Mantegari reminded those in attendance, the budgets are ratified by the budget committee and town at Town Meeting.

Kelly responded to the letter by stating there were inaccuracies. He pointed out that the Select Board did not have these increases planned before the October 25th meeting, as the letter alleged. Kelly added the Select Board did have an open discussion about the increases at the October 25th meeting.

Jim Michaud, Route 125, read a prepared statement. He stated he is a resident and business owner. Michaud said he is okay with merit raises. He stated he has issue with the transparency of the board.

Jim Johnson, Shannon Way, stated he believes powers are derived from the people. He questioned utilizing knowledge Clement had on payroll costs.

Chief Ventura shared he worked figures for his police department. He reminded those in attendance to understand there are people attached to the COLA and merit increases. Ventura explained he has two officers whose contract is up next year. If he does not fight to keep them with a livable wage, he will be requesting \$80,000 from the board to recruit and train two new officers. The increase voted on by the board was \$86,000 to cover all employees, Ventura added.

Jim Berlo, Scrabble Road, asked how much the \$86,000 covered and where ARPA money came from. Clement responded that amount covers all 20 full-time employees and on-call fire fighters for a total of about 60 employees. She added ARPA money is federal money.

Jones asked for a reminder of how much ARPA funding was received by the town. Clement responded \$472,000 with only \$115,000 being appropriated but not spent. Jones responded that leaves \$400,000 for future budgets.

Liz Faria, South Road, claimed large raises were given to only 4 employees last year.

Bill Faria, South Road, stated no money in the federal government is tax dollars.

Rebecca Dunham, Block Drive, asked if all employee's raise information, health benefits, employee taxes, could be published for the town meeting.

James Goodwin, South Road, stated he feels slighted that he did not know about the meeting regarding the raises.

Patty Shorland, Lindon Drive, asked to see the total compensation package of all employees.

Nick Wrighton, Middle Road, asked what a full-time job is, what it entails, and how remote hours fit in. Clement responded full-time is 40 hours and employees are eligible for NH Retirement at 35 hours. She explained remote days are staggered and does not impact hours employees and departments are available to the public.

Janice Wiers, library director, stated the percentages are based on a base wage. She shared she believes employees work hard and it is

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disheartening to see attacks on social media. Wiers asked people to be respectful.

Artimovich stated the board will do better on their agendas. He encouraged residents who are upset about increases, to attend a budget committee meeting. Artimovich shared the next meeting will be held on November 14th at 6pm at the Town Hall. He explained the meeting will also be live streamed.

Daphne Woss, Town Clerk/Tax Collector was present to discuss her budgets – Town Meeting, Elections, Tax Collector, and Town Clerk.

Town Meeting

- Budget down 22.22%
- Reduction due to 2 elections in 2023

Artimovich motioned, seconded by Mantegari, to accept the Town Meeting budget in the amount of \$2,801. Artimovich – aye; Jones – aye; Mantegari – aye; Kelly – aye; Morgan – aye.

Elections

- Budget down 29.56%
- Reduction due to 2 elections in 2023

Mantegari motioned, seconded by Jones, to accept the Election budget in the amount of \$7,326. Artimovich – aye; Jones – aye; Mantegari – aye; Kelly – aye; Morgan – aye.

Tax Collector

- Increase of 10.07%
- Wage adjustment to get employees where they should be based on current title/job descriptions
- Adjustments not made last year for those positions requested in 2023
- Increase in deputy's hours to cover for Town Clerk's conference attendance and vacation time

Jones motioned, seconded by Mantegari, to accept Tax Collector budget of \$71,720.35. Artimovich – aye; Jones – aye; Mantegari – aye; Kelly – aye; Morgan – aye.

Town Clerk

- Increase of 9.74%
- Dog license pricing set by statute
 - Increase reflective of pricing increase
 - Increased number of dogs in town

Jones motioned, seconded by Mantegari, to accept Town Clerk budget of \$74,530.35. Artimovich – aye; Jones – aye; Mantegari – aye; Kelly – aye; Morgan – aye.

Jones followed up with the board about the explanation of the ballot question discussed at a previous meeting. She explained Woss was hesitant to post on the Town's Facebook page because she felt it could appear the town was taking a stance. Jones requested permission to have a post shared with the link to the explanation she provided to the board at a recent meeting.

Jones motioned, Mantegari seconded, to post a link to the ballot question explanation on the Town's Facebook page. Artimovich – aye; Jones – aye; Mantegari – aye; Kelly – aye; Morgan – abstained.

Liz Faria, South Road, requested the town's website be updated to reflect the correct chairs and members of the different committees. Clement responded she believes they have all been updated.

Karen Clement, Town Administrator, presented the Finance and Town Administrator budgets.

Finance

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- Increase of 28%
 - COLA increase for treasurer
 - Third party bank reconciliations being put under this budget
- \$18,000 addition for reconciliations in place of previously eliminated full-time employee position

Jones motioned, Mantegari seconded, to accept the Finance Budget in the amount of \$107,483. Artimovich – aye; Jones – aye; Mantegari – aye; Kelly – aye; Morgan – aye.

Town Administrator

- Increase of 9.9%
- Budget of \$122,289

Jones motioned, Mantegari seconded, to accept the Town Administrator Budget in the amount of \$122,289. Artimovich – aye; Jones – aye; Mantegari – aye; Kelly – aye; Morgan – aye.

Morgan asked what budget the newsletter falls under and when their meeting will occur. Clement responded it will fall under the General Government Budget and that will be presented on November 22.

Kelly had no committee updates.

Mantegari shared Conservation Commission will be meeting tomorrow, November 2. The Energy and Efficiency Subcommittee will also be meeting on November 2.

Jones shared the next School Board meeting is next week and she will plan to update the Selectboard at their next scheduled meeting. She also shared she attended the Joint Loss meeting. There were no major items to report. Jones stated there may be a request coming to the Board requesting funds for a heat detection system at the new highway shed.

Clement shared there will be a groundbreaking ceremony at noon on Thursday, November 17 at the County Farm. Kelly will plan to attend as a representative. Jones shared there was a cover article in the newsletter about the new building.

Election Day is Tuesday, November 8. Jones, Kelly, and Artimovich will be present for the required quorum. It was shared that Kelly cannot be inside the ropes, near the voting machine, and cannot touch any ballots because he is on the ballot.

There will be NO Selectboard meeting on Tuesday, November 8. The Selectboard will sign the manifest at some point in the day.

Janice Wiers, library director, was in attendance to share a presentation with the Selectboard which had been prepared in collaboration with a patron named Laura. Wiers explained Laura recently moved to Brentwood, has several years of data analytics experience, and approached her about collaborating information. The presentation contained an overview of salaries and hours of the library employees. The power point is available at the end of the minutes.

Julie Velevis, Lyford Lane, asked about availability of statistics showing the number of patrons visiting and the number of online books being accessed. Wiers responded she presents a director's report monthly to the Library Trustees and that information is available online in their minutes.

Rebecca Dunham, Block Drive, asked if there would be a presentation for the amphitheater this year. Liz McConnell, library trustee, responded that she hoped there would be.

Kelly shared his frustration with the dynamic of the meeting earlier in the evening. He apologized to Clement and Peek for the behavior of some of the residents. He expressed it was unacceptable to have residents yelling and apologized he did not attempt to shut it down sooner.

Letty Bedard, Middle Road, asked if it was possible for the consent agenda to be attached to the minutes. Artimovich responded it could be added to the minutes. Jones suggested it be read at each meeting and it could be added to the minutes that way.

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Jones recommended COLA and merit, or planned increases by whatever method is decided, be established in October before budgets are presented to the Selectboard.

Clement stated she is still waiting for the tax rate from the DRA. She requested the board be ready for a meeting, if necessary.

Julie Velevis, Lyford Lane, shared she is the one who posted information on Brentwood Chats about the COLA, merit, and agenda situation. She stated she was not aware of any attacks and does not believe misinformation was being spread.

Jones, Artimovich, and Kelly respectfully disagreed with Velevis' statement.

Mantegari motioned, seconded by Jones, to adjourn the meeting at 8:37pm. Artimovich – aye; Jones – aye; Mantegari – aye; Kelly – aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Tamera Peek

WEEKLY TREASURER'S REPORT				
DATE:			11/1/2022	
General Fund:		TD BANK		
Previous Balance:		4,164,538.68		
Deposits:		77,719.91		
Payroll:		33,161.66	DDP: 31,481.90	
			CHK: \$1,679.76	
FICA:		7388.30		
to Impact Fees			Reg A/P Cks \$98,916.80	NHRS \$
A/P:		980,019.80	Swasey : \$209,893.00	CO-OP: \$671,210.00
Admin CC Paid		2,445.62		
Account Balance:		3,219,243.21		
Interest Earned YTD:		9,208.36		
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Joyce A. Gallant, Treasurer				
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Ambrose Kizza Deputy Treasurer				

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LOIS DE YOUNG 105 Crawley Falls Rd, Brentwood, NH 03833

Select Board

1 Dalton Rd

Brentwood, NH 03833

November 1, 2022

Dear Select Board;

At the October 25, 2022 Select Board meeting, Vice Chair Jennifer Jones opened discussion on COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) and how Town employee compensation is currently managed. Jones proposed increases should be given across all departments and merit-based increases, by utilizing the same mechanisms across all departments. These are major changes to the current Town practice.

This discussion was **NOT on the Select Board's October 25 POSTED AGENDA**, only a few Town residents were in the audience and the Brentwood Budget Committee members were not made aware of these proposed increases.

After less than an hour discussion and no public notification the Select Board voted All Town Employees a RAISE of 5% COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) PLUS an additional (up to 2.5%) INCREASE based on merit.

Apparently the Select Board had planned these proposed increases prior to the 10/25/22 Select Board's meeting, as Karen Clement had calculated the tax impact and the Select Board had a plan prepared to pay the first year \$86,000 cost of the 7.5% increase with ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act of 2021) which is a one-time, non-recurring Federal fund.

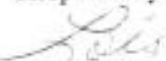
Pursuant to Part I, Article 8 of the N.H. Constitution and Section 1 of RSA Chapter 91-A, openness in the conduct of public business, I would like answers to the following questions:

- 1. Why didn't the Select Board post the Town Employees Raise increase proposal on the Select Board's October 25, 2022 Posted Agenda?**
- 2. With such large change in procedure and large increases, why didn't the Select Board have an open discussion at October 25 meeting and then take the vote at the November 1 Meeting after Town taxpayers were notified?**
- 3. For what can the ARPA funds be legally used?**

This is 3rd time at recent Select Board's Meetings, Vice Chair, Jennifer Jones brought up important issues to be voted on that were NOT on the Posted Agenda. Hence, Taxpayers are not given the opportunity to ask questions and voice concerns. I am truly concerned about the current Select Board's lack of transparency and communication with us, the Brentwood residents and taxpayers.

I request this letter be attached to the Minutes of this Meeting.

Respectfully submitted,


Lois DeYoung

603-498-0002