Town of Canterbury, NH
Board of Selectmen
Date: 2023 November 13
Location: Meeting House

Selectmen:
Cheryl Gordon (Chair), Kent Ruesswick, Scott Doherty

Town Administrator:
Ken Folsom

1. Call to Order
   a. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.
2. Administration
   a. The Selectmen signed:
      i. Kent made a motion to sign the Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of $16,276.59. Scott seconded. All in favor by roll call, motion carried.
      ii. Kent made a motion to sign the Payroll Manifest in the amount of $46,422.33. Scott seconded. All in favor by roll call.
   b. Previous Minutes Approval
      i. Kent made a motion to approve the public minutes for the Selectmen's meeting on November 6th, 2023. Cheryl seconded. All in favor by roll call, motion carried.
3. Working Session
   a. 2024 Budget
      i. See Selectmen's Minutes 11/6/2023 Section 4.e. for previous discussion.
      ii. Tax Rate Breakdown Proposed
         1. Earlier today the DRA sent the new proposed tax rate of $21. The current rate is $20.80.
         2. The Selectmen need to decide if they will accept this proposal from the DRA or if they will use money from the Unreserved Fund Balance to lower the tax rate. They must decide in the next meeting on 11/20/2023 so that tax bills can be sent out 30 days before the end of the year.
         3. Ken will confer with Assessor Mandy Irving to determine the average house price in Canterbury and create scenarios for different tax rates. This will provide the Selectmen with realistic data to determine what if any money should be used for this purpose.
      iii. Updated Wage Survey
         1. Ken distributed an updated wage survey that includes data from New Hampton.
         2. This still shows that Canterbury is about in the middle of the wage range.
      iv. There were two minor changes to the 2024 budget proposal that was distributed last week in the Election, Reg, & Vital Stats section (4140).
   b. Northfield Inter-Municipal Agreement for Roads
      i. See Selectmen's Minutes 9/25/2023 Section 5.a. for previous discussion.
      ii. Northfield has proposed a new Inter-Municipal Agreement to replace the previous one which covered Ayers Road and Fellows Hill Road.
      iii. This proposal suggests that the two Towns trade responsibility for Ayers Road every other year. Fellows Hill Road is not included in this proposal.
      iv. In a conversation with Ken, Road Agent John O'Connor suggested accepting this agreement if Northfield will take over Fellows Hill Road completely. The Selectmen agreed.
      v. Ken will contact Northfield's Town Administrator and convey the counter proposal.
   c. Sale of town owned property Tax Map 101 Lot 36

      i. See Selectmen's Minutes 11/6/2023 Section 4.d. for previous discussion.

     ii. Mike Pelky has contested the decision by the Selectmen to sell this property to Donald Pare.

   iii. Mr. Pelky's main concern is the timing of the bids. Mr. Pelky's offer came in on 10/4/23 and was supposed to be voted on in the 10/16/23 meeting. Due to Scott's absence, the Selectmen decided not to vote on the sale at that meeting. Mr. Pare's offer came in on 10/30/23. The Selectmen compared the offers at the meeting on 11/6/23 and they chose Mr. Pare's offer. The timing of the second offer and the footage from the 11/16/23 meeting both suggest that Mr. Pelky's offer was inadvertently disclosed to Mr. Pare.

   iv. The Selectmen acknowledge that had they voted on 10/16/23, they likely would have accepted Mr. Pelky's offer.

    v. The Selectmen do not know of a precedent for this situation in Canterbury.

   vi. The Town's counsel has advised that the Selectmen rescind the vote from the 11/6/23 meeting. They believe the Town should arrange for an auctioneer to sell off all Town-owned land in the Sherwood Forrest area including this disputed property.

  vii. Ken expressed concern about the cost and effort involved in arranging such an auction. Many of the properties in that area have deed issues that would be difficult to resolve.

 viii. Ken will talk to Mandy to scope out the project of resolving the deed issues to see if this is a feasible solution. Perhaps doing one or two properties a year would be doable.

   ix. The Selectmen discussed the history of building permits and road plowing in the Sherwood Forrest area. Historically, the Town has wanted to discourage more development there for density and road maintenance reasons.

    x. The Selectmen expressed that they will likely rescind the vote in the next meeting on 11/20/23. However, they purposefully did not make any decisions at this meeting regarding what they would do with the property so that Mr. Pelky and Mr. Pare would have a chance to speak on Monday.

  d. School District Withdrawal

      i. See Selectmen's Minutes 11/6/2023 Section 4.h. for previous discussion.

     ii. Ken was approached by two residents who had concerns with how this topic has been discussed by the Selectmen.

   iii. The Selectmen and Ken discussed how to balance the need for diplomacy with the rights of the Selectmen to express their opinions on the subject.

   iv. If the Board of Education approves for this process to move forward, the Selectmen will decide whether or not they should recommend the warrant article in the Town Report. The Selectmen will be able to indicate a split in opinion if needed.

    v. The Selectmen have been approached by a number of residents who are concerned about lack of communication and clarity about the next steps in the withdrawal process. They would like for the School Withdrawal Committee to publish a press release with information that would clarify this for the public.

   vi. Ken will ask School Withdrawal Committee Chair Randi Johnson when the next Committee meeting is and when a press release could be expected.

  e. Town Report Dedication

      i. The Selectmen discussed a potential candidate for the 2023 Town Report dedication.

4. Adjournment

  a. Kent made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:35 p.m. Scott seconded. All in favor by roll call, motion carried.

Next Meeting: 2023 November 20, 5:00 p.m. at the Meeting House

Minutes submitted by Kathleen McKay, Administrative Assistant