

APPROVED  
MINUTES OF THE MILFORD BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING  
January 23, 2023

**PRESENT:** Paul Dargie, Member Mark Bender, Town Administrator  
Tim Finan, Member Tina Philbrick, Executive Assistant  
Gary Daniels, Member Andy Kouropoulos, Videographer  
Laura Dudziak, Member, Excused  
Dave Freel, Member

**1. CALL TO ORDER, BOARD OF SELECTMEN INTRODUCTIONS & PUBLIC SPEAKING INSTRUCTIONS:**  
Chairman Dargie called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m., introduced Board members, and then led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. APPOINTMENTS – (Approximate times)**

**5:30 p.m. – Public Hearing for the Acceptance for Expenditure of Unanticipated Funds over \$10K NH (RSA (31:95b)) –**

- o Frank E. Kaley Trust for the Restoration of the Pillsbury Bandstand - \$10,000
- o Arthur L. Keyes Memorial Trust Donation for the Restoration of the Pillsbury Bandstand - \$10,000

Chairman Dargie opened the public hearing.

Dave Palance, Heritage Commission Chair, said he appreciates the donations to the bandstand, it shows community support. Selectman Freel thanked both trusts for donating money to support the bandstand. He still thinks that this type of project should be funded fully by donations and not taxpayers' money. He would like people to keep fundraising.

Chairman Dargie closed the public hearing.

**Selectman Daniels made a motion to approve a donation of \$10,000 from the Frank E. Kaley Trust for the Restoration of the Pillsbury Bandstand. Seconded by Selectman Finan.**

**All were in favor. The motion passed 4/0.**

**Selectman Daniels made a motion to approve a donation of \$10,000 from the Arthur L. Keyes Memorial Trust for the Restoration of the Pillsbury Bandstand. Seconded by Selectman Freel. The motion passed 3/0/1. Selectman Finan abstained because he's a member of the Arthur L. Keyes Memorial Trust.**

**5:35 p.m. – Recreation Department Fee Schedule Update Request – Recreation Director, Arene Berry**

Ms. Berry presented a request to increase pool pass fees. Recreations proposed 2023 budget currently includes an increase of \$3,735 for part-time wages which is comprised mostly of Aquatic Staff. This increase will allow us to be competitive in the current market which faces a shortage of employees. The last time fees were increased was in 2012.

Chairman Dargie fully supports the increase to help pay for the increase in wages for staffing. Selectman Freel asked if they might lose people due to the increase in fees. Ms. Berry said participation fluctuates due to weather. These fees are reasonable. They also offer a scholarship program for people who have difficulty paying.

**Selectman Finan made a motion to accept Recreation's proposed increase in fees. Seconded by Selectman Freel. All were in favor. The motion passed 4/0.**

**5:45 p.m. – Finance Department Fee Schedule Update Request – Finance Director, Paul Calabria**

Mr. Calabria presented a request to increase the Town's returned check fee from \$25 to \$35. The last increase in fees occurred about 18 years ago and the industry standards are now at \$35 to \$40. This would result in an additional \$1,000 per year. Selectman Daniels asked if we are covering the cost at our current rate. Mr. Calabria said it depends on what the issue is. We are almost covering our cost.

**Selectman Finan made a motion to accept the Finance's proposed increase in fees. Seconded by Selectman Dargie. All were in favor. The motion passed 4/0.**

**5:55 p.m. – Request to re-name the Public Works Building – Jay Duffy**

Mr. Duffy would like to rename the town's DPW Building to the "Robert E. Courage Milford Department of Public Works Building". Mr. Courage has worked and/or volunteered in Milford for over 65 years and currently serves as a Water Commissioner and an Alternate on the Cemetery Trustees. Mr. Courage has also served on the Select Board and Budget Advisory Committee. He already spoke to the Public Works Director about doing this. He spoke with the Kaley Foundation and they would be willing to cover the cost.

## APPROVED MINUTES OF BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING – 01/23/2023

Chairman Dargie is a huge supporter of Mr. Courage but is against naming buildings after people. He feels it would be better to have a building named after its function rather than a person.

Mr. Duffy said where he previously worked, buildings were named after people. He thinks this should be supported by a man who has dedicated most of his life to the town.

Selectman Daniels said he also has great respect for Mr. Courage with all the work and dedication he has given to the town. Mr. Courage has been recognized in the past as citizen of the year. The state level has an unwritten rule to not name things after people who are living. He would like to continue that standard.

Mr. Duffy said it would be great for Mr. Courage to see this before being in the ground.

Selectman Finan said he tends to lean this way but if you make exceptions, Mr. Courage would be one to make this exception for. He suggests tabling this and talking to the community and Mr. Courage.

Selectman Freel said he appreciates what Mr. Duffy does for the town and has great respect for Mr. Courage. He feels that there are other ways to honor Mr. Courage. He would not be opposed to a plaque placed at the Public Works building or on the bridge, where it would be seen by more people. Chairman Dargie would support a plaque. There was additional discussion about plaques and where they could be placed.

Mr. Duffy would like to table this and bring this back at a later date. Selectman Freel said most of the Board is against naming a building for someone. Selectman Freel said there are other ways to honor Mr. Courage.

### **6:05 p.m. – Armory Road Rail Trail Crossing Improvement – Conservation Commission Member, Chris Costantino**

Ms. Costantino gave an overview of the Armory Road crossing project. The Milford Conservation Commission intends to improve the Granite Town Rail Trail crossing at Armory Road this year (2023). This project will reduce the elevation differential and add a signalized crosswalk to address the safety concerns associated with hikers and bikers crossing a very busy road with limited sight distance and accessibility issues. The Plan identifies the project area on Armory Road as a primary network connection to the rail trail, mobile home Park, and surrounding mixed-use neighborhood.

This trail provides recreational opportunities for those who want to bike and run in a quiet wooded environment. It is a transportation alternative for commuters who are traveling to the center of Milford. In addition to the steady stream of hikers and bikers, the trail is used by many for training purposes, including the NH Army National Guard Mountain Infantry Unit, local cross-country and track teams, and the Ghost Train Trail Race, a major fundraiser for the Milford Conservation Commission.

The project will be paid from the Granite Town Rail Trail Revolving Fund which consists of:

- \$20,000 from the Kaley Foundation
- \$20,000 in private donations (residents, Eagle Scout project surplus funds, and the annual Ghost Train Rail Trail Race revenues)
- The MCC will use these funds as a match for a Recreation Trails Program grant application
- This project is not requesting any tax dollars

Selectman Daniels asked if we have to run electricity. Ms. Costantino said it will be solar-powered. Selectman Freel asked how long the lights will last. Ms. Costantino said she didn't know. Selectman Freel would like to know what you're getting for your dollars. Ms. Costantino said it's motion sensory.

Selectman Daniels would encourage some assessment on how much sun you would get because there is a lot of shade in that area. Ms. Costantino said some trees will need to be removed. She ran this by the town's Electrical Inspector and he didn't have any issues with this.

Chairman Dargie asked if it was a scenic road. Lincoln Daley said they would review it but he didn't think it was a scenic road.

Mr. Palance, said he's been on the trail and there are lots of challenges so this would be a great thing. He said the panels can last 25 to 30 years.

**3. PUBLIC COMMENTS (regarding items that are not on the agenda)**

Bob Hayden from Standard Power and Mike Thornton from Energy Advisory Committee gave the Board a brief update on the program. They will be on schedule to give an updated plan to the BOS at their 5<sup>th</sup> Monday forum. They received good results back from their survey. People who are on another plan don't have to opt into the new plan until theirs is complete. This plan doesn't have any sunk cost and they don't need to recover any cost on the fees that will be charged in this program. There is no fee to the town and the fee that they charge is 1/10 of a cent per kw hour.

Chairman Dargie asked how many people in Milford are on Eversource and not an alternate plan. Mr. Hayden said about 85%. Some people are on other plans and they have to finish those before opting out of a new plan.

Selectman Freel asked what the goal was for people to change over if this passes. Mr. Hayden said about May or June. There was additional discussion about when to buy the plan and how it's tailored to the individual town's plan. There are about 10 Towns on Milford's timeline.

Chairman Dargie asked how come the School District isn't on this project. Mr. Hayden said they are under a different contract. They could join on the second go around depending on the timing.

Selectman Daniels asked if someone can join the group in the middle of a contract. Mr. Hayden said it depends on the size of the meters/users.

**4. DECISIONS**

**a. CONSENT CALENDAR**

1. Acceptance and Appropriation of Unanticipated Revenues Under \$10K NH (RSA (31:95(b))) - Donation for the Restoration of the Pillsbury Bandstand
  - Granite Town Festivities Committee - \$2,000
  - Milford Lions Charities - \$2,000
  - Milford Historical Society online donations - \$325.00
  - Sue Carita - \$100
2. Acceptance and Appropriation of Unanticipated Revenues Under \$10K NH (RSA (31:95(b))) - for the Milford Fire Department to Update the Local Emergency Operation Plan.
  - 2021 Emergency Management Performance Grant - \$5,000
3. Approval of Report of Wood Cut, Map 2 Lot 28-2
4. Approval for the Conservation Commission to Accept Donations:
  - Kaley Foundation for the Granite Town Rail Trail Armory Road Crossing Improvement Project - \$20,000
  - The Richey Family for the Granite Town Rail Trail - \$500.

**Selectman Daniels made a motion to approve the consent calendar). Seconded by Selectman Finan. All were in favor. The motion passed 4/0.**

**b. OTHER DECISIONS**

1. N/A

**5. TOWN STATUS REPORT – Town Operating Budget**

Town Administrator Mark Bender and Finance Director Paul Calabria presented some proposed budget reductions per a suggestion from the Selectmen.

They identified several groups of reductions. These groups were made up of open positions that would be delayed a few months. That combined with training and supplies totals \$166,000. The staff supports these items. This would give us a 5.6% increase over the 2022 budget.

Further reductions would be having 32 hours of weekend coverage not be filled by Ambulance and deferment of the Non-Union COLA for a total of \$94,000. This would also cause a revenue loss. The staff does not recommend this. If we did all of this, we would achieve a \$260,000 reduction or 5% over last year's budget.

## APPROVED MINUTES OF BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING – 01/23/2023

All of these reductions combined with others will reduce our payroll and match our expenses but we will need to pick this expense up next year by about \$250,000 in the 2024 budget. These changes would not affect the default budget.

Selectman Freel is not for this unless you remove the positions completely. Administrator Bender said he didn't think you should remove Police Officers. Selectman Freel said sometimes you have to just make cuts. Selectman Daniels asked if there was a breakdown of who is getting what in the 7% increase. Is it going to the workers as opposed to supervision? Administrator Bender said it was across the board. Selectman Daniels said we are lacking people to do the work, what are we doing to get people out there to do the work versus giving more to management? We should maintain the staff that is doing the work.

Administrator Bender said the turnover has been heavier on the hourly side, but we've also had a turnover on the salary side. The cost of living affects everyone. We are more heavily weighted on the hourly side.

Chairman Dargie said we are not top-heavy. Most people have a function that they need to do and they do it. There isn't a lot of management in town. We have been presented with a spreadsheet with everything already.

Selectman Daniels asked if we could re-look at the new Engineer and see if we could eliminate that position. What we were paying for Engineering was less than what we would pay for the compensation. Administrator Bender said the Board approved the position which has been filled. The candidate left a Town Engineering position to accept ours.

Selectman Daniels said he doesn't like to hire people in the middle of the year. Those people are put into the default budget for the next year. He recommends that no positions are considered until budget time.

Lincoln Daley, Community Development Director, said the Engineer was a reclassified position that came from existing funds that were part of Community Development and Public Works and consulting funds. There were no new monies used for this position. Selectman Daniels disagreed and said we have to pay more now than what we did before. Selectman Freel agrees with Selectman Daniels. He suggests not hiring the assistant Planning position and having the Engineer step up.

Chris Labonte, a Milford resident, said a lot of the turnover is between DPW and Water Utilities. Going forward with a 7% increase wouldn't change anything.

Selectman Daniels said previously that Chairman Dargie asked about a default budget and what would be cut. Chairman Dargie said he didn't remember asking for that. Selectman Finan said that Chairman Dargie asked for a breakout after Selectman Daniels said he wanted to see the budget increase go down to 5%. It had nothing to do with the default budget, only the operating budget.

Katherine Kokko, a Milford resident, is struggling with which budget they are referring to. She referenced the budget that was presented on January 9, 2023. It doesn't match the budget posted in December. Changes include addition of the Crown Castle Lease of \$20,000 and the other \$40,000 added to retirement or termination pay. These additional changes were made to balance these changes out. She listed the changes and asked if they were correct. Mr. Calabria agreed. Ms. Kokko said the additional changes were not verbally brought to the Boards attention. Administrator Bender said early on that budgets continually evolve over the entire budget cycle and that is what Ms. Kokko is seeing. We saw that the Crown Castle lease wasn't included in the budget, so we added it. Things were shifted so it would be the same bottom line. Ms. Kokko said budgets posted should be as current as possible.

**Selectman Finan made a motion to accept the recommendation as designated by Administration for cuts to the budget of \$166,000. Seconded by Selectman Dargie. All were in favor. The motion passed 4/0.**

Selectman Freel isn't in favor of the ambulance reduction but he's in favor of extending the COLA. Selectman Dargie is not in favor of a reduction in ambulance hours. He could go either way on the COLA. Selectman Finan doesn't agree with either of the items. He's glad this is on the table so people can see what is coming down the road for cuts if we lose the budget. The COLA is small but it's using employees as pawns to make the number look better. Selectman Daniels said he doesn't see that we are using employees as pawns. This is the reality of what we are looking to accomplish more with what we have.

## APPROVED MINUTES OF BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING – 01/23/2023

Selectman Freel asked what the savings would be to bring the COLA down 1 point. Mr. Calabria, Finance Director, explained the COLA adjustments and said we are just where we should be. The 7% gets us equable to other towns. The savings in bringing the COLA down 1% would be about \$33,000.

Andrea Chappell, a Milford resident, said this deferment is just going to be the same thing we will go through next year as a big increase. What is being proposed isn't cutting the budget. We are putting this in, hiring people, and spending this money. We can't do that.

Administrator Bender said if you know you have a half dozen positions that you are not going to fill until mid-year, do you as a taxpayer want to pay for those positions the whole year? If you don't make these cuts, you are going to pay for this in 2023 for the entire year. Chairman Dargie said these are positions that we want. Ms. Chappell said if those positions were filled, we would be digging somewhere else. Maybe we can do it with a part-time position instead of filling a full-time position. If you had all the positions filled for 2023, you might not get your budget. We already know these percentage increases are coming. We are not cutting; we are just pushing the cost off. Selectman Freel said they know that the cost is going to be there, but if we know people are coming on later in the year, they don't need to be in the budget now. It's a true reflection of what will be spent. If this gets passed, hopefully, the services stay for the town.

Mr. Labonte asked what CPI Mr. Calabria looking at, isn't the same one that Mr. Labonte is looking at. Mr. Calabria said there are many different reports you can look at. He has always used the Mass/New Hampshire one which is usually the Boston/Brockton/Nashua one. They don't have one for the Wilton, Mont Vernon, and New Boston areas.

Mr. Calabria said the Board granted many increases last year which makes it harder to comply with Chairman Dargies' request to "not make it too painful".

Karen Blow, Human Resource Director, said we have tried to make headway with employees. We had some double-digit boots-on-the-ground increases in Public Works. We have tried to make headway where people are at. We need to value the employees. Bite the bullet now or we will be doing the same thing next year. We do stand behind whatever we do.

Arene Berry, Recreation Director, we have a lot of turnover but we also have employees who have stayed. We did a good job throughout the year with wage adjustments to bring some employees up to equitable, but there are many employees that didn't have wage adjustments last year. You are now considering deferring their increases a month or lowering the percentage point. She would like the Board to consider the morale of those employees who didn't have those increases.

Selectman Daniels said at this time he would not support changing the COLA and Ambulance suggestion. People are getting hit with higher prices everywhere. They will be looking at what is increasing and decide they are not going to vote yes on the budget. He is concerned about where additional money will come from if we have to go lower.

Administrator Bender said this is the hardest budget that he's had to work on. Trying to find additional places to cut was not easy. There are implications for next year that we have to keep in mind. These deferrals are out there and there isn't a need to tax people for 2023 if those expenses are not going to be incurred, and we know they are not going to be there. He doesn't like it, but he likes it better than having a default budget. We are closer to the default budget by \$240,000. The services that the town provides are worth it.

Ms. Kokko asked how much we spent on the new positions over this last year. Mr. Calabria said he doesn't have those numbers. Ms. Kokko clarified that it would be roughly \$130,000 including benefits. Out of the \$249,000, there is about \$130,000 that was added in mid-year. Because of the timing and planning of when this person was hired, their salary is no longer included in the default budget. If that position had been budgeted for in the 2022 budget it would have been included in the default budget. Mr. Calabria said the budget for the town engineer was a hybrid position that was not filled in the highway department. Other budgeted items were brought down to zero or greatly reduced to help fund this position. Ms. Kokko said she understood that it didn't fully fund the engineer's position. Mr. Calabria said yes. Town Administrator Bender said that would have been the amount included in the default budget. Ms. Kokko said if the \$68,000 had been included at the beginning of the year it would have been in the default budget and we would be that much closer to matching the default budget. There has never been a conversation about what happens when changes like this are made midyear it has an impact on the end-of-the-year budget process.



Administrator Bender said the budget that we will present at the deliberative session will be \$17,291,068. Mr. Calabria reminded the Board that the warrant has to be posted by Monday.

## 6. DISCUSSIONS

### 1. 2023 Draft Warrants

The Board reviewed some DRA-suggested language changes to the 2023 Warrants.

Warrant Article 3 - WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITY (WWTF) UPGRADE PROJECT – \$23,953,000 BOND the DRA changed the vote to be a 3/5 Ballot Vote requirement for passage instead of 60%.

Warrant Article 7 FIRE ENGINE REPLACEMENT - 7-YEAR the tax implication was changed to: Beginning in 2025 or the year we take delivery this article has an estimated tax impact of \$6.02 on an assessed valuation of \$100,000). This is because the fire engine has a three-year lead time. We are locking in the price but not doing any prepayment.

Warrant Article 9 ONE REPLACEMENT AMBULANCE increased the total purchase amount from \$371,922 to \$409,000 and the annual payment amount from \$52,857 to \$60,820. It also included: Beginning in 2025 or the year we take delivery this article has an estimated tax impact of \$2.94 on an assessed valuation of \$100,000). This is because the Ambulance also has a longer lead time. We haven't gone through the bid process yet. They are not sure what the up-fitting equipment cost will be.

Selectman Daniels asked about locking in the price and how did we get to the increase in price. Eric Schelberg, Ambulance Director, said they are not guaranteeing the price of the Ambulance until the chassis arrives. They built in a 10% contingency which brought the price up by about \$27,000. Director Schelberg added another \$10,000 based on the equipment being added to the ambulance. The chassis will arrive in about 18 to 24 months from when you go into the queue.

Mr. Labonte referenced an e-mail in the BOS package and asked if going down one fire truck, will it save us money. Ken Flaherty, Fire Chief said yes. He doesn't know the trade-in values yet, but it would reduce the cost of the CIP in the future because the rescue truck coming in would take the place of one of the other vehicles.

Warrant Article 20 – ANNUAL LABOR DAY PARADE – price was decreased from \$10,000 to \$3,000.

Warrant Article #21 RE-ADOPT THE OPTIONAL VETERAN'S TAX CREDIT – DRA shortened language to make it simpler. Additional verbiage will be in the voter's guide.

Warrant Article #22 RE-ADOPT ALL VETERAN'S TAX CREDIT - DRA shortened language to make it simpler. Additional verbiage will be in the voter's guide.

There was additional discussion about deferring vehicles. Chief Flaherty invited Selectman Freel to go to the Fire Station to see the condition of the trucks they will be getting rid of.

Selectman Freel and Selectman Daniels changed their vote on Warrant Article #7 Fire Engine Replacement from 3/2 to 5/0.

There was a discussion about the Ambulance and Selectman Freel decided not to change his vote.

### 7. PUBLIC COMMENTS (regarding items that are not on the agenda)

Ms. Kokko said donations for the Pillsbury Bandstand currently total \$30,046.42. They anticipate additional funding to come.

Mr. Schelberg said one of the vendors for the Ambulance Vehicle offered no down payment, no contract, and just walk away to get in the queue rather than waiting. This would be before the vote. No financial or legal obligation. If the vote doesn't pass, they can sell it to someone else. This is for the chassis only. The Board said as long as it's not an obligation that is fine.

## 8. SELECTMEN'S REPORTS/DISCUSSIONS

### a) FROM PROJECTS, SPECIAL BOARDS, COMMISSIONS & COMMITTEES

**APPROVED MINUTES OF BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING – 01/23/2023**

Selectman Daniels said the Recycling committee is still focusing on composting for recycling.

Selectman Freel said there are openings in Zoning if anyone wants to join. Mr. Labonte asked about zoning changes that will be on the ballot this year. Mr. Daley said there are no additions for this year.

Mr. Labonte asked if the BAC typically votes on things that don't have a financial impact. Chairman Dargie said that is a question for the BAC. Mike Thornton said they don't usually take a position on anything political or if it has no financial impact.

**b) OTHER ITEMS (that are not on the agenda)**

**9. APPROVAL OF FINAL MINUTES - Selectman Daniels moved to approve the minutes of January 4, 2023, January 9, 2023, Budget and Bond Hearing, and January 9, 2023, regular meeting. Seconded by Selectman Freel. All were in favor. The motion passed 4/0.**

**10. INFORMATION ITEMS REQUIRING NO DECISIONS.**

a. N/A

**11. NOTICES.** Notices were read.

**12. NON-PUBLIC SESSION – Selectman Daniels made a motion to go into non-public under RSA 91-A:3, II (c) Reputation for the approval of two sets of non-public minutes from December 27, 2022, under RSA 91-A:3, II (c) Reputation. Seconded by Selectman Freel. All were in favor. The motion passed 4/0.**

Selectman Daniels made a motion to leave non-public. Seconded by Selectman Finan. All were in favor. The motion passed 4/0.

In non-public the Board approved two sets of minutes only for December 27, 2022 (beginning of the meeting) under RSA 91-A:3, II (a) Personnel and RSA 91-A:3, II (b) Personnel and December 27, 2022 (end of the meeting) under RSA 91-A:3, II (c) Reputation. The minutes were already sealed at the December 27, 2022 meeting.

**13. ADJOURNMENT: Selectman Freel moved to adjourn at 7:59. Seconded by Selectman Daniels. All were in favor. The motion passed 4/0.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Paul Dargie, Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_  
Laura Dudziak, Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Tim Finan, Vice-Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dave Freel, Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gary Daniels, Member