

APPROVED
MINUTES OF THE MILFORD BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
October 11, 2021

PRESENT: Gary Daniels, Chairman John Shannon, Town Administrator
Chris Labonte, Vice Chairman Tina Philbrick, Executive Assistant
Laura Dudziak, EXCUSED Andy Kouropoulos, Videographer
Paul Dargie, Member
David Freel, Member

1. CALL TO ORDER, BOARD OF SELECTMEN INTRODUCTIONS & PUBLIC SPEAKING INSTRUCTIONS:
Chairman Daniels called the public meeting to order at 5:30 p.m., introduced Board members, and then led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman Daniels indicated that those people in the audience who want to speak or add to the discussion should please use a microphone to be heard on the PEG Access live broadcast.

Chairman Daniels welcomed members of the public accessing this meeting remotely. He intends to continue using zoom at the Board meetings because there is more participation using this tool.

2. APPOINTMENTS – (Approximate times)

5:30 p.m. – Community Development Overview – Director, Lincoln Daley

Mr. Daley gave an overview of the Community Development Department activities and projects in the current year and anticipated budgetary requests in 2022.

Building Activity & Permitting:

- Status of building and development activity in Milford
- Community Development issued permit summary – Over 850 permits were issued in the last 2 years.

This year so far, Planning has seen about 44 applications and Zoning has seen about 25 applications.

Projects 2021-2022:

- Downtown Oval and Nashua Street Improvements Project
- Milford Dog Park is ongoing
- AOT Permit - Brox Sand & Gravel Operation is ongoing. Hoping to receive a decision by November this year.
- Downtown Parking Improvements
- Milford Master Plan Update
 - o Economic Development, Business Expansion and Retention Chapter
 - o Housing and Housing Diversity

2022 Budget: suggested additions

- New Community Development and permitting software system - \$45,000 for the first year with an annual expense of \$12,000.

- Addition of Environmental Health Officer - \$105,000 salary and benefits.

Selectman Freel asked about the requirements for that position. Mr. Daley and Chief Flaherty explained the process and what was required. They are hoping to have it self-regulated and most of it paid for by permit state fees. This would free up Chief Flaherty to do his current responsibilities.

- Adding a new Community Development / Town Hall service vehicle – Similar to the current Jeep at about \$22,000 to \$25,000. They are continuing to explore other options and opportunities for possibly repurposing another department's vehicle. Selectman Dargie would like a detailed spreadsheet outlining all town-owned vehicles, including Water and Sewer.

- Addition of hours for inspectional and administrative services

Selectman Labonte asked if the budget suggestions were already in the budget. Mr. Daley said only an additional 2 hours for inspectional and administrative services are in the budget.

Selectman Freel asked why go to a full-time health inspector instead of part-time if the Fire Chief is doing the inspections as well as his full-time job. Mr. Daley said the Chief doesn't do everything except the Restaurants and they also don't do community assistance because they don't have the resources. Chief Flaherty said questions and permits would be answered issued sooner than the state can issue them because people would be able to come in and talk to the person. He would also like the health inspector to be certified as an environmental officer like Fred Elkind in the past.

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Chairman Daniels said if the state can do this, why would we spend \$100,000 to put someone in so that we can take the money from the state and use it to pay for that person. Chief Flaherty said it takes up to three weeks for the state to respond to inspections and or questions, its money well spent to have someone in house. Restaurants can be shut down during that waiting period. Initially, we could generate around \$35,000 from permits but we could be doing many other things in that capacity to generate much more. We could also get grants to help offset the salary. There are only 15 municipalities that do this out of 230 in New Hampshire because they don't have the resources.

Chairman Daniels asked if Community Development has a backlog on permits. Mr. Daley said it was 4 or 5 weeks, now it's around 2 weeks. Chairman Daniels asked about the affordable housing issue and dealing with it locally. Mr. Daley yes. There was additional discussion about the types of structures that can be utilized. This is part of the master plan chapter.

5:35 p.m. – Ambulance Overview – Director, Eric Schelberg

Mr. Schelberg gave an overview of the Ambulance Department activities during the preceding 12 months.

Activities and Education

- COVID-19: operational changes to protect staff – full PPE use as indicated, and other responders; purchase of COVID decontamination equipment, shortages, and delays in obtaining, sufficient quantity of PPE at this time; price increases on gloves

- EMT Course

- A/EMT refresher

- Handtevy pediatric application introduced

- EMS Warm Zone II grant

- National Night Out

- Child Passenger Safety technician course, four staff technicians; plus 10 seat inspections

- 9/11 Memorial

Vehicles and Equipment

- In-service of replacement ambulance: Sugarloaf Vehicles - PL Custom and associated equipment; mileage as of October 6th - 19,465 miles

- Replacement portable radios procured and placed in service

Personnel

- Conversion of 40-hours of part-time hours to one full-time position

 - o Full-time: 9; Part-time: 13; Billing Clerk (P/T): 1; Per-Diem: 10; Volunteer: 1

- Turn-over: 4 transition to per-diem status; 2 part-time A/EMT; 2 per-diem Paramedic

- Hiring sessions: four held

 - o Four offers out of 13 applicants – 10 qualified and invited; 5 attended with 4 withdrawing and 1 no-show; no outside interest in a full-time position

- Pending Billing clerk opening

Ambulance Transport, Billing, and Revenue

- Billing vendor change effective April 2021

- Rate increase effective April 2021

- 2020: Billings - \$1,485,973 Revenue - \$831,650

Statistics

- 2020: Calls – 1,814; Transports – 1,365; Mutual Aid: Received - 59; Provided – 32 (53% (31 calls) during the hours of 07:00 – 23:00)

- 7.8% reduction in call volume and 9.9% transports; identified from the assisted living facility and nursing homes

- 2021: Calls – 1,526; Transports – 1,143; Mutual Aid: Received - 48; Provided – 48 (70% (34 calls) during the hours of 07:00 – 23:00) Call Stacking – 7 (12:50 minute response)

 - o 9% reduction in call volume and transports in January and February, return to pre-COVID activity in March with anticipated annual call volume exceeding 2,000 calls

Budget

- 2021 Budget Status: within budget, wages and technical supplies are areas of concern for overage; fuel and maintenance look to be underspent

- 2022 Budget Proposal

 - o Wage adjustment: \$1.50/hour for all staff minus Director, these are in the proposed budget

 - Competition from surrounding communities and industries. Mr. Schelberg explained why he needs to pay his employees a better rate, and what it takes to become an EMT.

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Selectman Dargie asked if the EMT staff is fully vaccinated and do they do testing regularly. Mr. Schelberg said all of his staff except 1 is not vaccinated and that person is not tested regularly.

- o Over-time increase due to open shifts covered by full-time staff (currently 28- hours/week open)
- o Late calls – the department will spend approximately \$6,000 due to late calls.
- o Hiring sessions and Field Training shifts for new employees – recruitment retention is about \$6,000.
- o PRV replacement - \$55,859 – this came from the Milford Police Department, is a 2010 vehicle. The transmission does not work in reverse. It's \$5,000 to replace the transmission. The vehicle has about 110,000 to 114,000 miles on it. Selectman Labonte requested that we get a quote on the transmission. Mr. Schelberg doesn't want to dump good money into a bad vehicle. They also have another vehicle that they can drive with 108,000 miles on it. Selectman Labonte asked about a trade value for this vehicle. Mr. Schelberg said about \$1,400 to \$1,800.

Selectman Freel suggests that the town fix the transmission. It will be worth more if it's fixed. We need another vehicle for inspections; this could be used for that. Mr. Schelberg clarified that the vehicle is only worth \$1,400 to \$1,800 and it will be around \$5,000 to fix it. Selectman Labonte feels that it's worth more than that.

Chairman Daniels asked about the cost to convert a part-time person to a full-time person. Mr. Schelberg said it would just be including benefits and he doesn't know what benefits that employee has. Chairman Daniels asked what the state fuel cost was. Mr. Schelberg thinks about \$2.20 and \$2.30 per gallon. WEX is about .40 to .50 cents more.

Selectman Labonte asked what an inside billing clerk does if you outsource your billing. Mr. Schelberg said they review all the PCR's to make sure all the data that the ambulance department and the billing company needs are correct. Everything is also reviewed for audits, handles reports, and billing questions. They also handle Medicare and medicaid validations. Selectman Labonte asked what it would cost to do the billing in-house. Administrator Shannon said they would have to hire a medical coder, a lot goes into it. Mr. Schelberg said we have done a better job through the billing service. In-house would be a full-time plus job. It's a lot of work. Mr. Schelberg explained the main reason that we don't collect on billings for Selectman Freel.

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

Katherine Kokko, a Milford resident, said the Heritage Commission will be hosting a FREE Home Improvement Workshop; Restoring Old Windows on Saturday, October 16th, and Saturday, October 23rd from 9 am until 4 pm. You can sign up by e-mailing MilfordHeritageEvents@gmail.com or calling 603-321-6068. Masks, food, and supplies will be provided.

Ms. Kokko said the Bandstand is now a finalist for inclusion to the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance's 2021 Seven to Save. An announcement will be made on Tuesday, October 26, 2021, at 5:00 pm. If accepted, it will open a good opportunity to get funding to restore the bandstand.

Ms. Kokko asked if money has been spent on Communications and if Crown Castle is active yet. Administrator Shannon said it isn't active yet and he doesn't think any money has been spent yet. He will check.

DECISIONS – Selectman Dargie moved to approve the consent calendar. Seconded by Selectman Freel. All were in favor. Selectmen Dargie, yes, Selectman Labonte, yes, Chairman Daniels, yes and Selectman Freel, yes. The motion passed 4/0.

4. The motion passed 5/0.

a) CONSENT CALENDAR

- 1) Approval of Army National Guard and other National Guard and/or Reserve units to use Town-owned land for training purposes.
- 2) Permission for Community Action for Safe Teens (CAST) Youth Empowerment and Service (YES) team to observe Red Ribbon Week on the Oval October 25th until November 1st.
- 3) Request for Acceptance and Appropriation of Unanticipated Revenues under \$10,000 (31:95(b)) Donation to the Ice Rink Special Purpose Fund to replace lights at the skating rink with LED Fixtures
 - b) \$2,925.00 – East Milford Improvement Society Trust

b) OTHER DECISIONS

- 1) N/A

5. TOWN STATUS REPORT – N/A

6. DISCUSSIONS

1. **2022 Operating Budget** – Administrator Shannon said the first draft went out and everyone should have it. There is a 4.9% increase and about half is required. There are Police and Ambulance vehicles included in the budget as well. He asked when the Board would like to talk to department heads. There were no large increases.

Selectman Freel asked if we have any surplus this year. Paul Calabria, Finance Director said those calculations are usually done early in November; he will have a better idea then. Selectman Dargie asked about the tax rate. Mr. Calabria said he's still waiting for some information; hopefully, they will have a meeting soon to set the tax rate. They are hoping to send the tax bills out by November 1st.

Selectman Labonte asked if it was too late to apply \$500,000 of fund balance towards the 2021 tax rate since we didn't use the \$700,000 previously authorized earlier this year. Mr. Calabria said the Board already has action in place for \$644,000. Selectman Labonte said the \$500,000 would be in addition to that amount. He asked if he could make that a motion. Selectman Freel said he would like to first see if we have a surplus left over. There was additional discussion on what they thought they would need. Mr. Calabria said we could allocate more money towards the tax rate this year, he's anticipating a large amount in surplus this year, depending on what winter brings. Administrator Shannon said we don't know for sure, he would rather wait a little longer to see where we are. Mr. Calabria said the Board can give him a tentative, up to amount, so when he sets the tax rate, he could let them know what the tax rate would be using that amount.

Selectman Labonte made a motion to appropriate \$500,000 from the fund balance to reduce the 2021 tax rate. Selectman Dargie seconded for discussion. Selectman Dargie said the \$700,000 approved earlier wasn't something that would have not normally been applied to the tax rate. He asked what the fund balance amount was that we currently have. Mr. Calabria said removing the \$700,000 would have brought us down to 8.41% in fund balance.

Selectman Labonte said those were the numbers at the end of 2020. The number replenishes at the end of each year. He wants the additional \$500,000 which would still leave us over \$200,000 for dispatch from the original \$700,000 we already approved earlier this year. Selectman Freel still wants to wait to see about the surplus. Selectman Dargie said it's the same thing, the surplus goes into the fund balance. Mr. Calabria said he has no idea what the tax rate will be right now.

Selectman Dargie asked Mr. Calabria if he was confident that we would be able to afford all the money for dispatch that we set up if we take another \$500,000 out of the fund balance. Mr. Calabria said yes. Chairman Daniels said the main thing is that we are not going to jeopardize something that we want to do. Selectman Dargie said it's important that we get dispatch funded.

Chairman Daniels asked what the percentage would be in fund balance if we took out the additional \$500,000. Mr. Calabria said about 7%. Selectman Freel asked why we have to do this now instead of a month from now. Chairman Daniels said because it would be too late to attach it to the 2021 tax rate.

All were in favor. Selectmen Dargie, yes, Selectman Labonte, yes, Chairman Daniels, yes and Selectman Freel, yes. The motion passed 4/0.

2. **AoT Permit Update** – Administrator Shannon said they had a video call with NH Fish and Game and DES. We are on our 6th extension. Everyone appears to be on the same page and we are hoping to hear something by November. Work won't start up again until mid-May. We may need to extend North East Sand and Gravels contract to make up for time lost.

Selectman Dargie asked if other issues could cause problems. Mr. Daley, Community Development Director said no. They are working through identifying areas and who is going to be the holder of the Conservation Easement. Chairman Daniels asked about Beaver Brook. Mr. Daley said they are hoping to re-engage them going forward. Chairman Daniels wants to make sure we don't suffer the delays just because we are trying to bring in someone who doesn't want to be involved in this.

Paul Calabria, Finance Director gave an update on the Police Vehicle involved in the accident. Primex calls for depreciated replacement costs.

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

8. SELECTMEN'S REPORTS/DISCUSSIONS

Selectman Labonte mentioned an air conditioner at the High School in the video production room that died. Fixing it will be about \$7,000 or \$8,000 to replace it. Selectman Dargie asked if it was town-owned equipment. Andy Kouropoulos said GTM owned the equipment. Selectman Labonte said GTA said they would pay half and the school would pay half. He asked the Board their thoughts. Selectman Freel asked why the school didn't pay for all of it. Selectman Labonte felt that \$8,000 was a lot of money for the ac unit. Chairman Daniels said he needs more information. Selectman Dargie is okay with whatever GTA decides to do. Chairman Daniels said they would put this under decision at the next meeting.

a) FROM PROJECTS, SPECIAL BOARDS, COMMISSIONS & COMMITTEES

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

9. APPROVAL OF FINAL MINUTES - Selectman Dargie moved to approve the minutes of September 27, 2021, as amended. Seconded by Chairman Daniels. All were in favor. Selectmen Dargie, yes, Selectman Labonte, yes, Chairman Daniels, yes and Selectman Freel, yes. The motion passed 4/0.

10. INFORMATION ITEMS REQUIRING NO DECISIONS.

1. N/A

11. NOTICES. Notices were read.

12. NON-PUBLIC SESSION a motion made by Selectman Labonte to enter into a non-public session in accordance with (RSA 91-A:3, II(c)) Reputation and approval of non-public minutes for September 27, 2021. Seconded by Selectmen Dargie. A roll call vote was taken with Selectman Dargie yes, Selectman Labonte yes, Selectman Freel yes, and Chairman Daniels yes. The motion passed 4/0.

Selectman Labonte made a motion to approve the non-public minutes of September 27, 2021, as amended, under reputation. Seconded by Selectmen Dargie. A roll call vote was taken, Selectman Dargie yes, Selectman Labonte yes, Selectman Freel yes, and Chairman Daniels yes. All were in favor. The motion passed 4/0.

Selectman Labonte made a motion to leave the non-public session. Seconded by Selectmen Freel. A roll call vote was taken, Selectman Dargie yes, Selectman Labonte yes, Selectman Freel yes, and Chairman Daniels yes. All were in favor. The motion passed 4/0.

In non-public, the Board discussed two items pertaining to Reputation. The Board made one decision, for approval of the non-public minutes.

Selectman Freel made a motion to seal the non-public minutes of October 11, 2021, under reputation. Seconded by Selectman Dargie. A roll call vote was taken with Selectman Dargie, yes, Selectman Labonte yes, Selectman Freel yes, and Chairman Daniels yes. All were in favor. The motion passed 4/0. The minutes were sealed under reputation because if not, it would affect adversely the reputation of the person/persons who requested the non-public meeting.

13. ADJOURNMENT: Selectman Dargie moved to adjourn at 8:55 pm. Seconded by Selectman Labonte. A roll call vote was taken with Selectman Dargie yes, Selectman Labonte yes, Selectman Freel yes, and Chairman Daniels yes. All were in favor. The motion passed 4/0.

Gary Daniels, Chairman

Paul Dargie, Member

Chris Labonte, Vice-Chairman

David Freel, Member

Laura Dudziak, Member - EXCUSED