

Town Status Report

February 13, 2023

1. Deliberative Session Review – With the conclusion of the Deliberative Session and post Deliberative Session Board votes, do members have any comments or questions?

2. Benchmark Electric Pricing

Staff seeks guidance from the Board of Selectmen regarding the Town’s contractual electric rate. The Town’s electric contract with Standard Power is set to expire in November 2023. The Town’s current rate is \$0.16510. The default rate from February 2022 – August 2022 is \$0.20221.

The Town has been approached by Standard Power with pricing options (*see attached email dated 2/1/23 from Ryan Polson, Standard Power*) that effectively reduce electricity rates for the Town. Standard Power has suggested a “blended rate” whereby the Town would extend a contract with Constellation (another provider) for a prescribed length of time (12 months up to 56 months). The savings or reduction in prices is based on Constellation’s ability to purchase electricity further into the future. By doing so, the cost of electricity averages out and lowers rates in near term.

The Board has options to consider. Given the fluctuation in energy costs, the Board may want to select an electric rate with a shorter period and then assess in 2024. Staff recommends that the Board consider accepting the 20 month blended rate of \$0.13330 beginning in March 2023 and terminating in November 2024. The Board could choose longer term period (32, 44, and 52 months) beginning in March that would reduce the rates further.

If the Town chose to stay with the current rate, it would remain at \$0.16510 through November 2023. The Town would need to revisit this topic prior to expiration of the contract and evaluate/select a rate and period.

3. Four Day Work Week – Staff continues to evaluate the feasibility of implementing a four-day work schedule at Town Hall and DPW. The Ambulance, Fire, Police Departments have their own unique work schedules requiring twenty-four hour coverage and as such, are not part of this review. Staff views the four-day work schedule as a means to improve overall service to the public, reduce operating costs to the Town, and provide a tool/benefit to retain and recruit employees.

Staff at the Town Hall believe that we can improve service with extended hours earlier than 8:00 am start and later than the 4:30pm closing time. In an effort feedback/input from the residents and property owners, Staff conducted a public online survey. The responses were encouraging with majority supporting the proposed four-day work week with the extended hours in the evening. In addition, Community Development contacted representatives from the building/development community who expressed their general support of the concept.

The Town should also realize energy cost savings by closing the building from Thursday evening to Monday morning. We estimate annual costs savings of approximately \$5,000-\$8,000.

DPW is open to a flexible schedule for employees as buildings, highways, parks, cemetery. This may include a combination of a 4-day and 5-day schedules during certain seasons. We will still need to discuss with the Union. Staff also is continuing to evaluate alternative and extended hours for the Transfer Station.

At this time, additional discussion with staff and input from the public is necessary to determine the recommended extended hours of operation (ie. 7am – 5pm, 7:30am – 5:30pm). In addition to releasing updated surveys, we have scheduled an informal public session on February 21st in the Town Hall Board of Selectmen Meeting from 4:30 to 6:00 for residents/stakeholders to provide input/comments. We anticipate submitting the final proposal for Board of Selectmen review and consideration at the February 27th regularly scheduled meeting.

4. **Town Report and Voters Guide Update** – Tina Philbrick will a brief update and status.