TOWN OF CHESHIRE

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OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Meeting Minutes – January 19, 2021

Members Present: Michelle Francesconi, Chair
Jason Levesque, Emergency Services Liaison
Mark Biagini, Clerk
Ronald DeAngelis, Highway and Infrastructure Liaison
Robert Ciskowski

Others Present: Mark Webber, Interim Town Administrator
Noelle M Pandell, Interim Administrative Assistant
Christine Emerson, Town Clerk

Others Present via Go-To-Meeting: Bob Navin, Highway Superintendent
Thomas Francesconi, Fire Chief
Christopher Garner, Board of Health
Aaron Dean, Superintendent, HVRSD
Erika Snyder, Business Manager, HVRSD

M. Francesconi opened the meeting at 6:30 pm.

Open Session

M. Francesconi read from a prepared set of remarks that was listed on the agenda concerning that, pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Board of Selectmen will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible.

M. Francesconi acknowledged the members of the Board present at the meeting.

M. Francesconi advised that she was going out of order on the agenda and first take up the renewal Bond Anticipation Note (BAN) for Municipal Purpose Loan. Town Clerk, Christine Emerson was present at the meeting and had the BAN for the Selectman's signature.

4. New Business

b. Sign renewal Bond Anticipation Note (BAN) for Municipal Purpose Loan
M. Francesconi noted that this BAN was originally issued on February 4, 2015 in the amount of $570; $400K was for a fire truck and $170K was for a highway truck. In 2017, we added another highway truck to the borrowing for an additional $125K. In 2019 we made a final payment on the first highway truck

and are now renewing the note for $345,250; $314K is for a fire truck and $31,250 is for a highway truck. After a brief discussion, *M. Biagini made a motion to approve the renewal of the Bond Anticipation Note (BAN) – seconded by J. Levesque* ***– Roll Call Vote – All members yes – Motion carries****.*

Christine Emerson left the meeting.

a. Discussion regarding lease agreement with the Hoosac Valley Regional School District

M. Francesconi advised that the Board would now discuss the lease agreement with the school district. She noted that Aaron Dean, Superintendent and Erika Snyder, Business Manager of the school district were present via Go-To-Meeting.

A. Dean noted that he was surprised to learn about this matter through the press. He said from what he can tell there are two issues: ownership of the materials in the library and the lease needing to be more reflective of the current arrangement. Lengthy discussion followed regarding the materials in the library; M. Francesconi said that she and M. Webber had met with E. Snyder, the Business Manager, and A. Dean to get some answers to questions the Board had asked. She has seen many of the books in the library and that they are from the Adams Memorial High School and Hoosac Valley High School, and many are extremely outdated. The books that belonged to the former Cheshire Elementary School have been dispersed to the Hoosac Valley Elementary School and the local libraries. M. Webber noted that the discussion in the meeting touched on adjusting the rate of the lease to reflect use of the library space. M. Francesconi noted that adding the former library space to the lease would add 1100 square feet which is equivalent to approximately 25% of the current leased space. She suggested maybe adding 25% or $2,500 to the current lease payment, which would be subject to the Board's approval and the school committee's approval. She noted that despite an article about the previous week's meeting, nothing had been privately agreed upon and there had been a tentative discussion regarding numbers.

E. Snyder reported that the school district had a custodian for the first year then the Town took it over and their expectations were not met. They started with use of five bathrooms and now they have one. They went an entire winter without heat and no hot water. She said they tried to be good tenants and have not complained. She said they asked the former Town Administrator for clearly defined terms but they haven't been able to get them and some of the language contradicts itself.

M. Francesconi asked the Board if anyone had any questions for A. Dean or E. Snyder. She noted that the discussion should be kept to the current topic of the lease. R. Ciskowski stated to the A. Dean and E. Snyder that if they were so unsatisfied, maybe they should give a 60-day notice to find a new location. M. Francesconi stopped R. Ciskowski stating that he was out of line speaking on behalf of the Board. R. Ciskowski said that it was okay for her to speak on behalf of the Board when she offered the district to pay an additional lease payment of $2,500. Following some discussion, R. Ciskowski continued asking if the district was storing items in other areas of the school; A. Dean said not at this point but noted that they did have records stored in the old section and in cabinets in the library. R. Ciskowski recommended that the Board change the locks to the basement of the old section.

M. Francesconi stated that she fully communicated what happened in the meeting she and M. Webber had with A. Dean and E. Snyder. She said there was work to be done and someone had to do it and she stands behind what he did. She suggested that the Board designate someone to have discussions with the district.

R. DeAngelis asked about the conflicting language in the lease. E. Snyder pointed out that on the first page of the lease it states that the Town will be responsible for all utilities and then in another area in

the lease it states that the district will pay 10% of the utilities. She said she asked the former Town Administrator to remove the language on the district paying 10% of utilities but it was not removed.

R. DeAngelis asked E. Snyder if she thinks the price they are paying per square footage is a fair amount to pay for the space they have. E. Snyder responded that it was a reasonable amount at the time, and it was what the district could afford. A. Dean noted that the district provides in-kind services like providing the internet for the Selectmen's meeting.

There was discussion about adding use of the library to the lease; A. Dean said that they were just trying to clear out the clutter. He also noted that he does not think they will need the library space going forward. They just needed it during the pandemic. M. Francesconi and J. Levesque indicated that they have no problem with the district using the library during the pandemic. R. DeAngelis noted that technically there is no lease in place because neither party has a fully signed copy.

Following additional discussion, A. Dean offered to have the district's attorney clean up the contract and then send it to the Selectmen for their review. M. Francesconi asked if the Board was okay with this and they all were.

M. Francesconi noted that the floors are being stripped and waxed this weekend and she would like the library floors to be done too. Everyone agreed to move the materials from the library into the cafeteria so that the floors can be done.

A. Dean and E. Snyder left the meeting.

1. **To Hear and Act on the Minutes from the Prior Meeting – January 12, 2021**
   J. Levesque made a motion to approve the minutes from January 12, 2021 as written – seconded by M. Biagini – there was no discussion – ***Roll Call Vote – M. Francesconi yes, J. Levesque yes, M. Biagini yes, R. DeAngelis abstained and R. Ciskowski abstained - Motion carried****.*

2. **Reports of Town Departments**

   a. **Highway Department –** R. Navin reported that the weather has kept them busy and the two big wing trucks broke down; one is fixed and back in service and the other one should be back in service any day. They have been helping at Town Hall as time permits. They worked with the Water Department and moved materials out of the former Water Department building at the Father Tom Campsite. They are also filling potholes as time and conditions allow.

      R. Navin advised that the janitor/grounds person will be back to work on February 1st. He said he spoke with C. Garner and a representative from the Northern Berkshire Solid Waste Management District regarding upgrades at the transfer station. He said he will request a meeting with the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Health to brainstorm. He also noted that the compactor is starting to rot out but there are grants available. M. Webber asked R. Navin if he pulled a permit and R. Navin said not yet but he will. R. Navin said he has meeting with M. Webber next week and he will more of an update in two weeks.

      R. DeAngelis asked if EMTs and volunteer fireman could be on a priority list for storms so that they can get out if they get a call. A brief discussion followed and R. Navin said that they make every effort to make sure their streets are open in case they get a call.

J. Levesque asked R. Navin if they are responsible for trees that are leaning over the power lines; R. Navin said that if the trees are near electrical wires, the Highway Department does not touch them. He said if anyone knows of any trees around town that are dead or hanging close to wires, to send him an email and he will have it taken care of.

b. Police Department – No update as the Police Chief was not in attendance.

c. **Fire Department** – Fire Chief T. Francesconi advised that John Burzimati did a walk through at the fire station with FW Webb to do an assessment of the boiler. They said the current boiler is too big and they recommend replacing it. T. Francesconi said that he will submit a request for a new boiler together with the estimate to the Board. The immediate need was to replace the circulator pump in the kitchen. T. Francesconi confirmed that the fire station has heat at this point and he will keep the Board updated with regard to the system.

T. Francesconi advised that it is burning season; it started January 15th and it goes until May 1st. He said people are encouraged to burn no while there is snow on the ground. Permits are available through the Town's website.

T. Francesconi advised that when the new police car comes in, the new command vehicle will be in too. He noted that the command vehicle is coming out of the Fire Department's budget. T. Francesconi advised that some of the members of the Fire Department received the COVID-19 vaccination. He also said they have been using the recently purchased sprayers to disinfect the apparatus and the station.

d. Board of Health

C. Garner was not in attendance but M. Francesconi said she spoke with him and since there is an uptick in COVID numbers, they are stopping meetings inside Town Hall. If the Board agrees, a notice will be sent to Town employees telling them that there will be no more meetings in small spaces in Town Hall. The Board agreed.

C. Garner, who had been having issues with his phone, said he had been on the meeting the whole time, but he could not get his volume to work. He was able to correct the issue at the end of the meeting and then gave his Board of Health update. He thanked M. Francesconi for overseeing the Town Hall project and he thanked others who moved him into the Annex.

C. Garner said that he kept in contact with the Board of Health while he was away on vacation. He said while we were in the red, there was a glitch in the report. We only had 17 cases and as of Friday, we had 23 active cases. Online it says we have 80 cases but that is a running total from the beginning of the pandemic. He said he spoke with M. Francesconi and R. Navin and he would like to get the ball rolling and start looking for grants to replace the compactor. Regarding hiring, he said he is happy to work with R. DeAngelis, R. Navin and M. Webber to get the word out more.

3. Old Business

a. Discussion regarding the Search for a Town Administrator

M. Webber distributed a document to the Board members and advised that he would like them to consider the five items that he needs direction on how to move forward. He asked the Board

members to email him their thoughts on the five items and once he hears back from everyone, he can compile the information. Once we have a comprehensive job description, we can then start discussing the process to search and hire. M. Webber said that the MMA website is loaded with opportunities.

M. Webber stated that an Interim's main focus should be to find the next person. He said Dalton and Monterey are also searching for a Town Administrator. He will try and get a list of their applicants to see who is out there potentially looking for a job.

b. **Update on the Town Hall Project** – M. Francesconi advised that the painter finished painting the Annex and the meeting room upstairs. M. Francesconi stated that she was unable to get out of purchasing the furniture that was reserved by the Town Administrator as there is a 50% restocking fee. So, the furniture will be split between the Town Administrator and the Administrative Assistant.

M. Francesconi noted that the painting in Town Hall has been paused due to the painter having another place he needs to be. She said the former Board of Health area has been painted. She has received one quote for carpet in the basement and she is waiting to receive the second quote. She will keep the Board updated.

M. Francesconi stated that there is a wall in the basement near the old Board of Health office that has had the sheetrock replaced a couple of times. She is working with Outlook Builders to fix the issue before replacing the wall.

M. Francesconi advised that Dave Nickum switched the locations of the phone lines. She further noted that George Sweet replaced the light outside Town Hall.

M. Francesconi stated that the former Town Administrator wanted to change the telephone system, which would allow Town employees to check their voicemail from home. She spoke with Dave Nickum who stated that he could provide instructions to remote access to voicemail with the existing telephone system. M. Francesconi said if the Board was amenable to doing this, then we would only have to replace the aging telephones. Board members agreed.

4. New Business

a. Discussion and possible action regarding interview plan for open positions

i. **Compactor Operator**
ii. **COA Aide**
iii. **COA Van Driver**

R. Navin advised that he received two applications for the Compactor Operator and M. Webber said he received one application for the COA position. R. Navin asked how the Board wanted to handle interviews. Discussion followed regarding the Board being involved with interviews from the beginning and applications becoming public. M. Webber stated that discussions can be held in closed session until finalists are determined. R. Navin noted that he had some concerns regarding the applications he received, and he would like to continue advertising to see if others apply. After additional discussion, R. DeAngelis said he would meet with R. Navin and review and discuss the applications received.

5. Public Comment Period

J. Guerino asked if the amount of the school district lease was $10K and M. Francesconi said yes.

M. Biagini asked if the Water Department phone line was being moved this week. M. Francesconi said yes and she said she spoke with the department secretary about it today and she also reviewed the plan for moving with her too.

M. Biagini asked where residents can get extra bags. C. Garner said that the bags are available at the compactor. After a brief discussion, R. Navin said that he brings a couple of cases of bags to the transfer station as needed. M. Biagini then asked if the workers at the transfer station who take in the money need to be bonded. C. Garner said that they never have been bonded because the money gets turned over every day. M. Webber said if the employees collecting the money needed to be bonded then everyone who touches the money would need to be bonded. There should not be a problem If the money is turned over every day.

R. DeAngelis suggested doing away with bags and instead calculate a cost for each resident and include it in taxes. C. Garner said that he would have to investigate whether we could do that since we are a member of the solid waste district.

There were no other public comments.

6. **Announcements from Board Members**
M. Biagini said that he collected the last of the liquor license renewals and M. Webber now has everything that is needed.

M. Webber said he received another note from Donna at the Planning Board requesting to be on the agenda regarding resignations. He also received a note from AFSME union advising that there is a new rep who will be reaching out to start negotiations in about a month or two. M. Webber will speak with B. Nevin about this when they meet next week.

7. **Any Other Business Not Reasonably Anticipated 48-hours Prior to the Meeting** - None

8. **Adjournment** – With no further business, *M. Biagini made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:27 PM – seconded by J. Levesque – **Roll Call Vote – All members yes** – Motion carries*

Respectfully submitted,
Noelle M. Pandell