

Selectboard Minutes

February 20, 2024

Present: Jenn Jones, chair
Andy Artimovich, vice chair
Jon Morgan
Russ Kelly
Paul Kleinman

At 6pm, Jones called the meeting to order.

The Board signed the payroll and accounts payable summary register.

Artimovich motioned, seconded by Morgan, to accept the consent agenda which consisted of public minutes from 02/13/2024, recreation manifest, the treasurer's report (found at the end of these minutes), and the following building permits:

- Barrie & Melinda Ferraro, 17 Lindon Drive, Solar
- River Run Development, 1 Taylor Circle, Building
- Matt Greenburg, 37 Scrabble Road, Electrical
- Wright Builders, 31 Route 107, Building
- Brenda Demaria, 52 Abbey Road, Building
- 2020 Dunn Family Trust, 1 Sunset Lane, Electrical
- Kevin Butler & James McPhee, 29 James Circle, Electrical
- 3 Ponds LLC, 68 Three Ponds Drive, Electrical
- Brenda Demaria, 52 Abbey Road, Electrical
- Wright Builders, 31 Route 107, Electrical

All were in favor.

Jones opened the meeting to public comment at 6:02pm. Seeing no public comment, Jones closed it at 6:02pm.

Jones opened the SB2 public hearing at 6:03pm. She explained the board takes no stance on SB2 and no decisions would be made tonight. She added the hearing is fulfilling a statutory requirement. Jones invited the petitioners to come forward to offer a presentation on SB2. No petitioners appeared to be present.

Jones offered the opportunity for the public to speak on SB2.

Liz Faria, South Road, stated she is opposed to SB2. She explained her reasoning to be that at the school deliberative session over 26,000 possible voters could have attended and only 235 people from 6 towns were present. Faria voiced her concern that SB2 would provide little representation and voters would not be as informed. She argued that many towns that have switched to SB2 have regretted that decision.

Lois DeYoung, Crawley Falls Road, stated she objects to SB2. She believes Town Meeting is a fundamental democracy and SB2 would produce uneducated voters because the average voter will not attend meetings ahead of voting. She added there is free open discussion at Town Meeting.

Rebecca Dunham, Block Drive, asked if the SB2 warrant was the first article being discussed at Town Meeting. Jones confirmed it would be. Dunham asked if there would be handouts or a formal presentation. Jones responded that she did not believe there would be a formal presentation. She noted that the library had a presentation on SB2 and some information was being discussed at this hearing. Jones added she expects people will be voicing their thoughts at Town Meeting. Dunham

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stated SB2 does not lower taxes according to a local historian. She encouraged the public to participate in Town Meeting before deciding it is not the best form.

Betsy Ibbitson, Scrabble Road, shared she does not know much about SB2. She added she believes it is easier than attending Town Meeting.

Bill Dunham, Block Drive, asked if the \$850,000 solar panel project for the school was going to be voted for on March 6. Jones confirmed that was correct. Dunham asked if that school meeting is similar to SB2. Jones explained the school is not SB2. Dunham attempted to draw a parallel between the school and SB2.

Ward Byrne, Rowell Road East, stated he was opposed to SB2. He believes it would eliminate the ability to communicate with elected officials. He added that SB2 would eliminate the opportunity to weigh in on decisions before the topic is voted on. Byrne added he is concerned with the continued increase of taxes.

Caleb Labbe, Shannon Way, shared he is opposed to SB2. He noted it was from the history side of Town Meeting which has been occurring for more than 200 years and seems to work.

Gabbie Kelly, Mohawk Lane, speaking as a private citizen and not as a representative of any boards she serves on stated she is not speaking for/against SB2. She noted that the length of the last Town Meeting prevented her from staying the entire time. Kelly noted with SB2 there is a deliberative session. She added the work of the budget committee and Selectboard could fall apart with a vote for a default budget with SB2.

Bill Faria, South Road, stated SAU 16 is an example of SB2. He believes with this structure that residents lose the opportunity to speak with other people about the topics.

Lois DeYoung, Crawley Falls Road, took blame for the length of the last Town Meeting with all the secret ballot requests. She believes the secret ballots helped cut the budget. DeYoung supported the secret ballots because she did not want her neighbors or friends to know how she was voting on some topics.

Betsy Ibbitson, Scrabble Road, stated that DeYoung's point of worrying about her neighbor knowing how she was voting was a great point about why people support SB2.

Jones closed the SB2 hearing at 6:29pm.

Jones stated she believes the presentation that will be provided is important to help people understand the tax impact. She added it is important to understand when voting on the budget that was approved by the Selectboard and Budget Committee that the budget number is not a direct one-to-one relationship of what the taxes will be. Jones stated it is important to vote with sound information.

Steve Dawson, Ladd Road, representing the Communications Subcommittee was present to offer a presentation on Tax Impact not being the same as the Tax Rate. He stated he has lived in Brentwood for 44 years with his wife. He added his 2 sons have gone through the Swasey school system and graduated from Exeter High School.

Dawson explained what he has learned from attending Town Meeting is that people focus only on this year and last, only expenses are looked at, and that tax impact is not the same as the tax rate. Dawson added that he vetted all the numbers through Karen Clement, Town Administrator and Jack Mitchell, budget committee chair. He added the information can be found on old tax bills and in town reports.

Dawson explained the budget committee uses a \$400,000 home as the median appraisal amount when considering tax

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impact. Examining the last 4 years, Dawson explained the tax rate change from 2020 to 2023, the increase is 1.47%. He added that is a 34-cent increase per \$1,000. He noted that is a remarkably low increase. Dawson explained that a tax bill came in \$136 higher in 2023 than 2020. He added that was a remarkable increase considering the US inflation rate was 18.6%.

Dawson noted that the municipal line (town portion) of the tax bill is the only line the Selectboard has control over. He stated that rate decreased 9.8% between 2020 and 2023. Dawson explained that results in a decrease of \$168/\$400,000.

Dawson explained the tax rate is affected not just by expenses but also revenue. He explained revenue sources such as boat and motor vehicle fees, state grants, federal grants, impact fees, and property taxes help off-set expenses. Dawson reiterated that the tax impact is not the same as the tax rate.

Dawson explained the state education tax on the tax bill. He explained the State-Wide Education Property Tax (SWEPT) went up 39.4% last year. He explained it is a tax the state levies on all towns in NH. How that amount is figured, Dawson explained, is that the state is obligated to provide an adequate education by constitution for all pupils. He explained the state levies a tax on all properties to get to their proposed amount of 363 million dollars.

Bill Faria, South Road, questioned the SWEPT cost increasing. He stated there is a court case that will result in the number increasing.

Morgan responded that the per pupil cost lies with the SAU. He added the Claremont decisions, Faria referred to, have gone to the NH Supreme Court. He explained the argument states that the state is required to provide an adequate education. Morgan explained the state has set that amount at \$4,000 per student while schools are saying the cost for educating is between \$15,000 - \$18,000 per student. He added, it is why the cases are in their third round of the Supreme Court because the argument is that the state is acting unconstitutionally.

Bill Faria, South Road, argued that the 2025 reassessment will cause tax rates to increase. Dawson responded that if the assessment increases, the tax rate will decrease. Jones responded that you will be multiplying a larger number (assessment) by a smaller number (tax rate).

Letty Bedard, Middle Road, stated the base rate provided for a student is \$4,100. She added that in 2019 the tax rate was \$27.70 and in 2020 following the revaluation, the rate decreased by 16% to \$23.19.

Eric Turer, Peabody Drive, stated the state has revenue sources besides property taxes.

Dawson added that out of state corporations contribute money to the state through business enterprise tax, as do the sales of lottery tickets, and the NH liquor sales by out of state customers.

Liz Faria, South Road, stated 80% of the current tax bill is the schools. She asked how the communications committee can help get that message out to the public. She added that is a 68-million-dollar budget. Dawson responded that the communications committee is attempting to provide information to people. He added it is important to know that the school budget since 2020 increased 2.87% for both Coop and Swasey. The concern is that the population has dropped while the costs have increased. Dawson explained the communications committee is attempting to get the numbers out.

Jones shared the importance of understanding the budget being voted on at Town meeting. She added that the increase of the budget does not mean that is the amount the taxes are going up.

Clement presented the Selectboard with a reappointment slip for Heather Gilbert as inspector of elections through August 1, 2024. Morgan motioned, seconded by Artimovich, to sign the appointment slip. All were in favor.

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Artimovich had no committee updates.

Morgan shared the Economic Development quarterly breakfast will be held tomorrow, Wednesday, February 21 at 7:30am at the Brentwood Recreation Center. He added it is a roundtable and is open to all current business owners and people considering doing business in Brentwood.

Kelly had no committee updates.

Kleinman stated the finalized report for the South Road/Route 125 road audit should be available soon.

Jones shared the board received information that the multiyear feasibility study for the Pickpocket Dam draft is posted on the Exeter town website. There is an opportunity to offer questions and input for 30 days, she added. Jones stated there is a meeting about the Pickpocket Dam on February 27 from 7-9:30pm at Exeter Town Hall.

Jones reminded those in attendance that the School District meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 6 from 6pm-8pm.

Jones encouraged people to sign up for email alerts on the town website.

Jones reminded people that Community Power will be a warrant article. She shared there is a recording of the required public hearing on the town website.

At 7:12pm, Morgan motioned, seconded by Artimovich, to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Tamera Peek

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WEEKLY TREASURER'S REPORT

DATE:

2/20/2024

General Fund:

TD BANK

Previous Balance:	7,248,664.20		
Deposits:	42,975.30		
Payroll:	32,955.51	DDP: \$32,955.51	
		CHK: \$	
FICA:	7537.59		
A/P:	298,452.87	Reg A/P Cks \$66,252.87	NHRS \$
		Swasey \$232,200.00	CO-OP: \$
Transfer to REC CC Voided Check	100.00		
Account Balance:	6,952,593.53		
Interest Earned YTD:	37,977.69		

Joyce A. Gallant, Treasurer