

Town of Litchfield, New Hampshire

Board of Selectmen

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Meeting Date: 11/23/20

Call to Order: 6:32 pm

Meeting Location: Town Hall

Meeting Called By: Board of Selectmen
Type of Meeting: Selectmen's Meeting
Facilitator: Steven J. Webber

Note Taker: Matthew Sullivan

In Attendance: Troy Brown, Town Administrator
Terri Briand, Town Clerk (virtual)
Ben Sargent, Police Chief (virtual)
Frank Fraitzl, Fire Chief
Doug Nicoll, Deputy Chief

Selectmen in attendance:
1. Steven J. Webber, Chairman
2. F. Robert Leary, Sr., Vice Chairman
3. Richard W. Lascelles
4. Kevin A. Lynch
5. John E. Pinciario

Selectmen absent:
1. None

Memo:

Agenda Topic: Call to Order

Presenter: Chairman Steven J. Webber

1. 5:30 pm – Paperwork Review
2. 6:32 pm – Call to Order, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance
3. 6:34 pm – Chair Steven Webber mentioned that Pat Jewett passed away on Saturday, November 21. Selectman Lascelles spoke about the positive impact that Pat Jewett had on the town of Litchfield. Ms. Jewett's funeral will be at the Community Church, and she will be interred at the Hillcrest Cemetery. Selectman Lascelles would like to see the community's citizens gather along 3A as a final goodbye to Ms. Jewett. He also requested that the town's flags be flown at half-staff. The Board had a moment of silence for Ms. Jewett.

Discussion: None

Motion: (Selectman R. Lascelles / Selectman S. Webber) Motion to have the town's flags flown at half-staff in memory of Pat Jewett.

Vote: (5-0-0) The motion carried

Agenda Topic: Governor Sununu's Executive Order

Presenter: Chairman Steven J. Webber

Chair Steve Webber mentioned that as of Friday, November 20, Governor Sununu placed a mandatory mask mandate. Mr. Webber asked Chief Sargent to speak about the mask mandate.

Chief Sargent acknowledged the mask mandate put in place by Governor Sununu. He noted that all persons over the age of five must wear a mask or cloth face-covering anytime they are in a public situation, whether indoors or outdoors. Chief Sargent commented on a situation that occurred on Saturday, November 21, at the Transfer Station.

Chief Sargent commented on how several of the town employees were being disrespected. Several Litchfield residents were swearing and using profane language directed at the employees of the Transfer Station. Chief Sargent added that David Mellen sits in on the Emergency Management Team meetings, and the common goal of the Emergency Management Team is to create a safe working environment and maintain a secure facility where the residents may safely dispose of their trash. Chief Sargent asked that all residents wear a mask when disposing of their trash and to take the high road if an issue was to occur.

Agenda Topic: Review and Approval of Consent Items | **Presenter:** Chairman Steven J. Webber

1. A/P Manifest: 11/17/2020 - \$21,243.87, and 11/24/20 - \$128,891.81
2. P/R Manifest: 11/19/2020 - \$63,333.31, and 11/25/20 - \$57,508.18
3. Land Use Change Tax Denials - (5)
4. Supplement Tax Warrant - \$808
5. Town Clerk / Tax Collector and Treasurers Reconciliation - October

Town Administrator Troy Brown mentioned that the five Land Use Change Tax Denials were from the disputed assessments and the development down at Weatherstone Road.

Discussion: None

Motion: (Selectman J. Pinciario/ K. Lynch) Motion to accept the Review and Approval of Consent Items.

Vote: (5-0-0) The motion carried

Selectman Lascelles asked if a sign should be placed at the Transfer Station instructing the residents to wear masks per the Governor's mask mandate. The Board members agreed that a sign should be placed at the Transfer Station reminding residents to wear a mask.

Agenda Topic: Items Moved from Consent | **Presenter:** Chairman Steven J. Webber

1. None

Agenda Topic: Items Added to Consent | **Presenter:** Chairman Steven J. Webber

1. None

Agenda Topic: Approval of Meeting Minutes | **Presenter:** Chairman Steven J. Webber

1. November 9, 2020, Meeting Minutes

Motion: (Selectman R. Leary / Selectman R. Lascelles) Motion to approve the Meeting Minutes from November 9, 2020.

Vote: (5-0-0) The motion carried

Election Budget - Delegation of Authority:

Town Administrator Troy Brown commented that a question was brought forward about who has ownership of the Town Meeting Budget. The idea is to make sure that one person is in charge of overseeing the Town Meeting Budget, and the authority would include making the final decisions on purchases. The Town Clerk, Terri Briand, informed Mr. Brown that she has been in charge of the budget for the past ten years. At the same time, Town Moderator Frank Byron believes that everyone should know who is in charge of the budget.

At the last meeting, the Selectmen agreed to table the discussion until further research was done. The Board discussed the issue, and the consensus was to keep the Town Clerk and the Town Moderator working as a team, but Ms. Briand would be responsible for the budget.

Discussion: None

Motion: (K. Lynch / Selectman R. Lascelles) Motion to keep Terri as the handler of the election budget.

Vote: (5-0-0) The motion carried

Election Trailer Purchase:

Town Administrator Troy Brown commented that the town keeps all the election supplies and equipment in an election trailer. Over the last few years, the town has purchased new election equipment, and that equipment requires a larger trailer. Town Clerk Terri Briand has applied for grants and received funding to buy a larger storage trailer. Mr. Brown noted that the larger trailer would need to be around 20 to 24 feet in length. The larger trailer would provide additional storage space and a side access door.

Ms. Briand described the storage situation with the current election trailer. Ms. Briand noted that the town could not fit all the equipment in the trailer, and she has to store some of the equipment in her office. Initially, the town kept the election equipment in the school, but the School District stopped allowing the town to use their building for storage. The town then purchased the current trailer for the election equipment.

The Board discussed the usage of the current trailer and the purchase of a larger trailer. Ms. Briand commented that the town would be better off allowing another town department to use the trailer instead of trading it in.

Discussion: The Board discussed the size of the new trailer and how the trailer would be purchased.

Motion: (Selectman R. Lascelles / Selectman J. Pinciario) So moved.

Vote: (5-0-0) The motion carried

Tanker Truck Purchase:

Town Administrator Troy Brown stated that the Board of Selectmen are finalizing the 2021 Warrant Articles. At the last meeting, the Board agreed to have a serious discussion about the 2021 Warrant Articles. Mr. Brown reminded the Selectmen that at a previous meeting, they had removed the Warrant Article to purchase a tanker truck. He added that the Litchfield Fire Department put together a committee that researched a tanker truck's purchase. The Fire Department recently learned some new information about ordering and financing fire trucks.

Chief Frank Fraitzl mentioned that the Fire Department had been looking into purchasing a new fire truck with multiple vendors. He noted that Deputy Chief Doug Nicoll is heading up the Truck Apparatus Committee, which consists of a representative from each of the four companies and Deputy Chief Nicoll. Chief Fraitzl commented that they made

presentations to the Capital Improvement Planning (CIP) Committee but had not had a chance to present to the Board of Selectmen.

Chief Fraitzl stated that they propose to replace the current tanker truck with a fire engine that can hold more water than a typical fire engine. He added that a standard fire engine could hold about 1,000 to 1,250 gallons of water. He is looking to purchase a fire engine that can hold more water because there are still areas in town that do not have fire hydrants. The fire department is always looking to see if the purchase of one fire engine might replace two fire trucks.

Deputy Chief Nicoll mentioned that the Truck Apparatus Committee has looked at different chassis styles and warranties. He noted that most fire trucks come with a ten-year warranty, at a minimum. The initial cost to purchase a fire truck was \$682,000, and Deputy Chief Nicoll does not see anything more expensive. He stated that the committee has spoken with seven national manufacturers. The seven manufacturers all offer similar options.

Deputy Chief Nicoll commented that the days of purchasing a fire truck through an RFP are over. The new way to buy fire trucks is through cooperative bidding. The process is similar to how the Highway Department and the Police Department purchase their vehicles. Three large companies represent the manufacturers, and they offer competitive bidding prices for the municipalities. Deputy Chief Nicoll stated that the manufacturers are offering good deals to municipalities because of Covid. He pointed out that it would take 12 to 15 months from the date of purchase to receive the fire truck, but the first payment would not be due until a year after receiving the fire truck. Chair Steven Webber commented that if the town approved a fire truck's purchase in 2021, the fire truck would be received in 2022. Because the fire truck would be received in 2022, there would be no tax impact in 2021.

The Board discussed creating a Warrant Article to propose the purchase of a new fire truck. The Selectmen deliberated the pros and cons of purchasing a new fire truck. The Board acknowledged that they would like to buy a new fire truck, but the town has other needs. In the next couple of years, the town will be looking to build either a new school or a new Police Station. Simultaneously, the Board agreed that the fire engines are getting old, and the town will be forced into purchasing new fire engines. Chair Steven Webber referred back to the CIP document and mentioned that the town residents believed a new fire truck was a priority.

Chief Fraitzl mentioned that the Fire Department was not requesting to buy a tanker truck to replace the current tanker truck. The proposal is to purchase a fire engine to replace the tanker truck. The new fire engine would be the first fire engine to leave the Fire Station on almost every call. The current tanker truck would become a backup to the new engine. Chief Fraitzl added that if the town approved a fire truck's purchase in 2021, the Fire Department would not come back in 2022 requesting another fire truck.

Chair Steven Webber stated that the Board needed to make a decision soon. At the first meeting in December, the Board will vote to approve the Warrant Articles. The Board's consensus was to wait for two weeks before deciding on a Warrant Article for a new fire engine.

Recreation Impact Fees:

Town Administrator Troy Brown said the Recreation Commission had discussed the Jeff Lane Project or Justin Bissett Field. The Rec Commission is working with the Air National Guard to do some improvements at Talent Hall and at the same time constructing a parking lot, drainage, and batting cages at Justin Bissett Field. Mr. Brown mentioned that the Air National Guard requires that the town show that they have the funds to proceed with the work. The town has about \$95,279.69 in Recreation Impact Fees.

The Recreation Commission has requested that the Board vote to approve the use of up to \$28,000. The funds would build a road access, a parking lot, and foundation/base poles for baseball cages. The Justin Bissett Field parking lot will be similar to Sawmill Park's parking lot. Chair Steven Webber presented the work that has been done at and around Justin Bissett Field.

Discussion: Town Administrator Troy Brown mentioned that the Recreation Commission might request more funds if needed.

Motion: (Selectman R. Lascelles / Selectman K. Lynch) I move we release the recreation Impact Fees to invest in the fields as proposed.

Vote: (4-0-1) The motion passed. (Chair Steven Webber abstained)

Health Agencies:

Town Administrator Troy Brown presented a list of health agencies who have requested funds from Litchfield. Last year, the Board of Selectmen established a committee that would review the agencies' amounts requested. The committee made a presentation to the Board, and the Board approved the requests. The total amount requested was placed on a Warrant Article and voted on by the residents.

The agencies have sent in letters this year requesting funds from the town. Below is a list of the agencies and the recommended amounts for 2021. Mr. Brown mentioned that he believes there is enough money in this year's Operating Budget to advance funds to the Litchfield's Women's Club. Mr. Brown said that he would reach out to the Litchfield Food Pantry and see if they need assistance. If they need funds, then the Board will advance funds to the Litchfield Food Pantry.

Human Services / Health Agencies	2020 Approved	2021 Requested	2021 Recommended	\$ Increase
Big Brother Big Sister	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$0
Home Health & Hospice Care	\$6,500	\$6,500	\$6,500	\$0
Meals on Wheels	\$2,040	\$1,955	\$1,955	-\$85
Bridges	\$300	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$700
Greater Nashua Mental Health	\$2,000	\$4,878	\$2,000	\$0
Lamprey Health Care	\$800	\$800	\$800	\$0
Court Appointed Special Advocates	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$0
American Red Cross	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$0
United Way 211	\$500	\$200	\$500	\$0
Harbor Care	\$0	\$5,000	\$0	\$0
Family Promise	\$0	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Litchfield's Women's Club	\$2,500	\$0	\$0	-\$2,500
Total =	\$18,140	\$28,833	\$21,255	\$3,115

Chief Sargent mentioned that for five years, the Litchfield Police Association had provided the School District with thousands of dollars worth of gift cards. At the end of every year, the Association makes another gift card donation to the School District.

Discussion: Chair Steven Webber asked for a motion to approve this year's allocation and a recommendation for next year. Town Administrator Troy Brown mentioned that this would not cause the budget to go over the tax cap.

Motion: (Selectman K. Lynch / Selectman R. Leary) Motion to approve this year's allocation.

Vote: (5-0-0) The motion carried

Union Contract:

Town Administrator Troy Brown informed the Board of the tentative contract agreement with the Litchfield Police Department. The union met last week and notified the town that they have agreed to the terms and conditions of the contract proposal. Mr. Brown commented that both parties acknowledged the uncertainty of the economy, and agreed to limit the scope of the contract to just wages and duration.

The union understood the tax cap of the town and the uncertainty of the economy. The union agreed to a wage increase on October 1, 2021. The wage adjustment would be an increase of three percent. The next year, the increase would occur on July 1, 2022. In the final year of the contract, the union agreed to a two-and-a-half percent increase.

Because the union agreed to wait until October 1, 2021, for the first wage increase, the impact on the tax cap will only be \$11,803.

Discussion: Chair Steven Webber asked for a motion to approve the Litchfield Police Department contract. Mr. Brown asked the Selectmen to sign the contract, and he would have the union membership sign the contract. The Selectmen thanked the union and Mr. Brown for their work negotiating a new contract.

Motion: (Selectman R. Leary / Selectman J. Pinciario) So moved.

Vote: (5-0-0) The motion carried

2021 Warrant Articles:

Town Administrator Troy Brown stated that he did not see any reason to review each of the 2021 Warrant Articles. He believed that the only Warrant Article that needed to be reviewed was Article Twelve – Solar Exemption. Mr. Brown mentioned that Avitar provided him with documentation that shows what all the state communities are doing with regards to solar exemptions. He noted that 62 communities have solar exemptions already in place.

Most of the towns exempt 100 percent of the solar equipment assessed value. Litchfield’s data was that the town has 61 properties that have the equipment on the buildings. The town has a total assessed value of \$1,200,000 in solar equipment and the tax rate for 2020 of \$18.58 per thousand. With this exemption in place, Mr. Brown stated that the town would lose \$23,018.58 of tax revenue.

Mr. Brown noted that most communities exempt a flat percentage. The reason provided was that the calculations are easier for the town administration. The Board members discussed the different options for providing tax exemptions. An option discussed was that the owner who had the solar panels installed would receive the exemption. If the owner sells the home, then the new owner would not receive the exemption. Mr. Brown said he would check with legal counsel.

Snowdrop Lane and Lilac Court – Dangerous Trees:

Town Administrator Troy Brown commented that a United States Postal Service driver contacted Selectman Jack Pinciario. The driver was concerned that it is tough to deliver the mail on Lilac Court and Snowdrop Lane. Mr. Brown mentioned that reports had been made that tree limbs are hitting vehicles, and residents walking down the road have to walk into the street. The two streets are becoming a safety hazard to vehicles and residents.

A letter was sent to the residents of Lilac Court and Snowdrop Lane. The letter read that the residents were being asked to trim their trees back. If the residents trim their trees and leave the brush on the road’s side, the Highway Department would pick up the brush. The Road Agent went down into the neighborhood, and the neighbors agreed to trim their trees. Mr. Brown asked the Board to declare the trees dangerous and allow him time to work with the neighbors, and if nothing is done, the town would be legally allowed to trim the trees.

Selectman John Pinciario pointed out that the builder had an agreement with the residents that if the branches became a problem, he would come back and remove the branches. Selectman Kevin Lynch commented that he remembered the builder's agreement. The Board was concerned that if the trimming of the trees is left to the residents, then the trimming will be inconsistent.

Discussion: Selectman John Pinciario questioned if the town would become liable by approving the motion. The Board agreed that the town is already responsible.

Motion: (Selectman K. Lynch / Selectman R. Leary) Motion that we have proved that the trees are becoming a hazard and that the town knowing this and the homeowners knowing that they need to work with it are understanding that it will be taken care of some way.

Vote: (5-0-0) The motion carried

Agenda Topic: Public Input @ 8:33 pm

Presenter: Chairman Steven J. Webber

1. None

Public Input closed at 8:34 pm.

Agenda Topic: Business (Cont.)

Presenter: Chairman Steven J. Webber

Pennichuck Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):

Town Administrator Troy Brown mentioned that he provided the Board with a Memorandum of Understanding. The MOU is between the town of Litchfield and Pennichuck Water. The town is building one of the communication towers up by the Pennichuck Water structure, and Pennichuck wanted something in writing that includes the responsibilities of all the parties involved.

Legal counsel has reviewed the MOU, and except for some grammatical errors, they had no problem with it. Mr. Brown will send the insurance company a copy of the MOU for them to review. Once the MOU is finalized, he will present the document to the Board.

Agenda Topic: Other Business

Presenter: Chairman Steven J. Webber

1. None

Agenda topic: Administrator's Report

Presenter: Town Admin. Troy Brown

Colby Smith:

Colby Smith sent an email to Town Administrator Troy Brown. Mr. Smith requested that Mr. Brown inform the Board that there will be a plaque displayed. The plaque will read 'Dedicated to all the Litchfield volunteers who have given of themselves to enhance the lives of others. Flag adopted April 22, 2019. Eagle Scout Project Colby Smith, Troop 11, 2020,'

Mr. Smith is trying to put together a dedication for this weekend. Covid-19 has impacted his ability to have a dedication sooner. Mr. Smith has also requested that the town hang a POW flag below the United States flag. The Board agreed with Mr. Smith's request.

The Board discussed what to do with the picture of Pat Jewett. The Board recommended purchasing a new frame for the picture and placing the picture in the Town Hall lobby.

Agenda topic: Selectmen Reports

Presenter: Chairman Steven J. Webber

Selectman Richard W. Lascelles - Heritage Commission:

1. Selectman Lascelles discussed Mel's Funway with the Board of Selectmen. He mentioned that his understanding was that Mel's last day would be November 3, and they remained until November 13. Chair Steven Webber commented that the motion to extend Mel's season was until the closing of Spooky World's season.

Selectman Robert Leary Jr. - Budget Committee:

1. The Budget Committee is off this week and will start voting on the School District budget next week.

Selectman Kevin A. Lynch - Planning Board:

1. The Planning Board met last week, and they approved the sign. The sign cannot be a Christmas color, and may only be black and white. The Planning Board approved a one lot subdivision on Pheasant Lane.

Selectman John E. Pinciario - Conservation Commission:

1. The Conservation Commission meets on the first Thursday of every month.

Selectman Steve J. Webber - Rec Commission & CIP Committee:

1. The Rec Commission met on November 10 and discussed the Impact Fees for Jeff Lane. The next meeting is on November 24.

Agenda Topic: Adjournment

Presenter: Chairman Steven J. Webber

Discussion: None

Motion: (Selectman R. Leary / Selectman J. Pinciario) Motion to adjourn the public meeting at 8:49 pm.

Vote: (5-0-0) The motion carried

Approved by the Board of Selectmen:

Steven J. Webber, Chairman

F. Robert Leary, Sr., Vice Chairman

Richard W. Lascelles

Kevin A. Lynch

John E. Pinciario