

Town of Litchfield, NH
Board of Selectmen Meeting
December 28, 2020
Litchfield Town Hall
6:30 pm

In Attendance:

Selectmen: Steven J. Webber, Chairman, F. Robert Leary, Sr., Vice Chairman, Richard W. Lascelles, and John E. Pinciario
Town Administrator: Troy Brown
Also in Attendance: Ben Sargent, Police Chief
Absent: Kevin A. Lynch

Memo: None

1. Call to Order:

- a. 5:30 pm - Paperwork Review
- b. 6:30 pm - Chairman Steven Webber called the meeting to order, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Review and Approval of Consent Items:

- a. A/P Manifest: 12/22/2020 - \$160,357.65, and 12/29/20 - \$75,536.92
- b. P/R Manifest: 12/24/2020 - \$63,555.06, and 12/31/20 - \$57,358.67

Discussion: None

Motion: (Selectman R. Lascelles / Selectman R. Leary) Motion to accept the Review and Approval of Consent Items.

Vote: (4-0-0) The motion carried

3. Items Moved from Consent:

- a. None

4. Items Added to Consent:

- a. None

5. Approval of Meeting Minutes:

- a. December 14, 2020, Meeting Minutes

Discussion: None

Motion: (Selectman R. Leary / Selectman R. Lascelles) Motion to approve the Meeting Minutes from December 14, 2020.

Vote: (3-0-1) The motion carried (Selectman J. Pinciario abstained)

6. Business:

a. Pennichuck East Utility Rate Increase:

Town Administrator Troy Brown mentioned that Selectman Richard Lascelles had a virtual meeting, reaching out to the community members and residents. The meeting was about the proposed rate increase that Pennichuck East has submitted to the Public Utilities Commission (PUC). Mr. Brown noted that Mr. Lascelles wanted to provide the Board with an update and see if the Board wanted to proceed with some official action. Mr. Brown deferred to Mr. Lascelles.

Mr. Lascelles commented that he has heard that some residents believe that the Board should file for an intervener. He noted that as an intervener, the Board would be privy to all the communications between the PUC and Pennichuck. Mr. Lascelles mentioned that the town currently has three interveners including himself. Mr. Lascelles stated that Litchfield has three issues with the request to increase the rates. The issues are:

1. The PFOA issue
2. Water quality issue
3. Cost issue

Mr. Lascelles stated that Pennichuck had requested a 21% increase, and Litchfield is already paying an extreme amount of money for water. He noted that the increase would be retroactive to the date that Pennichuck initially filed for the increase. Mr. Lascelles commented that he believes that the request to increase the water cost is to help pay for the St. Gobain issue. He said that the town should hire a utilities lawyer who can advise the town on how to proceed.

Mr. Lascelles mentioned that in most cases the PUC just approves the rate increase. He is hoping that the town residents will make enough noise that the rate increase will not be as large. He commented that in the long-term the town of Litchfield needs to consider buying the water system. He

provided Hudson as an example. He pointed out that Hudson pays 1/3 of the cost that Litchfield pays for water, and Hudson's water comes from Litchfield.

Mr. Lascelles asked Mr. Brown if he had spoken with Kevin Smith, Londonderry's Town Manager. Mr. Lascelles pointed out that Londonderry is going to fight the request to increase rates. He suggested that Litchfield could piggyback with Londonderry in their fight to stop the increase. Mr. Brown stated that he would have some names of firms that have utility attorneys at the next meeting.

Discussion: None

Motion: (Selectman S. Webber / Selectman R. Leary) Motion to register the Board of Selectmen as interveners.

Vote: (4-0-0) The motion carried.

b. **Recreation Field Maintenance Contract:**

Town Administrator Troy Brown mentioned that the Rec Commission had put out an RFP for the 2021 field maintenance contract. The first round did not yield the interest that the Selectmen were looking for, and the Selectmen asked the Rec Commission to put out a second RFP for the field maintenance contract. The second RFP came back with two proposals. The Rec Commission chose to award the contract to Naticook Lawn and Landscape.

The Selectmen budgeted \$51,000 for the mowing and maintenance of the Rec Commission fields. The amount of the contract proposed by Naticook Lawn and Landscape was \$53,000. Mr. Brown mentioned that he was looking forward to Ryan Lane being able to work on the fields for a second year and show the work that he can accomplish.

Selectman Robert Leary asked if the proposal by Naticook Lawn and Landscape included the work that was left off by TLC. Mr. Brown stated that the proposal had everything. The Board agreed that they know Mr. Lane and the type of work that he does. Mr. Webber mentioned that Mr. Lane's proposal was \$10,000 less than the other proposals but acknowledged that the bid was \$4,000 more than last year's bid. Mr. Webber was very happy that Mr. Lane came back and added that he did a great job last year. Mr. Brown pointed out that going from one contractor to another every year is not good business, and stated the field maintenance contracts should be for three years.

Discussion: None

Motion: (Selectman R. Leary / Selectman R. Lascelles) Motion to accept the Naticook Lawn and Landscape, LLC bid of \$53,000 for field maintenance for the town of Litchfield.

Vote: (4-0-0) The motion carried.

c. **Public Input: (Opened at 6:47 pm)**

1. **Jeremy Bergh - 41 Tanager Way** - Mr. Bergh has been a resident of Litchfield for ten years and has been active in coaching sports. Mr. Bergh mentioned that he agrees with the Board intervening in regards to the Pennichuck rate increase. He stated that he intended to provide the Board with his and other parents' opinion of the use for Talent Hall. He noted that the parents believe that Talent Hall should be open under certain circumstances.

Mr. Bergh commented that he believes that he has a plan to allow youth sports teams back into Talent Hall. The plan would include cleaning before and after practice, taking temperatures, contact tracing, and a deep clean once a week. He noted that getting the children off the couch and practicing would be beneficial to the children. The benefits include getting exercise, socializing, stopping the losing at sporting events, and decreasing anxiety.

The Board discussed why the Rec Commission had closed Talent Hall and how the Rec Commission does not have the money in its budget to clean the building consistently. Mr. Webber mentioned that he was concerned with the increasing number of positive cases of Covid-19. Mr. Lascelles commented that as long as the children follow the guidelines while playing or practicing, he is not concerned with them using Talent Hall. Mr. Bergh described his plan for cleaning, requiring children and coaches to wear masks, and the parents would not be allowed to sit on the stage.

Mr. Webber suggested that Mr. Bergh contact the Rec Commission and sit down to talk to them about his plan. After the Rec Commission provides a recommendation, Mr. Webber will meet with the Emergency Management Team and receive their guidance. Mr. Leary added that if the Rec Commission gives Mr. Bergh their blessing the Board should give their blessing as well.

Mr. Brown suggested that if Mr. Bergh is available on Wednesday at 2 pm, he should present his plan to the Emergency Management Team. Mr. Webber requested that Mr. Brunelle add Mr. Bergh to the Webex meeting with the Emergency Management Team.

Public Input Closed at 7:02 pm.

d. **2020 Financial Report:**

Town Administrator Troy Brown stated that this was the third time the Board discussed the 2020 financial report. He mentioned that the town is coming to the end of the fiscal year. The town has two more payrolls that will be issued for the year. Mr. Brown commented that he is keeping an eye on all the departments, especially the Highway Department. He said that he was expecting to receive the ambulance and fire hydrant bill soon.

Mr. Brown mentioned that he spoke with the Department Heads for the Highway, Police, Fire, and IT Departments. The town is still seeing the same financial figures that the Board projected a month ago. Mr. Brown estimated that the town would have about \$325,000 of returned funds for the year 2021. He pointed out that the figure is significant, but the town received about \$200,000 from COVID-19 relief funds, and the Board had implemented a spending freeze.

Mr. Lascelles asked if the Board needed to decide during the meeting to encumber funds. Mr. Brown noted that the Board does not meet again until after the books are closed, so encumbering the funds needed to be made during the meeting.

The Board discussed the benefits and the drawbacks of returning the unused funds to the town residents.

e. **2020 Encumbrances:**

Town Administrator Troy Brown reviewed the encumbrances for 2020. Police Chief Ben Sargent called in and spoke about the need for a Detective Car. He mentioned that the current vehicle is no longer safe and would not pass inspection in 2021. He added that the cost to repair the current vehicle would be more than the vehicle's value. Mr. Pinciario mentioned that the Block Grant for 2021 would be less than what the town received in 2020. The Board voted to decrease the \$100,000 encumbrance for paving down to \$50,000.

2020 New Encumbrances: (as of right now)

Department	Purpose	Amount
Police Department	Detective Car	\$35,000
Police Department	(1) Mobile & (7) Portable Radios	\$25,000
Fire Department	(1) Mobile & (12) Portable Radios	\$50,000
Recreation Department	Backstairs at Talent Hall	\$8,000
Recreation Department	Darrah Pond Gate	\$5,000
Recreation Department	Mulch	\$2,500
IT Department	5 Computer Upgrades	\$6,620
IT Department	(2) LPD MDT Replacement (1)	\$8,700
IT Department	(4) Chromebooks	\$1,800
IT Department	Communication Project	\$35,000
IT Department	Building Security (Town Hall & Police Dept.)	\$12,000
Highway Department	Paving	\$50,000
Building Department	Printer	\$8,000
Gen. Gov't Department	Town Hall Beautification	\$8,000
	Total Encumbrances:	\$255,620

2020 Re-Encumbrances:

Department	Purpose	Amount
General Government Building	Office Furniture	\$5,000
Fire Department	Software Contract to Bridge Hudson and Litchfield	\$3,500
IT Department	IT Equipment	\$5,621.48
Total Re-Encumbrances:		\$14,121.48

Discussion:

None.

Motion:

(Selectman J. Pinciario / Selectman R. Leary) Motion to change 01-4312.10-573 \$100,000 in paving to \$50,000.

Vote:

(4-0-0) The motion carried

Discussion:

Mr. Webber requested a motion to approve the encumbrances as now noted.

Motion:

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

Vote:

(4-0-0) The motion carried

Discussion:

Mr. Webber requested a motion to approve the 2020 Re-Encumbrances as now noted.

Motion:

(Selectman J. Pinciario / Selectman R. Leary) \$14,121.48 for re-encumbering.

Vote:

(4-0-0) The motion carried

f. **2021 Warrant Legal Review:**

Town Administrator Troy Brown reviewed the Warrant Articles with the Selectmen. He mentioned to the Selectmen that Legal Counsel pointed out that Article 9 needed to be reworded. Legal Counsel reworded Article 9, so the voters understood that the town was not responsible for 100 percent of the town and library employees' unanticipated health and dental care costs.

The second change was to Article 12. Legal Counsel mentioned that the way the Article was written, she could not guarantee that the town would win in a dispute over the exemption rights transfer. The updated Article reads that the new owner must reapply for the exemption if the property is sold. The Board requested that Mr. Brown go back to Legal Counsel and requests that she rewrite the Article to read that a new owner would not receive the tax exemption for the solar system.

Last year, the Board put forth an Article requesting the approval of funds to paint the Old Town Hall. Because of several reasons, mainly Covid-19, the painting was never done. Mr. Brown has asked Selectman Robert Leary to paint the old Town Hall and Mr. Leary agreed to fit it into his schedule. Because Mr. Leary is an elected official, he is concerned that there might be an appearance of a conflict of interest. Mr. Brown stated that the Board could either authorize him to enter into a contract with Mr. Leary or the Selectmen will need to create a new Warrant Article requesting funds to paint the Old Town Hall.

Discussion:

The Board discussed their options and agreed there would not be a conflict of interest in having an elected official paint the Old Town Hall, under the current circumstances.

Motion:

(Selectman J. Pinciario / Selectman R. Lascelles) I make a motion.

Vote:

(3-0-1) The motion carried (Selectman R. Leary abstained)

g. **2021 Holiday Schedule:**

New Year's Day	Friday	January 1, 2021	Closed
Civil Rights Day	Monday	January 1, 2021	Open
		Town Clerk/Tax Collector	Closed
President's Day	Monday	February 15, 2021	Closed
Memorial Day	Monday	May 31, 2021	Closed
Independence Day	Monday	July 5, 2021	Closed
Labor Day	Monday	September 6, 2021	Closed

Columbus Day	Monday	October 11, 2021	Closed
Veteran's Day	Thursday	November 11, 2021	Closed
Thanksgiving Day	Thursday	November 25, 2021	Closed
Day after Thanksgiving	Friday	November 26, 2021	Closed
		Solid Waste	Open
Christmas Day (Observed)	Friday	December 25, 2021	Closed
New Year's Day (Observed)	Friday	January 1, 2022	Closed

- Town Clerk/Tax Collector will be Closed because the State of New Hampshire Motor Vehicle Division is closed. The employees will use their Earned Time for the day.
- Solid Waste Only - The Solid Waste Facility will remain open. Eligible employees will receive holiday pay for this day.

Discussion: None.

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

Vote: (4-0-0) The motion carried

f. **2021 Mileage Rate:**

Town Administrator Troy Brown informed the Board that the IRS set the 2021 standard mileage reimbursement rate at 56 cents per mile. He added that last year the standard mileage reimbursement rate was 57.5 cents per mile.

Discussion: None.

Motion: (Selectman J. Pinciario / Selectman R. Leary) I move to approve the 2021 IRS standard mileage reimbursement rate at 56 cents per mile.

Vote: (4-0-0) The motion carried

g. **2021 Pat Jewett Volunteer Appreciation Award:**

Town Administrator Troy Brown commented that Laura Gandia contacted him about the Pat Jewett Volunteer Appreciation Award. Ms. Gandia has updated the application and is getting ready to make the application available to the residents. The deadline for the application submission is January 29, 2021. Ms. Gandia noted that she would like to have the ceremony on Monday, March 1, 2021. She informed Mr. Brown that this would be her last year running the event.

h. **Recreation Commission Resignation - Colleen Gamache:**

Town Administrator Troy Brown said that he received a resignation letter from Colleen Gamache. He mentioned that Ms. Gamache served as the Vice-Chair for the Rec Commission. Mr. Brown commented that Ms. Gamache informed him that she was no longer able to work, volunteer to Co-Chair the Booster Club, along with other activities that she is actively involved in, and still be able to provide the time needed to serve as a full-time member of the Rec Commission

Mr. Brown stated that Ms. Gamache had submitted her resignation to the Rec Commission, and the Commission had accepted the resignation. Mr. Webber added that Ms. Gamache has done a great job with the Rec Commission. She has been part of the Rec Commission for 12 years. He said that she was a vital part of the Commission. Mr. Leary thanked Ms. Gamache for her years of volunteering.

Mr. Pinciario requested that Mr. Brown send a notice of appreciation to Ms. Gamache for her twelve years of time and effort. Mr. Webber supported the request made by Mr. Pinciario.

Discussion: None.

Motion: (Selectman R. Leary / Selectman R. Lascelles) I move to accept the resignation of Colleen Gamache as a full-time member of the Litchfield Recreation Commission.

Vote: (4-0-0) The motion carried

7. **Administrator's Report:**

Town Administrator Troy Brown apologized for needing to take a medical leave. He mentioned that he appreciated the support provided to him and recognized how fantastic technology has become. He was able to perform his job and still be at home. Today was his first day back in the office.

8. Selectmen's Report:

a. **Selectman Richard W. Lascelles - Heritage Commission:**

Selectman Lascelles commented that the NH House of Representatives, over the last couple of months, have met in the UNH hockey rink, assembled on the UNH field hockey pitch, and in January, they will have a drive-in meeting.

b. **Selectman Robert Leary Jr. - Budget Committee:**

The Budget Committee has a meeting next week.

c. **Selectman Kevin A. Lynch - Planning Board:**

Absent

d. **Selectman John E. Pinciario - Conservation Commission:**

Selectman Pinciario mentioned that the next Conservation Commission meeting would be at the gas station on 3A.

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

Selectman Webber reviewed the topics of the Talent Hall usage and the resignation of Colleen Gamache.

9. Non-Public Meeting:

Discussion: Mr. Webber mentioned that the Board would enter a Non-Public Session under RSA 91-A:3 II(a) - Employee Compensation. He requested a motion to enter a Non-Public Session.

Motion: (Selectman R. Leary / Selectman R. Lascelles) So moved.

Vote: (4-0-0) The motion carried

Entered Non-Public

8:21 pm

Reconvened Public Session

9:01pm

10. Adjournment:

Discussion: None

Motion: (Selectman R. Leary / Selectman R. Lascelles) moved to adjourn the public meeting at 9:01pm.

Vote: (4-0-0) The motion carried

Respectfully submitted,
Matthew Sullivan
BOS Recording Secretary

Approved by the Board of Selectmen:

Steven J. Webber, Chairman

F. Robert Leary, Sr., Vice Chairman

Richard W. Lascelles

Kevin A. Lynch

John E. Pinciaro