

PARTICIPATING FINCOM MEMBERS: Lois Stearns, Dan Campbell, Sue Kaczinski, Tony Matteo, Jack Spanbauer and Bernhard Porada

ALSO PARTICIPATING IN VIDEO CONFERENCE: Andrea Llamas, Town Administrator; Tom Walker, Highway Superintendent; Mark Fortier, EMS Chief; Cameron Kennedy, EMS Deputy Chief; Jon Hall, Police Chief; Isaac Golding, Chief Operator for Sewer; Bee Jacques, Selectboard member; Karen Boudreau, Sewer Commission; Tyler Bourbeau BNCTV

Live via BNCTV & Recorded via Zoom
Stearns called the meeting to order at 6:00pm

Stearns read the following statement as per the agenda:

"Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, MGL, C30A. s20, 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 Town of Northfield Finance Committee will be conducted via remote participation. These minutes will be posted on the Town of Northfield Website as soon as possible after the meeting"

• **HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT BUDGET DISCUSSION**

- Llamas started out advising that she is working with highway (and other large departments like EMS and Police) to break down wages to get more accurate figures. For highway, she is separating wages and winter road wages. Wages cannot be over-expended, whereas winter road wages can be. This will allow for Walker to use his Chapter 90 money to the fullest extent and not have to use it towards wages. Llamas discussed her method of the breakdown for wages, overtime wages, winter road wages and winter road overtime wages.
 - Llamas needs to make a few modifications to Walkers wages to get current amount as well as modify the secretary hours; these changes will not affect the budget significantly.
 - Maintenance position person's wages will need to be a part of this budget; he is tracked as a separate person behind the scenes per Llamas. Llamas has to be able to track his portion of winter road wages.
- Walker reviewed budget line items. Increase on facility maintenance (mostly due to heating and building material cost increases) and cemeteries increased (for improvements). Level fund on all other line items.
- Highway department is making their own sand, so the cost of that line item has decreased significantly
- Porada inquired about final costs for road repairs from all the storm damage, Llamas will look at latest expenditure report. Town still waiting for final numbers and how the state is determining distributing funds to towns.
- (1) Capital Item requested \$200,000 for a used truck to haul dirt- strictly dirt-not to plow. Walker would have the same number of trucks in the fleet but would include swapping some of the dump bodies and/or adding a sander attachment. Walker noted that the \$200,000 would be more than enough to buy a used truck and that is his preference, however, if he needs to buy a new truck, the \$200,000 would cover the cost for new.
- Stearns asked about the Tighe and Bond letter of proposal for Old Wendell Rd. Walker and Llamas explained that money was already appropriated last year (\$100,000). This includes a study to see if the two portions of Old Wendell Road can actually be connected. There are house lots that have sold on the lower portion section with minimal access that will be constructing homes in the next 1-2 years. There is also a potential sale for building lots on the upper portion. This is a county road which is connected to chapter 90 funds.

• **EMS BUDGET DISCUSSION**

- Fortier and Kennedy discuss the EMS Enterprise Fund.
- Llamas has included COLA in this budget
- Fortier explained that his budget revolves around anticipated revenue. Anticipated Revenue projection is about \$439,710. The 6% COLA did decrease the excess review originally anticipated

- Budget discussion on wages. There are 3 different wage categories (dependent on qualifications). The increase in budget to wages is basically due to the 6% COLA increase. Discussion on positions and number of employees.
- Utilities increase, building maintenance and supplies increase, vehicle maintenance, building lease (entering into a new lease agreement for 2 years, with a 3rd year option- in hopes that the new facility would be in the near future), diesel fuels, medical supplies, EMS other charges (capital plan money set aside for pagers, allocated new money as old pagers die, new pagers can be purchased to go with new radio system). Fortier explained the current state of the radios; 450 vs 800 systems.
- No principal or debt interest line item in the budget as the 2007 ambulance is paid off
- Capital Item (1) ambulance. Requesting to replace A1 2007 van ambulance with a box truck. Factory lead time 16-18 months. Looking to get approval now so it can be in-que to receive. Asking to take excess revenue and ambulance donation – nothing from taxation. Van ambulance might not necessarily be disposed of once the new one arrives. Explanation of generation of income. Mostly due to call volume within Northfield and Bernardston and now Erving. Certified by DOR amount \$336,010, contributions from Bernardston total \$20,000.
- Llamas has applied for a Regionalization and Efficiency grant to study ambulance service. Fortier has been approached for by another community as there is a significant need.

7:10pm Fortier and Kennedy leave FINCOM zoom meeting

• **POLICE DEPARTMENT BUDGET DISCUSSION**

- Hall presented the Police budget
- Capital request for a cruiser, based on capital schedule. Instead of trading in the vehicle right away, this vehicle would be used by the SRO until a new “administration vehicle” could be purchased. Then possibly ARPA funds could be used to purchase the “administration vehicle”, an unmarked type vehicle. This administration vehicle does not need to be a SUV police vehicle. Parked Labeled cruisers can be frowned upon at a school location. This vehicle would have a longer life span as opposed to a regular patrol police cruiser.
- Capital request for IMC police data base, run plates, write reports, etc.... additional license for more people to be able to be on the system at the same time.
 - Brief touch upon staffing: Chief wants to have at least an overlap in officers on duty or specific days/times should have two officers on duty.
- \$14,264 training budget; it does include special training (bridge academy)
- Salary and wages do include the COLA (and the difference between salary in old chief/new chief)
- SRO budgeted 100% by Northfield then school reimburses 50%. SRO position had been advertised, applications were received and the first and second round of interviews were done; officer was approved. A few more details before its finalized; the superintendent and school committee need to meet to determine what hours and what specifics they want for the SRO, then the applicant can decide if they want the job.
- Constables are in Police budget; Town Clerk Campbell also uses the constables for issues related to elections and town meeting. Campbell will make certain that Chief Hall gets copies of pay when Town Clerk uses Constable services so he can calculate usage.

7:35pm Police Chief Hall leaves FINCOM Zoom meeting

• **SEWER BUDGET DISCUSSION**

- Golding presents sewer commission budget. Change to budget items include:
 - Overtime Wages increase. Currently only 1 full time employee (Golding). No applications were received for the part time position. There is a lack of license operators out there, especially with an offering of only part time.
 - Other increases include Professional Services (hiring engineers due to being under noncompliance/consent order by state), collection system increase, sludge increase (due to transportation/trucking costs), other expenses increase and reserve fund increase.

- State and Federal money will be available that the engineer should be able to guide them for some of the large projects. USDA also has grant funding potentially available, Boudreau stated they are working on this route.
- Stearns asked about the college and if they are able to help; Llamas stated they are only a customer at this point, nothing more.
- Porada asked about retained earnings amount to date; Llamas stated the certified amount is \$377,251
- Land survey amount of \$2,000 seemed to be low per Spanbauer; Walker stated this is only to have a survey to locate pins of property.
- Capital request \$20,000 repaving the access road. From the railroad tracks to plant basically the "driveway" is falling apart. Porada asked if waiting till after repairs of building or doing the real bad portions only would be best. Boudreau stated that based on the condition the road is in, the need is now. There are very large trucks going in and out and need to have a decent road for them to transport sludge etc....There is a discrepancy as to where exactly the town road lays vs the "driveway"

8:032pm Golding, Walker and Boudreau leave FINCOM zoom meeting

• **OTHER CAPITAL PLANS**

- Llamas has a request for \$750 from the CONSCOM to purchase hardware (chrome book or laptop)- Llamas is trying to get ahold of CONSCOM to discuss the need and the best route to go to purchase a laptop/Chromebook. Llamas believes there are available funds to cover costs to purchase thru our IT. Not good practice to purchase for boards/committees to buy elsewhere.
- NES refurbishment of bathrooms (\$240,000). Llamas would like the superintendent to attend a FINCOM meeting to discuss this article.
- Campbell brought up that there has been a lot of discussion with the Council on Aging as well as from townspeople (most of which have limited or no internet access) who would benefit with having an electronic sign out front of town hall to communicate special information such as meetings or postings or events. Quotes that have come back to Campbell are in the range of \$20,000-\$30,000. This would replace the current "sandwich boards". Campbell noted this would be made aesthetically pleasing as possible. Town Clerk and Town Secretary would be the responsible parties to keep this board updated. State has notified Llamas that sign would be acceptable so long as it is not in front of sidewalk (closest to Main St). Campbell stated the location would be right up close to building.
 - Jacque said that the sign is a concern with the Historic Commission as this area of town is in the Historic District and the Town Hall is a historic structure. Jacques stated that MASSDOT will need to come before the Historic Commission

• **ANY OTHER SPECIAL ARTICLE REQUESTS FOR ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**

- No further word from the Recreation commission for special requests regarding mosquito control

• **PVRS BUDGET**

- Budget subcommittee meeting weekly. Stearns has been watching

• **REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES OF 2/14/22**

- Minutes from the 2/14/22 meeting were reviewed.
 - *A motion was made by Spanbauer, seconded by Campbell, and VOTED unanimously to accept the February 14TH, 2022 meeting minutes as written.*

• **TOWN ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE**

- Update on Town Clock; progress has been made. Estimate was provided the motor repair; \$350. Electrical updates and bringing it up to code. Matteo asked about a discussion from last year about the town putting money aside each year for maintenance going forward. Llamas stated that perhaps a maintenance agreement should be made with either the electrician or the repair/motor person; Llamas to reach out to find out what a yearly agreement may consist of

NORTHFIELD FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 28, 2022 6:00 PM
VIDEO CONFERENCE VIA ZOOM

- Schell Bridge is in a review process by Mass DOT because bids all came in too high. Issue being the steel, as it needs to be a special kind of steel. April and June will be the time frame for review. This is not a dead project.
- East Northfield Water District; project is moving forward working with water company and Thomas Aquinas college. Working on creating a presentation for residents to see what they are working on. It is an idea of a district which towns people need to agree on. Public forum prior to Town Meeting to explain; Town meeting vote to form the district. Creating the district on paper must be done first. Then the project, which would include USDA borrowing, could begin to look at as a new district and infrastructure. Residents would then be members and have control of the district.
 - Stearns asked what the Town's roll is; Llamas stated it is to help facilitate the process. Working on behalf of the residents trying to cover issues such as water quality and costs. College has taken the lead on the financial side of this thus far, working on the numbers regarding hypothetical costs to do this district. College has paid for all the consulting cost to date.
- **ARPA FUNDING**
 - ARPA committee meeting tomorrow, March 1 at 4 pm, hoping to start making decision on money distribution. The selectboard ultimately approves, this committee does the recommendations to the Selectboard.
- **REPORTS OF MEETINGS ATTENDED REPRESENTING FINCOM**
 - Porada (Emergency Services Facility): Meeting last Wednesday with two selectboard members. Three (3) architectural firms provided presentations. Then each firm was evaluated and rated on suitability, then voted on. A firm was chosen and forwarded to selectboard for final approval.
 - Matteo (CPA): Met last week and did approve the project to paint the historical building on Pine St; Old School House #2 (the only applicant). This project is to be done this year and be all ready for next year's celebrations (Northfield's 350th).
- **COMMUNICATIONS**
 - 350th anniversary letter looking for committee participation and/or sponsorship
- **OTHER ITEMS NOT GENERALLY ANTICIPATED 48 HOURS IN ADVANCE OF THIS MEETING**
 - NONE
- **NEXT MEETING**
 - 3/7/2022 This will have the Franklin County Tech, Recreation and Town Clerk. Llamas will include other Town Hall accounts such as treasurer/tax collector.

A motion was made by Campbell, seconded by Matteo and VOTED unanimously to adjourn the FINCOM meeting

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm

Submitted by:
Bethany Walker
FINCOM Secretary

Approved On: 3/7/2022

Approved By: Daniel R. Campbell