

Pownal Budget Committee

April 15, 2021 Public Proceeding Minutes Approved

Members Present:

Bo Chesney, Gennifer Giuliano, John Green, Brian Stornelli, Andy Wyatt

Absent:

Matt Roy

Guests:

Heidi Curry and Andy O'Brien of the Select Board, Road Commissioner Dick Clarke

1. A quorum was established (five committee members logged in). The meeting was called to order by Chairman Green at 6:34PM.
2. Mr. Wyatt provided a second draft of minutes of the March 18, 2021 meeting. Mr. Chesney moved to approve them as written. Mr. Stornelli seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Wyatt also provided a draft of minutes of the March 25, 2021 meeting. Mr. Chesney moved to approve them as written. Chairman Green seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

3. The Public Comment period was skipped as no members of the public were in attendance.
4. The Select Board Comments period was skipped as the Select Board members in attendance did not have any comments.
5. Chairman Green informed the committee of the resignations of the Town's Administrator and Deputy Clerk. The Administrator's last day is today. The Deputy Clerk will remain until late May. Former Town Administrator Scott Seaver will return part-time to cover the office tasks while the Select Board works to recruit and hire replacements.
6. Mr. Wyatt summarized the Capital Improvement Plan Committee's deliberations and decisions regarding appropriations into, and expenditures from the capital fund for the next fiscal year. The CIP committee recommends an appropriation of \$152,000 into the capital plan fund. The CIP committee also recommends the following expenditures from the capital plan fund:
 - i. Up to \$42,000 to replace extrication equipment for Public Safety.
 - ii. Up to \$220,000 to replace Truck #4 for Public Works.
 - iii. Up to \$170,000 to acquire a wheel loader for Public Works.
 - iv. \$138,591 to install a replacement multi-plate culvert on the Poland Range Road, with expectation that a \$125,000 Stream Smart will replenish the Capital Plan fund.

Ms. Giuliano inquired about when the grant money would be paid to the Town. Mr. Clarke assured that it would be within the same fiscal year. Mr. Chesney moved that this committee make the same recommendations to the town. Chairman Green seconded. The motion passed with all in favor.

7. Chairman Green opened a discussion of the proposed General Government budget by questioning the need to include pay increases for the two just-vacated positions of Administrator and Full-time Clerk.

Mr. O'Brien informed the committee that the Select Board would like to have some 'wiggle room' in compensation for the recruitment of new hires for the office staff. He suggested up to \$60,000 for the Administrator and \$21.00 per hour for the Full-time clerk. There was much discussion about this matter as those figures represent a significant increase from the current year budget of \$46,676 and \$36,358 for those positions.

Mrs. Curry informed the committee that the Select Board and Planning Board have been in discussions with North Star Planning of New Gloucester to consider engaging with them to assist the Town with Planning Board workload, ordinance review and ordinance creation. The Select Board intends to amend the related fee schedules so that the applicants will cover much of the additional cost for North Star's services. The Select Board is proposing an additional \$10,000 for the Planning Board line in the General Government budget. The arrangement with North Star would call for payment of \$1500 per month, with unexpended balances rolling forward to cover work in future months. This additional cost is offset by not having to pay the \$9000 stipend to Tony Dater, the current Town Planner.

Mr. Chesney asked why the Town is pursuing this (e.g. was there a triggering event?). Mrs. Curry replied that the Planning Board workload has been increasing in volume and complexity recently, and indications suggest that this pattern will persist. Mr. Chesney suggested that providing hard statistics to help the Town make this decision at Town Meeting. Mr. O'Brien noted that the Town approached North Star Planning, not the other way around.

Regarding the variable rate structure for North Star's services, Chairman Green expressed concern about how that rate is determined. Will we be paying a higher rate for low-level work, if it is assigned to a senior-level employee?

8. Mrs. Curry informed the committee that the Select Board would like to hold an in-person Town Meeting this year. We expect that progress on the corona virus pandemic will permit fully-attended outdoor gatherings by June. The Select Board is considering convening a Town Meeting at noon on June 19, with June 26 as a rain date. An in-person Town Meeting is favored as it provides a forum for debate that does not exist in a secret ballot format.

Mr. O'Brien will work with Scott Seaver to ensure that an updated General Government budget sheet is available for review/discussion at the next meeting of this committee.

9. The agenda items for Committee Deliberations, Town Meeting Recommendations and Town Report Narrative were tabled since the General Government budget still has unresolved questions.
10. The next meeting is set for Thursday, April 22, 2021 at 6:30 pm. Chairman Green will provide the agenda and a URL for the meeting.
11. Mr. Chesney made a motion for adjournment. Chairman Green seconded. The motion passed with all in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Andy Wyatt