**TOWN OF EAST KINGSTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

MEETING MINUTES

December 11, 2023

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| Town Offices  24 Depot Road  East Kingston, New Hampshire  6:30PM | Robert Caron, Chair  Joseph Cacciatore, Vice Chair  Robert Nigrello |

Board Members present: Joseph Cacciatore – Vice Chair, Robert Caron – Chair and Robert Nigrello.

Others Present: Town Administrator Grace Ruelle, Police Chief Michael LePage, Police Lieutenant Clayton Jervis, Planning Board Chair Josh Bath, and Conservation Commission Chair/Town Engineer Dennis Quintal.

Chairman Caron called the meeting to order at 6:30pm with the roll call.

**APPROVAL AND SIGNING OF DOCUMENTS**

***#1. Meeting Minutes***

The Board reviewed the November 27, 2023 meeting minutes.

**MOTION: Mr. Nigrello motioned to approve the November 27, 2023 meeting minutes; seconded by Vice Chair Cacciatore. The motion passed 3-0-0.**

***#2. Accounts Payable Check Registers***

Chairman Caron presented, for board review and questions, accounts payable check register dated December 1, 2023 in the amount of $10,742.10.

**MOTION: Vice Chair Cacciatore motioned to approve and sign the accounts payable check register dated December 1, 2023 in the amount of $10,742.10; seconded by Mr. Nigrello. The motion passed 3-0-0.**

Chairman Caron presented, for board review and questions, accounts payable check register dated December 1, 2023 in the amount of $7,900.00.

**MOTION: Chairman Caron motioned to approve and sign the accounts payable check register dated December 1, 2023 in the amount of $7,900.00; seconded by Vice Chair Cacciatore. The motion passed 3-0-0.**

Chairman Caron presented, for board review and questions, accounts payable check register dated December 8, 2023 in the amount of $83,236.03.

**MOTION: Mr. Nigrello motioned to approve and sign the accounts payable check register dated December 8, 2023 in the amount of $83,236.03; seconded by Vice Chair Cacciatore. The motion passed 3-0-0.**

***#3. Payroll Registers***

Chairman Caron presented, for board review and questions, the payroll check register dated December 8, 2023 in the amount of $52,808.17.

**MOTION: Chairman Caron motioned to approve and sign the payroll register dated December 8, 2023 in the amount of $52,808.17; seconded by Vice Chair Cacciatore. The motion passed 3-0-0.**

***#4. Police Special Detail***

Chairman Caron presented, for board review and questions, police special detail payroll register for the period of November 28 through November 29, 2023 in the amount of $1,320.00.

**MOTION: Chairman Caron motioned to approve and sign the police special detail payroll check register for the period of November 28 through November 29, 2023 in the amount of $1,320.00; seconded by Vice Chair Cacciatore. The motion passed 3-0-0.**

***#5. Employee Change Forms – Fire Department***

Board members were presented with employee change forms from the Fire Department dating June 2023 and December 2023. Discussion ensued about past discussions with the department concerning the timing of the submission of documents to the board, on strategies to address this practice, and on doing right by the employees affected by the changes. Retroactive pay is calculated for each change with some retroactive for several months back. Board members agreed to approve the December employee change form but withhold the June forms pending further explanation and clarification of why the forms are not filed in a timely manner and on ascertaining legal advice for options to address this ongoing problem.

**MOTION: Chairman Caron motioned to approve and sign the Employee Change Form regarding Mr. Bateman effective December 5, 2023; seconded by Mr. Nigrello. The motion passed 3-0-0.**

**CORRESPONDENCE ITEMS**

***#1. Police Department Invoice Approvals***

Police Lieutenant Jervis presented invoices for a laptop for the new cruiser ($2,554.15) and equipment to outfit the new cruiser ($17,325.00) to be paid from the special detail fund.

**MOTION: Chairman Caron motioned to approve payment of the two invoices (laptop $2,554.15 and outfitting the new cruiser $17,325.00) from the Police special detail account; seconded by Mr. Nigrello. The motion passed 3-0-0.**

Discussion then ensued on paying the balance on the new Police station heating system (only deposit paid) and its funding resulting in the plan to make a determination at a later date. Lieutenant Jervis then informed the board on an incident involving a new police cruiser and a rock requiring repair/replacement of rocker panels and doors totaling $8,700 in damage. The vehicle is drivable and will continue to be used until the parts come in and repair can be scheduled.

***#2. Country Hill Estates – Under 55 Exemption Request***

The board was apprised of a request for a 54 ½ year old son of ailing residents on Autumn Lane to be allowed to reside at the premises to care for his parents. The request has been approved by the condo association. Board members opined the request was reasonable and did not conflict with the spirit of the covenants.

**MOTION: Mr. Nigrello motioned to grant the exemption for this case and allow a person less than 55 years of age to reside at Country Hills Estate due to the special circumstances as presented; seconded by Chairman Caron. The motion passed 3-0-0.**

***#3. Town Office Projects***

FLOOR REFINISHING: It was agreed at the last meeting that the flooring refinishing project would move forward pending the cost estimates to employ Ace Cleanout to move office furniture into pods for a period of one week. The cost estimate came in at $2,750 which would come from ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds.

PAINTING: Chairman Caron presented three bids for the spring 2024 painting of the interior of the town office building (2 coats for ceilings, walls, bathroom, town clerk’s office, hallway, staircases, and selectmen’s office). One quote was for $4,500, one bidder withdrew from the bid process, and one quote was for $10,610.

**MOTION: Mr. Nigrello motioned to award the painting of the town office bid to Bob DeLoge in the amount of $4,500; seconded by Vice Chair Cacciatore. The motion passed 3-0-0.**

MINISPLITS: As follow up to discussion from the last meeting, board members reviewed and compared the components and BTUs for each of the four minisplits bids for the town office building (Diamond, McKenzie, Donovan, and Granite State). It was the consensus that Mitsubishi models be purchased, and that exterior work can begin before the snow falls. Board members reviewed the costs and business reputations and noted one of the companies still needs to submit a quote for a system in the bathroom.

**MOTION: Chairman Caron motioned to install a Mitsubishi heat pump minisplits system at the town office building and expend up to $35k for such purpose; seconded by Vice Chair Cacciatore.**

Discussion: Board members noted that the motion as presented would provide the board with the latitude necessary to consider the reputation of the businesses considered when awarding the final bid.

**VOTE: The motion passed 3-0-0.**

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

***#1.*** ***Budget Presentations***

PLANNING BOARD – Planning Board Chair Josh Bath was present to review a couple of the budget lines submitted in the 2024 Planning Board budget. Discussion ensued on the actual expenses associated with postage and the part time salary (postage should be budgeted even though is offset by revenue, and the salary listed does not calculate with current expenses or the additional digital archiving project). Chairman Bath and board members agreed to increase the salary line to $16k and the postage line to $750 still reflecting a decrease of 4% under the 2023 budget.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION – Conservation Commission Chair Dennis Quintal was present to review the Powwow Pond Milfoil line item. Discussion ensued on the practice of utilizing these funds for either the milfoil project or for treating invasive species which was done at the boat ramp and railroad lots ($4k invoice submitted earlier that day), that the Town of Kingston coordinates the Powwow milfoil treatment plan, that from year to year, they do not know what the cost will be for these projects, and that any surplus in the Conservation Commission budget is then transferred to a special Conservation Commission fund. Board members were satisfied with the explanation provided.

HIGHWAY – The proposed 2024 budget totals $508,500 reflecting a 0% increase over the 2023 budget. Projects considered for 2024 include topcoats to Greystone and Sanborn, water issues on South and Pheasant Run, paving on South, Andrews Lane, and Pheasant Run, grade and paving of Rowell Road, grading of Andrews Lane extension, guardrail repair on South and Joslin, addressing erosion on Greystone, and obtaining an engineering review of the Giles Road railroad bridge. Town Engineer Dennis Quintal indicated he would work with the Road Agent to get a cost analysis for the projects for the next board meeting.

POLICE DEPARTMENT – Lieutenant Jervis reported he has confirmed the estimated cost of $15k for prosecutorial services and that the department is still in the process of securing a prosecutor for January.

ELECTIONS – The proposed 2024 budgets for elections total $14,732 and $2,550 reflecting increases of 68% and 50% over the 2023 budget respectively. It was noted five elections are scheduled in 2024 (presidential primary, deliberative session, March election, state primary, and general election), the state is offering refresher classes on the election process, and although the state has approved the use of new voting machines, they are not in the town’s budget for 2024.

ASSESSING – The proposed 2024 budget for assessing totals $76,244 which includes the new contract and annual maintenance costs. Discussion ensued on utilizing the capital reserve funds ($26k), budgeting an additional $25k, increasing the capital reserve fund warrant article, and drafting a warrant article which would transfer unspent budget monies into a capital reserve fund. The board will look at draft warrant article options at their next meeting.

BLOCK 5 PROJECTS – It was noted that each department has budgeted their own IT projects and that the board needs to determine which priority projects are moving forward for the town offices.

**MOTION: Chairman Caron motioned to approve IT Block 5 projects #1812 and #1806 for the town office building and to hold off on the remaining projects at this time; seconded by Vice Chair Cacciatore. The motion passed 3-0-0.**

DEBT – Debt budget is going down. The conservation easement project (48 Giles Road Rear) has not occurred as of yet; there are problems on the landowner’s end.

LEGAL – Discussion ensued on increasing the proposed 2024 legal budget to $60k due to ongoing and potential cases, and on tracking the legal expenses by department for future budgeting options.

TOWN-OWNED BUILDINGS – The proposed 2024 budget for town-owned buildings totals $19,202 reflecting a 21% decrease under the 2023 budget. Decreases were attributed to reductions in the old town hall telephone, electricity, and heating budget lines due to the usability of the building while under renovation.

***#2. 2024 Town Report Bid Opening***

Chairman Caron opened and presented the following bid quotes to print the 2023 Annual Report. Quotes were submitted to eight businesses requesting bids for 200 copies with two size options: 8½x11 and 6x9. Four bids were received.

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| Bidding Company | 8 ½ x 11 | 6 x 9 |
| Minuteman Press (Stratham) | $2,396 (colored cover)  $2,385 (black/white cover) | No bid submitted |
| Image Wise Graphics (Hampton Falls) | $2,759 | $2,759 |
| Kase Printing (Hudson) | $1,789 | $1,320 |
| Select Print Solutions (N. Brookfield, MA) | $1,950 | $1,495 |

Discussion ensued on using Select Print Solutions in the past and experiencing a number of problems with quality, using Image Wise in the past (most expensive), and on returning to the 6x9 size reports. Noting the report is now posted online, the number of reports needed has reduced significantly. Requiring a sample of the product as well as a proofing option before going to print as also noted.

**MOTION: Chairman Caron motioned to award the 2023 Town Report printing bid in 6x9 format to Kase Printing pending a sample/recommendation; seconded by Vice Chair Cacciatore. The motion passed 3-0-0.**

***#3. Nonpublic Session – Review of Nonpublic Meeting Minutes (HB321)***

**MOTION: Chairman Caron motioned to go into non-public session under RSA 91-A:3, (m) Consideration of whether to disclose minutes of a nonpublic session due to a change in circumstances; seconded by Vice Chair Cacciatore.**

**The board was polled: Chairman Caron – yes**

**Mr. Cacciatore – yes**

**Mr. Nigrello – yes**

The board entered non-public session at 8:02pm.

The board re-entered public session at 8:07pm.

**MOTION: Chairman Caron motioned to unseal nonpublic meeting minutes dated April 6, 1998, April 13, 1998 Sessions I and II, April 27, 1998, May 11, 1998, May 18, 1998 Sessions I and II, June 22, 1998, and June 29, 1998; seconded by Mr. Nigrello. The motion passed 3-0-0.**

***Budget Presentations Continued***

WELFARE (Shelter) – The proposed 2024 budget for Welfare totals $10,000 reflecting a 0% increase over the 2023 budget.

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING – The proposed 2024 budget for Social Services totals $7,875 reflecting a 23% decrease under the 2023 budget ($2500 less). The town no longer collects food and items but utilizes foodbank cards. Discussion ensued on donating the outdated food items currently stored at the town office to the Marston Farm and the unexpired items to the church.

Other budget items noted were a decrease in Personnel Administration due to salary changes, Primex’s 15% increase in rates, waiting on run rates from the Fire Department and from Emergency Management in order to finalize those budgets.

As a follow up to last meeting’s budget discussions with town officials, the board discussed the Town Clerk’s request to make special benefits accommodation for the current Deputy Town Clerk as she would be reducing her hours from 20 to 10 per week. The remaining 10 hours would be covered by way of hiring a new person who would also be interested in running for the Town Clerk position in 2025, thus allowing the current Town Clerk to fill the 10-hour position resultant of the election. The special request was to include prorated paid holidays that fall within the 10-hour weekly schedule. Discussion ensued on the appreciation of 22 years of service by the Deputy Town Clerk, concerns about setting precedence for future employees, no provisions for such a request in the personnel policies, and possibly offering a special employment contract for a period of one year only (transition year). Town Administrator Ruelle will discuss this option with the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk and then draft a special employee contract for board consideration.

Mr. Nigrello took the opportunity to commend Chairman Caron on the extensive work undertaken to upgrade the town office building.

With no other business before the board,

**MOTION: Chairman Caron motioned to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Nigrello. The motion passed 3-0-0 and the meeting ended at 8:30pm.**

Minutes prepared by Catherine Belcher.

Approved on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

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| Joseph Cacciatore |  | Robert A. Caron |  | Robert L. Nigrello |