

Rowe Board of Selectmen Meeting
December 31, 2019
10:00 A.M.
Rowe Town Hall – Meeting Room 1

Board of Selectmen: Chair Charles Sokol, Vice-Chair Jennifer Morse (arrived at 11:24),
Selectman Ed Silva
Administrative Staff: Paul McLatchy III, Administrative Assistant to the Boards
Other Attendees: Walter Quist, Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Representative
Audience of Citizens: Joanne Semanie, Marilyn Wilson

Call to Order: Chair Sokol called the meeting to order at 10:05 A.M., a quorum of the board present.

Recording Devices: One recording device was noted.

Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership (MTWP) Letter: Resident Walter Quist attended the meeting as the MTWP representative to ask the Board of Selectmen to sign a letter of support in applying for a \$20,000 grant. This grant would be used to establish a Forest Stewardship Plan (FSP). According to Park Manager Sean Loomis, a plan has not been done since the late 80s or early 90s, and was last done by a handful of college students rather than seasoned professionals. This grant application would be submitted in conjunction with Conway and Heath.

In addition to the immediate benefits of a plan, having a FSP might allow the town to obtain additional grants in the future. As natural recreation use increases in the area, Mr. Quist also pointed out that this could be useful for the town in determining what activities might be desired or opposed by the townspeople. It could also be used by the town's emergency services to help prepare for emergencies occurring on or near town property (i.e. involving kayakers, hikers, etc.). There is also potential for private landowners to apply for help to develop a management plan for large parcels of property so that in the event that logging or some other activity is desired, it can be done in a sustainable way.

Chair Sokol asked about the downsides of this, and whether this might encourage certain cutting operations on town-owned lands. Mr. Quist pointed out that most of the town-owned land came into the town's possession by donation, which carries with it certain covenants about what may and may not be done on said land. Each time a proposal is raised it would need to be looked at in a transparent and open manner so that the public may voice their input. This might also help to identify the trees that are either dying or at risk and might therefore be good candidates for cutting versus healthy trees.

MOTION TO SIGN: A motion was made by Chair Sokol to sign the letter of support, was seconded by Selectman Silva, and passed unanimously in favor (2-0-0).

Mr. Quist was thanked for coming to the meeting and departed.

DPW: The Selectmen briefly discussed the DPW's work during the most recent ice storm. Both felt that the department had performed well, and Selectman Silva had sent an email to Superintendent Larned expressing these sentiments.

Roof Over Mailboxes: The Selectmen have been exploring what the cost would be to build some sort of roof over the outside Post Office boxes to help protect against the elements. Marilyn Wilson stated that she had looked into this during her tenure as a Selectman and found that it would be futile to put one in as during a rain storm, the dripping water could be blown into the locks (and could potentially freeze them if it was during a colder time of year).

Prior Year Bill Votes: Ms. Wilson brought a copy of an opinion she received from Gary Blau at the Department of Revenue in 2015 explaining the vote thresholds for prior year bills (attached). The town has traditionally applied a 9/10 vote for all prior year bills, and this has proved problematic at times. If the bill is proposed at the Annual Town Meeting, it will only require a 2/3 vote. Special Town Meetings still require the 9/10 vote if the money was never appropriated to begin with. However, if money had been appropriated and simply was not paid out for one reason or another, the vote requirement is reduced to a simple majority. Ms. Wilson departed the meeting after sharing this information.

Municipal Light Plant: Chair Sokol informed the Board that there was a recent application for connection, but other than that, there is little else to report. Grant money is being returned to the town, and the current financial projections look like the business model is sustainable.

Treasurer: Treasurer Cooper was scheduled to attend the Board meeting, but was unable to due to poor weather. She will be asked to attend a meeting in the near future.

Kings Highway: The contract and notice-to-proceed have been signed. Questions were raised about coordinating road closure, camp activities, and emergency services. To Mr. McLatchy's knowledge, the road will only be closed for about a day or so at the beginning and end of the project. During this time, the fire department will likely store a fire engine on the other side of the bridge in case of an emergency. The Board asked Mr. McLatchy to serve in a capacity similar to an owner's project manager and to provide the Selectmen with weekly schedule updates once the project is underway.

Bylaws: Town Counsel has reviewed the draft bylaws as proposed by the Bylaw Review Committee (BRC). Other than one that counsel suggested would not be approved, most of the remaining changes were minor changes or notes. The Board will need to decide whether they want to handle this from here on out or hand it back to the BRC for them to bring to town meeting. It was agreed to wait for the entire Board to discuss.

Comp Time Request: Administrative Assistant Paul McLatchy III will be attending the annual Massachusetts Municipal Association conference in Boston at the end of January. Due to travel and long days, he is estimating that he will earn approximately 14 hours of overtime that week. He has requested instead to accrue that as comp time, as permitted in the personnel policy handbook. This would help to avoid running over the budget line and would expire if not used by the end of the year.

MOTION TO APPROVE: A motion was made by Chair Sokol and seconded by Selectman Silva to approve the conversion of up to 14 hours of comp time (up to 21 hours regular pay) for that week. The vote was unanimous (2-0-0) in favor.

META Grant Award: The town has been awarded a Municipal Energy Technical Assistance (META) grant from the state for \$12,500. The purpose of the grant was to hire a consultant to investigate the feasibility of heat pumps and the town hall and/or the fire station. Mr. McLatchy and Selectman Silva worked together to develop a Request For Proposal (RFP), which was advertised on the state and resulted in three submissions.

One submission by B2Q was not recommended by Mr. McLatchy as it only included an analysis of the town hall, not both buildings. The remaining two submissions, one by GDS Associates for \$12,500 and Antares Group for \$11,907.76, were both reviewed favorably by Mr. McLatchy and would be appropriate vendors. While both were well qualified to perform the heat pump study, GDS Associates included some additional services in their energy analysis of the building that could lead to additional cost-saving measures for the town. As this is a RFP, the town is not bound to the lowest bidder, but to the proposal that is in the best interests of the town.

MOTION TO AWARD: A motion was made by Chair Sokol and seconded by Selectman Silva to award the META Grant contract to GDS Associates, Inc. for \$12,500. The vote was unanimous (2-0-0) in favor.

Treasurer Computer: Chris Bovino from Northeast IT requested that another computer be found or purchased for the treasurer. Currently she shares a computer with the accountant, who does much of his work remotely. This has resulted in overlap and means one person cannot do his/her work if the other is using the station. Mr. McLatchy (as town clerk) offered the use of his computer as he can access everything he needs to in his administrative office. This would only be until the elections in May, but would solve the problem in the short term. No vote was taken, but Mr. McLatchy was given permission to proceed.

Town Administrator: This has been a topic of conversation that has been visited multiple times over the past few meetings. Chair Sokol stated that he envisions a person who would essentially act as a CEO of a company with the Board of Selectmen comparable to a Board of Directors. Selectman Silva said that even though he has been here a short time, he views the concept of having employees report to multiple people as “sloppy”. In his business, they rectified this arrangement by hiring a director of operations, who all employees now report to. Since then things have become far more efficient and streamlined. Both members agreed that in order for such a position to succeed the person in that position would need to have the backing of the Board in their decisions.

Chair Sokol suggested that there could be a number of issues people might have with creating this position. Politically this might be divisive as there are always personalities involved, and the new position would require greater pay as there would be more responsibilities assigned to it. In addition, it hasn't been made clear whether this would be a new position or would take the place of an existing position (both Mr. McLatchy and Joanne Semanie opined that there was not sufficient work for three full-time employees). If it were to replace an existing position, there would need to be a reorganization, which could involve a shift in personnel. Ms. Semanie pointed out that the biggest hurdle will be convincing people that this position is necessary, as most people don't really know what goes on in the day-to-day administration of the office.

At this point in the conversation, Vice-Chair Morse entered the meeting.

Vice-Chair Morse proposed that if a change were to occur, it would be best done as a bylaw change to prevent a future board from overturning it. A general policy change could be altered at the whim of the incumbent board at the time. Mr. McLatchy was asked to consult with Town Counsel about the process.

Chair Sokol wants to see a job description and an idea of cost before proceeding. Vice-Chair Morse will forward information that she has at this point to the other members. Chair Sokol would like to see the Board list all of the different roles that need to be filled in town hall, and once that is done determine how they would best be filled.

Budget Hearing Schedule: A draft budget hearing schedule was presented (attached). The Board felt that they did not need to meet with departments that are level-funded or requesting explainable increases (i.e. annual COLA increases). No departments were removed at this time, but Mr. McLatchy will coordinate with the Finance Committee and the department members to finalize a schedule. Dates of January 16th, 23rd, 30th, and February 6th and 13th were tentatively selected as the five nights for budget hearings.

Municipal Vulnerability Program (MVP): Mr. McLatchy asked for approval from the Board to proceed with the grant application for the MVP program. No vote was taken, but approval was given.

Agenda: Due to the time, the remaining portion of the agenda was tabled until the next meeting, with minutes being prioritized at the beginning.

Next Meeting: The Board will next meet on Thursday, January 16th to review several issues and begin budget hearings with the Finance Committee and various departments.

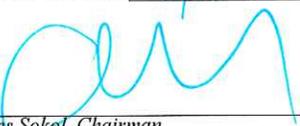
Adjourn: With no further business to attend to:

MOTION TO ADJOURN: A motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:59 was made by Chair Sokol, seconded by Vice-Chair Morse, and passed unanimously (3-0-0) in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Paul McLatchy III
Administrative Assistant to the Boards

7. Draft Budget Hearing Calendar
8. KP Law Review of Bylaw Proposals
9. Community Preservation Act Report
10. Executive Secretary Update
11. Administrative Assistant Update

Approved on: 1/16/2020



Charles Sokol, Chairman

B. Minutes:

1. October 24, 2019
2. November 27, 2019
3. December 5, 2019
4. December 19, 2019

C. Correspondence

1. Yankee Atomic Letter, 12/17/19
2. National Grid Plan, 12/9/19
3. FCSWMD Budget, 12/18/19
4. FCSWMD Audit
5. FCSWMD Management Letter
6. Mass DOT Letter & King's Highway Bridge Report, 8/6/19
7. Ford Hill Culvert Report, 8/6/19
8. Zoar Road Bridge (Sam Rice Brook) Report, 8/6/19
9. Zoar Road Bridge (Shippee Brooke) Report, 8/6/19
10. Cyrus Stage Bridge Report, 8/6/19
11. Fire Department Grant Letter, 12/9/19
12. Opinion from Gary Blau, 1/2/15

Jennifer Morse, Vice-Chair



Edward Silva, Selectman

Attachments:

A. Documents:

1. Agenda
2. MTWP Support Letter
3. Administrative Assistant Comp Time Request
4. Antares Group Incorporated RFP Submission
5. B2Q RFP Submission
6. GDS Associates, Inc. RFP Submission