

Board of Selectmen Joint with Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

April 5, 2021, 6:30 pm

Virtual GoToMeeting

Present: Board of Selectmen Chair Diana Szynal, Edmund Jaworski and Brian Moriarty; Darryl Williams, Betsy Rider, Kim Baker, Diane Brzozowski and Sean Barry, Finance Committee; Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator; Phillip Genovese, Director, DPW; Eric Meals, Waste Water Superintendent; Sharon Strzewoski, Treasurer/Collector; Lydia Szych, Town Clerk; Martin McEvoy, Superintendent of Schools; and Robert Flaherty, Fire Chief.

**CALL TO ORDER** Chair Darryl Williams called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.  
Chairperson Szynal called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS** None

**PUBLIC FORUM** None

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES** None

**POSTED BUSINESS**

Wastewater Treatment Plant Generator: Eric Meals updated the Board and the Finance Committee about the plant generator. On March 15, 2021 there was a power outage and the generator did not come back on and when it finally did it didn't transfer power. It should have done it by itself. Eric Meals tried to get the generator going to no avail. He called Applied Dynamics from Greenfield who said the problem is an outdated control system. The generator shuts down but it is not able to start back up and transfer power. It was looked at about four months ago. At that time, Caterpillar said the cost for parts is between \$65,000.00 to \$70,000.00 to replace just the control system. Caterpillar got the generator running and said it would last for maybe six months. Eric Meals said in the master plan it was budgeted to be switch it out. Eric Meals talked to Mr. Genovese and they agreed they would try to wait it out and see how long the generator would last. Applied Dynamics went through the whole system and got it to start but the generator still will not transfer power automatically. Eric Meals got three quotes from three electricians and the lowest was \$99,000.00. Eric Meals suggests it be replaced given the fact that if it doesn't do it's job, it can end up costing more in the long run. If a storm hits and the generator is out more than an hour it could cause great harm. Ms. Rider asked if there was a surplus in the fund. Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator said there is \$54,662.00 in the fund. Diana Szynal asked if the problem is the generator or the power to the generator. Eric Meals said it's the whole generator. Eric Meals said the control system is the big problem. Ms. Rider asked if there were some other plans for the surplus. Eric Meals advised the Board and the Committee that the generator is original equipment. Phil Genovese said the fund is there if things break or in an emergency. Mr. Williams said that when the Finance Committee met last Saturday, this was one of the items discussed. Mr. Williams said they discussed if it was a cost

in FY21 or could it wait until 2022. It was suggested that there is money in finance reserve, the generator needs to be replaced now. Sean Barry said this issue would meet the criteria for finance criteria emergency. Mr. Barry said it is his preference to use the reserve because that is what the money is for. Mr. Genovese said the only other money available is from government (COVID) monies. Sharon Strzegowski, Treasurer/Collector said that we may not get the money and it is not a guarantee and it is not good to spend money you may not get. Mr. Williams asked if the town were to get the money, can it be used for something like this. Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator said we can apply for it, see if the Town gets it and take a look at what the requirements are in using those funds. Selectman Jaworski said this situation constitutes an emergency and this is what the funds are meant for. If you do not have a generator, Eric Meals said the Town would be out of compliance. The generator affects treated water which could put the treated water back into the Connecticut river. Selectman Jaworski said the generator is very, very needed and it fits the emergency portion of finance reserve. Mr. Williams agreed. Mr. Williams asked the Town Administrator if the Finance Committee can make a motion and approve this tonight. In order to use funds from free cash, the budget for the generator would have to be in deficit. It was agreed that the Finance Committee can vote tonight. Eric Meals asked with this emergency, do they have to put it out to bid since it is an emergency. Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator, said you have to put it out for bid but there is a provision for emergencies and she would get the information to Mr. Meals and have the Board of Selectmen vote on it tonight. Chair Szynal for the Board of Selectmen made a motion to declare the generator an emergency and an emergency purpose given what would happen if the generator would fail. Selectman Jaworski seconded, all in favor I, the motion was approved. Sean Barry made a motion to appropriate \$100,000.00 from finance reserve to the water sewer enterprise fund as emergency funds. Darryl Williams seconded; all in favor, the motion was approved. Marlene Michonski, Town Administration said there is a provision for emergencies but you cannot bypass the entire bidding requirement.

Review FY22 Budget and Annual Town Meeting Warranty Articles: Mr. Williams said the Finance Committee already talked about free cash. Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator said Sharon Strzegowski, Treasurer/Collector let her know what the amount would be for those not receiving minimum wage, which increased the budget. According to the Governor, COLA is 2% for non-union employees. Sharon Strzegowski said that the DPW's budget is 2% higher and that it's just a number she plugged in because negotiations have not started yet. In discussions on Saturday, the Finance Committee feels that all Town employees should be making minimum wage.

There was discussion regarding the updated budget Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator emailed to everyone today. Discussions were had with the different departments as to their proposed FY22 budgets and getting the numbers pinned down soon. It was the hope of the Finance Committee that at the next meeting the numbers for the proposed budgets will be more realistic.

Sharon Strzegowski, Treasurer/Collector presented the Board and Committee with the deficits going back a few years. She and the accountant mentioned that paying the deficit off would be a good idea. Ms. Strzegowski mentioned that if the Board wanted to borrow next year, the Town would get a better interest rate because the Town would not be carrying debt. Currently there is

a deficit of \$420,000.00 that no one can account for because the money was overspent about 5 years ago when Ms. Strzegowski was not here. Ms. Strzegowski further said that money was spent years ago even though the money was not there. Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator said there is another \$16,000.00 deficit. Ms. Strzegowski said that the work done for fire/police garage and went over budget as well as the Smith Academy library. Ms. Strzegowski said that Brenda Keir is looking into this. Ms. Strzegowski said there is nothing more she can do and that it is her opinion that the money is owed and should be paid. This is the last step to get things cleaned up. Diane Brzozowski asked if some of that money was payroll liabilities? Ms. Strzegowski said the accountant did not think so. Chair Szynal asked if this has been hanging out there for five years; can the deficit be split for two years? Mr. Williams asked what the free cash amount is (\$900,000.00) and asked if that money was used to pay these deficits off, where does that leave us? There was discussion regarding what to do with the free cash. Darryl Williams wanted to know if everyone was okay with paying all the debts out of free cash. Sean Barry said that it probably was not a good idea. There was further discussion regarding the free cash.

There was discussion of raising the Town Clerk's FY22 salary as payment for the elections. There was also discussion regarding the Planning Board's budget. Ms. Rider asked Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator for additional funds for a temporary assistant in case one of the secretaries is out on leave. The Finance Committee suggested that it would be dealt with if the situation ever arose.

Betsy Rider asked if safety budget could be put off until the next meeting. Mr. Williams said that at the next meeting, the safety budget would be first on the agenda.

With regard to the School Department budget, Selectman Moriarty stated that we must keep an open mind with regard to other departments where raises have not happened for years because monies have gone to the school. Selectman Moriarty said they need to keep in mind all departments. Selectman Moriarty said that he heard that no matter what - the schools get what they want - and that is not the case. Chair Szynal agreed with Selectman Moriarty that extra money is automatically given to the school. Selectman Moriarty said he feels that the school department thinks they when submit a budget, they think they automatically get what they want. Selectman Moriarty wants to be sure that all departments are taken care of, not just the school department.

There was discussion of the Public Works budget and Council on Aging. There is \$5,600.00 extra in expenses for cleaning and repairs and maintenance of equipment.

Chair Szynal left the meeting at 8:40 p.m.

Regarding the Council on Aging budget, they are looking for more money. Ms. Rider asked for more information but no one has given her any. Ms. Strzegowski said she would give the committee more information.

Regarding the Veteran's Services budget, they are looking for \$500.00 more for a computer program. Regarding library, they were looking for around \$500.00 more. Historical Commission is looking for \$2,000.00 more for software and a feasibility study.

Darryl Williams suggested another Board of Selectmen/Finance Committee meeting on Monday, 4/12 at 6:30 p.m. and with the hope to discuss public safety, and hopefully discussion and more information free cash.

Darryl Williams made motion to adjourn at 8:55 p.m.; Ms. Rider seconded that motion, all in favor, the motion to adjourn was approved.

Edmund Jaworski made a motion to adjourn at 8:55 p.m., Brian Moriarty seconded, all in favor, the motion to adjourn was approved.