

Colebrook Select Board Meeting

November 8, 2021

Colebrook Town Hall Courtroom

Select Board Members Present: Greg Placy, Chairperson, Ray Gorman, Suzanne Collins

Staff Present: James O’Gorman, Town Manager; Melanie Mathieu, Tax Collector

Guests Present: Darren Little, Colebrook Fire Department Representatives: Earl Bunnell, Wayne Frizzell, Brad Woodard, and Fire Chief David Woodard. Dawn Cameron, Colebrook Homeowners’ Cooperative; Jake Mardin, News & Sentinel.

Chairman Placy called the meeting to order at 5:00pm

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The select board welcomed new Town Manager James O’Gorman.

**Hearing of the Public**

**Colebrook Fire Department**

Sue introduced the topic of out of precinct calls by reporting that the Town has approximately \$10,000 in unpaid bills for out of precinct calls. She reviewed some of the letters from property owners outside the precinct refusing to pay their fire bills.

She explained the problem with unpaid bills and accrual accounting. The Town’s Accounting Firm, Cohos Advisors suggested an extension of the precinct boundaries to include the whole town, then the whole town would be in-precinct. Everybody would pay precinct tax.

She noted that the Town never budgets enough and that the Town ends up writing off the uncollected revenues.

The Town spent \$10,810 in 2019 and this included the \$2,000 retainer. If the whole town were considered in-precinct, this retainer would go away.

In 2020, the Town spent \$14,381. This year to date approximately \$8,939 is due on unpaid out of precinct bills.

Greg Placy explained that the whole town can be a precinct – defined by town line boundaries.

The precinct would still be run by Colebrook fire wardens. This would mean that the in-town fire precinct taxes would drop - all else being equal.

The other option is to budget a set amount with the town not responsible for billing out of precinct fire calls.

The Town would have to hold a special meeting in order to extend the boundaries of the precinct.

Sue noted that people are getting upset to get the bill. They think they’re in the precinct.

In reviewing the recent bills, Sue noted that they are mostly for ATV accidents versus house fires. The fire department has provided the Town with all the billing information right now.

The selectboard asked the fire fighters to think about it and see what makes sense.

The precinct tax 2020 was \$1.86. Greg stated that \$180,000 = \$1.00 +/- on the tax rate. This would decrease because it is spread among more people. Precinct valuation is \$84 million.

Budget of the fire precinct \$139,000.

Total whole town valuation \$186,000,000. = .74 a new line item on many people's bills (this would be .74 per 1,000).

In Town homeowners pay lower insurance rates because they are closer to fire hydrants within the precinct.

The conversation concluded with an understanding that there would be a signed agreement between the Town and the Fire Department. The fire department will put the agreement together including the fixed amount to be budgeted versus continuing with the billing (current agreement). The agreement would not be for a specific amount because each yearly figure would be based on previous years' experience.

This will give the town time to get the amount into the upcoming budget, with the rate figured from October to October.

For this year, the fire department will come up with a budget figure within the next couple of weeks.

Earl Bunnell added a comment about the fire hydrants around town. He asked if the town personnel could clean hydrants after snowstorms better this year than last year.

Greg Placy agreed that the Town needs to get these cleaned sooner and better.

Earl stated that a good rule of thumb is having a three-foot diameter cleared around the hydrants.

### **Bungy Road – Darren Little**

Ray Gorman introduced this topic noting that Darren was at the meeting because of trash, metal, unkept piles and smell at and from his neighbor's property. Darren noted that the garbage is even on Darren's property. There are ten cars on the property and another six cars, plus couple campers up by Paul Nugent's Campground. He went on to describe washing machines, piles of car batteries, refrigerators, tires, and propane tanks.

Greg Placy noted that any property with over two junk cars in the yard is considered a junkyard and must be permitted. Further, the existence of propane tanks and car batteries is a safety and health hazard.

Darren noted that he and Mike Smith and other neighbors have tried to help Chester clean things up. He went on to say that he, Darren, pays \$6,000 in taxes and is done looking at the mess. He is sick of it.

Sue noted that the only adopted Colebrook Town Planning Board ordinance is about a junk yard. You have to apply to have a junk yard if you have more than two cars in the yard. This is a NH State law. There is no Colebrook Town ordinance about collecting appliances and trash.

Darren noted that there is frequently a grinder and chop saw going at 11pm at night.

He said that Chester must be doing commercial hauling of trash - picking up other people's trash.

Finally, he noted that Chester is frequently in the road crossways unloading stuff - blocking the road and it's a safety issue because of logging trucks going up and down Bungy Road.

Ray noted that the Paquettes and Smiths, have called and spoken to him about it. He said that the residents on the Columbia side of Bungy are upset as well, but there is nothing Colebrook can do for Columbia residents.

The select board discussed the possibility of a new ordinance and noted that this is more than a "cease and desist" it is a full clean-up.

Ray noted that since there are no animals, they cannot send a health officer there.

They did note that commercial hauling has to be licensed with the State of NH and that the junk yard needs to be registered.

**Regular Agenda** The selectboard minutes of October 25, 2021, and October 29, 2021, were approved on a motion by Sue Collins, seconded by Ray Gorman, which passed unanimously.

### **New Business**

**DES – Pre-Application Update for ARPA Funding – Water Pollution Control Projects – CMA to file updated information.** Nothing to report.

### **2020 single audit finding and regular audit outstanding items.**

Sue reported that the audit resulted in Colebrook being written up for non-compliance with federal requirements needed for acceptance of federal grant monies beyond a certain threshold. Because Colebrook is beyond the threshold, the Town was put into the single audit category.

Melanie spoke with Tammy to see if another town has the required policies and procedures so that Colebrook could look at these and possibly replicate them. Also, Sue sent Tammy a follow-up email today as well.

Tammy will be working on this and will forward policies to look over.

**Legal Representation Letter to Attorney Frizzell.** Melanie said this has gone back to Attorney Frizzell.

**Tammy is working on the MD & A Statement.**

**Northern Borders Commission/EDA Grant - Status of QBS Process.** Michelle Moren-Grey of North Country Council was supposed to send a sample RFP. Josh Bouchard (from CMA) contacted Michelle.

The Town of Colebrook cannot spend any grant funds until the RFP selection process has been completed.

**Letter of Support for UCVH:** Sue Collins made a motion to authorize the evidence of community support for the application of UCVH for an HVAC system. The motion was seconded by Ray and passed unanimously.

**New GOFFER funds available – Safety & Emergency Program:** Funds available of \$50,000 for each New Hampshire town, requiring a 10% match. The funds are for equipment purchases which would total \$55,556 (to account for the 10% match requirement).

Sue noted that all reimbursed costs have to be allowable expenses under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Wastewater and water costs are allowable.

There is a minimum \$250 equipment cost to qualify and this is has to be related to assisting with, responding to, or being prepared for, COVID19.

Sue mentioned the need for emergency generators for pumping stations.

Greg mentioned Dean Neary - is there anything they need for emergency preparedness?

Sue noted that there is a capital reserve fund for Emergency Response – it's for a system that cleans the water in case all water sources become contaminated.

The select board members will bring this up during budget discussions with each department.

The State has put money aside for each of the 278 towns – so this is not a competitive grant situation.

If the Town can come up with match and equipment to meet the criteria, the Town can get this funding.

Ray Gorman noted that Senator Hennessey had presented this at the last meeting during her presentation to the select board.

**Tax rate setting 2021.** Melanie is waiting on the school for their form MS34. Melanie will find out how soon Colebrook can get this. Melanie will report back to the select board.

In follow-up, Ray asked if perhaps it is time to have a select board and school board meeting.

Sue thinks maybe in mid-December. Maybe the first December meeting (which is a 5pm meeting).

James will reach out to the Superintendent to suggest this: Monday, December 13th.

### **Old Business**

**Status of Dan Skowsen Appointment to Coos County Broadband Committee – No update.**

Ray reported that the North Country Council has been very active on this project, and they are moving forward.

Sue noted that there appears to be a lot of money for broadband in the bill President Biden is about to sign.

Ray will keep track of this project at the County level. What the State of NH is thinking and what North Country Council is thinking does not match. The State wants satellites. North Country Council would like to use towers.

**Status of Tax Deeding -** Mel spoke with Jonathan's secretary because Jonathan wants additional information for the Lamberts.

Mel needs to pull information together and have Jonathan review it and send it out to the “found person” in California.

Ray asked if, overall, people are paying as they are supposed to. Mel reported that people were doing what they are supposed to do.

**Status of Washburn Settlement: Final accounting.** Sue made a motion to approve the settlement and allow Mel to cut the checks (as recommended by our attorney) amounting to \$170,412.78 to each prior owner. And that Mel deliver those checks to the attorney where the previous owners will pick them up.

Ray seconded the motion.

The Town netted \$81,573.45 after settlement of penalties, interest, and back taxes.

The motion passed unanimously.

**Colebrook Homeowners' Cooperative RSA 155-B** – this is being worked on with Mel and Attorney Frizzell.

**Status of EPA permit application filed in August:** Greg Placy reported that he has had no word from Brian Sullivan or Greg Marchand lately.

**Boston Post Cane** – Sue reported that the Town of Peterborough sells the canes. Any engraving is done by Town of Colebrook. This is in the works. The cane costs \$150, plus engraving.

**FEMA Covid19 reimbursement request:** Courtney Jordan, State of New Hampshire Field Rep., is working with Melanie. Melanie got an email from FEMA requesting the 2019 audit. Melanie started to fill out the survey and sent email to Tammy for help.

After Tammy's help, Mel reported that “things should be good to go” and that she is expecting approximately \$38,000 +/- from this “first batch.”

**Personnel Policy Manual** – There are two or three things that need to be changed, but James will review and help to improve the manual.

### Signatures

**Cemetery deeds:** Teri and Harry Haynes.

**APP Sewer Connection application** - Greg reported that because now all of the APP dirty water and industrial waste and grey water go out in one spot, and because of the nitrates involved, the town (through CMA) asked that APP change the configuration so that the Town can test each system separately.

As a result, APP is applying for two connections which will do away with the one connection that they now have: One is wastewater and the other is industrial wastewater.

Sue asked if this addresses Paul Schmidt's concerns about provisions for sampling and his suggestion on how to engineer capability to be able to collect samples. Email dated 10/31/21.

Greg noted that he is looking at 10/21/21 paperwork for the application. He is not sure if the application addresses the 10/31/21 communication from Paul Schmidt.

He noted that the APP check is dated 11/2/21 and that Paul Schmidt's email was 10/31/21.

Sue made a motion to authorize Greg Placy to sign the APP sewer connection permit-applications after speaking with engineer Paul Schmidt to verify that these concerns are addressed in the application. Ray Gorman seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

**Land Use Penalty Assessment.** Reeves & Meikle. \$6,000. Gary Fournier determines this amount. This is a Bear Rock Road property.

Sue made this motion: **Water Warrant 71,533.91. Sewer Tax Collector's Warrant \$103,101.20.** Period ending 9/30/21. The motion was seconded by Ray and passed unanimously.

**Appointment of Zachary Bishop Part-time police officer.** Form from Town Clerk needs select board signatures. Form now goes back to Deb.

Greg noted that he was looking at a purchase order for mowing that has been done already. He noted that a P.O. should be used first, not after a purchase or service. The cost for this mowing seems to be way more than it needs to be.

Discussion about why the Town needs to pay to mow the fields by the North end wells that we are no longer using?

This is a question for Brian. These wells are abandoned, and it costs \$675 to mow. Mel will follow up with Brian about this.

James noted that there could be some stipulation connected to the grant funds used to develop the site and build the infrastructure. There are related files for James to review and Brian may know this.

**Town Manager's Report** -- James noted that it has been a pleasure for a first day. Thank you for the tour. Glad to be here. Select board glad he's here.

Sue asked Melanie about whether or not Melanie had received any planning board revenue.

Mel reported that she deposited October's and November's batch today. Mel thinks it's all caught up.

Sue noted that there had been no deposit of Planning Board revenues since May. This needs to come to the select board regularly.

There have been all kinds of sub-divisions, building permits and no deposit since May.

Sue sent the planning board administrator an email based on NH statute for \$500+ deposit must be made daily. The administrator was going to get it all ready and turned in to Melanie.

Sue reported receipt of the NaviStar max force engine settlement. Danny Lyons and Sharon worked on this \$7850.56. Tammy will tell Mel where to post this.

For James to consider: Who will be responsible for welfare in Colebrook? Tammy Letson had reported that Northumberland is currently advertising for this position. Perhaps a collaboration between Colebrook and Northumberland would work to make the position more appealing.

James and Tammy will talk about this on Wednesday.

Dawn Cameron asked about the status of the mobile homes in the Colebrook Mobile Home Cooperative.

Greg responded that the town's attorney is waiting for data from the town.

Sue asked Dawn about the Cooperative's monthly water and sewer bill payments to the town, noting that the town gave the coop a good deal. Mel said that every couple of weeks she receives \$1,000.

This amount is not close to what the Town agreed to.

Dawn said that as far as she knew, the Coop was going to pay \$1,000 per month.

The agreement was supposed to be \$7500 per quarter based on actual average use per household, not considering the leaks.

Dawn noted that the Coop's management company does the checks and all the rent collection, billing, paying.

Dawn has asked Dottie to include her on the emails about bills again – Dawn was taken off the emails for some reason.

Dawn went on to say that the Cooperative is the hole – even with a huge rent increase they do not have any money. With the water bills and how much still owed, the cooperative is broke.

Sue Collins noted that the previous 30,000 gallons per day of leaks was fixed to now be approximately 15,000 gallons per day in leaks.

The town agreed to bill a set fee rather than per gallon amount. Her recollection was that this was \$2500 per month.

So, why is the management company only paying \$1000 per month? Dawn thought that maybe that's what the cooperative can afford, so that's what the management company is paying.

Greg then asked: At what point does the town turn off the water?

Dawn responded that the Coop's CBDG grant was approved.

Sue responded that the Town got no notification.

Melanie brought in paperwork: The bills are for approximately \$6000 per quarter. The Town is getting \$1000. The Cooperative owes \$37,000 + \- right now so they just keep going deeper and deeper in debt.

Greg responded that there is money owed to the town. The Coop is not gaining on it, rather they are getting further behind. When does the Town say, "it's enough"?

Dawn said that until the water system is fixed – they are literally drowning.

Greg reviewed that the rate set is the rate set because of actual use - not counting the leaks. The rate was figured out based on the actual use – that is the only amount that the Coop is being asked to pay. This means that they cannot even pay what they are using.

He went on to say that the select board needs to talk with the management company. Town needs a contact person at the company.

Dawn said the contact person is Maria Carlson at Hodges Management.

Dawn said that all the Coop's loan money was used to pay CMA over and above the \$25,000 grant. The Coop just got another \$15,000 invoice from CMA all to pay for the USDA grant.

Sue said that the town is going to need a financial plan from the management company: The management company and the town need to come to a resolution.

Dawn noted that if management company personnel have to travel to Colebrook the Cooperative has to pay them extra.

Maybe a Zoom conference would work during office hours - the cooperative would not have to pay extra for this.

Ray followed up: The selectboard needs to speak with them one way or the other. The next meeting selectboard meeting is at 1pm.

Sue asked: Where is Allen Blake in all of this?

The selectboard wants to meet with the management company at 1:00pm on November 22nd. They are willing to talk via Zoom.

Dawn will connect with Maria at Management Company. Dawn will set up the Zoom and get on the selectboard agenda.

Sue made the motion to adjourn. Ray seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:03pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Christine F Charman*

Christine Charman, Transcriptionist.