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**TOWN OF ASHLAND
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MARCH 23, 2021
ASHLAND TOWN OFFICE
5:30 P.M.**

I. CALL TO ORDER -- Town of Ashland Chairman of the Board Eli Badger called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and requested a roll call of the Selectmen: Selectmen Alan Cilley, Andy Fitch, Bob Letourneau, Ann Barney and Chairman Eli Badger all acknowledged they were present via the video conference, constituting a quorum of the board. Chairman Badger notified attendees that the meeting was occurring over video and teleconference, a provision authorized by the Governor's Emergency Order #12 that waived the physical presence of board members during the Covid-19 pandemic.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Bob Letourneau

To approve the meeting minutes of March 15, 2021

SECOND: Andy Fitch

ROLL CALL VOTE: 5 (Badger, Cilley, Fitch, Barney, Letourneau)

MOTION PASSED

III. OLD BUSINESS

a. Sewer Budget Discrepancy Update – Katherine Davis reported that she communicated with DRA (Michelle Clark) about the under calculation in the approved Sewer Budget and was told that according to RSA 33-2, the town can add the omitted interest payment into the sewer budget without a town vote. Rusty Cross has written a letter to DRA on March 17 to inform them of the change. We may need to update the MS 232 at some point.

b. Ashland Electric Department (AED) Supervisor Position -The board discussed the job description for the AED supervisor. With input from Rob Kuell, the board made the following changes to the description:

1. Remove requirement for bachelor's or master's degree. Include associate's degree in Electric Engineering desirable.
2. Change electric utilities experience from 5 years to a minimum of 5-10
3. Increase supervisory experience from 2 to 3-5 years.

The Board agreed to post the position at a salary range of \$89,900 to \$150,000. Alan Cilley asked how this posting compared with the previous posting. It was posted previously on 10/29/2019. This posting is more extensive and detailed. The job will be

1 posted on the town website, New Hampshire Municipal Association (NHMA), and the
2 Northeast Public Power Association (NEPPA)
3

4 **c. Utility Clerk Position**

5 This position was previously under the supervision of the Utilities Superintendents and
6 now needs to be under Finance/HR and Town Manager. The Board agreed that the
7 position needs to be full time since the town office is short staffed currently. The
8 position would include both utilities assistance and general administrative assistance to
9 the office. The Board and Katherine Davis the 2019 audit recommendation to separate
10 billing responsibilities from the cash receipts collections/posting responsibilities.
11

12 The Board agreed that the position would be a Union position. Katherine will forward
13 the description to Legal for review and work with the Union to ensure appropriate
14 wording and salary range. Per Union rules, the position will be posted in house for 5
15 days before releasing it to the public.
16

17 **MOTION:** Andy Fitch
18 *To post the Utility Clerk Position*

19 **SECOND:** Alan Cilley

20 **ROLL CALL VOTE: 5 – 0**

21 **MOTION PASSED**
22

23 Salary will be discussed in a non-public meeting.
24

25 **d. Ashland Electric Department (AED) Rate Increase**

26 The Board discussed a new rate structure for AED. The Board agreed that a rate
27 increase is necessary given the current financial shortfall. The rate needs to cover
28 ongoing expenses including cost of operations, and salaries as well as repairs,
29 improvements, and upgrades to the infrastructure, most of which is old and out of date.
30 Craig Moore informed the Board that here is a real risk of power outages that could
31 negatively impact our most vulnerable citizens. The last increase to the rates (\$.005)
32 was in 2016 under the previous Electric Department Commission. Craig Moore
33 informed the Board that we sell approximately 17 million KW.
34

35 **MOTION:** Alan Cilley
36 *Raise the rates in each tier by \$.015 (approximately 10%) per KW hour which would*
37 *yield approximately \$300,000 per year.*

38 **SECOND:** None – Motion failed.
39

40 Many suggestions were made and discussed as follows: We currently have a tiered rate
41 structure. A flat rate for residential was suggested. For Industry, we give power only.
42 They supply their own transformers and we just meter it. We do have a metering fee.
43 They pay a demand fee and as the demand increases, they pay more money. That one
44 should not be changed. We should be dropping the electric rate for electric heat. That
45 should revert back to household. Eversource has closed that. Another suggestion was
46 for three tiers: residential, commercial and industrial. A \$.01 rate increase would result

1 in roughly a 5% increase in customer bills and would generate about \$150,000 increased
2 income. Craig Moore suggested leaving the rate structure as is, adding a \$.01 increase
3 across the board for now to generate additional case for salaries, infrastructure repairs,
4 new meters, and substation upgrades.

5
6 Adding to our cash shortfall is the fact that we bought too much power in the past and
7 are committed to that power purchase agreement until 2023. Furthermore, the meters
8 cause a 10%-15% loss. New meters should improve this.

9
10 Given the complexity of the issue, the Board agreed that further discussion prior to the
11 April 5 public hearing was needed. Craig Moore will continue to collect more data.
12 Katherine Davis will contact Steve Farnham at Vermont Public Power Supply Authority
13 (VPPSA) for his availability for a meeting in the next week.

14 15 **IV. NEW BUSINESS**

16
17 **a.** Katherine Davis discussed the Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) grant for the
18 sidewalk project. She reminded the board that this grant was an 80% (NHDOT) - 20% (for
19 the town). In 2020 we paid some of our costs to KV Partners and some additional
20 expenditures are due. The Board needs to authorize those expenditures from the Trustees of
21 the Trust Fund (TOTF) the to release this money from the Road Improvement Capital
22 Reserve Fund (CRF).

23
24 **MOTION:** Bob Letourneau

25 *To expend \$1,140.40 from the Road Improvement CRF to reimburse the town for the 20%*
26 *local portion cost for the final design and bidding assistance to KV Partners.*

27 **SECOND:** Andy Fitch

28 **ROLL CALL VOTE: 5 – 0**

29 **MOTION PASSED**

30
31 **b.** Rusty Cross requested an in-person to discuss septage rates. The Board agreed that the
32 meeting will be held at the Collins Street Conference Room. The topic will be added to the
33 agenda discussing the AED rates.

34 35 **V. NON-PUBLIC SESSION**

36 **MOTION:** Andy Fitch

37 *To enter Non-Public session for the purpose of NH RSA 91-A:3(b), The hiring of any person*
38 *as a public employee*

39 **SECOND:** Bob Letourneau

40 **ROLL CALL VOTE: 5 – 0**

41 **MOTION PASSED:** The Board entered Non-Public Session at 6:54 p.m.

42
43 **VI. PUBLIC SESSION:** The Board returned to public session at 7:22 p.m. The Non-Public
44 minutes were sealed. The Board discussed Town Hall personal issues and agreed that the
45 discussion should be in a non-public meeting.

1 **VII. NON-PUBLIC SESSION**

2 **MOTION:** Alan Cilley

3 *To enter Non-Public session for the purpose of NH RSA 91-A:3(c), Matters which, if*
4 *discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a*
5 *member of this board, unless such person requests an open meeting. This exemption shall*
6 *extend to include any application for assistance of abatement or waiver of a fee, fine or*
7 *other levy, if based on inability to pay or poverty of the applicant.*

8 **SECOND:** Bob Letourneau

9 **ROLL CALL VOTE: 5 – 0**

10 **MOTION PASSED:** The Board entered Non-Public Session at 7:29 p.m.

11

12 **VII. PUBLIC SESSION:** The Board returned to public session at 7:43 p.m. The Board
13 discussed Town Hall personal issues and agreed that the issues will be handled by the
14 Town Manager. Roles and responsibilities need to be clarified.

15

16 **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

17 **MOTION:** Bob Letourneau

18 *To enter Non-Public session for the purpose of NH RSA 91-A:3(b), The hiring of any person*
19 *as a public employee*

20 **SECOND:** Andy Fitch

21 **ROLL CALL VOTE: 5 – 0**

22 **MOTION PASSED:** Meeting was adjourned at 7:44 p.m.

23

24 *Notes prepared by Frances Newton*