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**TOWN OF ASHLAND  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES  
MONDAY, MAY 17, 2021  
UTILITY BUILDING CONFERENCE ROOM  
6 COLLINS STREET  
ASHLAND, NH  
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. Chairman Eli Badger and Selectmen Ann Barney, Alan Cilley and Andy Fitch were present in the conference room and Bob Letourneau was present via video conference. 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. PUBLIC HEARING**

The Board presented the background for the proposed \$ .15 per kWh increase in the Ashland Electric Department rates starting on June 1. The rates will help to cover costs of infrastructure upgrades, new meters, repairs, and salaries. Much of the existing infrastructure is quite old including the substation and poles. The increase is expected to generate an additional \$255,000 in revenue, some of which will be put into a capital reserve fund. There were no questions or comments from the public.

**III. NEW BUSINESS**

**a. Eaton Electrical Management Solutions** – David Ofcarcik of Eaton gave a presentation on remote meter reading for the Electric Department. Currently all of our over 16,000 meters are read manually requiring 160 hours of manpower per month. In addition, the data must be manually entered into our billing system. With the installation of new meters and remote meter reading, the data can be uploaded instantly and transferred to the billing system electronically. The system will vastly improve operational efficiency by providing additional information including power outages, usage to the customer, and peak usage. Data can be used for planning and managing supply costs. The system is secure and meets or exceeds North American Reliability Corporation (NERC) and Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP) standards. The company will provide on-site training. The lead time to purchase the gateways for the system is 8-12 weeks and 16-20 weeks to purchase new meters. The Board will continue to discuss moving forward with this technology.

**b. Sidewalk Bricks at the Common Man** – The previous Town Manager (Charles Smith) had agreed with the owner of the Common Man (Alex Ray) that the bricks Mr. Ray had put into the sidewalk would be removed, put on pallets, and returned to him. Unfortunately, removing these old brittle bricks to preserve them would require a great deal of time and manual labor. The contractor working on the sidewalk project plans to use a skid steer to remove the bricks, which would likely damage most of them. The Board discussed

1 purchasing new pallets of bricks to replace those that are damaged. Craig Moore will  
2 measure the space and Frances Newton will contact Mr. Ray to see if that option is  
3 acceptable to him.  
4

5 **c. Phone/Internet Upgrades – First Light:** The Board discussed a proposal from First  
6 Light, which currently provides our internet phone service. An upgraded phone service and  
7 new phones would be less expensive, a savings of \$24 per month, than our current contract  
8 with a 36-month renewal. The company can also provide faster internet service from our  
9 current plan. Our current bandwidth is 30 Mbps. With a 36-month renewal, the cost can be  
10 significantly reduced, and we have an option to increase our bandwidth to 100 Mbps for  
11 only slightly more than we are currently spending. By consensus, the Board agreed that we  
12 should move forward with the telephone proposal for all town buildings and increase the  
13 bandwidth for the Town Hall and Police Department to 100 Mbps. Frances Newton will  
14 contact First Light to ask about bandwidth increases for all other town buildings. The  
15 company can also provide mobile communicator technology at an additional \$6 per month  
16 per user. This would allow calls to be routed to mobile phones. The Board agreed to add  
17 this service to the Town Manager, DPW, Water & Sewer, Police Department, Fire  
18 Department, and the Electric Department.  
19

20 **d. Vendor Permit for Food Truck at the Ballfield:** Ann Barney received an inquiry  
21 from a vendor who wants to operate a food truck at the ballfield on Sundays for a softball  
22 league. The fee for the permit is \$50 and he wanted to know if this was per day or for the  
23 season. By consensus, the Board agreed to charge \$50 for the season, but the vendor will be  
24 required to provide all information required to obtain the permit including proof of insurance  
25 and indemnification for the town.  
26

27 Ms. Barney also told the Board that the Community Church has requested to use the field on  
28 Sundays during the summer for services. As in the past, they are free to use the park on a  
29 first come/first served basis. They also want to hold free cookouts for those who attend. The  
30 board agreed to waive any vendor fee but would request in writing legal assurances for the  
31 town regarding safety and indemnification. The church further requested to use the town  
32 beach for a baptism on June 13 from 11:30-12:00 AM. The Board again agreed to the  
33 request and asked that written legal assurances from the church be provided.  
34

35 **e. Ashland Historical Society, Whipple House Roof:** David Ruell informed the Board  
36 that the roof at the Whipple House needs repair/replacement. The cost of the project is  
37 estimated to be about \$14,000. The AHS currently only has about \$4000 but plans to submit  
38 grant applications to help defray the cost. Mr. Ruell asked the Board to support their Moose  
39 plate grant application including signing the application and writing a letter of support.  
40

41 **MOTION:** Andy Fitch

42 *To write a letter of support and have the Select Board Chair (Eli Badger) sign the Moose*  
43 *Plate grant application.*

44 **SECOND:** Alan Cilley

45 **ROLL CALL VOTE:** 5-0 in favor.

46 **MOTION PASSED**  
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3 **f. Ashland Electric Department Questions:** A citizen submitted several questions to the  
4 Board/Town about the Electric Department including questions about billing, audits, capital  
5 needs and long-term planning. The answers were supplied by Finance and Craig Moore.  
6 Basically, the billing issues are being addressed by the hiring of new staff and hoped to be  
7 resolved within the next month. The Board is actively seeking to hire new, qualified  
8 personnel and to implement new efficient systems for meters and infrastructure.  
9

10 **g. Update on American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding:** The Board has learned that  
11 \$200,000 will be made available to the Town via funding from ARPA. About half of the  
12 funds may be available as soon as this month. The second half will be sent next year. The  
13 funding may possibly be used for building modifications and improved broadband. The  
14 Board was asked to consider best uses for these funds.  
15

16 **h. Safety Inspection of Town Buildings:** Frances Newton informed the Board that the  
17 New Hampshire Department of Labor plans to conduct a safety audit/inspection of all town  
18 buildings and vehicles on Thursday, May 20, 2021 starting at 9:00 am. Craig Moore will be  
19 available to assist. The inspectors will go to the Library first.  
20  
21

#### 22 **IV. OLD BUSINESS**

23 **a. P-Card Decision:** On May 3, PFM presented information about a purchasing card (P-  
24 card) system. The card can be used for purchases and payments and will replace credit cards  
25 and debit cards. There is no fee for the system.  
26

27 **MOTION:** Andy Fitch

28 *To implement the P-card system as presented by PFM.*

29 **SECOND:** Alan Cilley

30 **ROLL CALL VOTE:** 4 in favor, Bob Letourneau voted nay.

31 **MOTION PASSED**  
32

33 **b. Purchasing Policy:** The Board discussed the new purchasing policy written by  
34 Katherine Davis with input from Fred Welch.  
35

36 **MOTION:** Andy Fitch

37 *To implement the P-card system as presented by PFM.*

38 **SECOND:** Eli Badger

39 **ROLL CALL VOTE:** 5-0.

40 **MOTION PASSED**  
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42 **c. Update on Security System for the Town Hall:** The previous estimate for the key card  
43 entry system provided by A&B Lock and Security was for one door only. To do all four  
44 doors at the town hall, the estimate is \$8,304. The Board agreed to table the discussion until  
45 bids can be obtained from other vendors.  
46

1       **d. Main Street Crosswalk Lights:** Some new cost data was provided for the Board's  
2 consideration for the previously discussed new decorative streetlights at the crosswalks. The  
3 very decorative lights are quite expensive. The light fixture alone could be as much as  
4 \$2,400 and the poles could cost an additional \$3,000-\$4,000. Rob Kuell and Craig Moore  
5 are researching other options of less ornate, black poles that might only cost \$3,200. They  
6 will present these options at the next regularly scheduled board meeting on June 7. For now,  
7 they will ensure that the electric connections for the poles are directly buried at the required  
8 locations rather than putting in concrete bases.

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10   **V. SELECTBOARD ITEMS** – Bob Letourneau had been asked about a citizen complaint  
11 form. This form was eliminated by a prior board. The Board suggested that citizens can  
12 submit complaints/concerns by a letter to the town hall. Mr. Letourneau suggested that it  
13 might be easier for citizens with a form.

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15   **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

16       **MOTION:** Alan Cilley

17       *To adjourn.*

18       **SECOND:** Andy Fitch

19       **ROLL CALL VOTE:** 5 – 0

20       **MOTION PASSED:** Meeting was adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

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35   *Notes prepared by Frances Newton*