

**TOWN OF BOLTON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN, REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, MARCH 2, 2021, 7:00 P.M. VIRTUAL
MINUTES**

		Present	Absent
First Selectman	Sandra Pierog	X	
Deputy First Selectman	Kim Miller	X	
Selectman	Robert DePietro	X	
Selectman	Mike Eremita	X	
Selectman	Robert Morra	X	
Administrative Officer	Joshua Kelly	X	
Members of the Public			

Also present: John Toomey, Nick Lavigne, Eleanor Georges, Adam Teller, Gwen Marrion, Skylar Frazer, Kawan Gordon, Amanda Gordon

1. Call to Order:

By: Sandra Pierog

Time: 7:03 p.m.

Place: Virtual

2. Public Comment:

Pierog said speakers will be limited to 3 minutes each.

John Toomey – Neighboring towns have issued a statement condemning violence following the January 6, 2021 incident at the U.S. Capital. Are the BOS going to do something similar? Pierog said the Democrats put a statement on the website. Morra said if someone breaks the law they should be punished. And that applies for the incidences that happened during the summer. Eremita said nothing has infuriated him to this extent since 09/11.

February 2, 2021, Regular Meeting

Motion: I move the Bolton Board of Selectmen approve the minutes of the February 2, 2021, regular meeting.

By: Pierog

Seconded: Morra

Voting:

For: Pierog, Morra, Miller, Eremita, DePietro

Against: None

Abstain: None

4. Appointments:

None

Pierog said we are still accepting applications for the Diversity Committee. If you want more information reach out to Town Administrator or check the town website.

5. Correspondence:

None

6. Reports & Updates:

A. Subcommittee Reports

Kelly said the Human Resources subcommittee met; those meeting Minutes are included in the packet.

Pierog said she, Morra, and Kelly met with the union reps and delivered the initial offer. We are waiting to hear back from the unions.

B. Properties and Facilities Report

Pierog said the Heritage Farm Commission has picked a vendor for the historical signs for the farm which are being funded by the Department of the Interior.

C. Open Space Management & Acquisition

Gwen Marrison said we need to nail down the trailhead to the Nathan Hale Corridor after the snow is gone. More and more people are using the property. She feels this is the right spot to use as the trailhead and it would be better to move toward a legitimate parking area and announce it as such. Patrice Carson and Ken Geissler, as part of the Four Town Vitality group, are helping with a map and guide for the Corridor. Carson mentioned a timber harvest that Coventry is working on. This was the first Marrison heard of it. A timber harvest requires monitoring and careful extractions. Marrison would like to know the area the harvest is planned for and the access. Pierog said she has not heard anything about this. A timber harvest should have gone to the IWC first and it has not. Kelly was asked to follow up with Eric Trott in Coventry.

D. FY 21 Budget Report

The expenditure report has the Land Use line highlighted because that department is 68.08% expensed which is slightly higher than the three prior fiscal years. This is not a concern of Kelly's. This is the variable cost for the Director of Community Development; hours will be adjusted to have the budget come in as expected. We are meeting expectations at 52.7% as of February 28, 2021. Kelly has contacted department heads to inform them they can make some of the larger expenditures that we have been holding off on due to unknown pandemic possible costs.

Eremita asked if there is outstanding money coming in from the shared use of the Land Use department with other towns? Kelly said those funds from Willington, Ashford, and Andover are coming in but do not get placed into the Land Use budget.

The Tax Collections report shows total collections at 99.4%. Kelly feels this will reach the 100% mark by the end of the fiscal year.

7. Ongoing Business

A. Consider and possibly act on Budget Transfers and/or Appropriation Requests

Kelly explained the five transfers for consideration:

Proposed FY 2021 Transfers - March 2, 2021					
\$ 350.00	To	Library - Professional Education & Training	From	\$ 350.00	Library - Dues & Fees
<i>Rationale: Given that new online courses are being taken this year that have not ever been taken before, the Auditor feels most comfortable having the costs for such programming come out of a new "Profession Education & Training" line rather than the Dues & Fees line.</i>					
\$ 500.00	To	Library - Other Professional Services	From	\$ 500.00	Library - Library Materials
<i>Rationale: To add \$500 to the program budget for enhanced spring programming.</i>					
\$ 4,500.00	To	Administration - Other Technical Services	From	\$ 4,500.00	Administration - Professional & Technical Services
<i>Rationale: The Town is installing a portal onto everyone's computer that will allow for department directors to see their budget expenditures in real time, will allow for POs and requests for payment to be made online, and will allow for online time entry. The installation for this costs more money than we had budgeted in Other Technical Services, but our savings in other areas will easily fund the completion of the project.</i>					
\$ 3,000.00	To	Highway - Waste Water Removal	From	\$ 3,000.00	Highway - Road Repairs
<i>Rationale: Need more in waste water removal due to washing trucks from many storms.</i>					
\$ 68.00	To	Fire Commission - Office Operating Supplies	From	\$ 68.00	Fire Commission - Equipment
<i>Rationale: Required for paying off bill.</i>					

Pierog said the auditor will not issue his report if we don't make the transfer for the Library.

Eremita said being friendly to the environment is important. But we are paying to wash salt off the trucks and capture the waste water all the while dumping hundred tons of salt on the roads every year that can wash off into water ways. It makes no sense. DePietro said washing the salt off the trucks prevents rusting. Pierog said DEEP feels you could be washing petroleum products from the trucks into the streams. Morra said DEEP did not think this through. For small operations it is overkill to the extreme to have to collect the waste water.

Pierog said having department heads being able to watch their budgets in real time is good and makes it easier to manage with the Tyler installation. However, Tyler is not the most user friendly software. Are users going to get training? Kelly said Tyler has been asked to spend a bit of extra time with training so the software will be used. This is an investment that will keep on giving. Pierog said this is a great move.

Motion: I move to approve the budget transfers as presented.

By: Morra

Seconded: DePietro

Voting:

For: Pierog, Morra, Miller, Eremita, DePietro

Against: None

Abstain: None

B. Other

None

8. New Business:

Consider and possibly act on the following:

A. FY 2022 Board of Selectmen budget proposal

Kelly said all of the changes recommended last week have been made with two other items to follow up on.

Pierog said we reduced the health insurance to 17% which is a little more than the cost that we anticipate on a stand-alone basis as CT CHIP will be dissolving. We had insurance consultant look at other vendors all which come in under the 17%. Pierog hates the thought of going to the State partnership plan but we can't ignore the 20% savings. We have talked to the School Superintendent of taking a potential change to the unions. Kelly has scheduled a meeting with the presidents of the Town employees' unions to see if they agree with the change. Morra got clarification from Pierog that on the open market the increase of 17% is over last year's expenditures. Miller asked why we don't want to go with the State partnership plan. Pierog replied that it is underfunded and subsidized by CT taxpayers. There are opinions that this is unsustainable. We would be committed to that plan for three years unless the increases become significant we can leave without penalty by proving another plan provides savings. The insurance consultant is recommending we try this plan. Eremita agrees with the concerns of the state plan. But since it is being funded by taxpayers why don't we take advantage of a plan we are paying in to. Miller asked what is the threshold of costs going up? Kelly can send the threshold to the BOS members. Pierog said we are sending the budget to the Board of Finance with the 17% increase because it may take 2-3 weeks to get buy in from the unions. Kelly said the total Town proper increase is 3.32%. If there is agreement to go with the State health insurance partnership that will drop below 2%.

Kelly said the other follow up item was asked by Morra as to where the money was coming from and where would it go for the revaluation. That would be the from the Administration budget, Administrative Services at \$36k.

Morra said there is a significant amount in flux right now. He would like the total to be under 3% but feels we should err on the side of caution and go forward with this budget initially.

Motion: I move to approve the budget proposal of 3.32%; total expenditures being \$6,493,422.

By: Morra

Seconded: Miller

Discussion: Miller asked how do we notify the Board of Finance (BOF) if we do have to make an adjustment to this proposal. Pierog said she would send a letter to the BOF indicating the change.

Capital Reserve: The Capital Reserve request is an increase 5.05%. The Capital Improvement request increase is 38.89% due to the money being set aside for the revaluation. This is money being moved from one part of the budget to another.

Debt Summary: This is a 8.92% increase in Bond and Note. 34% of the increase is the BOE budgeting for fewer Columbia students next year. The summary reflects the interest going down. The refinancing of bonds will result in \$160k of saving over the next ten years.

Miller asked if the BOS should tighten up the budget now to get to under 3% and tell the BOF that is the best we can do. Morra said the difficulty is not knowing what we will be paying for health insurance. This budget is setting the stage. If we can end up with a 2% increase we still have the potential of having a fairly level tax rate. Miller recalls last year we did an excellent job of tightening up the budget. Last year we got the double benefits of doing this. We pay for it now.

Voting:

For: Pierog, Morra, Miller, DePietro, Eremita with abstention on the Fire Commission budget.

Against: None

Abstain: None

B. FY 2022 Capital Improvement Plan proposal

Pierog said at the last meeting people spoke about having a track. Numbers received today indicated that adding a track build to the repairs of the soccer field would bring the project to just under \$2.3mill from \$1.5mill for only the soccer repairs. Adding a six lane track for \$700k seems too good to be true. The drainage repairs for the soccer fields will cover the proposed area of the track. Eremita said this is less than he would have expected as building a track is an involved project but the drainage would cover the track area as well. Miller said it does seem too good to be true. Originally we were talking about \$1.3mill for a track build. Pierog said these numbers came from Nathan Jacobs and Joe Dillion, Town Engineer. Contractors are hesitant to quote this kind of project right now due to economic uncertainties. This price also includes a 10% contingency. The Members agreed to adding the track to the Capital Improvement Plan proposal as it seems prudent to get this done. The ultimate decision is made by the taxpayers. Kelly suggests amending line item 40 to include the high school track and the soccer fields as it would be hard to **parse** out the drainage between the two projects. That takes that line item from \$1,490,000 to \$2,276,000. The bonded money goes \$3,201,500 and taxpayer ask goes to \$4,086,584.

There is the request to add \$25k in revaluation costs as a project becoming item 58 in taxpayer ask.

Motion: I move to adopt the total Capital Improvement Plan at \$3,627,500 total; with total bonded monies of \$3,381,500 and taxpayer ask of \$4,086,584 subject to correction due to possible math error.

By: Pierog

Seconded: Eremita

Voting:

For: Pierog, Morra, Miller, Eremita

Against: DePietro

Abstain: None

C. Setting a referendum date for the FY 2022 Budget

Pierog said as of April 19, 2021 the Governor's Executive Orders expire and there is no current provision for legal Zoom or hybrid meetings. We could have an in person meeting only for the budget referendum. The Council of Small Towns has asked the governor to reconsider that and asking the Legislature to reconsider those provisions at least through

this year's municipal budget season. Kelly recommendation is to schedule the first budget referendum for Tuesday, May 18th. Morra asked if an in person referendum is held will it be set up at the schools. Pierog said that could be an issue because it would require school to be closed. The schools will be remote on Wednesdays still. If that occurs we may have to hire door monitors to control occupancy in the building. Pierog added that the Secretary of State has said that referendums do not qualify for no-excuse absentee voting as the law currently stands so absentee voting will be only for those out of town or cannot travel due to health reasons. Morra said that can be interpreted loosely enough for those that don't want to be in crowds so anyone that wants to get an absentee ballot can get one, at least in his opinion. That may not be how the Secretary of State sees it. And Pierog said she is not the Town Clerk, that is her decision.

Eremita said in May the Fire Department could leave the trucks outside and likely convince the Chief to use the apparatus bays in lieu of the gymnasium. Pierog and Morra agreed that is an excellent thought.

D. Charter Revision Commission's recommendations

Pierog said the report was put together, well thought out, and easy to understand. Gwen Marrion, John Toomey, Eleanor Georges, and Adam Teller of the Charter Revision Commission were present.

Gwen Marrion presented. The process of reviewing the Town Charter started in October 2019 with twelve items from the BOS in the charge. The Commission added 12-15 more items. Since January 2020 the Commission has been going over each item. The last meeting was on February 4, 2021 and the report was revised based on comments from that meeting. This process is governed by statute. The BOS has until April 9, 2021 to set a public hearing date.

The Commission feels they have come up with a good set of rules that the Town of Bolton can live with. The Members want to hear the public's input and the BOS' input. We need to decide how to structure the questions to be on the ballot in November. Some of the items are hot topic issues; those might be separate questions. But balance has to be considered so people don't get fed up if there are too many questions on the ballot.

Pierog does not understand the provision in Section 10.2 about the Town Administrator not being allowed to serve in other capacities that she finds a bit problematic. The current Town Administrator does not hold other offices or positions that past ones have, such as Town Treasurer or the Open Burning official. Sometimes it is necessary to have the Administrator hold other positions. Eremita said Joyce was a long time fire department member and served for many years. There is an advantage of having another person available in the daytime to serve in the fire department. Excluding the Administrator from this may be detrimental to the town. Morra concurs with Pierog's and Eremita's statements. Administrators have been asked on and off to wear that different hat. They are not continual but they do occur. The BOS has to have that flexibility. Morra does not see an issue where serving in other positions will impact decisions based on budgeting or in doing the job properly.

Eremita asked what the final plan is for the Board of Finance. Marrion said two members would be appointed from the BOS, two from the Board of Education, and three members to be elected. Pierog said that seems like a good compromise. How does minority

representation work? Adam Teller said the BOS and BOE cannot appoint the two members being of the same party. DePietro asked why make this change at all. Marrion said to look at the role of the BOF was one of the original charges. The Commission felt this direction was to examine to see if there were issues with the current BOF. DePietro asked what the issues are. Marrion said there is redundancy in the budget process with no coming together of minds until late in the process. This recommendation would have everyone going through the whole budget process together. DePietro said that implies the BOE has some authority in the Town budget. Eremita said he was the one who pushed for this charge. The only role of the current BOF comes down to setting the mil rate without having any real knowledge of the departments work. The BOF looks at the bottom line with no intimate knowledge of the departments to base the decision on. The three members from the town will bring in the town person's view. Morra feels that recommendation may be discussed the most. This makes the whole process acceptable and efficient. The BOF is a five member board and the recommendation expands that to seven. Eremita is happy with the compromise.

Miller pointed out an editing error in Section 3.5, issue 2 which Marrion made a note of. Miller asked about Section 8.5, item 2 not being changed to limit the number of budget referendums. What would happen if the budget is not passed before the beginning of a new fiscal year. Pierog said the town would operate off the past budget until a budget referendum is passed.

John Toomey found when he served on the BOF he was not pleased with how it operated. One year when the BOE proposed going to all day kindergarten the BOF did not understand why this was being considered. Toomey sat in a kindergarten class twice and discovered the children were doing math and reading at higher grade levels. There have been years when the town had up to five referendums. When someone who actually understood what the BOE needs were and being able to explain that at BOF meetings only one referendum was held in those years. That was his rationale for making the change. This gets somebody on the BOF that knows what is going on.

Pierog said the BOS will set the public hearing on this for March 23, 2021. Pierog is hoping to have the language for the questions from the Commission by that date. After hearing that recommended changes heard during the public hearing may negate the language, Pierog withdrew that request.

E. Setting a public hearing date and time for review of the Charter Revision Commission's recommendations

Motion: I move to set the BOS Public Hearing for Tuesday, March 23rd at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom.

By: Morra

Seconded: Miller

Voting:

For: Pierog, Morra, Miller, Eremita, DePietro

Against: None

Abstain: None

F. Cemetery Care Service proposal

Pierog said we got one response from the vendor who is the current provider. Kelly said this is not the response rate we wanted. However, the rates in the response are level from last year. There was some level of improvement in the service. Kelly recommends approving this ten month contract and continue discussions about improving further.

Motion: I move to approve the Cemetery Care Service contract proposal for the period of April 1, 2021 – November 30, 2021.

By: Miller

Seconded: Eremita

Discussion: DePietro asked if the contract is for a standard rate. Kelly said since we did not get any other responses he cannot comment on a standard rate. It is a level rate however. Morra said the Ellington Jewish cemetery charges \$5k for a burial in addition to the cost of the plot. One thousand dollars is a typical burial cost.

Voting:

For: Pierog, Morra, DePietro, Miller, Eremita

Against: None

Abstain: None

G. Entitlement of 2 Shoddy Mill Road for disability benefit

Motion: I move to positive vote for Noah Brown as permanently disabled.

By: Morra

Seconded: DePietro

Voting:

For: Pierog, Morra, DePietro, Miller, Eremita

Against: None

Abstain: None

H. Release of Involuntary Lien at 20-6 Old Town Road, Vernon

Pierog's supposition of this lien is that someone associated with this property received some social welfare assistance from the town and as a result the lien was placed dated 12-2-1991. The lien was placed by Cannon when she was the Social Services Director. There is nothing in the town records of why it was placed nor does it state a monetary amount. The current owner is trying to sell the property and is asking the lien be removed.

Motion: I move to release the involuntary lien on 20-6 Old Town Road, Vernon.

By: Morra

Seconded: Eremita

Voting:

For: Pierog, Morra, DePietro, Miller, Eremita

Against: None

Abstain: None

9. First Selectman's Report:

A. COVID-19

Pierog said Bolton is up to 228 cases and has been since last Friday. Last Thursday the town dropped from red to yellow status; Bolton is the only town at yellow in the area. The case spread is under control.

B. Bond Refunding

As mentioned earlier this has been completed with a total savings of ~\$160k. They were issued at 2%.

C. Other

Pierog will be providing an update to the Members tomorrow outlining where this stands.

10. Administrative Officer's Report:

A. Administrator Search

Mentioned above.

B. Administrator's Goals

There are continued discussions on fixing and making an overhaul of the website especially considering making it ADA compliant.

Supervisors will have an outside facilitator come in for Setting Expectations session to help to manage that. The new Administrator will be able to have someone come in to manage this and help that person to make some bonds and connections from the outset for working with the supervisors as a team.

Work continues on the Standard Operating Procedures and diversity training.

UConn students continue to work on the draft schematics for Town Hall.

HR subcommittee has made a point of looking over the proposed policies. This will be a positive change as opposed to the 1993 edition based on the comments received so far.

C. Bids & RFPs

We have collected the banking RFPs. More information will be forthcoming to the BOS.

The Cemetery Care bid was discussed previously.

Pierog mentioned the Heritage Farm Committee has accepted a proposal from the three received for the historical signage.

D. Other

None

11. Adjournment:

Motion: I move to adjourn at 9:05 p.m.

By: Eremita

Seconded: DePietro

Voting:

For: Pierog, Morra, DePietro, Miller, Eremita

Against: None

Abstain: None

Respectfully Submitted,

Yvonne B. Filip

Yvonne B. Filip, Board of Selectmen Recording Secretary

Please see minutes of subsequent meetings for corrections to these minutes and any corrections hereto.