



Town of Bolton

222 BOLTON CENTER ROAD • BOLTON, CT 06043

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MONDAY, MAY 10, 2021- 6 P.M. VIRTUAL
SPECIAL MEETING
MINUTES**

The Board of Selectmen held a Special meeting on May 10, 2021 virtually by zoom with First Selectman Sandra Pierog presiding. Also in attendance were Selectmen: Robert Morra, Kimberly Miller, Robert DePietro and Mike Eremita. Members of the public included: Fire Chief Bruce Dixon, Chip White, BVFD Chairman John Morianos, Bernice Dixon and Board of Finance Chair Emily Bradley.

1. Call to Order

Sandra Pierog called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

2. Consider and Possibly Act on Approval of Budget Process Extension in Accordance with Governor's Executive Order 10 E.

Sandra Pierog stated the extension of the budget approval process is in accordance with the Governor's Executive Order 10E; which allows the Board of Selectmen to act by extending the budget approval process beyond the date our charter gives which is May 20, 2021.

Motion: I move that the Board of Selectman extend the budget approval process.

By: Bob Morra

Seconded: Kim Miller

Discussion: Kim Miller asked if the only negative to extending the budget approval process was that we can't do the absentee balloting. Sandra Pierog stated the only negative she's aware of at this point is that it's possible, not probable, but possible that we will not be able to use the no excuse absentee balloting which expires May 19, 2021.

Bob Morra said it means this will be done as it has been done in the past. If you're out of town you can get an absentee ballot as you normally had. Most of our voters are accustomed to that and it's not going to be a big issue. Sandra Pierog then stated that she believes some people who are extremely cautious about being in crowds and groups may have a problem; but it's the Town Clerk's decision whether or not she thinks your excuse is valid.

Bruce Dixon then stated there were a number of people including the Registrar of Voters that could not access this meeting with the given zoom information on the agenda. Jim Rupert, Kim Miller, Bruce Dixon and Sandra Pierog all passed the correct information to those in need and they were admitted to the meeting.

Before the zoom issue a motion was put on the floor to extend the budget process Time.

Voting:

For: Pierog, Morra, DePietro, Miller, Eremita

Against: None

Abstain: None

3. **Consider and Possibly Act on Setting a New Date for the Budget Referendum.**

Sandra Pierog reported that the dates of June 8 and June 9, 2021 originally selected for the budget referendum needed to be changed because the Registrar of Voters have a mandatory training both these days and need time to set up for the referendum.

Motion: I move that the Board of Selectmen move the budget referendum date to June 15, 2021 at the same location (St. Maurice Parish) during the same hours (6 a.m. to 8 p.m.).

By: Bob Morra

Seconded: Bob DePietro.

Discussion: Kim Miller asked if the fiscal year starts July 1st and the budget doesn't pass how is that going to work.

Sandra Pierog answered that there are several alternatives in several state statutes that we can choose.

1. We can send out the bills and if needed we can then send a supplemental bill.
2. We can hold the bills and then send them out with an extended payment time of 30 days.
3. If the budget fails a certain amount of times then we're stuck with last year's budget. (It is believed this happens after the 4th time the budget fails).

4. **Consider and Possibly Act on Funding for Repairs to Engine Tanker 334.**

Bruce Dixon gave an update on ET334. He stated that both John Morianos, Chairman of the Bolton Fire Department and Jim Rupert Administrative Officer were on the call this evening and had been apprised about this situation from the beginning.

Bruce Dixon shared that last Tuesday, May 4, 2021 he received a call at approximately 10-10:15 a.m. from Chip White who was on his way back from Watertown that morning driving ET334 and was broken down on 384 due to an anti-freeze leak. Chip had taken the truck to Watertown for a welding patch to be done to a suction hose (water pump system issue) which the department had found two weeks earlier during a live training exercise in Willimantic. Bruce first asked the town highway department to look at the leak and see if they could patch it and they could not.

On his way to the highway Chief Dixon called for a wrecker from Axle & Spindle out of Manchester. Chip and Bruce assisted Axle & Spindle to get the truck on the wrecker and then it was taken to the main Detroit Allison diesel dealer (now called Stewart & Stevenson) in Middletown. Stewart and Stevenson has been out to do emergency repairs in Bolton to fix other fire department vehicles for us in the past two months.

As of Tuesday all that was known was there was an anti-freeze leak. Bruce Dixon then notified Tolland County dispatch.

Wednesday around 11-11:30 a.m. Bruce spoke with a Stewart & Stevenson mechanic and supervisor who told him the engine had a blown seal. Bruce reported this truck does not have a head gasket it has 24 seals and if a seal breaks the anti-freeze then goes into the engine, valves, cylinders and oil pan and you have a failure of the main bearing.

Chip White, Lance Dimock and Bruce Dixon then had a conversation and started calling around to other engine companies to see what kind of competitive pricing they could find for this engine to be fixed. One dealer stated that he wouldn't touch the engine because it's not manufactured anymore and it's very difficult to find parts.

At 4:35 p.m. on Friday Bruce and Chip White spoke with the Service Manager at Stewart & Stevenson.

They discussed the different options available for fixing this truck.

1. Take our engine block and hone it down and get parts. This is hard as the engine is so old and not manufactured anymore and covid is also affecting things.
2. Another option which the service manager did not elaborate on at the time was brought up and he told us we would probably be happy about if it worked out.

Chief Dixon reported the fire department has looked at moving all the equipment off of ET334 onto other trucks in town. An emergency operations meeting was held with the entire fire department regarding moving equipment around on trucks and response from different apparatus. Bruce has also reached out to other fire chiefs and a manufacturer in the area to see if there are any spare or loner trucks that Bolton can use but there are none available. Waiting on one other call back from one other municipality and waiting to hear within a week if there is a chance for a rental.

Chief Dixon's conversation with the service manager Friday afternoon revealed that it would cost just under \$50,000 to replace the engine in the truck and they believe they can have the engine repaired in 60 days.

Kim Miller clarified that the engine is "dead" and our only options are replacing it with a new engine or rebuilt one. She then stated in our capital plan we are planning on purchasing a new truck. Is it feasible to not fix this truck and do a long term rental until we purchase the new one?

Mike Eremita spoke about a rental truck we had when the tanker was rebuilt and repaired. The previous rental cost \$4,000 per month. If we were to order our new engine on July 1st of this year, it would be another 9-12 months before we received it. So, \$4,000 a month for a year puts us at \$48,000 spent with nothing to show at the end of it. He also shared, if we borrow a loner truck we need to be aware that we are also responsible for any repairs and replacement cost for that vehicle. Whereas, if we spend the \$50,000 now to repair the one that just broke down, we'd have a good spare on hand.

Bruce Dixon then mentioned a letter John Morianos sent to the board before ET 334 broke down. In the letter John spoke about potentially keeping the current truck as a spare for the 12-18 months until the new one came in and/or until a major repair was needed. Then they would sell the spare as junk.

Sandra Pierog stated they had received the letter but felt this was a discussion for another time, but she appreciated Mike Eremita's comments on borrowing an engine because the replacement cost if we break it is not something she had thought of.

Bruce Dixon then spoke to a comment Kim Miller made in regards to how long does it take to get a new engine? Bruce stated they were under the impression that on July 1st if the new budget had passed with the capital they would then be able to order the new truck. But recently he heard that the new truck would not be able to be ordered until the spring of 2022 due to the bonding issue and asked Sandra Pierog if this was true.

Sandra Pierog stated there were two issues.

1. The current plan of the Board of Selectmen is to include the new truck in a larger bonding issue.
2. A larger bonding issue needs to be approved or even the purchase of the truck needs to be approved because it would include borrowing.

Sandra shared it does require action by the Board of Selectmen, then the Board of Finance, then a town meeting where our residents' have the right to petition that to referendum. All these take time and the cost of borrowing for just the fire truck is almost the same cost as what we would have to bond on the fire truck. The cost of borrowing \$680,000 which is in the capital plan right now approaches the same cost as if we were to borrow \$7 million. Sandra then stated if there's any way possible to repair this truck and increase its life to avoid the bonding cost until we can put a full package together with the new truck, I hope you'll continue moving forward with it.

Bob Morra agreed that putting the \$50,000 in to repair the current truck is good money. As it stands now that truck has virtually no value. This repair will increase the life of the vehicle for at least five years as an effective piece of apparatus, whether we keep this or not, it will serve the town and the department.

Sandra Pierog then asked if this would be a new engine we would be getting or a remanufactured one. Bruce Dixon then clarified it would not be a brand new one but a remanufactured engine; to which Bob Morra still agreed would increase the life and runtime of the vehicle and was worth the cost.

Sandra Pierog then asked a technical question about the remanufactured engine. Her understanding the existing engine is a two-stroke and they don't make those any more. Will the remanufactured engine be a four stroke then?

Chip White stated the current engine is a 6 speed 92 Detroit with a 4 stroke and it will be replaced with the same. This engine won't be new because it is not made anymore at Detroit because they sold all the tooling to it due to the emissions issue.

Kim Miller then brought up that the Board of Selectmen had just approved a number of purchases the week before at a meeting for approximately \$30 -\$40K; and was this something the board needed to look at now as an option to fund this repair?

Mike Eremita replied that the town was prepared to turn back an additional \$125,000 to the Board of Finance above and beyond what they had guaranteed for next year; but that they also have a rainy day fund; which he believes is the perfect designation for this type of expense. This repair meets the definition of an emergency which is what this fund is for and where he believes the money should come from while the approvals for purchases last week should be left as they were. Mike stated "we did not hide anything at last week's meeting." We knew we had an anti-freeze leak and that's all we knew when we voted last week. We have two options: first, we can use the some of the \$125k we were going to turn back to the Board of Finance; which again was over and above what we told them we would give them and has no effect on last week's vote; or second we can use the rainy day fund. I prefer the rainy day fund but will go along with taking it out of fund balance. We should not go back and reverse what we voted to spend last week. That is not necessary because we have the funds.

Kim Miller then stated that she was concerned that this expenditure was at the end of the fiscal year and how would the auditor look at this would this be a problem as to where we take the money from.

Bob Morra replied that what was voted on last meeting was based on where we were at that time as far as turning funds back. Probably if were very careful we'll have additional funds to turn back. What wer really may be talking about is not \$50,000 from the rainy day fund but probably closer to \$20 - \$25k; but Jim Rupert or Sandra Pierog could probably answer that better.

Sandra Pierog brought up that at Thursday's Board of Finance meeting she told the board that \$125,000 had been identified by the fire department to turn back; however we currently have an emergency and don't know how much this repair might cost and can no longer guarantee any of that money. She also put a freeze on non-emergency purchase orders across the town so there would be funds available with just a transfer from the Board of Selectmen on their own so it could be done quickly. Hearing its only \$50,000 Sandra considered great news. Taking this out of the rainy day fund would require Board of Finance action and town meeting action. If we try to do that this could take a month to get approved; whereas if we take the money out of the \$125, 000 we could vote on it tonight and Bruce could call them tomorrow and tell them he has the approval of a certain amount of money and they can get started.

Kim Miller stated it makes sense and we might as well take it out of the \$125,000 because we're going to have to move money and then put money back in the emergency fund anyways. Sandra Pierog agreed.

Mike Eremita voiced two concerns:

1. He's a big proponent of the rainy day fund. This is why it's there.
2. The purchases that are being held up because of this. We all agreed on the necessary purchase of the trailer and that it would solve another problem the fire department is facing. The trailer and all these other purchases are now on hold. We have the money and all these purchases should not be held up because of this. We're not a poor town. This repair is something that needs to be done as well as these other purchases and they should not be held up.

Sandra Pierog stated that once she has the repair estimate the ban on all the purchase orders will come off immediately.

Motion: I move that the Board of Selectmen reduce the \$125,000 we had anticipated returning to the town of unexpended funds by \$50,000 and those \$50,000 be utilized for repairs of the ET334.

By: Bob Morra

Seconded: Bob DePietro

Sandra then suggested a friendly amendment that we add a 10% contingency to that amount.

Motion: I move that the Board of Selectmen add an amendment adding a 10% contingency to the \$50,000 for repairs of ET334.

By: Bob Morra

Seconded: Bob DePietro

Motion: I move that Jim Rupert, Jill Collins and Sandra Pierog be authorized to arrange transfers within the projected surplus to fire department: equipment repairs in the amount not to exceed \$55,000 for repairs to ET 334.

By: Bob Morra

Seconded: Bob DePietro

Discussion:

Bruce Dixon stated he was concerned about the 60 day time frame and that we were about to go into a new fiscal year and the finance department is already giving him problems. Sandra explained the only time this would be a problem is if the contractor did not get us a quote by June 28th.

Mike Eremita stated he was originally opposed to funding the repair this way but if Sandra is going to release the hold on the on other purchase he will agree to Bob Morra's motion.

Emily Bradley Board of Finance, Chair spoke to the fact that the Board of Finance met last Thursday when they heard about the repair needed for the fire truck. The Board of Finance requested the budget process be extended to make sure they had all the information they could get as far as how much the fire truck repair was going to cost. Next steps are to take the information from tonight along with the health insurance information and come up with an expenditure number for the referendum. We have not made any decision on what that number is yet.

Motion: I move that the Board of Selectmen authorize up to \$55,000 for the repair of ET 334; and that the Administrative Officer, First Selectman and Chief Financial Officer are authorized to do budget transfers from various accounts into the fire department: equipment repairs account.

Voting: Unanimous

For: Pierog, Morra, DePietro, Miller, Eremita

Against: None

Abstain: None

Emily Bradley asked if the remaining balance of \$70,000 left over from the \$125,000 would be put towards next year's budget. Sandra Pierog confirmed this.

5. **Adjournment.**

Sandra Pierog adjourned the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy McCavanagh

See minutes of subsequent meetings for approval of these minutes and any corrections hereto.