



Town of Winchester
1 Richmond Road Winchester, NH 03470

**Minutes of the
Selectmen Meeting**

Wednesday, December 1, 2021

Board members present for the meeting: Ben Kilanski, Lindseigh Picard (by phone), James Rokes, Theresa Sepe and Herbert Stephens. Also, present Margaret Sharra and Rick Meleski.

First order of business: Public Hearing

The Chairman opens the meeting at 6:30 pm.

“Notice of Public Benefit Hearing, Wednesday, December 1, 2021, @ 6:30PM. The Selectmen will hold a public hearing on the public benefit findings of the proposed broadband project to build a Fiber Optic Broadband Network in the Town of Winchester. The proposed broadband project will cover not served and underserved locations as defined by RSA 38:38, I(c).” Selectman Rokes makes a motion to open the public hearing. Selectman Stephens seconds the motion. The motion carries 5-0. The Broadband Committee came before the board/public to present Winchester's Broadband Expansion. Jenn Howe stated that the committee is seeking a grant fund initiative with a private public partnership through Consolidated Communications. With 50% of the funding coming from the State or through federal funds. Some community members maybe subscribers with Consolidated currently and are not satisfied with the internet service. Due to the current speed and reliability. With the broadband expansion project the fiberoptics internet speed will be greater than 400times faster than what we currently have. The fiberoptics technology is the fastest available and allows better service for zoom meetings, google classrooms, gaming, video streaming etc. In 2018, the NH Legislature passed SB 170 which helped to clarify the use of municipal bonding as a revenue source for broadband infrastructure. The broadband committee has been working together for over a year now and has collaborated with Southwest Regional Planning Commission. The 1st step was to seek approval from the Select Board to create a committee, then sent a survey to the residents, took the survey results, and sent out a RFI (request for information) to determine which areas are being served or not and what the internet speeds are. Once that information was received the committee chose a PP Plan with grant funding. The RFP (request for proposal) was sent out. The committee received 3 RFP's; one doesn't have fast enough speeds to meet the requirements and the other 2 was Comcast & Consolidated. The committee agrees that Consolidated provided the most cost-effective option for the town. Lastly, we have to hold 2 public hearing and the Select Board need to choose Consolidated as the provider. Nichole Pelkey spoke on how it will impact Winchester. 18% of the town is underserved, 2400 house. One question that most people will have is if we are to take a bond out and the town votes for the broadband expansion “how will this impact my taxes”? The repayment of the bond will NOT be paid back through taxes. It will be paid back through the residents that opt to subscribe to the service. Anyone that is underserved or currently has highspeed internet and it is optional you don't have to subscribe. If only half of the people who currently are underserved opt into the service about a ¼ of the bond will be paid back within a year. It will be paid back well with the 20-year period. Some of the public benefits are essential to the way we live, work, learn, and play. Access your health benefits with Telehealth, working from home, home schooling, economic benefit to the town, studies show that K-12 students with access to broadband at home are twice as likely to attend college. Natalie Quevedo stated that the reason the committee was here is to discuss the public benefit. By taking out the bond and switching to highspeed internet everyone will be able to upload and download at faster speeds. This will help residents who are telecommuters, students that are learning from home. This is a huge benefit to the whole town. Jen Bellan spoke on the economic development. People want businesses to come to town to help with the tax base. These are 21 century businesses and rely on highspeed internet. Natalie the median household

income in Winchester, NH in 2019 was \$40,425, which was significantly less than the median annual income of \$77,933 across the entire state of New Hampshire. Residents that have lower income tend to pay more for internet service. So the surveys shows that 75% of residents currently use streaming, telehealth, video calling, gaming, and online shopping services. Jen Bellan stated that more Health providers are setting up health portals for patients to speak to the Doctors, make appointments, fill prescriptions. This relies on better internet. Natalie said that 32% of students have to use their cell phones to do their homework because they don't have adequate internet service and 46% have multiple obstacles they need to overcome. Jen Bellan added stated that there are kids that don't have internet. The kids deserve every tool like internet, we need to have internet for them so they can succeed. Natalie said that 93% of people that took the survey rely on the internet to buy a home. We want to boost our economic and encourage people to live in Winchester. The committee did some math on the housing values. Currently we 2410 underserved locations, if these locations were severed the property value could increase by 3.3%. For the 1587 people that are severed their property value could increase by 1.4%. The total net worth of the town increase by \$15,831,989. When the town value goes up it doesn't raise the taxes. Lawrence Wood gave a timeline of the project 12-24 months. Planning/Onsite surveys 45 days, Detail Engineering 45 days, Material Procurement 60 days, construction 180 days, Testing 30 days, System update/release 30 days, Equipment Design/ Procurement 120 days, Equipment Installation 45 days & Test 30 days. Many of these items can be done in conjunction. Natalie asked the board to accept Consolidated proposal and wanted to make it clear that it will not affect the tax rate. Selectman Stephens asked if they would apply for a grant too. Natalie said yes and that Consolidated will help apply for the grant. No Public comments or questions. Selectman Stephens makes a motion to close the public hearing. Selectman Rokes seconds the motion. The motion carries 5-0. Natalie Quevedo stated that the board needs to accept/approve the provider at the 2nd public hearing. Once the board has chosen the provider that's when the negotiations with our Attorney and Consolidated will start.

Second order of business: Minutes & New Business

Barb Depew-Chairman & Jenn Howe-Treasurer from Conant Library came to present their budget to the board. Also attending from the Conant Library Ann Goodrich Bazan-V Chair, Jennifer Levisse & Jennifer Bennett-Secretary. Trustees not attending Denis Murphy, Kristen Landry & Mitty Johnson. Barb introduced the new Library Director Barry Weeks. Jenn asked the board if they had any question on the requested budget. The board had no questions. Selectman Rokes makes a motion to approve the Conant Library budget in the amount of \$89,900. Selectman Sepe seconds the motion. The motion carries 5-0.

Amanda Lunt & Paul Taylor from the Thayer Library presented their budget. Paul stated that the increases are in the Librarian salary, adding an assistant and additional programming. Also increases to the propane & electrical line. Selectman Kilanski stated that there is a price reduction on the rent to offset the salary. Selectman Rokes asked if the utilities are separated for the library & the renter. Amanda said yes last year the board requested that the rental account should pay the portion of the utilizes. Selectman Sepe is not comfortable with approving a budget that doesn't show the revenue and the amount in the Trust Fund. The board tabled the budget until Dec 8th.

The board reviewed the Landfill budget. Selectman Sepe asked the board didn't we discuss hiring someone to oversee the towns interest at Transfer Station. The board stated that we talked about it but didn't make any decisions. Karey stated that we need to approve the budget we don't have time to makes changes to how the Transfer Station should be run. Selectman Rokes said we need to go with we have currently, but we need to start the conversation and discuss the options. Selectman Sepe said I'm not saying to run it ourselves but to hire a person to for our interest. Selectman Kilanski asked would that be a parttime employee. The board stated yes. Selectman Rokes said one of the proposals was the town running it and MDS hauling the trash. Selectman Kilanski stated that was one of the options and cost of the bags with an estimated savings of 35%-45% but no prices for what the charge is for hauling. He stated we would be charged by the tonnage and the trucking fees. Selectman Sepe said that she would be uncomfortable with making the decision to go to pay by the bag. Every time we put it on the ballot it failed. Selectman Kilanski agrees that we need to put it on the ballot this year and have the estimated cost savings and the amount that it would save the town. Selectman Rokes said the only way

we will be able to get people to recycle and stop the commercial use is pay by the bag. Everyone then pays their fair share, and they will recycle because they don't want for the plastic, metal & cardboard. Selectman Kilanski stated that a lot of towns have gone to the bags and got rid of the dump stickers. Selectman Picard said she agrees with Selectman Sepe and put to the community and get some feedback. My household is very mindful of recycling everything and compost and still have a bag of trash a day. I am concern with the impact of pay as you throw. But we do clearly have an issue because we have lost the local control and we do need someone there on site that has Winchester's interest in mind. Is there an opportunity to offset the increase by bringing in our employee. So we can get some metrics on what that looks like in a pay by the bag. Currently its \$20 per household, if we know that there are landlords that are throwing for 4 different households in 1 house maybe we take the approach of having different tiers for payment of the dump stickers. Instead of penalizing the residents that are doing everything they can. There needs to be a longer conversation and maybe roll it out in a phase and bring in an employee in the next budget. Then spend the next year getting feedback from the employee and then go to the community for the next budget on what the best options are. Selectman Rokes said the only thing is now it's the employee's discretion. 1 person can come in with 12bags a week and says he makes that at his household. How do you manage that. Selectman Picard said that's the board setting some parameters for the person monitoring. Selectman Rokes said Peter from MDS had said that the 14 towns they oversee are going to pay by the bag and we are the only ones. The system works. Selectman Stephens stated that we put it on the ballot and the people voted no. Selectman Sepe said we should put it on the ballot and get all the details and let the people decide. If the people decide they don't want to go with the pay by the bag, then we hire a town employee to monitor it. Selectman Kilanski stated that there is an increase of \$36,000. Selectman Rokes said that Peter stated that when the town started the pay by the bag it cut their budget in half. Selectman Stephens said the MDS will not staff or run the Transfer Station if we decide to go to pay by the bag. Only haul the trash. Selectman Sepe said we still have to hire someone to be out there, so you are not going to save that much money. Selectman Rokes makes a motion to approve the Landfill budget in the amount of \$354,654. Selectman Stephens seconds the motion. The motion carries 4-0-1.

The board reviews the minutes of 11/20/21 for approval. Selectman Rokes makes a motion to approve the minutes. Selectman Sepe seconds the motion. Motion carries 4-0-1. The board reviews the minutes of 11/17/21 for approval. Selectman Rokes makes a motion to approve the minutes. Selectman Stephens seconds the motion. Motion carries 3-0-2. Selectman Rokes makes a motion to approve the minutes. Selectman Sepe seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

Property owner at 5 High Street has requested that his 2family structure be billed as 1unit not a 2 unit. The property has been ordered by NHDHHS in 2016 to empty the apartment and cleanup the lead hazard. The Water Department feels that the owner has more than enough time to cleanup the property or make changes like decommissioning the kitchen. Selectman Sepe males amotion to deny the request. Rokes seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0

Margaret Sharra-Deputy Health Officer gave the 2021 local board of health report. *The most pronounced issue in Winchester as well as the world is the COVID-19 pandemic. Since March of 2020 the virus affected all health officers with additional work. The officer has regularly posted virus to keep the residents up to date on town responses to the pandemic and receives constant updates from the state on what to prepare for. The office is always available for residents to call. To date there has been 393 Winchester residents testing positive and there are 16 active cases today. In the state there have been 161,244 residents testing positive, 1716 deaths and currently 392 are hospitalized. These numbers are rising daily. The single most important thing a person can do is get vaccinated. It is expected that Health Officers will continue to take an active role in tracking and the prevention of the corona virus. The state has asked for Health Officers to promote vaccines and keep abreast of clusters or breakouts in their towns. This virus will be with all of us for years to come. It is expected that we will adjust to its ups and downs and people should plan to be getting yearly vaccinations similar to flu shots. The town Health Officer position is open, the most recent person resigned. A town Health Officer is expected to*

abide by the rules of the state and acknowledge COVID-19 is real. Other issues addressed by the health officials this year are unsanitary living conditions, bug infestation, improper collection of household garbage, and foster care inspections. The department has enough safety gear for future inspections next year. I am not seeing any changes next year in general operations of this department. All appointed, current, and future health officers now must complete a 3-hr. training and take a test to be a Health Officer/Deputy Health Officer. Health Officers must also pass a background check. The Health Officer with the BOS will need to create a readiness report to submit the DHHS next year. DHHS will send a template.

Selectman Rokes makes a motion to approve an abatement for multiple tax deed properties in the amount of \$9,266.00 Selectman Sepe seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

Selectman Rokes makes a motion to approve a water abatement for 37 Town Beach Rd. in the amount of \$720.03 Selectman Sepe seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0. Rick asked the board for an amendment, that the owner pays for the meter before the board abated the amount. Selectman Sepe asked Rick why did you approve the abatement if they owe for the meter. Rick said he denied the abatement because its above his authority. Selectman Rokes makes a motion to revisit the motion. Selectman Sepe seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0. Selectman Rokes makes a motion to deny the water abatement for 37 Town Beach Rd. in the amount of \$720.03 Selectman Sepe seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

Intent to cut map 14 lot 11

The board signs the tax deeded properties approved a few weeks ago.

Selectman Rokes makes a motion to approve the supplemental tax warrant in the amount of \$2,071. Selectman Stephens seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0

Selectman Rokes makes a motion to approve the tax warrant in the amount of \$6,840,023 Selectman Sepe seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0

Upcoming dates: **December 4th @ 9am-** Auction 3 Tax Deed Properties, **December 8th @ 6pm-**Public Hearing to review the Town Beach concepts with SFC Engineering & Public Hearing for Winchester Learning Center CDBG Grant Application, **December 15th @ 6:30-**2nd Public Hearing for Broadband & National Grid project presentation, **December 22nd-** no meeting & **December 29 @ 6:30-**Review Warrant Articles. **Budget Committee Dates:** Tuesday, December 7, 2021 @6pm at the School, Monday, December 13, 2021 @6pm at the Town Hall to finish Town Budgets, Tuesday, December 14, 2021 @6pm at the School, Tuesday, December 16, 2021 @6pm at the School (If needed). Public Hearing on Annual Town & School Budgets: **January 13, 2022** (tentatively) Deliberative Session Town & School: **February 5, 2022**

The board reviews and approves the following financial documents:

Selectman Rokes makes a motion to approve payment form the Town Building Capital acct to Gasset Energy in the amount of \$7,100.00. Selectman Stephens seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

Finance Dept asked to readdress the on call pay for the PD. January 2021 the board approve \$25 on call pay. Amy asked for clarification, the PD has been paid the \$25 every 2hr. Selectman Sepe make a motion to approve the Chief request of \$25.00 per night on call and time and half with a 2hr minimum if called out within the on-call hours. Stephens seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0

Third order of business Other:

Selectman Picard gave an update on the RED Committee. Saturday, Dec 11th will be the 1st Holiday Bazar at the Town Hall. Registry your homes for the Winter Wonderland contest by Dec 10th. Maps will be available soon after.

Fourth order of business public comment:

Todd Kilanski asked the board if there is a no cell phone policy at the Select Board table. Selectman Kilanski stated yes. Todd stated It needs to be upheld more. Also Todd made a comment on the Transfer Station and hiring 1 person. That is a burden on 1 person to oversee the Transfer Station. Increasing the dump sticker costs. Everyone needs to pay their fair share.

Nonpublic under RSA 91-A:3II

Selectman Sepe makes a motion to enter nonpublic session under "c & e". Selectman Rokes seconds the motion. The motion carries 5-0. A roll call vote was taken, and members vote "yes" individually, and the board convenes in non-public at 8:41pm.

Adjournment:

The board reconvenes in public session at 9:12pm.

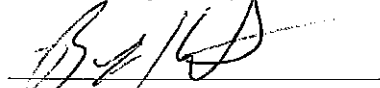
Selectman Sepe makes a motion to seal the minutes under "c & e". Selectman Stephens seconds the motion. The motion carries 5-0.

Selectman Stephens makes a motion to adjourn at 9:15pm. Selectman Picard seconds the motion. The motion carries 5-0.

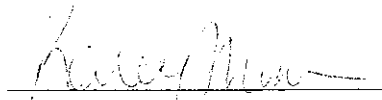
Minutes respectfully submitted:

Karey Miner, Town Administrator

Minutes signed by:



Ben Kilanski, Chairman



Karey Miner