



Town of Winchester
1 Richmond Road Winchester, NH 03470

**Minutes of the
Selectmen Meeting**

Wednesday, December 15, 2021

Board members present for the meeting: Ben Kilanski, Lindseigh Picard, James Rokes, Theresa Sepe and Herbert Stephens. Also, present Amy Bond 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 15, 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 Picard seconds the motion. The motion carries 5-0. The Broadband Committee came before the board/public to present Winchester's Broadband Expansion. Natalie Quevedo 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. With the broadband expansion project the fiber optics internet speed will be greater than 400 times faster than what we currently have. 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. 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 were Comcast & Consolidated. The committee agrees that Consolidated provided the most cost-effective option for the town. Lastly, we have to hold 2 public hearings and the Select Board needs to choose Consolidated as the provider. 18% of the town is underserved, 2400 households. 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 high-speed internet and it is optional you don't have to subscribe. 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. By taking out the bond and switching to high-speed 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 for small businesses and economic development. 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 show that 75% of residents currently use streaming, telehealth, video calling, gaming, and online shopping services. 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. 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 have 2410 underserved locations, if these locations were served 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. The 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. No Public comments or questions. Selectman Rokes makes a motion to close the public hearing. Selectman Stephens seconds the motion. The motion carries 5-0. Selectman Picard makes a motion to choose Consolidated as the provider. Selectman Rokes seconds the motion. The motion carries 5-0.

Second order of business: Minutes & New Business

The board reviews the minutes of 12/8/21 for approval. Selectman Picard makes a motion to approve the minutes. Selectman Sepe seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

Selectman Rokes makes a motion to approve an abatement for map 8 lot 119-H14 in the amount of \$912.00. Selectman Sepe seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

Selectman Rokes makes a motion to approve the supplemental tax warrant for Warwick Senior Housing in the amount of \$2,476, Woodcrest Housing in the amount of \$13,053 and an abatement for Snowbrook in the amount of \$5,110 and Winchester Senior Housing in the amount of \$12. Selectman Picard seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

National Grid-Susan Scarcella came to speak to the board on A1/B2 Transmission Line Asset Condition Refurbishment project overview. Existing overhead ROW from Vernon Switching Station in Vernon, Vermont to Pratts Junction in Sterling, Massachusetts. 3.11 miles and 44 structures in Winchester with 31 parcels. The project is to address the aging condition of the existing 69kV A1 and B2 transmission lines and to improve and maintain system reliability. Originally constructed in 1909, these lines generally remain on the original lattice structures and the existing right of way travels along approximately 60 miles of various levels of challenging terrain. Complete rebuild of transmission line within the existing ROW, including: Replacement of all structures with new structures and foundations designed to 115 kV standards. The new structures will be built above the existing structures, which will be removed after the new lines are placed in service, Installation of new conductor & Right of Way access improvements where necessary. The old structures are between 50-60ft tall, and the new structures will be 100-120ft tall. The right of way width is 100ft wide from the center line. An approximately 4560-foot stretch of the A1/B2 is located along the Pauchaug Brook, with some structures in the brook. NEP is investigating options including: A potential relocation of the ROW to the north of the brook, Potential realignment along the south bank of the brook & Rebuild in the existing location. Project outreach and filed activity started in September 2020 and is ongoing. A project Open House will be scheduled soon to meet with residents, landowners, committees, and the board. They are in the process of putting a website together for information on the project. Susan asked about Local Permitting or will NH Site Evaluation Committee need to be involved. How (if at all) do Winchester's regulations and bylaws apply to this kind of project and/or will the Planning/Zoning Board require a site review. Selectman Rokes asked if the old structure will be removed. Susan stated that they will be removed but the foundation will stay in place. *John Hann spoke on behalf of the Conservation Committee & presented comments and question, John is a member of the Winchester Conservation Commission. We are stakeholders in this project not only because A1/B2 towers are on our land, but also because the Manning Hill area is a conservation priority for us. It has qualities the Master Plan directs us to protect: large tracts of uninterrupted forest and uninterrupted steep slopes, Pulpit Falls, Manning Hill Farm, and the scenic quality of a totally rural stretch of forest between Burt Hill Road and Old Manning Hill Road. It is a quintessential entrance to the State of New Hampshire and defines the rural character of our town. The WCC appreciates the existing crossing of the A1/B2 line over Route 10 because it is so far above the line of sight to be practically invisible. We are not in favor of any change diminishing this scenic quality. To be fully forthcoming, I am a landowner on the existing route. National Grid always has worked cooperatively with me, and Lewis Tree has been careful and cooperative whenever they are on site. I have one question for National Grid to answer now and several others to be answered at your convenience. Here are the questions for later:*

How, when, and at what stages of the planning process will the Town of Winchester and the WCC be able to provide meaningful, substantive input? To whom will the input be provided and who will respond? Who at National Grid is the final arbiter of a decision to propose route relocation to the NH Site Evaluation Committee? Why is the carrying capacity of the A1/B2 Transmission Line being increased from 69 kV to 115 kV? Is modernization the only reason for upgrading the line? What criteria will be used to investigate relocation options? Will existing structures be removed if the line is relocated? Will the existing ROW be eliminated if the line is relocated? Will interconnection be allowed in NH? If a construction road is created to replace structures, will it remain after the project is completed and if so, will National Grid install measures to protect interior areas from unwanted vehicle access? Here is the question to be answered now for the BOS, WCC and the public: The A1/B2 ROW has worked for 112 years, and the new structures will be significantly higher. Modernization and power upgrades can be achieved over the existing route. Will National Grid agree not to use eminent domain when proposing changes to the route or gaining new access improvements? Both Susan and Mike (National Grid) stated that can't answer that question but want to work with the landowners. Barry (National Grid) said that he works on the permitting process and will need to know what the town requires for permitting and if there will need to be a site plan for this project. Selectman Picard said it looks like the next step is for the board to talk to the Planning Board on the permitting for the project. John Hann added that there are safety improvements that should be done on Manning Hill and the road has been on the State of NH 10-year plan for 20 years.

The board reviews and approves the following financial documents:

Selectman Stephens makes a motion to approve waiving the outside detail charge to the Pickle Festival in the amount of \$244.00. Selectman Picard seconds the motion. The motion carries 5-0.

Selectman Stephens makes a motion to approve payment to Scully Architects from the Church Steeple capital reserve fund in the amount of \$3,750.00. Selectman Picard seconds the motion. The motion carries 5-0.

Selectman Rokes makes a motion to approve moving the town accounts into the general cash funds and close all other accounts. Selectman Picard seconds the motion. The motion carries 5-0. Amy added that the accounts will be closed once all checks have cleared the accounts. Hope to have this completed by end of February.

Selectman Picard makes a motion to approve payment to CAG from the Ambulance billing fund in the amount of \$1,138.86. Selectman Rokes seconds the motion. The motion carries 5-0.

Selectman Rokes makes a motion to approve Avitar's Mapping 1year Agreement in the amount of \$3,675. Selectman Picard seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

Selectman Rokes makes a motion to approve Standard Powers reimbursement agreement with increase rate of \$0.005. Selectman Picard seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0.

Jim & Danielle will be helping Hinsdale's Town Clerks Office for a few days and will be charging them an hourly rate. The board thanked Jim for helping Hinsdale.

Third order of business Other:

Selectman Stephens makes a motion to approve a firework permit for 196 Old Hinsdale Rd. for 12/31/21 from dark to 11pm. Selectman Picard seconds the motion. The motion carries 5-0.

Natalie Quevedo asked the board to review the Broadband mailer and if they have any questions/changes. The board had a few changes. Natalie stated that she will make the changes and send a new version to the board next week.

Natalie Quevedo asked the board if the Broadband Committee could use the Attorney that Renelle-bond agent recommended to the broadband committee, Attorney John Ratigan from DTC Law Firm. Selectman Picard made a motion to approve using John Ratigan from DTC up to \$2000 and if the Bond fails, he agrees to not charge the Town. Selectman Sepe seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0

Selectman Kilanski gave the board and update on the budget Committees meetings. 12/13/21 the Budget Committee finished and approved the last of the Town budgets. 12/14/21 the Budget Committee finished and approved the last of the school budget with a decrease of \$118,000.

Karey let the board know she dropped off the County Tax bill and this year we didn't need to take out a Tax Anticipation Note.

Karey reminded the board no meeting Dec 22nd. Dec 29th the board will review warrant articles.

Fourth order of business public comment:

N/A

Nonpublic under RSA 91-A:3II

Selectman Stephens makes a motion to enter nonpublic session under "c & e". Selectman Picard 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 8:25pm.

Adjournment:

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

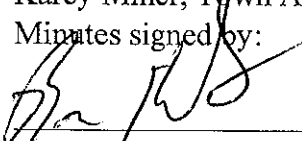
Selectman Sepe makes a motion to seal the minutes under "c & e". Selectman Stephens seconds the motion. The motion carries 5-0.

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

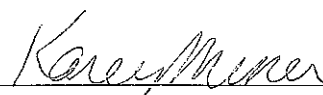
Minutes respectfully submitted:

Karey Miner, Town Administrator

Minutes signed by:



Ben Kilanski, Chairman



Karey Miner