

# Town of Fairfield Selectboard Minutes

December 30, 2024

In Attendance: Gavin Ryan, Ron Bocash, Brian Dubie and David Persons

Roads: Absent

Town Clerk: Absent

Town Administrator/ Recording Secretary: Cathy Ainsworth

Visitors: Sarah Allerton, Peter Burns, Julia Callan, Larry Edelson, Susan Magnan

## **Gavin Ryan called the Selectboard to order.**

1. Susan Magnan made a motion to call a special meeting of the Bent Northrop Memorial Library (BNML) Trustees to order. Peter Burns Seconded. All in favor. Sarah, Larry, Sue and Peter provided an overview of the 2025 BNML budget, which grew 9.3% but with a 0% increase to the tax request. The budget included increased staffing, due to high library activity. They also increased staff pay, to become more equitable compared to the same positions elsewhere in the state. They are offsetting increased expenses by utilizing revenue from surplus and the trailing 3-year average of their investment account. They answered questions from the Selectboard. Susan made a motion to close the special meeting of the BNML Trustees at 7:14PM. Peter Seconded. All in favor.

**Brian made a motion to add three items to the Selectboard Agenda: Appointment/ Reappointment of the Planning & Zoning Board members; Executive Session for a personnel matter; and Executive Session to discuss a legal matter. Ron Seconded. All in favor.**

**Brian made a motion to approve the minutes of 12/09/2024. David seconded. All in favor.**

**Brian made a motion to approve the minutes of 12/19/2024 Ron seconded. All in favor.**

2. Julia Callan applied to be appointed to the Planning & Zoning 2-year term expiring at the end of December, and Peter Burns is not seeking reappointment to this seat. Dan Pipes is requesting reappointment to the 3-year seat he holds, expiring at the end of December. The Selectboard invited Julia to talk with them about her interest in the position. She explained that she wants to help the Planning & Zoning Board to find a balanced path forward. The Selectboard discussed the impact the recent reappraisal and school tax increases have had on Fairfield and said that they would like economic issues to continue to be part of the discussion with the Planning Commission's bylaws update project. Brian encouraged candid, straight forward dialogue to find a path forward and that people who may not have made the meetings be engaged and invited to provide their perspectives. She said she has been engaged with the discussions and feels ready to participate as a board member.

**Brian made a motion to reappoint Dan Pipes to the 3-year term on the Planning & Zoning Board. Ron Seconded. All in favor.**

**Brian made a motion to appoint Julia Callan to the 2-year term on the Planning & Zoning Board. Ron Seconded. All in favor.**

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3. Cathy reports that she submitted a Better Roads grant for the McKenzie road, using the hydraulic study conducted by Tyler Billingsley earlier in the year and some ditching corrections included in the Friends of Lake Champlain's Fairfield Watershed study. The total project budget was \$75 K and has a 20% match requirement. The grant's maximum request amount is \$60K.
4. Bill Kimball plans to attend the Selectboard's January 13 meeting, in preparation for his January 15 School Board meeting where the school budget will be on the agenda. Cathy shared a paper copy of his PowerPoint and invited their feedback to Mr. Kimball.
5. Cathy has been working on year end efforts (taxes, budgets, NEMRC accounting, etc.) She met with Amanda about the Excise tax and budget report formatting.
6. The Selectboard reviewed changes to the budget since the last meeting, based on the Selectboard's suggestion of a 3% Cost of Living increase, assuming a \$75,000 surplus. Cathy said she expects about \$150,000 surplus. Ron suggested decreasing the tax rate lower using the actual surplus amount for revenue. David suggested not using the full surplus amount. Gavin wondered whether to use more surplus for equipment. The Selectboard discussed equipment needs. Cathy to bring the equipment fund balances, including their maturity dates, the balance owed on the truck that is currently ordered and an easy to read, accurate budget to discuss at the next meeting. Cathy wondered if the Selectboard would agree on a COLA to enter into the payroll module for 2025.

**Ron made a motion to apply a Cost-of-Living Adjustment for employees to the next payroll, of 3%. Brian Seconded. All in favor.**

**Brian made a motion to approve the warrants. David seconded. All in favor.**

7. The Selectboard discussed whether to submit a letter of support for Amcare. David had a discussion with the Director, and the letter is no longer needed.

**Brian made a motion to enter executive session to discuss a legal matter. Ron seconded. All in favor.**

**Brian made a motion to exit executive session. Ron Seconded. All in favor. Discussion only.**

**Brian made a motion to enter executive session to discuss a personnel matter. Gavin Seconded. All in favor.**

**Brian made a motion to enter executive session. Ron Seconded. All in favor. Town Administrator's Performance Review completed.**

8. The Selectboard suggested that the January 13 meeting begin at 6PM.
9. The Selectboard said any appropriation requests need to participate in the signature process, as has been the practice for the past few years.

**Brian made a motion to adjourn. Ron seconded. All in favor.**

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