

Town of Westmoreland
Minutes of the Public Bond Hearing
Thursday, February 18, 2021
11:00AM

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Selectmen - Russ Austin, Frank Reeder and Clayton Stalker

The meeting was held in-person in the large town hall meeting room following Covid-19 regulations; masks were required and chairs were positioned 6' apart.

1. Chair Frank Reeder opened the hearing at 11:00am per RSA 33:8-a to discuss the Town of Westmoreland obtaining a \$2,272,500 million dollar bond for the purpose of building a new fire station on Town-owned land at 772 Route 63 (behind the current fire station). The bond will include architectural and engineering work, building construction, site work, permit fees and interior equipment.
2. Estimated Schedule from New Hampshire Municipal Bond Bank (NHMBB):
A spreadsheet (attached) was distributed showing the tax impact on the bond over twenty years. The estimated tax rate increase was based on the 2020 assessed valuation of the town (\$166,370,954) and used a 2.5% fixed interest rate. NHMBB expects the interest rate to be lower based on their January 2021 bond sale.
If passed at the March 10, 2021 ballot voting, the first payment would be due in 2022.
3. Chairman Reeder went over the procedure for the Alternate Ballot Voting as opposed to holding a town meeting in 2021 due to Covid-19. A virtual hearing will be held Friday, February 26th where the Warrant Articles will be read and explained. A second hearing will be held Wednesday, March 3rd to answer questions and discuss comments that will be submitted following the 1st hearing. Any questions that come in regarding the Fire Station article will be forwarded to Tom Finnegan, Chair of the Fire Department Facility Advisory Committee (FDFAC).
The Fire Station article will be on a separate ballot and requires a 3/5 majority vote to pass.
4. Tom Finnegan stated that in addition to the recent informational mailing that the FSAC sent to every home in town, that fire department members will be at the Recycling Center and at the Fire Station on February 27th to answer questions from residents about the proposed station.
5. Jo Ann LaBarre asked if the construction costs were based on pre-Covid numbers as the cost of materials has increased so much. Tom Finnegan stated that the costs were based on current rates. Chairman Reeder added that he had talked to Owner's Rep Steve Horton regarding this issue and that Mr. Horton said that the ups & downs of construction costs were considered.

6. Wes Staples stated his concern over the increase in the tax rate and the fact that the town did not have a wetland permit yet to build in the FDFAC preferred location. Chairman Reeder stated that no further money will be spent on the project until a permit from the NH Department of Environmental Services is obtained.
7. Chief Harry Nelson stated that the Dick Delano property on Route 63 might be available and be a good location, but it would cost more money to purchase the property. Wes Staples added that the property is very wet also. Chief Nelson also added that he hopes the town will continue to have town meetings and not ballot voting. The Selectmen assured him that following the changes in 2021 due to Covid-19, the town meeting process will return.
8. There being no further questions or comments, Chairman Reeder closed the hearing at 11:30AM.

Submitted by:

Jo Ann LaBarre, Town Administrator