

BOARD OF SELECTMEN – AUGUST 23, 2022
MEETING MINUTES
BARKHAMSTED TOWN HALL

Meeting called to order at 7:14 PM. Present were First Selectman Don Stein and Selectmen Ray Pech and Nick Lukiwsky

DELEGATIONS: No delegations were present.

PUBLIC COMMENT: No public comments were made.

MOTION: Ray Pech made a motion, seconded by Nick Lukiwsky, and passed unanimously to approve the minutes of the July 28, 2022 meeting and the August 11, 2022 special meeting.

MOTION: A motion was made by Nick Lukiwsky, seconded by Ray Pech, and passed unanimously to approve the following Tax Refunds:

Brian Fox	\$ 21.49	Credit
James Buchok	\$ 79.44	Refund
Priscilla Slater	\$ 60.82	Refund
Estate of Carroll Hughes	\$ 80.43	Refund
Peter Persechino	\$ 290.78	Refund
Steven Root	\$ 795.72	Refund

DISCUSSION: Nick Maltby, President, and Lew Patchett, Treasurer, of the New Hartford Volunteer Ambulance Association, met with the Selectmen in an effort to better tie the ambulance service to the towns and to better understand the Town’s expectations. One of the discussion points was that the Selectmen would be interested in the number and types of calls that the NHVAA makes. This information is actually available through the monthly newsletter published by the association and also by Litchfield County Dispatch (Dan Soule). One of the discussion points was that even though the NHVAA has the PSA (Primary Service Area) for Barkhamsted, the town is divided between the Winsted Area Ambulance Association and the NHVAA to improve proximity and response times. LCD can also provide monthly data on the calls made by both Winsted and New Hartford ambulance associations in town.

One of the biggest problems being faced by Emergency Medical Service (EMS) agencies in the region is the lack of staffing, both volunteers and paid, and the increased costs resulting from the need to hire more paid staff at increased wage rates. At this point, 85% of the shifts have paid staff and that obviously affects the salary structure. The other problem is that the equipment in the region is aging and frequently out of service and there is a greater need for mutual aid, which can leave a region without adequate coverage if needed. There is also a greater need for grants to help bolster the budgets and Nick is working with the Northwest CT

Community Foundation. Nick also mentioned that he thought there needs to be consideration of a more regional approach to EMS and that maybe a name change for his organization might be appropriate due to the area that it covers.

Nick and Lew also provided budgetary data for the Association. Their net revenue has been decreasing over the past years, which affects their fund status. This is also a critical problem due to aging equipment, rising prices and the lack of resources to set aside funds for replacing the equipment. Don Stein also stated that he would be willing to entertain an assessment increase if needed to maintain the level of service needed by the Town, as this is such a critical service for the residents.

DISCUSSION: The Selectmen reviewed the end-of-the year General Government expenditures for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2022, including the transfers among the accounts and the transfer of Town Aid Road funds into the Highway Department budget. With the transfer of \$115,414 from TAR, the final budget shows a surplus of \$1,365.21 for the fiscal year. There were 34 transfers between the various accounts to bring them all within their budget, for a total of \$105, 823 (both into and out of the various line items).

Ray Pech made a motion, seconded by Nick Lukiwsky, and passed unanimously to approve the transfers among the individual line item, as presented. These transfers will be presented to the Board of Finance for their approval at their September meeting.

DISCUSSION: Don Stein presented the July actuals for the current year's General Government budget. The figures are as expected for the first month of the year, as there is a combination of full year invoices for items such as insurance and internet services for some of the offices, monthly invoices for work performed or supplies bought, and the normal monthly salary and other related expenses. The first month is 8.33% of the year, and the expenditures were 12.38% based on the annual bills which were paid.

DISCUSSION: The Selectmen reviewed the road budgets and the plan based on the use of Town Aid Roads funds for the FY 21/22 budgets and the expected receipt of FY 22/23 State grants and the Town budget. Taking into account grants and town funds, there is currently \$422,904 available and the projects that are planned total \$422,175. That includes a reserve of \$50,000 for Spring 2023, funds for cost share for the STEAP grant for restoration of the west riverbank on the Farmington River, paving and reconstruction of Wallens Hill Road, and doing catch basins and preparation for paving on Briarwood. The engineering for the water line extension from Winsted along Old New Hartford Road is also in the town budget, as is paving of Shannon Drive using a combination of ARPA funds and town funds. Repaving of the Senior Center parking lot is underway using ARPA funds, as are funds for tree work to supplement the town budgets. The plan includes repaving Briarwood using next year's budget after the prep work that is being done this year.

DISCUSSION: The Selectmen reviewed the ARPA budgets and expenditures that will be reviewed by the committee at a meeting to be called on September 20, and also at the Board of Finance meeting scheduled that same night. No new projects have been approved and the expenditures to date are slightly over budget by 0.4% (\$955 out of a total expenditure of \$241,905). At the upcoming meetings, approval will be requested for the expenditures to support the Emergency Medical Responder course and the repairs to the school parking lot that had been previously approved by the Selectmen and Rich Winn, Board of Finance chair. There will also be discussion of the cost of extending the water lines from Winsted if the town is not successful in receiving the STEAP grant for this project and also for the cost of the Senior Center kitchen modifications. The low bid for the kitchen is either \$55,000 or \$58,000 depending on which option is chosen, but the ARPA budget for this project was \$40,000, including the commercial kitchen hood. This project will be presented at the next committee meeting to determine if increasing the budget for this project is doable.

DISCUSSION: The Selectmen discussed options for heating oil and diesel fuel purchases in the coming year. These options are to continue with Quinoco either on a fixed price, full year basis, or to buy at the market price as needed, or to purchase the full year's needs from an oil consortium being coordinated by EdAdvance, which has been used by many school districts, and which is not open to municipalities. They will be using Easter River Energy as their supplier. The consensus was to wait as long as possible to make a decision in the hopes that prices will decrease, but the final decision was left up to Don Stein. In any case, the Town had budgeted based on last year's prices, and will probably have a deficit on these commodities and salt due to the increases.

DISCUSSION: The Selectmen briefly discussed the possibility of a town-owned internet service for the community based on high-speed broadband from fiber optics. If Federal money that is newly available can be obtained, the Town would be responsible for about 25% of the cost, and the cost of bonding the rest of the construction over a 20-year period could be included in the consumer bills. Assuming a take rate for the service of 60% for this superior speed service, the cost to the residents would be \$89 per month with additional, modest costs for running the fiber down the driveways. The town could consider including that in the project, which would increase the take rate, or have the user pay that cost for that driveway, which would vary based on the length of the driveway. The Selectmen thought this was worth pursuing at least to the point of having realistic figures for the costs, especially since it could also provide competition for the incumbent providers, which could spur them to lower costs or to expedite bringing this service to Town.

OTHER BUSINESS:

- Don Stein reported that he is scheduled to meet with the Director of the

Farmington Valley Health District to discuss their vision for the future and their relationship with the small towns. That meeting will be scheduled in September.

- The Selectmen briefly discussed the sales of the property at 47 and 57 River Road, based on the request from the PZC to consider buying it or buying a piece of it for Town use. The property is currently very close to being sold and Don Stein will meet with the new owners once they have finalized their purchase, in order to better understand their position on retaining the whole property or selling off a piece.
- The Selectmen agreed that the logistics of videoing all their meetings and making recordings available to the public was too challenging and costly. Also of concern was that this practice would have to be expended to all boards and commissions and the availability of the equipment and the training would be very problematic.
- Don Stein will work with the fire, ambulance and State police, including reaching out to LCD to have data to present to the Selectmen on a regular basis with regard to emergency calls that these services make.
- There was a request by the store owner at the Barkhamsted end of West Hill Pond to see if the Town would be interested in purchasing the property. This was deemed to not be feasible and will not be considered further.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Donald S. Stein
First Selectman

The next meeting of the Board of Selectmen will be a Special Meeting on September 20 at 8:00AM. The meeting scheduled for September 13 has been canceled.