

**Gorham Selectmen's Meeting
Monday, October 28, 2019
Gorham Town Hall Public Meeting Room**

Meeting opened at 6:26 pm.

Present: Selectman Michael Waddell, Selectman Judy LeBlanc, Selectman Adam White, Town Manager Denise Vallee, Interim Police Chief John Scarinza, New Police Chief Adam Marsh, April Marsh and their three sons. Berlin Sun Reporter Edith Tucker, Town Clerk/Tax Collector Carol Porter, Minutes Taker Paul Robitaille

No action was taken in Non-public Session of October 7th.

Motion made by Judy LeBlanc to unseal the minutes of October 7th, seconded by Adam White, the selectmen announced the hiring of Adam Marsh as the new Police Chief. Adam will begin his employment on November 4th.

Mr. Marsh thanked the board and was congratulated by the selectmen. The new chief was sworn in by the Town Clerk Carol Porter. John Scarinza, Interim Chief said that Adam is a "great addition to the Gorham police force." Mr. Scarinza will stay on as Interim Chief for one week after Adam starts to coordinate the transition.

Selectman Judy LeBlanc said "thank you" to John Scarinza for acting as the interim for the last six weeks.

Discussion regarding the MS-1 and the tax rate: Town Manager Denise Vallee announced that the town tax rate has decreased \$2.74 per thousand down from \$36.51 last year to 33.77 this year. This is due to an increase of valuation of town utilities of over \$1.6 million and a decrease in the school rate of \$1.53 and town rate of \$.83 per thousand.

A Motion was made by Selectman Judy LeBlanc to apply \$100,000 from the unrestricted fund balance to reduce taxes, seconded by Adam White, all in favor.

Town Manager Denise Vallee said that the town is in compliance with the NH Department of Revenue's recommendations of between 5% and 17% for the retained fund balance as the unrestricted fund balance is at 10.8% of General Operating Expenditures, which is just under the recommended average of 11%.

Selectman Michael Waddell said that the budget is still tight. "Depending on the weather, the highway salt budget could be in the red by the end of the winter season."

Selectman Mike Waddell commented that the ATV lawsuit has now cost the town more than \$50,000 in legal fees and that all the issues except compensation have been dismissed "we have no choice but to defend the town."

Selectman Waddell commented that the Snow Storage Project seems to be tracking in the right direction. That project should be finished on time and may come in under budget.

Selectman Judy LeBlanc spoke about the major transition in town personnel, that the town is in the process of acquiring 2,000 acres for the Town Forest, that 700 ft. of road on Stony Brook Road has been improved. The town is in the process of upgrading their telephone system and internet and is working on a Solar Project. The town has also purchased a new truck for the Fire Department and a cruiser for the Police Department.

Town Manager Denise Vallee said that Phase I of the snow storage project is complete. The debris pile is gone and stumps are gone allowing the area to be graded and filled in for the coming winter for the area where snow will be deposited for snow storage.

Town Manager Denise Vallee has met with Phil Bedard with Couture Construction and the site is being readied for testing of soils and for the installation of the berms and we are waiting for the concrete headwall to come in. The project should be finished by the first week of November. Couture has offered to allow the town to dump snow on his property if the project is not finished in time.

Mr. Scarinza spoke about the conditions of the soils. Will know soon if adjustments of the soils must be made. Selectman Waddell and Mr. Scarinza discussed the coverage over the sewer line and the protection of that line.

Selectman Waddell asked for a Motion to pass over the acceptance of unanticipated revenue because the public hearing was not noticed in time for public knowledge of tonight's meeting. A motion was made by Selectman LeBlanc and seconded by Selectman Adam White. The board was all in favor of passing over.

The Board discussed the MS-1 review with the Assessing Clerk Michelle Lutz. Chairman Waddell said that it looks like the town has maintained its equalization rate of 96.7, close to where we were this year. Michelle Lutz said that after reviewing all the sales in Gorham, she believed that assessing is where it should be. The equalization rate is dropping slowly showing and increase in values. Process will be done through town web-site EQ is dropping slightly which means sales are going up. Land has dropped residential buildings has gone up. Building values have climbed considerably over the last four years drop in commercial has gone down to the assessment given. Town has gained over a 1.6 million in value, most of which was residential buildings.

Mr. Waddell began to speak about Economic Development for commercial property. He wants to get 100 percent participation from the selectmen, the department heads, Planning and Zoning and volunteers on board and headed in the same direction.

The board spoke about a letter TM Vallee will send as a response to Mr. Richards from Gorham Heights regarding a request to repair the culvert at the end of his driveway. When the driveway permit was given, the homeowner was made aware that he is responsible to maintain and repair the culvert.

A request from Water & Sewer was received regarding issuance of a Town credit card. Jessica has been making purchases using her personal credit card. Jessica investigated getting a credit card and it would be simpler to have the card under the town's account. All the billing and payments would be done through the Water & Sewer office. There would be no added work to the town office personnel. The card would have a \$4,000.00 limit. The Board agreed that the Water & Sewer Department may be issued a credit card and that they are fine with the limit of \$4,000.00.

With regard to the Solar project, TM Vallee received a notice that the US Department of Agriculture considers the Gorham Solar project a "transformational project" and is eligible for a grant of \$200,000, but in order to qualify for that grant an energy audit of the town and school buildings would be required. The cost for the energy audit is \$ 6,000.00. Eversource would reimburse the Town \$2,100.00 and Clean Energy NH would reimburse the Town \$1,000. The grant application must be sent in by the end of November. The town manger suggested that the town portion of the energy audit come from the unanticipated fund revenue of \$43,000. An engineering study for roof support at both the Fire Department and Public Works garage would cost \$3,500 per building to ensure that the structures are safe to place solar panels on the roof of the buildings. Total project cost is \$370,500 and the town's electric bills would all be covered, with the exception of 75% of the Town Hall. The School's project could potentially cover the cost for electricity for all the school buildings and for the 75% of the Town Hall. Lighting audits were done for town hall, the Public Works garage and the Fire Station. If improvements are made, this will decrease the amount of cost for these buildings with an estimated saving of \$25,000 over ten years. Chairman Waddell asked for a Motion to spend \$ 9,000.00. The Motion was made by Selectman Adam White, seconded by Selectman Judy LeBlanc and all were in favor.

Chairman Waddell spoke about the coming budget process and the proposed meeting dates. Budget process: Monday, the 23rd of December, he noted that no meeting will be held due to Christmas. On Dec. 16th, there will be an overall budget review.

A Motion was made by Selectman White and seconded by Selectman Judy LeBlanc to accept the schedule for budget review. A couple of meeting dates are in addition to the regular meeting schedule. 11-18 Budget review Town Clerk/Tax Collector and Assessing; 11-25-19 Police, Fire & EMS; 12-19 Finance & Capital Reserve funds; 12-16 overall Budget review; 12/30 regular selectman meeting with approval of Encumbrances. All were in favor of the new meeting dates.

Approval of Contract with George Sansoucy, PBLC for assessment services of commercial properties/utilities: A motion was made by Adam White, seconded by Judy LeBlanc and all in favor.

Approval of Contract to engage Christopher Boldt, Esq. to represent the Town of Gorham regarding an appeal of value by Central Rivers Power. A motion was made to sign the contract by Adam White, seconded by Judy LeBlanc, all in favor.

A motion was made by Selectman LeBlanc and seconded by Selectman White to accept the counteroffer by Portland Pipeline for property & pipeline valuation, all in favor. This will be a

reduction of \$353,000 this year and of \$353,00 next year to a value for Portland Pipeline Corporation of \$1,980,000.

The Warrant for an adjustment on interest for Royalty Inn was signed by the board.

TM Vallee reported that Stony Brook had the last layer of asphalt put down last Friday and that all of the culverts have been replaced. The project is scheduled to be done at the end of the week and should be under budget. We will be working with FEMA to get the 75% reimbursement.

The Libby Pool project is still at the same point. The town has to wait until Nov. 3rd for comments from the Army Corps of Engineers and then the project will begin if the weather cooperates. If not, we will wait to begin in the Spring.

Public Comment: Edith Tucker had a question regarding the Police Chief's salary. TM Vallee responded that Chief Marsh will be paid \$71,000 per year.

There were no selectmen updates.

Town Manger's Report: TM Vallee met with representatives of the Glider Association and they were very happy with the mowing done by Public Works. 45-50 gliders were here this year and there were approximately 250 takeoffs and landings. The Glider Association has been coming here since 1993. Most of the planes are two-seat gliders owned by various clubs. This time of the year is the best time to catch wind waves from Mt. Washington. Gliders can stay up 5-7 hours on the flow. One-third of the participants stayed in hotels, 1/3 camped and 1/3 commuted. The association practices "leave no trace". All gliders must register with the State. The association would like to have more campers on the property and would like to work with the Town to find a place to camp somewhere on the airfield. The association said they would like to be notified of local events in advance of their event so they can attend.

Upgrades for the phone project: The work has been completed by Ray's Electric at the fire station for the installation of the fiber network.

All routers/equipment have been shipped to Concord and are ready for installation within the next few weeks.

FERC Relicensing Project for Lower Gorham Dam: Town Manager Vallee went to the scoping meeting where a review of the Project for all eight dams took place. The licensing project takes five years to complete. The town has until Nov. 23rd to submit comments on the Pre-Application Documents filed with FERC. Our comments will be on recreation availability and a combined approach for area recreation. Chairman Waddell said each relicensing gets to be more complex. Each dam now has their own recreation plan. Mike has skimmed through the 700 pages of documents. What was bought up, was doing a joint recreation project with neighboring towns. Comments from Milan and Dummer have been filed. Chairman Waddell stated that it is important for Gorham to note town issues of property right easements, etc. which need to be settled since the divestiture to Central Rivers Power. The Town had easements and deeds filed with FERC. At the last minute, Eversource converted everything to the licensing process. There

are properties in town where the dam owners have the rights to flood property. This can affect how the property is taxed. The Town needs to find out if this is a problem and needs to research which properties have those easements. The town has 60 million in value from utilities. That issue was not recognized in the last licensing, but it is important to find out what that value to the community is. Flood control for every impoundment is different. Gate management in high flow situations is important for the Town. Chairman Waddell has agreed to write the comments to FERC and TM Vallee will also review the comments. The EPA grant for Recreation Economy proposes the building of a bridge across the Androscoggin for access to trails on the Hogan Road side of the river, which would also improve access from the trails to downtown businesses. It is the hope of the Town to have a collaborative project in order to have money invested from other sources.

TM Vallee said that a telephone conference with the EPA is scheduled for Nov. 4th and that there will be three additional hour to an hour-and-a-half phone meetings to prepare for the Community Workshop which will be held in February and March or perhaps May & June.

TM Vallee attended the North Country Public Safety Foundation annual meeting. The Town of Gorham had several first responders recognized at the meeting for their actions in the Fallen 7 incident in Randolph last June.

Town Manger Vallee and the Planning Board Chairman Paul Robitaille attended the annual North Country Council meeting at the Town & Country Resort. Ms. Vallee spoke about the proposed Economic Development projects proposed for the Town of Gorham and credited Jesse McCreedy for writing the successful grant application for technical assistance for the new bridge and increased access to the Androscoggin River from the downtown village.

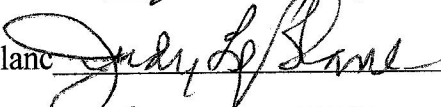
A motion made to accept both public and nonpublic minutes for the meeting of Oct. 7th by Selectman Judy LeBlanc and seconded by Adam White, all in favor.

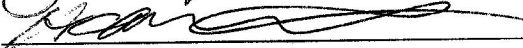
Motion made by Judy Leblanc to adjourn, seconded by Adam White, all in favor.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:17 pm.

Date 11/18/2019

Michael Waddell 

Judy LeBlanc 

Adam White 

Submitted by Paul Robitaille