

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES
TOWN OF EPPING, NEW HAMPSHIRE
December 21, 2020**



VIA ZOOM

ATTENDANCE

Chairman Adam Munguia; Selectmen Bob Jordan, Mike Yergeau, Cody Belanger and Joe Trombley; Town Administrator Gregory C. Dodge. Executive Secretary Joyce Blanchard was excused.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Adam Munguia called the public meeting via Zoom to order at 7:00 PM.

MINUTES

Minutes from the December 14, 2020 Selectmen's meeting were submitted for approval.

Motion by Selectman Bob Jordan to approve the minutes from the December 14, 2020 Selectmen's meeting. Seconded by Selectman Cody Belanger. Roll Call; Selectmen; Belanger, Jordan, Trombley, Yergeau and Munguia all voting aye. Motion carried 5-0.

EOC DIRECTOR DON DeANGELIS

EOC Director Don DeAngelis reported on the latest COVID-19 cases which are on the rise. There are currently 44 known cases in Epping. Exeter has 44 cases as well with Raymond reporting 48 cases. The State has shifted some of the "sorting out" of cases to the communities where there would be a more accurate account. The Town's EOC goes through the list to determine valid information. The State has had 6,688 confirmed infections with hospitalizations now up to 278.

PUBLIC WORKS PERSONNEL

The Selectmen discussed with the EOC Director and Chief Lombardo how the Highway crew should be handled as there were suspected exposures to COVID-19. Highway Supervisor David Reinhold was in on the meeting to listen and address concerns. Selectmen Cody Belanger wanted to know if DPW could close down as the Town Hall did. Discussion continued. Dave Reinhold said that operations could be halted however if there was a winter weather event he would have to have the crew work on snow removal. Though no motion was made the Board by consensus agreed that the highway crew could curtail operations unless there was a snow emergency. This would not pertain to the Transfer Station.

TOWN HALL CLOSURE

The Selectmen discussed the closure of Town Hall and the return of personnel. There was considerable discussion on this topic with amendments made to motions on top of amendments, etc. In the end the Selectmen decided on separate motions to deal with the closure and employees.

Motion by Selectman Cody Belanger to close Town Hall to the public until January 11, 2021. Seconded by Selectman Joe Trombley. Roll Call; Selectmen; Yergeau, Belanger, Trombley, Jordan and Munguia all voting aye. Motion carried 5-0.

Motion by Selectman Cody Belanger to close Town Hall to all employees until December 28, 2020. Seconded by Selectman Joe Trombley with discussion. Discussion continued. Chief DeAngelis and Lombardo reminded the Board that December 29th was a better date as that will be ten days for most quarantines to end. AMENDMENT-Selectman Cody Belanger amended his motion to the date of December 29, 2020 with a second from Selectman Joe Trombley for discussion. Discussion continued. The following amendment was made; Selectman Cody Belanger amended his motion to allow one (1) employee in at a time and that the Board would revisit the issue on December 28, 2020 with a second from Selectman Joe Trombley for more discussion. Considerable discussion continued and before any further amendments were made, Town Administrator Dodge asked that the Board rescind all motions and amendments made on this topic thus far and to put forth a new motion. Selectman Cody Belanger rescinded his motions and amendments as did the "second" Selectman Joe Trombley.

A new motion was put forward.

Motion by Selectman Cody Belanger to close Town Hall to all employees until December 29, 2020 with the Emergency Operations Director and Town Administrator to determine essential personnel and that the Selectmen would revisit the issue at the December 28, 2020 meeting. Seconded by Chairman Adam Munguia. Roll Call; Selectmen; Trombley, Belanger, Yergeau, Jordan and Munguia all voting aye. Motion carried 5-0.

CHIEF LOMBARDO'S REPORT

Chief Lombardo reported that it has been a busy week with the call volume on the rise.

The Santa Parade was held on December 20th and it went very well and was well received. This is something the Town needed in these times.

Chairman Munguia agreed that the parade was a nice touch and Selectman Trombley echoed those thoughts saying that it was bigger and better than in past years. The snow was an added nice touch.

POLICE CHIEF MICHAEL WALLACE

Chief Wallace reported that the last COVID affected officer has returned to work and that the department is back to full staff.

Captain Jason Newman has retired from the Police Department after 28 years of combined part-time and full-time service. The Chief asked the Selectmen to join him in wishing him a safe and healthy retirement. Individual Selectmen wished Captain Newman well and offered their congratulations. Selectman Jordan adding that he will be missed.

PRESS RELEASE/NOTICE TO RESIDENTS

Selectman Cody Belanger offered a “release” to advise the public of the COVID incident at Town Hall and subsequent Board actions. This brought considerable discussion on the issue.

Motion by Selectman Cody Belanger to have the Town Administrator and Emergency Operations Director prepare a public service announcement on behalf of the Board of Selectmen relative to the COVID incident at Town Hall. Seconded by Selectman Bob Jordan. There was further discussion with the only stipulation being that the draft release be forwarded to the Selectmen before being made public. Roll Call; Selectmen; Trombley, Yergeau, Belanger, Jordan and Munguia all voting aye. Motion carried 5-0.

BUDGET DISCUSSION

The Selectmen had presented their amended 2021 budget to the Budget Committee on December 16, 2020. It appeared that the Committee did not feel as though the Selectmen had met the goal of the Committee however in the end the amended budget with a 4.2% increase received an affirmative vote of 8-3.

Motion by Selectman Bob Jordan to recommend the 2021 Town Budget at a 4.2% increase as last submitted to the budget committee. Seconded by Selectman Cody Belanger. Discussion on the motion began with Selectman Belanger asking Selectman Jordan if he would amend the motion by removing the increase in the Selectmen’s stipend of \$4,750. Selectman Jordan agreed to the amendment and the “second” was good with the amendment with discussion. Discussion: Chairman Munguia expressed his opinion on how the Budget Committee handled the Board’s revised budget. He said that the eleven member committee had the “nuclear option” of rejecting the budget as proposed though forty plus elected officials put together the budget. He acknowledged that the Budget Committee does have that authority.

Selectman Joe Trombley stated that he would be happy with supporting the budget with the added stipend being removed and that the Budget Committee knew that the Board was willing to do so however they did not act on it. He felt it would be irresponsible for the Board to remove the stipend without feedback from the Budget Committee.

Selectman Cody Belanger said that there were other areas of the budget where cuts could have been made as well. He further stated the cuts on the Town side were “miniscule” when compared to the school and county budgets.

Selectman Bob Jordan felt that there was a “knee jerk” reaction by the budget committee on the Town’s budget.

Selectman Trombley impressed upon the Board that it should be the budget committee asking for the Selectmen to remove the stipend.

Selectman Mike Yergeau said he was “tired” talking about it.

Original motion by Selectman Jordan and the “second” of Selectman Belanger was rescinded.

Motion by Selectman Bob Jordan to accept the budget of a 4.2% increase as presented to the Budget Committee. Seconded by Chairman Munguia. Roll Call Vote; Selectmen Trombley, Yergeau, Jordan, and Munguia all voting aye, Selectman Belanger voting nay. Motion carried 4-1.

TOWN WARRANT REVIEW

The warrant was not ready for review so this item was postponed until next meeting without a vote of the Board.

Discussion was had regarding removing the “trash compactor” article from the warrant. There was division on the Board as to whether or not this article should be put forth to the voters. Selectman Trombley stated that unfortunately the voters are not always “informed” on the warrant articles. Chairman Munguia disagreed in some aspects stating that the Board of Selectmen are supposed to know more than the voters in that the Board is more aware of the needs of the Town.

Selectman Trombley said that in his opinion there needs to be better enforcement on the use of the Transfer Station, dump sticker fees need to be looked at and the Selectmen need to look at how commercial vehicles and out of state users are driving our costs up. He closed by stating he was not in support of having the article on the warrant because the Board hasn’t fully vetted the true need. Chairman Munguia said that the idea of the budget committee not wanting to include such an article on the warrant just because they don’t want to pay for it is not a reason not to bring it forward, the towns people deserve better than that. However, at this juncture the Chairman said he did not care if the compactor was on the warrant or not.

Motion by Selectman Joe Trombley to take the compactor off of the warrant and to revisit this issue and work with Dave and Dennis to improve the operation. Seconded by Selectman Mike Yergeau. Discussion: The Board wanted to hear from Dave Reinhold. While Dave Reinhold agreed with most of everything said, adding another day is not helpful since he does not have the manpower. Chairman Munguia said he does not support the compactor. He is more inclined to look at other initiatives. Selectman Trombley said the intent of the motion was to give the Board a year to look at ways of reducing the burden at the Transfer Station. Hearing no further discussion, the Chairman called for a vote. Roll Call Vote; Selectmen Trombley, Yergeau, Belanger, Jordan, Munguia all voting aye. Motion carried 5-0.

LAND USE CHANGE TAX

Nine (9) “Land Use Change Tax” forms (Map #003 Lot #001-027 in the amount of \$8,500, Map #016 Lot #061-004 in the amount of \$8,500, Map #016 Lot #01-003 \$8,500, Map #002 Lot #001-004 \$8,500, Map #009 Lot #001-020 \$8,500, Map #003 Lot 001-028 \$8,500, Map #010 Lot #058 \$8,000, Map #021 Lot #008 \$650 and Map #033 Lot #064 \$8,500) were submitted for approval. Chairman Munguia read off one for Tax Map #16 Lot #061-004.

Motion by Selectman Bob Jordan to approve the LUCT for Map #16 Lot #061-004 in the amount of \$8,500. Seconded by Selectman Cody Belanger. Roll Call Vote; Selectman Trombley and Belanger voted in the affirmative, Selectman Yergeau asked if there would be an individual vote on each. This motion was rescinded.

Motion by Selectman Cody Belanger to accept LUCT for Map #003 Lot #001-027 in the amount of \$8,500, Map #016 Lot #061-004 in the amount of \$8,500, Map #016 Lot #01-003 \$8,500, Map #002 Lot #001-004 \$8,500, Map #009 Lot #001-020 \$8,500, Map #003 Lot 001-028 \$8,500, Map #010 Lot #058 \$8,000, Map #021 Lot #008 \$650 and Map #033 Lot #064 \$8,500. Seconded by Selectman Bob Jordan. Roll Call Vote; Selectmen Trombley, Yergeau, Belanger, Jordan and Munguia all voting aye. Motion carried 5-0.

VETERAN'S CREDIT

A Veteran's credit application was submitted on behalf of Gail B. Soucy (Map #023 Lot #039-015C) and Judith Rehfeld (Map #036 Lot #001-036). Both qualifying for said credit.

Motion by Selectman Cody Belanger to approve the Veteran Tax credit for of Gail B. Soucy (Map #023 Lot #039-015C) and Judith Rehfeld (Map #036 Lot #001-036). Seconded by Selectman Bob Jordan. Roll Call Vote; Selectmen Jordan, Belanger, Trombley, Yergeau and Munguia all voting aye. Motion carried 5-0.

NE SOLAR AGREEMENT

The revised NE Dragway Solar Agreement was submitted for Board review and/or acceptance. The Board members felt they had not devoted enough time for review and thus were not prepared to vote on this matter. Chairman Munguia asked the Administrator what the "drop dead" date was for this. Administrator Dodge said he had heard from the vendor today and that suggested changes by Town Counsel were approved however there were other questions raised which had not been addressed as of yet. Mr. Dodge felt this could be tabled for another week.

Motion by Selectman Cody Belanger to table the NE Solar Agreement. Seconded by Selectman Mike Yergeau. Roll Call Vote; Selectmen Trombley, Yergeau, Belanger, Jordan and Munguia all voting aye. Motion carried 5-0.

DPW PURCHASE ORDER

Purchase Order #0301 was submitted by the Department of Public Works to purchase rock salt from Granite State Minerals in the amount of \$18,700.

Motion by Selectman Cody Belanger to approve purchase Order #0301 to purchase rock salt from Granite State Minerals in the amount of \$18,700. Seconded by Selectman Mike Yergeau with a question for Dave Reinhold. Selectman Yergeau wanted to know if that price was "delivery" price and Mr. Reinhold said yes to the "shop". Selectman Yergeau would speak with Dave Reinhold in the

morning regarding other questions. Roll Call Vote; Selectmen Jordan, Belanger, Yergeau, Trombley and Munguia all voting aye. Motion carried 5-0.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Town Administrator

Town Administrator Gregory Dodge said that the old police cruiser bids were overlooked and that we would take care of that next week. He apologized to the bidders.

Lastly, the Budget Committee will meet on Tuesday December 22, 2020 and there was a late agenda item where there would be more discussion on the Town budget.

INDIVIDUAL SELECTMEN'S REPORTS

Selectman Cody Belanger

Selectman Belanger said that the purchase order approved at a previous meeting for the Rocku as submitted by ETV was understated by \$350.

Motion by Selectman Cody Belanger to approve an additional \$350 for the previously approved Rocku in the amount of \$2,500 for a total of \$2,850. Seconded by Selectman Bob Jordan. Discussion: Selectman Belanger reminded the Board that ETV derives funding from Comcast and thus there is no tax impact. Roll Call Vote; Selectmen Belanger, Jordan, Yergeau, Trombley and Munguia all voting aye. Motion carried 5-0.

Selectman Belanger wished those who celebrate Hanukkah a Happy Hanukkah and those who celebrate Christmas a Merry Christmas to all especially his fellow Board members.

Selectman Joe Trombley

Selectman Trombley congratulated Captain Newman on his retirement. He also said that the COVID incident at Town Hall is a reminder that it could happen anywhere. He advised all to be safe.

He wished everyone Happy Holidays.

Selectman Mike Yergeau

Selectman Yergeau said that he has been crazy busy at his work. He wanted to commend Dave Reinhold and his crew for doing a great job on the last storm clean up.

Selectman Bob Jordan

Selectman Jordan congratulated Captain Newman on his retirement.
He commended the Police and Fire for the good “stop” at a structure fire this morning.
He too was very pleased with the Santa Parade.
He wished all a Happy Hanukkah, Kwanza, Christmas, etc.
Happy New Year, hope 2021 is a better year.

Selectman Adam Munguia

Chairman Munguia also congratulated Captain Newman.
Thanks to Dave Reinhold and crew for their excellent job during the recent snow storm.
He thanked the Board for participating in the “emergency meeting” on Zoom this past Saturday. The Board needed to make some quick decisions and he thanked the Chiefs for their input as well. He regrets the incident at Town Hall ever happened but said that it is indicative on how insidious the disease is as he too was affected by it.
Lastly, he wished all a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and Kwanza.

ADJOURN

Motion by Selectman Cody Belanger to adjourn after a 30 second pause for anyone calling in. Seconded by Selectman Joe Trombley. Selectman Trombley stated that Steve Thomas a citizen was on Zoom and asked if he had any comments to which he said he was all set. After 30 seconds a roll call vote was taken; Selectmen Yergeau, Belanger, Trombley, Jordan and Munguia all voted aye. Motion carried 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gregory C. Dodge
Town Administrator

Adam Munguia, Chairman

Bob Jordan, Vice-Chairman

Mike Yergeau, Selectman

Cody Belanger, Selectman

Joe Trombley, Selectman

Dated: January 12, 2021