

Town of Colrain
Select Board/MLP Board Meeting
Colrain Town Office
55 Main Road
4:30 PM

**MINUTES OF SELECT BOARD
January 23, 2024**

Present: Benjamin Eastman, Chair; W. Thomas Griffin; Emily Thurber

Others Present: Andrea Donlon, FRCOG; Ellen Weeks, Personnel Committee; Michael Shuipis, Deb Menard, Doug MacLeay, Betty Ringwood, Finance Committee Members; David Greenberg, Ad-Hoc CPA Exploratory Committee; Peter Brooks, Energy Committee; Steve Daby, Highway Superintendent; Tyson Howard; Scott Coombs; Howard Phelps; Betsy Browning; Kathy Phelps; Jane Johnson; Jade Mortimer; Jonathan Lagreze; Mike Slowinski; Marjorie Smith, Administrative Assistant; Kevin Fox, Town Administrator

Chair Benjamin Eastman called the meeting to order at 4:31 pm.

Appointments:

Andrea Donlon -Senior Land Use& Natural Resources Planner – FRCOG RE: Offer of Assistance via Grant Funding Toward CPA (Community Preservation Act) Exploration Process

Andrea Donlon, FRCOG, explained that the Select Board authorized the formation of a CPA Exploratory Committee and since, the committee has met and done a lot of work and research on the CPA. FRCOG has a five-year grant that would allow help to the committee if they and the Town want help, consisting of creating outreach materials, community events, prepping for Town Meeting, etc. Andrea listed some of the other towns FRCOG has worked with. Michael Shuipis questioned the type of information that would be provided to residents. All information provided is factual and not campaigning for or against the CPA. Andrea further explained the grant is outside/independent of the DLTA funding and would cover the full cost of their services.

MOVED: Thom Griffin moved to accept the generous offer of assistance via grant funding towards the CPA exploration process.

Emily Thurber seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

Colrain Energy Committee RE: Proposed Green Communities Grant Project Narrative

Thom Griffin expressed that he did not appreciate Peter's interruption at the last Board meeting. Peter Brooks presented the proposal for the fire department insulation project. The Board received an energy efficiency summary report and project narrative that is to be submitted to DOER and is asking for permission to submit the project narrative for approval. The total cost is \$18,000 with approximately \$7,000 to be paid by Town after state incentives, which would be covered by the Green Communities Grant. The cost estimate may increase as it didn't include prevailing wages. Peter further provided a history of the Town's Green Communities Grant and projects completed as well as that the Energy Committee has recently merged with the Ad-Hoc Solar Planning Committee. They will be looking into possible solar projects in town and will come to the Board at a future time to ask permission to hold a public information session regarding possible solar projects.

MOVED: Emily Thurber moved to authorize Peter Brooks and Kevin Fox to submit the project narrative to DOER for the fire department insulation.

Ben Eastman seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

Meeting with Finance Committee RE: Cost of Living Increase Recommendation (see below under old business) and FY2025 General Budget Process Discussion

Kevin Fox explained that a COLA increase is integral in the budget process, should the Board recommend an increase. Kevin provided a list of the COLA increase over the last seven years and the Northeast CPI (2.5%). Health insurance premiums are increasing 10% and the Town covers 75%. Kevin is looking for a number to start with and go from there. Each member offered their suggestion and agreed to have Kevin start with a 3% increase.

Regarding the general budget process, Michael Shuipis explained that the Finance Committee analyzes the draft budgets submitted by department heads and then meets with each to go over the draft and make recommendations with them. Only two departments have submitted their drafts, which were due 12/31. Kevin sent a reminder in early January and will send another as directed by the Board. Michael further explained that this years' budget process may take longer for the Finance Committee to go through and put the final budget together, in part because of the school; they have a long way to go to get to normal budget increases.

New Business:

DLTA (District Local Technical Assistance) Project Prioritization Request

Kevin Fox sent the DLTA packet to the Select Board and Planning Board a couple weeks ago to give them time to review and the Request Form needs to be submitted to FRCOG by 1/31. The Board is tasked with picking their top three priorities. Discussion on the three items picked and completed last year. Kevin offered his recommendations and an explanation: Abandoned and Distressed Property Inventory and Action, Municipal Succession Planning and Older Adult Services. Emily agreed with the recommendations and added Public Information and Warning. Thom and Ben also agreed regarding the three.

MOVED: Thom Griffin moved regarding the District Local Technical Assistance for three choices, that we choose the Municipal Succession Planning, Abandoned and Distressed Property Inventory and Action and Older Adult Services.

Emily Thurber seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

Old Business:

FY 25 Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) Discussion

See appointment with Finance Committee

Organizational Chart and Town Administrator Job Description and Qualifications

Michael Shuipis updated the Board regarding the first phase of the Ad-Hoc Town Administrator Search Committee of revising the job description and creating an organizational chart. Both have been presented and brought back regarding clarifying the hiring, firing and discipline process in the job description. The Committee discussed the language and have decided that kind of guidance is universal to any job in town and that specific wording or guidance should be in the Personnel Policies rather the job description. The task of clarifying the wording has been passed onto the Personnel Committee. The next meeting is tomorrow and will move forward on advertising.

Discussion regarding who should have final hiring and firing authority and consensus was that the Select Board should have ultimate authority and at their discretion could delegate hiring authority to the Town Administrator for certain positions. Ellen Weeks suggested amending the Supervisory Responsibilities paragraph by striking the last two sentences and adding "For matters of hiring, disciplining and termination, the Town Administrator will refer to the Town's Personnel Policies."

MOVED: Thom Griffin moved to approve the job description as amended that was submitted by the Ad-Hoc Committee for the Town Administrator position.

Emily Thurner seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

Unanticipated:

Ben Eastman – Bridge Sidewalks

Ben Eastman spoke with a resident who contacted the DEP and said that the Conservation Commission can give the Select Board permission to dump snow into the river from the bridge sidewalk on Jacksonville Rd. Kevin Fox will follow-up with contacts at the DEP.

MOVED: Thom Griffin moved to recess the meeting for 20 minutes.
Emily Thurber seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

Ben Eastman called the meeting back to order at 6:00 pm.

Appointments:

Highway Dept. Operator/Truck Driver/Laborer Candidate Interviews:

The three members of the Select Board asked questions of each candidate. Tim McCrory did not attend the interview.

Tyson Howard:

Tyson explained his reasons for applying for the position (28 years' experience driving, 10 years plowing, another step to serve the community) his license status of having a CDL, but not a medical card, top skills and goals, handling possible unsafe situations, rapport with current highway workers and experience working with equipment and construction materials.

Scott Coombs:

Scott explained his reasons for applying (retirement, be more local, DPW experience), has all the licenses, top skills and experience (asphalt, culverts, road prep), reasons for short longevity at other jobs and handling disagreements with co-workers.

Tim McCrory:

Tim McCrory did not attend the meeting.

Discussion:

The Board asked Steve Daby's opinion on both candidates. Steve answered that neither was a standout applicant. All three members voiced concerns regarding the two candidates and have reservations regarding each, specifically Tyson's lack of a medical card and Scott's short longevity at prior jobs. Kevin recommended that should either be offered the position; it should be contingent upon positive reference checks and CORI. All three members agreed not to hire either applicant.

MOVED: Thom Griffin moved to keep job search open for the highway position.

Emily Thurber seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

Kevin recommended removing the advertisement from the website until the Board is ready to readvertise and will send both candidates thank you letters.

Town Administrator Updates:

None

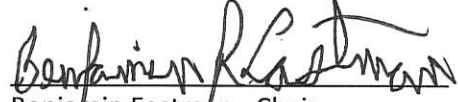
MOVED: Emily Thurber moved to dissolve the meeting at 6:48pm.
Thom Griffin seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

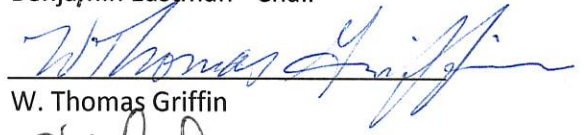


Marjorie Smith
Administrative Assistant

Accepted by the Select Board



Benjamin Eastman - Chair



W. Thomas Griffin



Emily Thurber

Documents Distributed to the Select Board Before the Meeting in a Packet or at the Meeting:

Select Board Meeting Notes

Email from Andrea Donlon, FRCOG, to Kevin Fox, Town Administrator, dated 1/3/2024 re: Assisting Ad-Hoc CPA Exploratory Committee

Green Communities Grant Activity to Date Spreadsheet

Town of Colrain Green Communities Designation Grant Project Narrative: Fire Department Insulation

Energy Efficiency Summary Report re: Colrain Fire Station Insulation Project with Energy Committee

Email from Michael Shuipis, Finance Committee Chair, to Finance Committee Members and Kevin Fox, Town Administrator, dated 1/10/2024 re: Joint Meeting with Select Board

Consumer Price Index (CPI) Northeast Region – November 2023 re: COLA Increase/Decrease since Nov. 2020

Town of Colrain COLA Increase History for last 6 Years

FY2024 Sources/Uses Worksheet

Town of Colrain Employment Application – Tyson Howard

Town of Colrain Employment Application – Tim McCrory

Town of Colrain Employment Application – Scott Coombs

Email from Clara Lopez and Linda Dunlavy, FRCOG, to Kevin Fox, Town Administrator, dated 1/9/2024 re: DLTA Funding

2024 District Local Technical Assistance Request Form

Draft Revised Town Administrator Job Description and Qualifications

Draft Town of Colrain Organizational Chart