

FARMINGTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Tuesday, April 12, 2022

6:30 P.M.

The conduct of the meeting will include remote access by telephonic, video, and electronic means. The public may attend in person or by viewing the live stream at <http://mtbluetv.org/program-live-stream-farmington-selectmen.html> or Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/MBTV11/> or by calling 778-5874

Town Manager Christian Waller called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M. with the following members present: Matthew Smith, Stephan Bunker, Scott Landry, and Byron Staples. Joshua Bell was unable to attend. Executive Assistant Nancy Martin, Police Chief Ken Charles, K-9 Officer Ethan Boyd, Western Maine Behavioral Health Options Liaison Katlynn Johnson, Wastewater Treatment Plant Superintendent Steve Millett, Motor Vehicle/Sewer Clerk Mavis Gensel, Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator III Joe Hartigan, Fire Rescue Department Captain Terry Bell, Budget Committee Chair Clyde Ross, Budget Committee Members Betty Jespersen, Judith Murphy, and Lloyd Smith, Town Report Committee Member Linda Smith, Board of Appeals, Assessment and Transportation Advisory Committee Member Dennis O'Neil, Mt. Blue TV camera operators Andre Cormier and trainee Lillie Clark, and members of the press and public were also present. Members of the media and public participated remotely.

ITEM 1: Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Town Manager Christian Waller led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

ITEM 2: To Elect Officers for the Ensuing Year – Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary

Town Manager Christian Waller opened the floor for nominations for the position of Chairman of the Board of Selectmen for the ensuing year.

Scott Landry nominated Matthew Smith for Chairman; Stephan Bunker seconded.

Town Manager Christian Waller called for a vote for Matthew Smith as Chairman.

VOTE	AFFIRMATIVE	3	ABSTAIN	1	ABSENT	1	MOTION CARRIED
			(Smith)		(Bell)		

Town Manager Christian Waller turned the meeting over to Chairman Smith.

Chairman Smith opened the floor for nominations for the position of Vice-Chairman of the Board of Selectmen for the ensuing year.

Scott Landry nominated Stephan Bunker for Vice-Chairman; Matthew Smith seconded.

VOTE	AFFIRMATIVE	3	ABSTAIN	1	ABSENT	1	MOTION CARRIED
			(Bunker)		(Bell)		

Chairman Smith opened the floor for nominations for the position of Secretary of the Board of Selectmen for the ensuing year.

Scott Landry nominated Byron Staples for Secretary; Matthew Smith seconded.

VOTE	AFFIRMATIVE	3	ABSTAIN	1	ABSENT	1	MOTION CARRIED
			(Staples)		(Bell)		

ITEM 3: Christian Waller to provide a status update on the Town Report

Matthew Smith dedicated the 2021 Town Report to Stephan M. Bunker. For the past 40 years, Steve has worked in many public safety roles. He worked for the Farmington Police Department from 1972 to 1975. He has worked as a deputy sheriff, a corrections officer and dispatcher, a home-school resource officer, and an EMT. Steve retired as the 9-1-1 dispatcher training and education manager at Maine Criminal Justice Academy and Executive Director of the Maine Sheriff's Association. Mr. Bunker continues to serve the community as a firefighter for 44 years and a Selectman for 27 years. He served on the RSU #9 Board of Directors, the Town Planning Board, Zoning Board, Revolving Loan Fund, Conservation Commission, and the following committees: Budget, Landfill, Sewer, and Recycling. Stephan Bunker stated that Farmington has been his adopted home since 1965. He has had many opportunities to leave, but something always brings him back. Mr. Bunker proclaimed that Farmington is the biggest little town in the State. He is surrounded by great citizens and employees. Mr. Bunker noted that Down East Magazine, March Edition, also recognized Farmington as one of Maine's best places to live. He encouraged everyone to pick up a copy and read it. Mr. Bunker declared he was thrilled and humbled to receive this year's Town Report dedication. He will always call Farmington his home.

Christian Waller reported that the Town Reports are now available at the Town Office and other locations throughout the community.

ITEM 4: To allow Police Chief Ken Charles to address the Board and to introduce Substance Abuse Counselor Katlynn Johnson

Police Chief Ken Charles announced that K-9 and Patrol Officer Ethan Boyd was honored as 2021 Officer of the Year. Officer Boyd volunteered to be the Town's lead field training officer. Chief Charles reported that Officer Boyd handled a lot of extensive investigations. Officer Boyd recognized some suspicious activity, and he investigated. He recovered a significant quantity of fentanyl, as well as several firearms that were associated with the narcotics trafficking issue. Police Chief Charles used tonight's Board meeting as a ruse to present Officer Boyd with the Lifesaving Award. On March 26, 2022, at approximately 1210 hours, Officer Boyd was the first responder to a "man down" at a local restaurant. He located the male subject and based on his knowledge and experience, recognized that the man was exhibiting signs and symptoms of a possible narcotics overdose. The man was not breathing, his skin turned purple, and he was unresponsive. Officer Boyd immediately administered two doses of Narcan, and the patient regained ineffective breathing. He provided rescue breathing until NorthStar Ambulance arrived and assisted them with their resuscitative efforts. While on the scene, the patient regained consciousness and was able to walk to the ambulance. He was transported to Franklin Memorial Hospital without further incident. Without a doubt, Officer Boyd's quick response and adherence to training resulted in a life saved. His actions exemplified the Farmington Police Department's mission: "*To create a feeling of safety for the people within the Town of Farmington.*" Police Chief Charles proudly presented the Lifesaving Award and ribbon medal to Officer Boyd. Officer Boyd received a standing ovation from the Selectboard and those in attendance.

Chief Charles introduces UMF Alumni and Western Maine Behavioral Health CADC OPTIONS Liaison Katlynn Johnson. Ms. Johnson provided a brief overview of the CADC OPTIONS Initiative. The OPTIONS Initiative aims to improve understanding of the Good Samaritan Law and increase the calls to 9-1-1 for medical assistance/overdose emergencies. Increase the distribution and availability of lifesaving Naloxone (Narcan) across Maine. Educate at-risk populations on safer drug use practices that reduce the risk of fatal and non-fatal overdose. As well as to connect people affected by the opioid epidemic and substance use disorder with local prevention, harm reduction, recovery, treatment, and general support resources. Ms. Johnson works out of the Police Department. Chief Charles announced that a drug take-back event would be held at Meetinghouse Park on Saturday, April 30th between 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M.

ITEM 4: To Review and Approve the Proposed 2022 Sewer Department Budget and Establish the Sewer Use Rates

Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) Superintendent Steve Millett provided an overview of the 2022 Sewer Department Budget. The proposed 11.78% budget increase includes: pay raises, increased insurance costs, and a few projects that must be completed this year. He said they would continue to pick away at WWTP maintenance so that they would not have to do any major overhauls. He reported the plant had not been updated since 1992. All WWTP external tanks have been upgraded, except for one tank, which will be upgraded this year. Slowly but surely, he is stocking spare equipment parts. He explained some of the pumps take 10 to 12 weeks to arrive. The pumps won't be out of commission for three to four months by maintaining an inventory of essential parts. In response to Stephan Bunker's question, Mr. Millett stated that there is no increase in user rates.

Byron Staples moved to table the 2022 Sewer Department budget until after the Town Meeting.

Matthew Smith asked Mr. Staples why he wanted to table the sewer budget. Mr. Staples stated that the budget changed last Friday and that tabling the budget would allow time to answer some questions. In addition, he thinks it is important to see what happens at the Town Meeting. He explained there are a lot of similarities between the budgets, and he feels it is important to know how the voters react. Stephan Bunker expressed his appreciation for Mr. Staples' observations; however, he reminded folks that this is a separate user's account funded by users, not all taxpayers. It stands aside from regular Town Meetings, and it is the Selectperson's prerogative to make the ultimate decision. Mr. Staples expressed as a representative of the taxpayers; he feels the voters who vote on the Town budget might potentially be the sewer ratepayers. As an example of some of the confusion, the previous version of the budget showed a 24.69% increase. The revised budget shows an 11.78% increase, and it looks like something has changed. Mavis Gensel stated that much work and time goes into this budget. She revealed they are trying to get companies to provide prices on all the necessary items. Ms. Gensel described the difficulties of predicting the cost of goods when costs are going straight up. She stated that it is incredible how close to the line Mr. Millett's budgets are. Past budgets confirm how accurate and close to the line Mr. Millett's budgets are. Mr. Staples reiterated a few things in this budget that he is not 100% sure of. Ms. Gensel reported that she needed to send the sewer bills to the users; she stated she was under the gun to get them out. Mr. Smith asked Mr. Staples if there were any items that he was unsure about, or was it the budget as a whole. Mr. Staples stated there are a few things he is curious about. There are no reserve account balances and no surplus fund balances. Ms. Gensel reported that 2021's figures are not available from the auditors yet. She said that Sewer's bottom line was about \$5,000,000. There is approximately \$2,400,000 in reserves. She stated the Sewer Department has a big bottom line, and it is a good thing. During the pandemic, usage dropped dramatically. When the University stopped taking students in 2020, the Sewer Department was \$70,000 in the hole, thank goodness we had a healthy unassigned fund balance to absorb that loss. She is hoping that usage comes up to a healthy 51%. There are a lot of projects going on, and we are starting to see our numbers come up. Mr. Staples inquired about the 32% increase in personnel asking how it will affect next year's sewer rate. Is the 32% increase for the fiscal year or 2/4 of the year. Christian Waller confirmed the 32% increase was for the fiscal year. To eliminate some of the earlier confusion, copies of the sewer budget as it stood at the time were included with the budget to the Selectboard and the Budget Committee. However, Mr. Millett and Ms. Gensel revised it. Mr. Millett stated much of the increase is due to the higher cost of goods and services. Mr. Waller confirmed that any pay adjustments were made in the same manner as the other pay adjustments. Ryan Morgan remarked if the Town passes the sewer budget and the voters go to the Town Meeting and decide not to pass the Town's budget, many voters and sewer users would feel that the Selectmen did not hear them. He expressed his concern with the 25% pay increase. There will be dissimilar pay rates if the sewer budget passes and the Town budget does not. Ms. Gensel addressed Mr. Morgan's concerns. She stated she has worked for the Town for 32 years, almost 33 years, and the Town brought in a counter clerk for nearly as much as she makes. She has been here for 32 years with no pay raise in the past 14 years. Her raise 14 years ago was nothing more than a longevity raise. Ms. Gensel voiced her frustration with the lack of pay raises. Mr. Morgan asked if she received Consumer Price Index (CPI) increases. Ms. Gensel confirmed she did receive the cost of living raises, but health insurance costs ate up every cent of the CPI increase. Mr. Millett reiterated that insurance costs exceed the CPI increases every year. Ms. Gensel reported that she makes less than \$20 per hour, and the new hire came in at almost the same rate. She explained that her job responsibilities are enormous. Her duties include legal work, easements; she is accountable for all the Department of Motor Vehicles' work; as Sewer Clerk, she does all the billing and manages all the liens and foreclosures. Ms. Gensel said it is unfair that someone with minimal experience earns almost as much as she

ITEM 4: To Review and Approve the Proposed 2022 Sewer Department Budget and Establish the Sewer Use Rates (continued)

does. She declared that she deserves a raise. Mr. Staples stated he completely agrees with Ms. Gensel; he is 100% on board with the pay raises. He said there might be a few things they may need to talk about, such as a 32% increase. Perhaps some mathematical errors need to be addressed. He does not know because he just got the revised sewer budget. Mr. Smith asked if the Board tabled the Sewer Budget until April 26th, would that be enough time to review and digest the budget? Mr. Staples stated he would stick with his original motion to table the 2022 Sewer Department budget until after the Town Meeting.

No one seconded the motion; the motion failed.

Stephan Bunker motioned to table Item 4 until April 26th; Scott Landry seconded.

VOTE	AFFIRMATIVE	4	ABSENT	1	MOTION CARRIED
			(Bell)		

ITEM 5: To determine if the Town will use \$5,857.94 from the Unassigned Fund Balance to aid Franklin County in paying for an upgrade to the fuel station (total cost = \$16,250)

Christian Waller reported that based on the percentage of fuel the Town uses, the Franklin County Commissioners (FCC) requested aid in the amount of \$5,857.94 to assist in the cost of upgrading the fuel station from keys to magnetic key cards. This will allow the FCC to instantly stop access to the pumps for any lost or misplaced key card, and a new key card can be reissued immediately.

Scott Landry moved to authorize the use of \$5,857.94 the from the Unassigned Fund Balance to aid Franklin County in paying for an upgrade to the fuel station (total cost = \$16,250); Stephan Bunker seconded.

VOTE	AFFIRMATIVE	4	ABSENT	1	MOTION CARRIED
			(Bell)		

ITEM 6: To accept Alvin A. Da Costa's resignation from the Revolving Loan Fund Committee

Scott Landry moved to accept Alvin A. Da Costa's resignation from the Revolving Loan Fund Committee; Byron Staples seconded.

VOTE	AFFIRMATIVE	4	ABSENT	1	MOTION CARRIED
			(Bell)		

Matthew Smith thanked Alvin A. Da Costa for serving on the Revolving Loan Fund. Stephan Bunker encouraged new startups or existing small businesses to take advantage of low-interest loans from these underutilized funds.

ITEM 7: To Sign the Town of Farmington Mission Statement on Safety

Christian Waller explained the Mission Statement on Safety is part of the Workers' Compensation Leader Program and requires renewal if there is a change in the Board of Selectmen membership. He stated nothing changed in the Mission Statement itself.

Stephan Bunker moved to renew the Town of Farmington Mission Statement on Safety; Scott Landry seconded.

ITEM 10: To Discuss Other Business (continued)

- E.) Byron Staples said it is a pleasure to be here, and he looks forward to working with everybody. The amount of community outreach he has received so far has been great. He hopes everyone keeps it up and continues to have conversations. It has been a lot more than he expected, it has been great. He looks forward to this and is excited.
- F.) Ryan Morgan asked if the State Revenue Sharing was 5% from now on or is it one year only. Scott Landry stated that the Legislature got it to where it is supposed to be. Whether the next legislature keeps it there or not remains to be seen.
- G.) Matthew Smith welcomed Byron Staples to the Selectboard and stated that he looks forward to serving with him. As an active member of the Downtown Committee, he feels Byron will bring a new perspective to the Board.
- H.) Matthew Smith thanked everyone for their continued support.
- I.) Matthew Smith reported that Chad Crandall invited the Selectboard to tour the Blue Sky Labs facility.

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Scott Landry moved to adjourn at 7:22 P.M.; Stephan Bunker seconded.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by Nancy L. Martin.

Byron Staples, Secretary