

Town of Pomfret Selectboard
Approved Special Meeting Minutes
December 14, 2022

Present: Emily Grube, John Peters, Benjamin Brickner, Steve Chamberlin, Jon Harrington (from 7:00 pm)

Public: Neil Lamson (Lister), John Moore (Planning Commission), Nancy Matthews (Auditor), Kristin Esty (Auditor), Kevin Rice (Fire Chief), Scott Barger, Scott Pearce, Jake Astbury, Greg Olmstead, Sharlene Kelly, Betsy Rhodes (Library), Carl Bulgini, Cathy Peters, Carrie Weschler, Ryan Palmer (Windsor County Sheriff-elect) (until 6:30 pm), Cynthia Hewitt (Selectboard Assistant)

1. John called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.
2. Public Comment – None.
3. Agenda Review – No changes.
4. Items for Discussion or Vote
 - a. Personal Property Tax Lien (Parcel 0705, Allen Hill Road) – Karen Osnoe circulated a Notice of Person Property Lien for approval. Ben moved and Emily seconded approval of the same. Unanimous. [*Note: this motion was reconsidered at the end of this meeting to allow Jon Harrington (absent until 7:00 pm) to participate.*]
 - b. Ryan Palmer, Windsor County Sheriff-elect – Mr. Palmer introduced himself and described his vision for future Windsor County Sheriff services. His term begins February 1, 2023. Mr. Palmer intends to increase staff and hopes to offer a wider range of community patrol and law enforcement services, albeit at a higher price point than today. Rather than one 4-hour patrol per week, Mr. Palmer foresees dedicated patrols totaling 12 or more hours per week, plus nearly 24-hour dispatch-based coverage utilizing “circulating” cruisers around the county. Response times of an hour or less would be the goal.

Ben asked if Mr. Ryan’s office would respond to local ordinance matters such as dog complaints. Mr. Palmer said he would like his office to become Pomfret’s “full-service police coverage”, including local ordinance issues of any kind. Emily mentioned the annual foliage traffic issue on Cloudland Road, explaining that this year Pomfret paid extra for additional coverage in that location at that time. Mr. Palmer anticipates this type of extraordinary service still would be considered “extra”, but that any additional charges would be reasonable and reflect costs.

Mr. Palmer stated he intends to honor Pomfret’s existing contract (which runs through June 30, 2023) and looks forward to working with the board to develop the best coverage for Pomfret residents.

- c. FY 2024 Town and Highway Budget – Neil has added the town, highway, and Fire Department budgets to the spread sheet. These were reviewed in a line by line fashion.

The Selectboard’s stipend was discussed. Ben noted the stipend hadn’t been adjusted since 2000, and that in today’s dollars it would be about \$1,800 per year. He expressed unease at the Selectboard approving its own pay raise, however, and offered that the increase could be delayed until after the next election or put to the voters directly. Emily suggested that the stipend be increased to \$1,500 per year directly in the budget. Assuming we have an in-person town meeting again next year, the voters will have an opportunity to change this if they wish to do so.

Jon suggested budgeting for a municipal administrator who could assist the board with grants, RFPs, etc. He has researched two positions in nearby towns. This needs further research, but an approximate line item cost was added for discussion purposes.

Frank Perron contacted the board regarding a new line item for a Fire Warden salary as required by statute (10 V.S.A. 2642); this was added for both the Fire Warden and Deputy Fire Warden (the latter per 10 V.S.A. 2641(d)).

Betsy Rhodes stated the Library may need to hire a lawncare service this year; previously this work had been done by volunteers. Steve noted that Artistree – which abuts the Library – utilizes Dependable Land and Lawn. Emily suggested that the Library contact them for their availability and a price quote so this item can be budgeted appropriately.

The Fire Department’s proposed budget reflects a significant year-over-year increase, through a combination of additional operating and reserve spending, that exceeds even the historically high inflation rate. The Fire Department will review and come back to the board regarding any adjustments or savings that may be had, to keep the increase in line with increases elsewhere in the town budget. Scott Pearce expressed the Fire Department’s desire to increase communications with the board, and transparency with the town, and to this end offered to make monthly or quarterly reports as needed.

The Board decided Jim’s presence was necessary for a thorough review of the Highway Budget, which will be discussed further at the 12/21/2022 meeting.

- d. Warrants – Ben moved and Steve seconded payment of the following warrants:

23058	\$ 7,833.77	A/P
23060	13,851.99	Payroll

Unanimous.

5. Meeting Wrap Up
 - a. Correspondence – None.
 - b. Review of Assignments – Ellen re NEMRC, Health Insurance, and Property and Liability Insurance costs; Municipal Standards Grant (Emily will handle); Jim re: Workers Compensation Complaint.
 - c. Agenda for Next Meeting – FY 2024 Budgeting, purchase of Apple computer equipment for remote meeting use.
6. Adjournment – John moved and Ben seconded that the meeting be adjourned. Unanimous. The meeting was adjourned at 11:01 pm.