

Greensboro Selectboard

January 13, 2021

Meeting Minutes

[Meeting was held via Zoom conference call]

SELECTBOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Peter Romans, Andy Kehler, Gary Circosta, Tracy Collier

SELECTBOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Matt McAllister

OTHERS PRESENT: Kim Greaves, Josh Karp, Brett Stanciu, Chief Aaron Cochran, Shaun Fielder, Mike Sardina, Eric Remick, Janet Steward, Jennifer Ranz, John Stone, Aaron Green, Michael Porrazzo

CALLED TO ORDER: 6:30 PM

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Petitions for two articles to be added to town meeting warning – *Jennifer Ranz*

MINUTES

- 12/9/20 unanimously approved as amended (regular meeting).
- 12/16/20 unanimously approved as written (special meeting re police contract).
- 1/6/21 unanimously approved as written (special meeting re police contract).

PUBLIC CONCERNS

Property in need of clean up, resident in need of assistance – *Robert Hundley*. Robert submitted a letter to the Board. A friend of his is interested in purchasing a property in Greensboro, but won't purchase the property prior to it being cleaned up. The property owner is unable to clean up the property himself; Robert added that the owner has medical conditions and may need assistance in finding new suitable housing.

Robert asked the town to consider cleaning up the property and placing a lien on the title to offset clean up costs.

The Board took no action on cleaning up the property. There was a discussion of whether the town health officer should do a welfare check on the resident. Peter will follow up with health officer Karl Stein.

POLICE

1. **Police report.** The December police report was reviewed by the Board.
2. **Police services contract.** Peter gave an update on police contract negotiations with the town of Hardwick. The Greensboro Selectboard had specific questions about the contract back in

early November. Peter said that since these questions have gone unanswered, negotiations haven't been able to move forward.

Both Peter and Gary said they've been surprised and disappointed that the Hardwick Town Manager and Selectboard appear disinterested in discussing their concerns. Most of the questions are regarding overpayments by Greensboro, Peter said.

Gary said that he went into the negotiations thinking the two towns were in a partnership; however, it seems like we're just a customer paying a flat fee for a service, and we can take it or leave it. He said that after looking eight years back in Hardwick town reports, it appears that the contract is weighted against Greensboro, with approx. \$125k of overpayments made in the current contract period alone.

The overpayments are due to the difference between HPD's budget (which Greensboro pays a flat percentage of) and HPD's actual expenses.

Examples of situations where HPD expenditures were reduced: when officers unexpectedly leave the Dept. and positions are not immediately filled; and when grant reimbursements come in that weren't accounted for in the budget. While these costs savings are a benefit to Hardwick, Greensboro sees no reduction in the fee for HPD services that it pays.

Gary said he's made a number of assumptions during his research and asked the Hardwick Town Manager and Selectboard to check them for accuracy, but he's heard nothing from them. Gary felt that Greensboro taxpayers deserve an explanation of the apparent discrepancies.

Hardwick Town Manager Shaun Fielder was unhappy about this discussion taking place in an open meeting, and disputed the assertion that he and the Hardwick Selectboard didn't want to negotiate. He said that some of Greensboro's questions have been answered, and that it's disingenuous to say that Hardwick is taking advantage of Greensboro.

Shaun said he's disappointed in the contract negotiation process so far, but would like to continue the conversation. He said there may be problem with a three-year contract that includes an automatic inflation value, and that perhaps the towns should go back to a flat annual percentage. He added that lowering Greensboro's percentage could also be discussed.

While Shaun said that Hardwick wants to try to make the numbers work for Greensboro, he also said that it's expensive to run a police department. Chief Cochran added that the HPD provides Greensboro with 24/7 coverage and a 11 minute response time that no one else can match.

Peter said that the Greensboro Board is disappointed enough with the negotiations that other policing options are being explored. Gary added that the HPD does a great job providing the contracted service – it simply appears that Greensboro has been overpaying for it.

GREENSBORO FIRE DEPT.

November/December combined report reviewed.

- An issue with the furnace at the new firehouse is being worked out.
- Delivery of the new tanker truck is delayed until the end of February.

ROADS & DRIVEWAYS

1. **Certificate of Highway Mileage.** Reviewed and signed.
2. **Sand screening cost overrun.** No update.

TOWN CLERK – Kim Greaves

1. **Liquor licenses for Hill Farmstead Brewery, Willey’s Store, Smith’s Store.** Andy made the following motion:

The Board approves liquor licenses for Hill Farmstead Brewery, Willey’s Store and Smith’s Store.

Gary seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

2. **State Sales Studies of Greensboro properties.** The Board reviewed the corrected 2019 Equalization Study and the 2020 Equalization Study. Kim said that Greensboro’s Education Tax rate may increase in part due to unfavorable changes to our CLA (Common Level of Appraisal) and COD (Coefficient of Dispersion).

TREASURER

1. **FY21 budget YTD.** The Board reviewed the FY21 YTD budget reports.
2. **December check warrants.** The Board reviewed the December check warrant reports.

ONGOING BUSINESS

Selectboard protocols. Last month, a member of the public was upset that a Selectboard member appeared to act unilaterally. Peter told those present that Selectboard members don’t have the authority to make independent decisions, and that the incident has been a valuable lesson for the Board.

Peter sought first-hand information from those involved in the incident, and it appears that no egregious conduct occurred. Apparently a Board member made an off-hand comment, but the recipient of the comment didn’t take it too seriously.

Board members thanked Peter for looking into and clarifying this issue.

TOWN MEETING 2021

1. **Adding two articles to warning – Jennifer Ranz.** Jennifer said she’ll try to get signatures on two petitions to add articles to the town meeting warning, unless the Selectboard elects to add the articles.

Article 1: *Moving forward, any bylaw or ordinance change will be voted on by Australian ballot.*

Article 2: *Moving forward, all open elected positions will be voted on by Australian ballot.*

Gary made the following motion:

The Board will add Jennifer Ranz’s two articles to the town meeting warning.

Tracy seconded the motion and the Board discussed the articles.

Peter said that he likes the traditional method of voting on these items at a floor meeting.

Tracy felt that the article addressing the ordinances would make the Selectboard less nimble.

Gary said he needed more information and more time to make a decision.

Vote: All opposed; the motion did not pass.

- 2. Hand counting ballots vs. using the tabulator.** Kim advocated for using the tabulator rather than hand counting ballots. It appears there will be financial assistance from the state to offset some of the printing, mailing, and tabulator programming costs.

The Board agreed to use the tabulator for counting town meeting ballots.

The Board reviewed and discussed the draft town meeting ballot.

- 3. Postponing town meeting.** While the legislature has given towns permission to delay town meeting, the Selectboard agreed that the 2021 town meeting should not be postponed.

- 4. Informational letter.** The Board agreed on the importance of sending out an informational letter about town meeting to all registered voters. Discussion of including an informational letter with the town report, and/or sending a separate letter closer to town meeting.

The Board will revisit the discussion about the informational letter after the two upcoming informational meetings.

- 5. The FY22 budget** will be finalized next week after the two informational meetings. The library submitted a petition to restore its appropriation to the 2020 amount.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Andy made the following motion:

The Board will enter executive session at 8:38 PM to discuss the police services contract.

Tracy seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

The Board left executive session at 9:10 PM, and took no action.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully Submitted: Josh Karp, Selectboard Clerk