

Town of Florida Select Board Meeting

Florida Town Hall
379 Mohawk Trail
Drury, MA 01343

February 15, 2023

6:01 pm meeting called to order by Neil Oleson.

Select Board members present: Neil Oleson, Mike Bedini, Terry I. Green

Select board members absent:

Others present: Joan Lewis, James White, Vicki Winchell, Ron Bosley, Cindy Bosley, Joel Mollison, Jake White, Ron White, Krista Bishop, Larry Cote, Karen Brule, Lisa Brown, Derrick Rougeau, Aurora Foster

Selectboard:

- Joel Mollison of Northeast IT attended to discuss the IT Grant the town received.
 - Joel discussed the grant writing and proposal process that was necessary to obtain the grant. In writing it they said some computers would be replaced, some upgraded to meet new format style that is required to meet the needs of things being put in place (cloud-based service, new server, updated email system). He clarified you do not need to go with the company that wrote it but do need to complete the process in one year. State was asked for \$65,000 when writing the grant even though the estimate came to just over \$45,000. Grant was approved for \$60,000. This was done because there is always a variance and escalation of prices as well as things that would crop up that they did not know were there.
 - Joan has now run into a problem with her PC and it is not functional. He has been working with Joan troubleshooting her computer. It was purchased with wrong hardware and is now causing a performance issue. Options are to fix the hardware problem or replace the computer. Her computer was not included as one of those to be replaced when the grant was written. It is fixable and would be about \$650 to fix. His suggestion is to replace the drive and computer should be good for another 3 or 4 years.
 - The grant was awarded for \$60,000 therefore there are funds available. The board needs to decide who gets what from it. In past they do not work with the board of selectmen as a whole due to open meeting law issues. Typically, towns designate someone, most cases it is the town administrator. They would like a designee for this project if they are to move forward.
 - Joel also discussed the challenges in working remotely for employees as people would need to log into the town hall system from home. Cindy questioned if they really want everyone working from home. Joel responded that is an internal discussion.
 - He also discussed moving emails to a new platform that would be a huge undertaking and could take a few months (including the training).
 - Joel discussed service contracts. Most towns hire an outsourced IT company to cover the umbrella of everything. Florida has never done anything like that. Regardless of the size of towns, most have all the same departments (Assessors, Treasurer, Collector, DPW, FD, Town

Select Board Initials NO MCB TIG

Select Board Meeting
February 15, 2023

Selectboard (continued):

- Administrator) across the board so expense is the same. Most systems now require software subscriptions. Joel has 3 service plan levels and has given Florida the two basic levels for options. Because he requested to know the most amount of email addresses for the town from Joan it pushed the costs up. The worst-case scenario was 68 email addresses. After reviewing the list, Joan was able to cut it down to 21-22 which would reduce a service plan from about \$2000 per month to around \$1600 per month, which is the lower tier plan. Plan includes services that would be bought out of pocket anyways that are required for the grant because a lot of the services have to do with the security portion. Grant does not cover service plans or subscription-based software packages. Plan includes unlimited day to day support for all employees. They need to know if the town would like to move forward with a service plan because it decides on where the software would be procured from. Service plan costs are not in the current budget.
- Terry discussed cases of towns having systems being taken for ransom. Neil and Joel debated system securities and cloud systems.
- Ron asked Joel's opinion on what system the town should get. Joel reiterated that regardless of size of town you still have the same departments, same technical problems, same backup systems needed in place, same security protocol. Things are to complicated now to do this in house. It should be someone who has experience with municipalities or it will end up broken like it was. Lowest tier is \$1600 per month.
- Joel clarified the need for one town designee as well as obtaining a signed contract to go forward with the town. Terry agreed with the need for updated security and the monthly service costs. Neil and Mike added that expense would need to be done at town meeting. Terry felt we could tentatively say we'd like to move forward with a contract.
- Joel will submit an updated proposal, to include sitting for 5-6 hours to discuss the plan. He would like Joan and the Selectboard to decide what everyone needs.
- Assessor Krista Bishop discussed the CIP Shift and presented options for the board regarding the split for the tax rate. Krista explained if the board does not select a split the tax rate will be \$15.56, almost twice the current rate. The board usually does a split. Last years residential rate was \$8.82. The average house residential assessment is \$183,036.00, up approximately \$13,000 from last year. Terry questioned if any funds would be added into overlay. Krista replied nothing would be added as there is approximately \$600,000.00 currently in overlay. The board deliberated the shift options.
 - Mike Bedini made a motion to set the rate for 1.2975 split. Terry I. Green seconded. Unanimous.
- The board discussed the Bakke property. They are selling 663 acres for an asking price of \$2.5 million. The family will keep 62 acres with a cabin. There is an income of \$70,000 year from the windmills which is estimated to increase to \$100,000 per year. The board will review the information and discuss at the next meeting. If they feel it is a viable option, the decision will be moved forward for town approval.
- Discussion held regarding holding the Special Town Meeting for purchasing a new fire truck and including a second item requested by Terry regarding whether the towns people would support to move forward in researching options for building a multipurpose building. Terry will submit the correct wording to Lisa. The board will need to decide where funding will be taken from for the fire truck. Audience member questioned if funds from overlay could be used to which Neil replied it cannot unless it was transferred into the general fund. They can however use stabilization funds. Lisa explained the timeline needed to prepare for the meeting. Jake White explained truck pricing. All trucks went up \$5000 except for the E1 truck that they are interested in. They would like to purchase through state contracting. They will be able

Select Board Initials _____

MLB 718

Select Board Meeting
February 15, 2023

Selectboard (continued):

- to use Sourcewell and avoid the need for bidding. The Special Town Meeting date has been set for Wednesday, March 22, 2023 at 7pm at the Senior Center. With the mailing for the STM Lisa and Joan will include the information regarding electricity rates and burn permits.
- Verizon cell tower information has all been sent out and has gone through the registry.

Jim White, Highway Department Supervisor:

- Greasing and checking over trucks
- Dealing with snow, sleet and rain.
- Met with Heidi Dugal regarding a community shed. McCann is going to build it. Town just needs to pay for the materials. The students will build it on site the week of April 24, 2023. It will be 10x12 with two windows on the side and siding. Mike suggested a metal roof.
- Contacted Dan Clark to see if he is interested in bidding on the windows and siding for the Church Road fire station and windows for town hall. He was too busy to. Jim also called Ames Builders who did not reply back. Three bids were received from Anthony Arigoni.
 - Church Road Fire Station windows \$5695 and siding \$11700
 - Town Hall windows \$7600
 - DPW garage roof \$6395

Jim will review the Building and Maintenance account balance. He will use any funds left in this year's budget to start the projects. The board suggested the most important to start first is the DPW garage roof. Some funds may need to be appropriated out of next years budget to continue.

- Berkshire Regional reached out regarding writing a grant. One stop growth application portal is open for FY2024. Whitcomb Hill Road needs reclaimed and new overlay. Jim estimates it would cost around \$1 million. They did not give a price on writing the grant yet. Jim will reach out for more information. Terry added that a person needs to be Map It certified, which Jim is, and thought moving forward the Town Administrator would be writing grants to avoid the costs. Joan will sign up for the class.
- Jim presented a list of highway equipment (vehicles, backhoes, chippers) to the board as someone had requested at a previous meeting.
- Jim submitted a written vacation policy for the board to review for upcoming union contract negotiations. Neil informed all that the current policy does state if using one day vacation the employee should be giving 24 hours' notice.
- Truck 2, 2005 International, burning oil, losing power. What does the board suggest to do with it, send it out for repair estimate? The body is in decent shape and the cab looks good. Neil suggested Cummins North East in Springfield. Jim will contact them.

Joan Lewis, Town Administrator:

- The graduate student who was doing the animal project has completed her program and passed the project onto a new student.
- Working with Lisa on mailings.
- Computer died today.
- Took test for the procurement officer and passed with a 91.

Select Board Initials _____ MLW JL

Select Board Meeting
February 15, 2023

Public Comment:

- Cindy discussed Spectrum is not going to cover the entire town. She is questioning if there will be more money available. Her answer from Representative Barrett’s office is Yes. Joan will have to be the point person and sign up for the Municipal Digital Equity Planning Service Grant. Email came in back in November. Barrett’s office was insistent Joan needs to sign up for this.
- Cindy questioned what the \$40,000 that came to the town from the state in December is going to be spent for. It was to be used for broadband. Neil felt it could be used toward Spectrum. Terry questioned if it was a check or ACH. Cindy was told it was a check and reported Stacie confirmed the town received it. Neil instructed Joan to contact Barrett’s office for spending criteria.

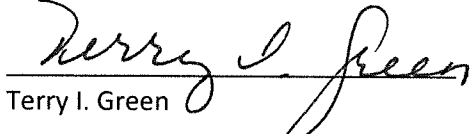
Mike Bedini made a motion to adjourn at 7:51 pm. Terry I. Green seconded. Unanimous.



Neil Oleson, Chair



Michael Bedini



Terry I. Green

Select Board Initials 