

**Town of Nelson
Selectmen's Meeting
Budget Caucus**

February 15, 2017

Executive Board Attending: David Upton, Maury Collins, Gary Robinson, Edie Drinkwater, Admin. Assist.

Others attending: General Public

At 7:00 PM David Upton opened the February 14, 2017 Caucus meeting of the Nelson Select Board.

- David thanked the Monadnock Folklore Society and Max Nunnemaker for providing the sound system to be used for the evening.
- David began with a sequential review of each Warrant Article including the zoning changes that will appear on the official ballot.
- There was a brief explanation of the proposed zoning changes and how they will incorporate the newly passed SB 146 which will become effective in June of 2017. (Accessory Dwelling Units)
- The format change for operating budgets met with some resistance and misunderstanding of how the final total may be expended. David explained that whether several operating articles are presented or just one which includes all operating budgets, the authority to expend by the Select Board remains the same. General operating articles do not carry the same restrictions as "special" or "Individual" articles.
Special and individual articles must be expended strictly within the parameters of the article as written and approved. Operating articles are expended to meet the needs of the overall municipal operations and at times may be overspent in one department and covered by underspending in another as needs arise.
- David explained that Fire Code Compliance to meet public safety was not optional for the Town to address. Public safety is a responsibility that the Selectmen cannot ignore, as doing so carries grave legal and safety consequences.
Some audience members stated that they made it clear last year that they did not want the Selectmen to spend any money on the Fire Code violations cited by the State Fire Marshal's office.
David explained that not all violations could be corrected in one year but that work had to begin and must continue.
Lisa Sieverts explained that the Town Buildings Committee was involved and had input into the details and the negotiations. Those negotiations allowed for some simple modifications in some instances that saved thousands by not having to add a sprinkler system to the Town Hall.
Understanding the need to continue to address the Fire Code violations is to understand the main increase in the operating budget.
- David then noted that the Select Board worked with and supported the Town Buildings Committee recommendation to add \$28,000 for energy conservation projects in the Old Brick Schoolhouse, Library/Town Hall, and Safety/Highway buildings.
Dave Birchenough presented a brief history, and projected the future energy savings that could be realized with a few projects for each of the buildings.

Some queried why the budgeted energy costs remained close to the previous year if the solar panels are producing energy.

Contributing factors were noted: The panels have not been producing for a full year at this time and were not yet in operation during some of the peak sun months. It was also noted that year round use of the Library lower level meeting room has grown far beyond previous use of the building. Some of the energy savings is being utilized by the additional use.

- Another question from the floor asked why there is no principal or interest listed for the loan on the Library Lower Level Project. It was quickly answered by Lisa Sieverts reporting that community donations had completely paid off the loan last year leaving nothing further to be paid.
- Fire, Police and Highway department reviews drew just a few questions including why there is an increase in paving material. Mike Tarr explained that the delay in repairs to the paved roads has taken a toll and they are in need of attention before they become any worse.
- Susan Peery presented an overview of the Library budget and praised the many programs offered to the public. She encouraged everyone to check out what is offered as there is something for everyone.
- David Upton reviewed the Warrant article for a new water well on Town property detailing the damage to existing plumbing and the poor water quality for drinking. Bert Wingerson explained the toll that has been taken on the HVAC system, in the Library lower level, due to the extreme iron deposit in the existing well.
- Susan Hansel spoke about the plans for the Nelson 250th celebration and the request for funding to offer many programs and presentations at no cost to attendees.
- Mike Tarr and John Bunce spoke to an article to purchase and equip a highway truck to replace the older (troublesome) international. Federal surplus vehicles have become available for purchase at extremely low cost. Once funding is approved, Nelson would be placed in the queue until a vehicle becomes available. When the vehicle is acquired it would be outfitted with the necessary equipment for all season road maintenance. (body, sander, plow, etc.) The road crew and the Highway Equipment Committee were impressed when they visited a nearby town that has acquired 2 vehicles in this manner. Purchasing a vehicle in this way will result in a remarkable cost savings for the town.
- Bob Lenox presented two Petition Warrant Articles for consideration. 1. To create an advisory committee by Town Vote. 2. To appoint the members by Town Vote. David Upton advised the audience that the Selectmen had already created such an advisory committee and had appointed the individuals listed in the petition articles.
- As with all petition articles, the Board sought legal opinion as suggested by DRA.

David read the following:

1. NH State Law does not give authority to the "Town Meeting" to appoint this type of advisory committee. That authority falls within the authorities granted to the Board of Selectmen.
2. The article as written implies that financial authority could bypass the Selectmen in the budgeting process. State law does not allow for this type of action or bypassing of the Selectmen on budgetary matters. Advisory committee development and appointment remains with the Selectmen at their discretion.
3. As this advisory committee has already been developed by the Selectmen any further action would be redundant. There is an existing Advisory Committee that is subject to all Public legal notice and posting of minutes, as is required of any town entity.

4. The individuals named in Article 22 have already been appointed by the Selectmen within their proper authority to do so. As these advisory committee appointments have no statutory standing, the "Town Meeting" has no authority to make these appointments beyond that which the Selectmen have already done.

- David Upton closed the Warrant review.

- David made a motion to approve the Warrant and Budget as presented.
Gary seconded.
The motion carried 3-0.

- With nothing further, David made a motion to adjourn.
Maury seconded.
The motion carried 3-0. 8:57 PM

February 15, 2017

David Upton, Chair

Maury Collins, Selectman

Gary Robinson, Selectman