

**CONWAY VILLAGE FIRE DISTRICT
COMMISSIONER'S MEETING
Thursday January 14, 2016 3:30 p.m.
Minutes**

Meeting was called to order at 3:30

Commissioners present: Janine Bean, Michael Digregorio, Joseph Quirk

Others present: Gregg Quint- Superintendent, Chief Solomon, and Amy Snow-Municipal Bookkeeper

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Mr. Digregorio made a motion to approve items A through C, motion seconded by; motion passed 3-0-0.

- A. Ratify A/P 2015 Manifests and sign checks dated 1/14/2016
- B. Ratify A/P 2016 Manifests and sign checks dated 1/14/2016
- C. Ratify Weekly Payroll and sign checks for week ending 1/10/2016

Mrs. Bean signed the Superintendent's and Fire Chief's time sheets for week ending.

Mr. Digregorio made a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes dated January 7, 2016, Mr. Quirk seconded the motion; motion passed 3-0-0.

BOC INFORMATION

The commissioners reviewed a document from Devine Millimet stating that our CWSRF loan will be closed on the 15th in the amount of 6.616 million with an interest rate of 1.875% and a maturity date of January 15, 2037 (attached).

The commissioners signed the engagement letter with Vachon Clukay to audit our books. Amy presented a questionnaire from Vachon Clukay that needs to be filled out by either the governing board or by management, there is time but it needs to be done prior to the audit.

POLICYS

The commissioners reviewed the first draft Policy of the Connection Fees for Large Projects. Discussion ensued regarding what a "large project" might be. Lamplighter expansion was discussed versus Great Bridge. It was decided that this will be put on hold until legal council can be consulted.

The commissioners reviewed the Cross Connection Policy amendment. Discussion ensued around the amount of time customers have to repair backflow preventers for high hazard. A line needs to be added stating that CVFD will be doing repairs on the commercial hazard backflow devices. Amy will e-mail all the pages of the policy to everyone.

UPDATES

Mr. Digregorio met with the Selectman at their January 12th meeting regarding the warrant article for turning over the sidewalks. Mr. Digregorio recapped the warrant. The article asks that CVFD handover \$90,000 toward Main Street sidewalks. Mr. Digregorio asked the Selectman to not tie the 2017 project to taking over the sidewalks. He asked them to reword the article stating that CVFD is handing over a \$60,000+ dollar that has a \$20,000+ payment left on it and possibly using \$20,000 out of the Sidewalk Capital Reserve fund to make the warrant palatable to the rest

of the town. It was discussed that there may be a warrant article at the CVFD Annual meeting clarifying the March 15th 2015 warrant article. Mrs. Bean believes they (Selectman) agreed to tie this only to the 2016 budget. Amy asked when the transfer would take place if it was voted on in April and was told it would take place immediately after the vote (in the affirmative). Pollard St. was brought up at the Selectman's because it is the one street on schedule for 2016. Mr. Digregorio does not want to pay for the machine and give them \$20,000, he would want an article clarifying the money can be taken from CRF and leave the money in the budget for the Trackless payment. So the town would get a \$60,000 dollar machine – they would make the \$20,000+ dollar payment and we would give them \$20,000 towards Pollard Street. Mr. Digregorio was directed by the Board to rewrite the town warrant article and get it to Earl.

LEGAL COUNCIL

Legal council has been contacted in regards to dissolving the District. Dan Crean PLLC of Pembroke was contacted. Mr. Digregorio felt that the Board should talk with employees first. Discussion ensued around what needed to be discussed/voted on at annual meeting: dissolving the District, turning over the Fire Department, Fire and Ambulance Contracts. Mr. DiGregorio relayed that his feelings after talking with the Town Manager that selling the Fire Department is a no go and handing it over could cause legal issues. He also recounted a conversation at a meeting around how the District is going to pay its bills. Earl Sires, the town manager, Peter Malia, Town of Conway Attorney, and Ed Alkalay, DVFD attorney, will all be at next week's meeting and Mrs. Bean felt that the board needs more information before talking to the staff. Mr. Quint mentioned that he was having a staff meeting tomorrow and he let the water/sewer staff know what is being talked about. Mr. Digregorio stated that the only reason the District would dissolve is if it was financially beneficial. Mr. Quirk spoke of being able to get grant money that the town may not be eligible for. It was agreed that there are many unknowns and questions. Mrs. Bean relayed that Carl Thibodeau stated at a Selectman's meeting that he had lunch with Jean Shaheen who told him that there may be money out there to help us with our financial situation. Jean Shaheen directed her staff – Chuck Henderson to work with us on this. **Mr. Digregorio made a motion to retain Dan Crean as legal counsel, Mr. Quirk seconded the motion**, discussion ensued about the legal line in the General District fund. **Motion passed 3-0-0**. Amy will contact Mr. Crean and tell him relay to him that we would like to retain his services and that we will be contacting him as to when we would like to speak with him.

Chief Solomon asked about the loan forgiveness and grants if we were to dissolve, these are questions that need to be asked of the lawyers. Amy was directed to find out as much as possible free of charge.

HOUSE BILL 1428

Mrs. Bean and Mr. Digregorio went to Concord yesterday for the bill's hearing presented by Representative Bucu. The Bill is asking for money for 2017 in the amount of \$1.6 million and 825,000 for 2016. This would mean \$247,655 for us for a year. Mrs. Bean testified that because CVFD is 20% over state average on our rates and fees we are eligible for 30% grant or \$3,677,900 over 20 years. She explained to finance committee our debt and tax impact with and without this money. Rep. Bucu explained that the audited surplus will be \$62 million and \$49 million is encumbered. He stated that law states that these projects will be paid if the money is available. Mr. Digregorio relayed that before the meeting he heard the Chair say that this hearing was a waste of time and this really bothered him. Both Mr. Digregorio and Mrs. Bean agreed that the committee really did not understand the impact of their decisions and how our District pays its debt and who we are. Mr. Bucu explained the process involved with passing bills and discussion ensued.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Thomas Bucu asked why we have to hire a lawyer since we have “free” legal counsel through New Hampshire Municipal (NHMA). He was told that Mr. Crean is a municipal lawyer and NHMA told the office staff that they do not get involved at this level. Mr. Alkalay is not a municipal lawyer – he is a labor lawyer who will be looking for our staff. Mr. Bucu stated that our debt stays with us and Mr. Digregorio talked about how there may be cost savings to district residents if it dissolves. We are not sure how the numbers are going to work out but we need to look at this possibility. Mr. Bucu stated that we all knew when we voted on this how it was going to be paid for. Mrs. Bean agreed that the voters knew this and voted for it. She talked about how the costs for the fire department are skyrocketing and we are already at \$4.63/\$1000 for next year and this does not include rates and fee for water and sewer – this is just taxes. Mr. Furtado wants to assume that besides the state not paying that everything else is working out as projected and he was told “no”. Chief Solomon explained when the voters were pitched these projects they were told that it would bring in economic development which did not happen, the economy crashed, and property values are worth less now than before, this all combined brought us from a moderate increase to a very large increase. Mr. Bob Dannenberg asked if this information was going to be available at the budget hearing and he was told that we would have all the information we possible can on February 9th. Mr. Masters feels the best option for the taxpayers is dissolving the district and the commissioners deserve a pat on the back for being brave enough to talk about this. No investors are going to come in at this rate to do any development. He feels the commissioners are doing everyone a “phenomenal favor”. Mr. Digregorio believes that our efforts to protect the river should be considered when the town is asked to vote to take over the sidewalks because everyone benefits from that river and we need help, we cannot afford to continue because of the financial impacts. He has always been an advocate for “joining forces throughout the town” but he will not vote for this if there is not a financial benefit to taxpayers, employees, and people in general and if done right there could be cost savings. Amy brought up something discussed at the last meeting that another issue CVFD faces is that this is where many of the nonprofits are – who do not contribute tax wise to the debt but have sewer service. Mrs. Bean stated that in total the property values that are tax exempt equates to \$30 million. The only PILOT we get is from the Sonata house for about \$900 which they do not have to do. Mrs. Masters thanked the district for putting the annual meeting dates on the bills.

Mr. Bucu asked that if there is any talk of canceling any of the water projects he would like to see the Main Street project preserved. Commissioners told him the town is involved with this project already and everyone wants to see it done. Hopefully the town will feel the project is important enough to continue with it. Mrs. Bean stated that water is fine this year and we did not have to raise the rates. Bids were advertised for West Main St. which is part of phase III water. We are not paying on this yet. Mr. Bucu once again iterated that if any have to be canceled, cancel West Main St. The bids did go out in the fall and came in too high so they were rejected. Mr. Digregorio state that West Main St. has been reclassified so it will no longer be shut down to trucks in the spring. Mr. Dannenberg asked if the Main Street project includes the dog bone and was told no but DOT wants to reconfigure the lights and be able to manipulate them when they re-deck the bridge over the Saco.

FIRE CHIEF’S BUSINESS

The Chief presented his most recent budget. Discussion ensued around payroll and overtime as well as overall budget. Discussion ensued around Fryeburg replacing medical supplies and Memorial Hospital called the Chief complaining that a critical patient came in from Bartlett Jackson and they didn’t call Conway because we are now billing for paramedic intercepts. When asked if the hospital would help by supplying medical supplies the answer was “no”. Using the 2015 valuation, the Fire Department needs .25/1000 less. Discussion ensued around the

department's revenues. A policy needs to be written for paramedic intercepts. We will have to wait and see how this plays out with payments.

OTHER BUSINESS

The legal line for the General Fund should be raised to \$5000.00 to cover the lawyer's fees. Discussion ensued around Fire and Ambulance contracts; the chief does not want the non-precinct fire contract to be tied to a formula. Discussion ensued around the town's portion of Capital Reserve and the fact that CVFD taxpayers pay taxed twice for the ambulance – by the District and by the Town (11 cents per thousand by the town) approx. \$21,000 to the town as double taxes. Discussion ensued around making the contracts fairer for District Taxpayers. The Town wants the ambulance contract separate from the fire contract. The chief said that if we do not separate the two, then the contract cannot be tied to valuation. Some discussion ensued around Albany contract and also keeping it fair for them as well. The chief stated that CVFD would be better off if any valuation used should be just the areas we cover instead of the entire town and Lower Bartlett and others.

Discussion ensued around sewer rates in 2017 if all the sewer debt on the sewer users, the new rate would be \$3550.00 per year for just sewer (not including water). There was also discussion around numbers the Carl Thibodeau came up with. Our numbers, based on 45,000 per quarter for a family of four, with the new rates

FUTURE DATES

- A. Next Commissioner's meeting, Thursday 1/21/2016 3:30 p.m.
- B. Budget Hearing: February 9th, 7 p.m. in the Firehouse Meeting Room
- C. Annual Meeting: March 8th, meeting starts 7 p.m. in the Firehouse Meeting Room

Meeting was adjourned without objection at 6:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Amy Snow, Municipal Bookkeeper