

**CONWAY VILLAGE FIRE DISTRICT
COMMISSIONER'S MEETING
Thursday January 21, 2016
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

Public in attendance: Earl Sires, Peter Malia, Ed Alkalay, Carl Thibodeau, Paul DegliAngeli, David Weathers, Steve Porter, Mr. and Mrs. Bill Masters, Bob Dannenberg, Mark Hounsell, Jim Hill, Daymon Steere, David Mercier, Mary Seavey, Tad Furtado

APPOINTMENT

Mrs. Bean started the meeting by recapping a meeting that occurred at the Town of Conway town hall at 1:30 in regards to dissolving the district with the Town employees, she and Commissioner Digregorio and via phone, NHMA lawyers, and a representative from DRA. The town is responsible for Class Five Roads, solid waste, and welfare. Town Manager Sires relayed what the town is responsible by and law and if the district dissolved the entire town would have to vote on the budget. There is a lot involved regarding permitting and silencing for water and sewer. There are questions at the selectman's office how to bill and tax the district residents among other things. The Town attorney stated that the town is not obligated and cannot take over the district unless the money is raised and appropriated by the town legislative body and he cited RSA 52:21.

Daymon Steere from the Conway Daily Sun asked for clarity on the fact that even if the District dissolved, the residents would not see any tax relief, Mrs. Bean told him not on the debt, Mr. Digregorio said maybe only on expenses. Chief Solomon stated that O and M of water and sewer and water debt are all paid by the users anyway. Sewer Debt is paid by taxes. Any savings would be seen on efficiencies and equalization in taxes between then non-precinct and district taxes for fire and ambulance. Mary Seavey wanted to the difference between the non-precinct and precinct taxes. The difference is \$1.52. Mary does not understand why non-precinct pays less. Mr. Quirk said it has been being worked on to equalize this through valuation. Mr. Carl Thibodeau said when this started it was within a few cents, he wanted to know how such a disparity occurred now. Chief Solomon accredited it to the two large department's budget increasing and the smaller ones not increasing as much plus other things. Mr. Mark Hounsell stated he wrote the formula and agrees it hasn't kept pace and he believes the ambulance and unfunded mandates, etc. is the biggest issue - he says we all knew the debt was coming. He feels that we need to see what the end game is. David Weathers asked about the status of coming up projects. He was told it is all being talked about. Mr. Hounsell made it clear that it is the costs for ambulance and not the operation, ours are the best in the area. Mr. Digregorio spoke of the numbers that he has seen that prompted him to look at ways to reduce cost. Chief Solomon stated that the ambulance actually made money in 2015. He feels the sewer debt is the problem along with no economic growth, lower valuations, and the state not paying it's share. Mr. Digregorio cannot see moving forward with more projects at this point. Mr. Hounsell stated we do have a better system now and maybe it is time to look at town wide fire but dissolving the district is not the answer. The question was asked what would happen if the district defaulted and the answer was that it was looked at and it really is not viable. Mrs. Bean said the state is working on putting \$247,000.00 a year in their 2017/18 budget for CVFD. There was discussion on how our percentage is figured. Mr. Masters

asked if the town is in position to accept the fire department legally. Mr. Sires answered that it has to be voted on by legislative body. Mr. Masters then asked if the 1997 warrant is invalid and was told any money that needs to be spent has to be voted on. Mr. Masters asked if the district were to surrender and the accept the department, would district residents see any relief and Mr. Sires said in essence no because the at this point the selectman would have the same people pay for it that are paying for it now due to the other precincts that are in existence. Mr. Thibodeau stated that handing over the department will do nothing we just need to equalize the contracts. Mrs. Bean reiterated that the Board is looking at all the options.

Mr. Digregorio stated that defaulting was not really brought up today but he said we would never just close the doors and walk away and Mr. Thibodeau stated that he was not talking about closing shop, just not paying the bill, he feels there is precedence out there to look at. Mrs. Bean said she did sit with Mr. Chuck Henderson from Jeanne Shaheen's office who is going to look into finding us some funding. Discussion ensued around who and how the sewer debt is paid. Mrs. Bean spoke of the un-taxable property exercise she did last week (see last weeks minutes). Ed Alkalay - CVFD attorney informed the body of the cost of bankruptcy or default - loss of control to bankruptcy court or the state etc. Mark Hounsell said the Town does provide fire service and the formula can be configured and worked out. Mr. Dannenberg asked about the 2016 rates and how it is going to reduce the debt. He was told that a small portion of the sewer debt is paid by rates but some of the increase is due to having to pay to send sewerage to NCWP. Mr. Steere asked about growth in the village with incentives. Mr. Sires stated that there is legislation that may be adopted to waive property taxes for five years to promote growth. Tad Furtado asked if all debt is paid to government he was told yes. He also stated that the town's Master Plan states that it supports infrastructure improvement and maybe the entire town should help pay the debt. Amy Snow wanted clarification on the tax incentives and the impact on the village. She believes that the District would still get the full assessed value but no one was 100% sure but the feeling was that yes, the village would still get the full amount. Mr. Digregorio feels the best thing for everyone is that the District has been protecting the river for years which benefits the entire town and there are people who do not understand that, and if the town took it over the betterment assessment should be spread across the whole town. He feels that being a community we should all participate in protecting the aquifer and river. Mr. Quirk gave a quick history of how the district partnered with state but now the state is not holding up it's end of deal. He feels that there are many who feel we are "one town with many tribes" and would like to see the town unified as far as at least the fire department.. Mrs. Bean said in the past the town has helped with monies to put pipe in the ground and feels this can happen again. Steve Porter asked if the district has looked into expanding its borders. He was told how difficult it is legally and logistically. He was told it was easier to dissolve and become a non-precinct of the town then to expand the boarders. Discussion ensued about billing others due to benefits to the river. There was a short recess while public left the meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Once the meeting reconvened, Paul DegliAngeli questioned the status of West Main St. because he needs to do the drainage. Discussion ensued regarding the bid opening on the 28th and Paul informed the board of his plans. Janine reminded everyone that in 2006 the body voted to do all this work and she has problem now telling them that we can't afford it. She also believes that the grant money will come eventually. Discussion ensued around Main St. staying on schedule and maybe not doing West Main. Paul D. stated that we lose a lot by not doing Main St. Mr. Digregorio believes that in 2006 people really did not understand the dollar figures and he does not want to go forward with West Main. He was told it does not matter who initiated the Main St. project, it would still cost the same. Discussion ensued regarding who is responsible for building the sidewalks. Paul D. said the state paid for sidewalks from Burger King to the Village,

the town built the sidewalks in North Conway Village. It is not understood why the state stopped at the village and why they will not build CVFD sidewalks. Paul stated that the State only has a certain amount of money to do Main St. if the bids come in low, maybe we can get them to chip in. Paul stressed how important it is to go forward with Main St. He also stated that a past DOT Commissioner was a lot easier to work with and things are different now but Paul D. will try to get as much as possible from the State. Bob Dannenberg believes that if federal money is involved in rebuilding a state highway, they need to provide projects. More discussion ensued about Main St. and DOT.

Paul D. mentioned that Almost There wants to hook into CVFD sewer. They are in Albany and the process was explained to Paul and that the district has too much going on now to entertain this.

Mr. Digregorio expressed his concern about pressures on the West Main St. pipes if they are not replaced and Main St. is and was told it would be okay. Chief Solomon stated that our ISO rating just improved from a 5 to a 4 and that is with doing nothing to the water system and we probably would never get better than that. It was stated that North Road needs to be done no matter what and it can be done in-house. Discussion ensued around the projects. David Mercier from Underwood Engineers, stated Main St. would increase rates by \$30.00/ year and West Main St. by \$40.00/year

Paul D. left the meeting at 5:10 p.m.

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Mr. Digregorio made a motion to ratify A through D, Mr. Quirk seconded the motion; motion passed 3-0-0.

- A. Ratify A/P 2015 Manifests and sign checks dated 1/21/2016
- B. Ratify A/P 2016 Manifests and sign checks dated 1/21/2016
- C. Ratify Weekly Payroll and sign checks for week ending 1/17/2016
- D. Ratify Adjustment Payroll for SS and sign check

Mrs. Bean signed the Superintendent's and Fire Chief's time sheets for week ending 1/17/2016

Approval of the minutes dated January 14 has been tabled until next week as well as Mr. Crean's engagement letter,

FIRE CHIEF'S BUSINESS

Car two's transmission - The Chief asked to spend \$3,000.00 to replace the transmission, **Mr. Digregorio made a motion to spend up to \$3,300 for car two's transmission, Mr. Quirk seconded the motion, motion passed 3-0-0.**

The Chief presented figures to be written off and sent to collections. The Chief recommended \$1,130.70 of Medicare remainders and one deceased with no estate and sending \$6,216.00 to collections. **Mr. Digregorio made a motion to write off \$1,130.00 as recommended by the chief, Mr. Quirk seconded the motion, motion passed 3-0-0.** The Chief was instructed to send the \$6,216.00 to collections.

WARRANT ARTICLES

Amy presented warrant articles for approval of the wording. Discussion ensued regarding the town's sidewalk warrant article and the fact that the Selectmen are still tying the warrant article to the 2017 project. Mr. Digregorio feels the town wants to steal every penny they can from our trust funds. Amy was instructed to submit the articles to the DRA for the wording. Mr. Digregorio pointed out that the town's warrant article does not mention the sidewalk machine. Discussion ensued regarding a warrant reinstating the commissioner's authority to construct and maintain until the date that we no longer have ownership. Amy was instructed to contact NHMA to get help with the wording and send it off to the commissioners. There will be no article this

year to turn over the fire department to the town. The chief will have to negotiate three contracts this year. Discussion ensued regarding the fire and ambulance contracts.

OTHER BUSINESS

The question was asked if the district still needs to hire a lawyer if we are not talking about dissolving. Mrs. Bean asked Dave Mercier to rework the numbers to move more of the debt to demand fee. Discussion ensued around configuring rates. Discussion ensued around the non-profits not paying towards the debt if it is on taxes.

The policy on large project's connection fees was discussed in regards to the definition of "large project." It was discussed to remove "large project" and make the payment plan available to everyone.

Next week will be the discussion on budgets.

Mrs. Bean asked if the commissioners are going to go to the selectman's meeting next Tuesday and ask them to yank that article. Mr. Digregorio stated that if it is pulled, we have no chance of getting rid of the sidewalks so we should let them leave it on and CVFD residents could have the chance to change at the Budget Hearing and Deliberative.

The meeting was adjourned without objection at 6:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Amy Snow – Municipal Bookkeeper