

TOWN OF KENSINGTON  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING  
Kensington Town Hall  
95 Amesbury Road  
Kensington, NH 03833  
MONDAY  
April 1, 2024  
Minutes - DRAFT  
6:30 PM

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:30pm and led all in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

In Attendance: Joe Pace (Chairperson), Bob Solomon (Member), Bob Gustafson (Member), and Kathy Felch (Town Administrator).

**Public Comment –**

**Representative Susan Porcelli, NH District 3**

Rep. Porcelli presented information on recently passed legislation in the House of Representatives HB1363, HB 129, and HB 1399. Rep Porcelli stated that these recent land use bills do not take smaller towns into account, as she feels they are more relevant to larger communities and cities. Rep. Porcelli feels that this legislation removes local control of zoning from small communities and would require significant changes to town zoning ordinances via state mandates. Rep. Porcelli clarified that the bills still need to go before the state senate, and wants constituents to be aware of and make their voices heard regarding this pending legislation.

**AGENDA:**

**DEPARTMENT HEADS:**

- Police Department –Chief Scott Cain –
  - A traffic stop earlier in the day led to significant drug interdiction.
  - The PD continues to be inundated with 91A requests and discussed the fee change proposal that was discussed at the March 25, 2024 Board meeting.
- Fire Department – Chief Jon True –
  - FD is preparing for the upcoming storm later in the week.

- Emergency Management – Ben Cole –
    - The graded drill will be on April 3, 2024. FEMA will be on site evaluating the Emergency Management Team. Weather does not appear to be a significant impact on the upcoming drill.
  - Road Manager – Matthew Armstrong-
    - Stop sign posts have been replaced at Hilliard Rd.
    - Speed limit sign and posts have been replaced on
    - The Roads department is preparing for the upcoming storm.
  - Town Clerk – Sarah Wiggin –
    - The spring workshop for the Town Clerks Association will be held on May 15, 2024.
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**NEW BUSINESS:**

- **AWARD LAWN MAINTENANCE BID**

York Landscaping was the lowest bid at \$17,210 for 19 weeks.

**MOTION: Bob Gustafson motioned to award the lowest bid contract to York River Landscaping. Bob Solomon seconded. All in favor.**

- **OPEN AIR PERMIT – CROWS FEET FARM**

*\*Tabled*

- **TOWN BUDGET DISCUSSION – DEFAULT VOTED IN- DISCUSSION**

J. Pace explained that the Town Administrator had determined that that the difference between the default budget and the proposed budget would be approximately \$140,000, and listed items that would be impacted in the town:

- Wages would be frozen at 2023 levels.
- Town Clerk elections budget would see no increase.
- The police department is facing \$40-42 thousand increases in health insurance.
- There would be an approximately \$50,000 gap in wages that would impact staffing and patrols in the police department.
- Fire and Roads Departments would see stipends and salaries frozen.
- Trash and recycling would be underfunded by several thousand dollars.
- The library would be underfunded by approximately \$3000.
- Mosquito and pest spraying would be significantly curtailed or cancelled.

J. Pace stated that the Board's options are to drill down into department budgets and determine whether there will have to be significant staffing and service impacts due to operating under a default budget, or to hold a special town election specifically to deal with the budget under NH RSA 40:13, which allows towns to hold a special town election to address solely the budget question.

A resident in attendance asked what the cost to the town would be for a special election. J. Pace replied that a town election cost about \$6000, but a special election addressing only the budget question would cost less, as it would be the only ballot question considered.

B. Solomon expressed concern about a potential special election in June and the impacts of a default budget between now and June. J. Pace mentioned mosquito and pest spraying, and wondered if curtailing those operations could give the town some breathing room in budget until June.

J. Pace expressed frustration at the hard work and time that went into formulating the budget, and the narrow margin with which the ballot question failed. He highlighted the role of misunderstanding and misinformation that could have led some people to vote against the budget based on anger and a lack of understanding. J. Pace expressed further frustration at what he considered a lack of concern over the fact that town staff, particularly on the Police Department, would lose their jobs, and that the six years of work to build goodwill and a trustworthy Police Department would be for nothing. A resident in attendance discussed residents who are frustrated with their property taxes going up. J. Pace highlighted the role that the school district plays in significant increases, and that the town's share of overall increases is around \$90.

A resident asked if the funds balance could be used to cover gaps. J. Pace explained that this issue is one of the items where funds balance cannot be used. He said that this issue does not qualify as a sufficiently "rainy day" to allow the town to use funds balance to cover gaps.

J. Pace highlighted the impact of underfunding the Police Department, and how he feels that too many people think things can be like they were years ago, but that the world is a different place now. He stressed the importance of a fully funded and professional Police Department working to keep the town safe. J. Pace also mentioned that in voting down the budget, the town will have to defer essential maintenance, which they will eventually have to pay for down the road when it will probably be even more expensive.

The Board further discussed the pros and cons of holding a special town election for the budget, and ultimately opted to not hold the special election, and to accept and operate under the default budget. J. Pace stated that they would first look at reexamining the

mosquito/pest spraying and trash/recycling contracts before looking at potential staff cuts.

**Town Administrator:**

Kathleen Felch-

- **SOLAR EXEMPTION FORM**

**MOTION:** Bob Gustafson motion to grant a solar exemption to tax map 11, Lot 25, 76 Amesbury Rd, Kensington, NH. Bob Solomon seconded. All in favor.

- **ELDERLY EXEMPTION FORM**

**MOTION:**

- Other board items -emails, mail, letters received.
- Any other business brought before the Board
- Approval of Board Minutes MARCH 11TH,13TH AND 25TH
- **Next meeting APRIL 15, 2024 PUBLIC HEARING -PD FEE CHANGES**
- Adjournment

**MOTION:** Bob Gustafson motioned to adjourn. Bob Solomon seconded. All in favor.

The Meeting adjourned at 8:46pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Owen Corcoran  
Land Use Administrative Assistant