



Town Council/School Board Joint Meeting

October 16, 2024 at 6:00 PM

Town Hall Auditorium

MINUTES

1. Call to Order - Introductions

Chair Conley convened the meeting at 6:00PM. Councilor White led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Town Councilors Present: Council Chair Katanna Conley, Council Vice-chair Brian Ward, Councilor Joe LaMattina, Councilor Colin White, Councilor Sonke Dornblut, Councilor Justin Glazebrook.

School Board Members Present: Chair Gary Swanson, Vice-chair Amy Tilton, Philip Nazzaro, Dan Smith, Lonnie Stebbins.

Staff present: Town Manager Steve Fournier, School Superintendent Todd Allen, Community Development Director Bart McDonough, and Wendy Chase, Recording Secretary.

2. General Discussions

a. Community Growth

Town Manager Fourier discussed this year's town-wide revaluation. Over the last 10 years, the town's value has increased 142%. By state law, towns and cities must conduct a revaluation every 5 years. We are seeing an increase in the population; more young professionals than young people with children and more retirees. The town is going through the Master Plan process right now and the Community Development Director (CDD) Bart McDonough is here this evening to answer questions and gain knowledge of the impacts that will be made by decisions the town and school make in the next 5 to 10 years.

CDD McDonough explained that the town is 6 months into the Master Plan process and has had a lot of community outreach and feedback and has gleaned that the town wants both affordable housing and land preservation. He said both topics are important and can be joined. The Planning Board is working on the Master Plan and any zoning changes would need to go to the Town Council for adoption.

SB Member Smith said that increasing the enrollment of the school by 5% would help decrease the tax rate because at that percentage the school would not need to hire more teachers/staff and the school would receive \$4,000 per student in state aid.

Superintendent Allen commented that the town's population has increased over

the past 10 years, but school enrollment has decreased over the past 10 years. The school pays 2.1 million per year towards the school construction bond.

CDD McDonough encouraged members to read Homes to Classrooms. He passed a copy around and will forward a link to it to everyone present. He said it's a study from 4 area communities that paints a picture of why school enrollment is falling.

Discussion ensued on ways to attract more families to town. CDD McDonough said that under the town's current zoning the town will be fully built-out by 2027. He explained changes to zoning ordinances allowing more bedrooms per unit and allowing smaller lots are ways to attract families. He said it should be done in a way that the growth would evolve over time.

Councilor White inquired about ways to offer workforce housing. CDD McDonough said that it cannot be mandated.

Councilor Dornblut remarked that there seems to be more of a tax crisis than a home shortage crisis and asked what the school is doing to encourage families to send their children to Newmarket schools.

SB Member Nazzaro said that they are trying to be innovative in the school district. For example, allowing open enrollment.

b. Future Projects - Budgets

Town Manager Fournier said he would be presenting an estimated tax rate (town portion) to the Council at their meeting. Upcoming projects include the forcemain replacement on Bay Road and the Moody Point stormwater project. He estimates the town portion of the rate to be \$4.52 per thousand.

Superintendent Allen said that there are school contracts to honor, so there will be a gradual increase in the school budget.

c. Facilities

Town Manager Fournier explained that the town facilities study can be found on his web page on the town's website. The study focuses on issues with the town hall, police station and library. We also have to look at the community center so that we may offer recreational opportunities for everyone.

d. Community Power Coalition of NH - Councilor LaMattina

Councilor LaMattina reported on Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire. He disclosed that he is on the board of directors but as a volunteer and receives no compensation; there is no conflict of interest.

He asked for permission to create a group of School Board members to meet with the Coalition to discuss the school joining to receive a lower energy rate. It was determined that Superintendent Allen can meet and discuss options with the Coalition.

3. Adjournment

Council Chair Conley adjourned the meeting at 6:58 PM without objection.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy V. Chase
Recording Secretary