

**MINUTES
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TOWN OF PEMBROKE, NH
November 2, 2015 at 6:00 PM**

Present: Chairman Justine Courtemanche; Vice Chairman Fred Kline; Selectman David Sheldon;
Selectman Vincent Greco

Staff: David Jodoin, Town Administrator

Excused: Selectman Michael Crockwell

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Courtemanche called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

2. SCHEDULED MEETINGS

Brian Fogg – Utility Valuations

The Board met with Mr. Fogg to discuss the recent abatement with Liberty Utilities. Mr. Fogg explained the process of how his office came up with the assessed values and the information that Liberty supplied in their abatement defense.

3. RECESS TO PEMBROKE ACADEMY CAFETERIA

At 6:20 PM, Chairman Courtemanche recessed the meeting which was to be reconvened at the Pembroke Academy Cafeteria.

Chairman Courtemanche re-called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM at the Pembroke Academy Cafeteria. She advised the public that questions will be limited to Pembroke residents.

4. CITIZENS COMMENT

None

SCHEDULED MEETINGS (Continued)

Eversource – Forward NH Plan/Northern Pass

Northern Pass representatives Maria Letourneau, Patrick McDermott, Sarah Hoodlet, and John Kayser provided information regarding the Northern Pass project.

Handouts regarding the project were available to all attendees; there were approximately 75 people in attendance. Mr. McDermott began the presentation with a brief history of the project, its benefits, and how it relates to Pembroke. He stated that on October 19, 2015 the project application was filed with the Site Evaluation Committee (SEC) which begins the formal approval process. He explained that there are several ways for the public to voice their concerns regarding the project. Once the application is reviewed and completed by the SEC (within 60 days), there will be a second round of public information sessions; one in each of the five counties of the district within 45 days after application completion. The SEC will also hold their own round of informative sessions within 90 days of application completion in each of the five counties of the district. Mr. McDermott stated that public comments will be taken orally or in writing at these sessions and public comments will also be taken at any time in writing. Further, the Department of Energy will also hold public information sessions. At these sessions, items which pertain to the individual counties will be provided including project overview, tax benefits, landowner outreach, and employment. He further stated that the Northern Pass project is only a part of the solution of clean energy and energy costs. This project will provide 2600 employment opportunities in which New Hampshire workers will be considered first. Electrical worker training programs will be established.

Mr. Kayser spoke to the logistics of the building process and reviewed outreach maps of the overhead lines and towers to be installed in Pembroke. He stated that right of way clearing will begin in early 2017 with the completion estimated for the fourth quarter of 2018. Work continues with contractors to develop a construction schedule. He noted that further information can be found for individual towns at www.northernpass.us.

Selectman Kline asked Mr. Kayser if there have been any changes to the current plan versus the plan from three years ago. Mr. Kayser responded that the only revision was to change three lattice structures to steel structures to mitigate potential visual impacts. Selectman Kline further inquired if the existing poles would be left in place in addition to more poles being brought in that will be higher. Mr. Kayser replied that the height will be added to existing poles where appropriate.

Mr. McDermott spoke on property tax impact and indicated that the \$34,582,000 project investment in Pembroke will result in an estimated sum of \$850,000 in property tax revenue for the first year with a 2% rate of depreciation each year. This figure is based on Pembroke's 2013 Municipal and Local School tax rate; it does not include the State or County tax rate.

Sarah Hoodlet, Project Outreach Specialist, reviewed her role for the Northern Pass project. She explained that her department receives, addresses, and logs all emails and calls regarding the project, and acts as the liaison for landowners and the general public. All concerns are documented and landowners are met with regularly along the 192 miles of the project. Letters have been sent to all landowners located within 15 miles of the project area. Contact information can be found on the Northern Pass website at www.northernpass.us.

At this time, Chairman Courtemanche opened the meeting to comments from the Board of Selectmen. There being none, she opened the meeting to public comments.

Butch Ayles, Meetinghouse Way, asked when the lines are buried in Pembroke, how deep they will need to go. Mr. Kayser responded lines are buried 4 ½' deep. Mr. Ayles then asked what the procedure is, and what else needs to be done, to assure that the lines in Pembroke are buried. He stated that most of the residents in attendance at this meeting are here for this purpose and many signatures against overhead lines have been obtained. He asked if it would be less expensive to dig a trench and bury the lines versus overhead towers. Mr. Kayser stated that the cost of burying the lines is 2-3 times more expensive than overhead lines; the cost is 3-4 million dollars to build overhead lines and 8-13 million dollars to build underground. Further, information regarding the procedure to bury the lines can be obtained from the SEC. The SEC handles all concerns regarding this issue. Mr. Ayles asked if lines are to be buried in other towns to which Mr. Kayser replied yes.

Mr. McDermott added that a balance approach was taken as it pertained to buried lines and initially there were no buried lines at all. He stated they understand that most communities want the lines buried however this approach was taken and three major areas of concern were taken into consideration which include; the White Mountain National Forest, Franconia Notch, and the Appalachian Trail. Further, cost is a factor to form a delicate balance of the project, between the economic benefits to the State and the impact to communities, in order to make the project a reality. The input for public comments must now go through the SEC as the project application, in its entirety, has been filed.

Selectman Greco asked if maintenance on the lines, in the long run, would be less expensive if underground than overhead lines. Mr. Kayser agreed that less maintenance would be required for underground lines however maintenance costs for overhead lines is minimal with very little maintenance expected for the first 15-20 years.

Sara Smith, Pembroke Street, voiced her concern that if the project profit margin is so low that they cannot afford to bury 6 additional miles, they shouldn't be doing the project at all. Additionally, she inquired as to what amount of money they intend to make over a 20 year period. Mr. McDermott responded that there is a tipping point in which more expense would make the project uneconomical. He explained that all communities want the same thing however there is a balance approach of what can be done underground and what cannot. Further, he stated that he is not aware of the profit margin.

Butch Ayles, Meetinghouse Way, believes that although Eversource feels it makes no sense to bury the lines, it makes sense to thousands of people in the project area. Mr. Ayles reiterated his questions regarding the possibility of burying the lines in Pembroke, who makes the decision, and who the petition should be submitted to.

Mr. McDermott replied that the SEC is the regulatory body and can approve or deny such a request or they can set conditions. If there are conditions set forth by the SEC, Eversource would then determine if the project is still economically viable. Mr. McDermott re-emphasized project benefits to the State of New Hampshire.

Chase Smith, Pembroke Street, feels that Selectmen need to put something together that the Town is opposed to the project and send it to the SEC. He spoke to alternatives to this project, including solar, and stated that he believes that the Northern Pass project will make it less likely that New Hampshire will put the effort where it actually needs to be.

Karen Yeaton, Church Road, indicated that not everyone is opposed to the project. She inquired as to the data of New Hampshire being 40-60% higher in energy costs than the national average and asked what New Hampshire's average is expected to be in 2022 should the project proceed. Mr. McDermott stated that New Hampshire's rates are estimated to decrease by 5% due to the Northern Pass project. Further, he reiterated that this project is not the whole answer to the New Hampshire's energy issues.

Marie Ayles, Meetinghouse Way, inquired as the large influx of property tax revenue and if the Selectmen have discussed this with the Budget Committee. Further, she asked if there would be a great reduction in property taxes because of this project. Chairman Courtemanche replied that this has not yet been reviewed with the Budget Committee.

Selectman Kline spoke to the statement by Mr. McDermott that the Northern Pass project would be paying property taxes equal to construction costs. He stated that the two most recent projects that came through Pembroke were not assessed at the construction cost. He asked when the last time was, and in what town, that a project's construction cost was the equivalent of its assessed value after it was completed. Mr. McDermott replied that he does not know the answer to this question however a lot of infrastructure and site improvement projects have been done. He believes that this project's capital costs will equal the assessed value.

Dan Crean, Eastview Drive, spoke to the estimated property tax payments. He feels that the figures provided are overestimated and bear no relation to reality. He further believes that the numbers provided by Eversource have no basis and are incorrect. He suggested that Eversource talk to someone who knows how to determine property taxes in New Hampshire before the figures are provided to the public. Mr. Crean asked what entity is responsible to pay the property taxes from the project. Mr. McDermott responded that Eversource is the responsible party. *(This statement was later corrected, see page 6.)*

Mr. Crean then asked who pays Eversource, to which he himself answered "landowners". Mr. Crean continued with comments regarding aforementioned minimal maintenance to overhead lines noting severe damage to towers during an ice storm two years ago. He asked what measures are being taken to control this and vegetation. Mr. Kayser responded that vegetation will be controlled on a regular basis. Lastly, Mr. Crean spoke to projects to conserve energy, issues with hydroelectricity, and the cap on solar from Eversource.

Sally Hyland, Bachelder Road, spoke to the visual impact of lines in the northern part of the State and asked if this is what caused them to bury those lines. If so, if this means that the views are valued less in this part of the state. Mr. McDermott reviewed the process of the consensus that was taken in which the upper part of NH (three areas stated above) was of the highest concern visually. Further, affordability was a factor when determining how much of the project line could be buried.

Ann Bond, Michol Road, asked who was surveyed in the consensus that resulted in the three areas deemed to be most important. Mr. McDermott stated that he did not mean to imply these were the only areas that people were concerned about but rather it was the majority of the consensus that these three areas were of the highest importance. Ms. Bond asked how the information was gathered i.e., meetings, mail, etc. Mr. McDermott stated that results were gathered from talking to people throughout the State. Ms. Bond asked how a petition should be filed. Mr. McDermott replied that he does not know how a petition should be filed and suggested that she contact the SEC or legal representation for information. Ms. Bond inquired as to the height of the proposed structures and how many stories the tallest ones will measure. She noted that a home in Pembroke can be built to no more than 35'. Mr. Kayser indicated that one story is the equivalent of 10' therefore the tallest structures will reach 13-14 stories. Ms. Bond inquired as to the noise level of the transmission lines as it is her understanding that common office noise is 50 decibels with these lines expected to be 345 decibels. Mr. Kayser replied that most of the noise from transmission lines, crackling and hissing sounds being the most common, are more prevalent in high humidity conditions but otherwise noise from the lines is limited. Ms. Bond asked about clear cutting and how much will be cleared in the rights of way. Mr. Kayser responded that 150 feet in each right of way will be cleared dependent upon the structure type and how wide the right of way is. Ms. Bond inquired as to vegetation. Mr. Kayser referred her to the DES permit for the project. Ms. Bond spoke to the Board of Selectmen and indicated that should a committee be formed to address the issues regarding the Northern Pass project, she would volunteer.

Mr. Liberty, representing Elaine Montminy, inquired as to Ms. Montminy's specific property as it pertains to the overhead lines. Mr. Kayser indicated that questions pertaining to specific properties could be addressed at the close of the meeting.

Sally Hyland, Bachelder Road, asked how the property tax projections factor in to financing distribution in the electric industry. Mr. McDermott replied that the tax projections are specifically for the Northern Pass project. The distribution system is separate from this project and abatements are on a case by case basis.

Wendy, Weisiger, Academy Road, appreciates that some of the lines will be buried and encourages Eversource to get up to speed with underground technology. She asked what the tower removal process is when the current technology is obsolete. She is concerned that there is no plan to take them down should Eversource go out of business. Mr. Kayser replied that the towers have at least a 40 year lifespan and there is no current plan to retire the assets. Ms. Weisiger asked that the Selectmen send a letter to the SEC encouraging the burying of all lines through all towns.

Sara Smith, Pembroke Street, spoke to the tax impact and if property values will decrease due to the visual impacts. Selectman Kline commented that assessed values are based on market value however it would be fair to assume that a property could be devalued due to the installation of a large tower. He is unclear how much a structure would devalue a property.

Mr. McDermott corrected the statement he made earlier in this meeting pertaining to who pays the property taxes that relate to the project. He stated that the taxes will in fact be paid by Northern Pass, LLC, not Eversource.

Pentti Aalto, Bachelder Road, inquired about the power plant, where the cost lies, and contractual obligations if the project fails. Mr. McDermott replied that the cost of the project will be born by Northern Pass, LLC Hydro-Quebec. Mr. Aalto further inquired about the cost of the alternating current portion of the project. Mr. McDermott explained that alternating current which is the system operating today is slightly more expensive than direct current due to more conductors. The line coming out of Quebec is direct current which is converted to alternating current.

Selectman Kline informed the public that the Town of Pembroke has voted twice against the project and assured them that this information has been passed on to the appropriate people. The Selectmen will continue their opposition to overhead lines and he encouraged the public to continue their request for buried lines as well. Additionally, as for the three areas where the lines will be buried, he believes that it was not necessarily voices but rather the impact to the areas that was of concern. All residents are welcome to attend Board of Selectmen meetings at any time and are encouraged to visit the Town website where information on what the Selectmen are doing can be found within the published meeting minutes.

Note: Prior information provided to the Pembroke Board of Selectmen regarding the Northern Pass project can be found in the Board of Selectmen meeting minutes dated October 21, 2013 and January 17, 2011.

5. RECESS TO TOWN HALL

At 7:44 PM, Chairman Courtemanche recessed the meeting which was to be reconvened at Town Hall.

Chairman Courtemanche re-called the meeting to order at 7:58 PM at Town Hall.

SCHEDULED MEETINGS (Continued)

Dan Crean – Energy Committee Proposal

Dan Crean was present to update the Selectmen on the Energy Committee's project proposal regarding lighting in the downtown area. This bulb replacement includes 13 decorative pole lamps and 4 bridge lights. He explained that the committee has attended many conferences and received cost estimates from two vendors. Although one of the vendors was less expensive, the Energy Committee is recommending LighTec based on their responsiveness and reputation. The cost for the project is \$16,231 which includes installation. This cost also includes cleaning, repair, and sealing of the current fixtures which ensures no maintenance or replacement of bulbs. The payback period is expected to be less than five years. Funds from the Energy Capital Reserve Fund will be used to fund this project. Mr. Crean also noted that the Energy Committee held a public hearing in which those in attendance provided comments on the light fixtures they saw as favorable.

The Energy Committee will be working next on overhead lighting conversion and hope to have a proposal in 2017.

Action: Selectman Sheldon moved to accept the Energy Committee's recommendation to proceed with LighTec as the vendor to replace the light fixture bulbs in accordance with the project provided by the Energy Committee, and to authorize the Town Administrator to sign all necessary documentation. Selectman Greco seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

The Selectmen questioned when the project would begin. Mr. Jodoin will follow up with LighTec and obtain a schedule.

4. OLD BUSINESS

Town Owned Land

The Selectmen discussed Town owned land including offers received for 2 parcels. The first was a counter offer for the 6 acre parcel on 7th Range Road in which the Selectmen had counter offered \$18,000 to the proposed offer of \$6,000.

The potential buyer increased his offer to \$9,000. The Selectmen agreed to counter this offer as well. The second is a 5 acre parcel of Town owned land located at 6th Range Road in which the Conservation Commission has offered \$5,000. After discussion, the Selectmen agreed to table this offer until more information is obtained on the parcel. The Selectmen discussed initiating a per acre cost for the sale of all Town owned land.

Action: Selectman Sheldon moved to counter the offer of \$9,000 in the amount of \$15,000 for the sale of the Town owned 6 acre parcel of land located at 7th Range Road. Selectman Greco seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

5. NEW BUSINESS

Approve NH Fish and Game Agreement

The Selectmen discussed the NH Fish and Game Agreement.

Action: Selectman Kline moved to authorize the Chief of Police to sign all the necessary documentation for the NH Fish and Game OHRV Law Enforcement Grant. Selectman Greco seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Approve 2016 Health Trust Documents

The Selectman reviewed the Health Trust Documents.

Action: Selectman Kline moved to authorize the Town Administrator to sign all the necessary documentation with Health Trust for the 2016 insurance. Selectman Sheldon seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Encumber Funds for Storm Water Program

Mr. Jodoin explained that these funds are being encumbered to 2016 due to a Federal Government delay.

Action: Selectman Kline moved to encumber the sum of \$11,000 from Account #1000-43112-31000. Selectman Sheldon seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Manifest/Abatements

Action: Selectman Kline moved to approve the Manifest and Abatements as presented. Selectman Sheldon seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Minutes 10/19/2015

Action: Selectman Greco moved to approve the minutes of 10/19/2015 as presented. Selectman Sheldon seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

6. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Mr. Jodoin spoke to the need for lighting for the Town Hall's parking lot.

Mr. Jodoin informed the Board that correspondence was received from Mike Vignale regarding a list of items being done to complete the Pembroke Hill Road project.

Mr. Jodoin brought to the Selectmen's attention, the Department of Transportation's approval of Main Street being closed down during Meet Me in Suncook's event; Christmas in the Village.

Mr. Jodoin is in receipt of two bids for the replacement of the front door at Town Hall. One bid is for a commercial door and the other for a residential type door. The Selectmen agreed to award the bid for the commercial door.

Action: Selectman Greco moved to accept the bid from Tom Hebert to replace the front door at Town Hall in the amount of \$7,000. Selectman Sheldon seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

A budget review schedule was discussed. The Selectmen agreed to meet with all departments for a work session on November 9th. Mr. Jodoin will follow up with department heads.

Mr. Jodoin stated that the tax rate has been set. He explained that the overall tax rate will decrease from \$29.70 to approximately \$29.02. The School rate has decreased and the Town rate has increased due to two issues: The Safe Routes to School project funds were not received as the project was stalled; and the increased construction costs did not come in as expected, and with the TIF percentage increasing from 10% to 35%, more overlay was needed in setting the tax rate. Mr. Jodoin assured the Selectmen that he will look at all options to see if the number can be reduced.

The survey of Village Lane is complete and the plans are currently available in 8 x 11 format. Larger copies will be obtained. A public hearing will be held on November 16th to update the snow policy, welfare guideline, and street and sidewalk policy. The Selectmen briefly discussed the survey, markers, and parking meters and intend to discuss these items in greater detail once they have the opportunity to review the survey.

The Town owned land on Borough Road was briefly discussed.

This property has not yet been listed with a realtor. The Fire Department recently notified the Town Administrator that this parcel was to be set aside to be used as a substation. The Selectmen will discuss the issue with Chief Paulsen at the special Board of Selectmen meeting scheduled for November 9th.

7. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Selectman Greco reported that he will be meeting with the Roads Committee and Recreation this week.

Selectman Kline reported that he met with Grant Administrator for Federal EDA Grants. It was determined that Pembroke does not qualify for this grant as Pembroke is not in an area of distress i.e. unemployment rate being below national average, and median pay being above average. Further, the contract for CLD additional work was received. The installation of bike lanes was discussed and the TIF Committee was not in favor.

Mr. Jodoin reported that 50-75 people attended the most recent Planning Board meeting and that the Planning Board was opposed to the 110 lot subdivision that is under review.

8. OTHER/CITIZEN COMMENT

None

9. NON PUBLIC SESSION

None

10. ADJOURNMENT

Action: Selectman Sheldon moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 PM. Selectman Greco seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Accepted by the Board of Selectmen

Justine Courtemanche, Chair