

North Berwick Board of Selectmen Minutes May 5, 2020

NORTH BERWICK BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES MAY 5, 2020

Present: Chairman Cowan, Selectman Galemmo, Selectman Hall, Selectman Johnson, Sr., Selectman Johnson, Jr.

Also Present: Dwayne Morin, Mike Barker

Chairman Cowan opened the meeting at 6:30 pm.

- 1. Pledge of Allegiance**
- 2. Review and Approve Minutes of April 21, 2020**

Selectman Galemmo motioned to approve the minutes of April 21, 2020 as written. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

- 3. Public Input**

There was no public input at this time.

- 5. New Business:**

- A. COVID-19: Update From EMA Director Mike Barker**

Mike Barker stated that he has been trying to talk to Dwayne on a regular basis to keep him informed as to what is going on within our community and County. Mr. Barker stated that, from an official standpoint through EMA there are no known cases of COVID19 in town. There is nothing that has been reported out. He has tried to make a case to try and find out more details. This would help us make decisions as to what we can open or not open based on the number of cases. We are still just getting county wide numbers. He said that today, it was reported that there were 4 more deaths in the State and 21 new cases. He said that we are still increasing within the State a little bit but not by what was projected for the State of Maine originally.

Mr. Barker said that, for emergency services for the Town, for the month of March and April, they saw a 22% decrease in transports to the hospital. There was also 30% less calls to 911 for our service which is a good thing but is bad for their revenue. It did help keep out crews safer and allowed them time to get more PPE. Mr. Barker stated that we were on the forefront of it to get masks, gowns and other things, but they realized that what they had planned for cases had grown, they would be short what they needed. They have since taken the steps to get what they needed. Mr. Barker said that EMA has been great. They have been holding conference calls every Tuesday and Thursday. The State has been holding conference calls every Thursday afternoon and Saturday mornings to update providers and Emergency Management Directors.

This week they started to go to a once a week call with EMA. They have been discussing what each community is planning on doing regarding what is closed and what the plans are to reopen.

Mr. Barker stated that they have received \$2,600 in the first round of grants that is used to help offset Medicare revenue. They have applied for the next round of these funds based on their declining revenue from transports in conjunction with the billing company to see if they can recoup some of those costs. Chairman Cowan asked what he anticipated to receive from this. Mr. Barker said that it is about a \$3,500 a month loss in revenue to the reimbursement account. If they get the funding, they will get about 75% of that loss depending when they look at everything like filing their taxes, what they spent out, non-profit entity and various other things. He stated that they are doing good so far. They spent a little bit of overtime at the beginning. They had some people that were out that were told to self-quarantine. They don't know where they picked it up, but they had symptoms. They paid them to stay home. They were cleared. Mr. Barker said that at the beginning, he took himself off the truck. His wife has a heart condition, so he was able to limit himself on his full time job by not dealing with the public and took more of a management stance. He stated that they are good right now regarding the budget. He has picked up a couple more staff to fill in some holes.

Mr. Barker said that their call volume is picking up and things are ramping back up again to almost a normal level. He said that, in the early stages, people were afraid to call. If they did call, they would go but they didn't want to go to the hospital. Unless they really needed to go to the hospital, they would not force them to go. He stated that they have enough PPE and are going to be getting more. He said that the County has been really good with helping out with supplies. Mr. Barker said that he has also been getting PPE for the Fire Department so they have some in case they come to assist the Rescue Department. He has been the single point of contact to get them what they need as well as getting what the Police Department has needed. He stated that he is getting a delivery tomorrow for 10 reusable N95 masks. They just have to buy the cartridges to put in them. They are \$80 apiece and they will end up having 25 of them. This will allow every member of Rescue to have one and they will be able to keep them forever and just change the cartridges.

Chairman Cowan asked if they were doing any testing on the employees to see if they have had the virus. Mr. Barker said that they had not. They had one person with symptoms early on and she didn't qualify for testing. She had very mild symptoms and she ended up quarantining for 21 days. The State's guidelines for First Responders states that they have to quarantine for 14 days and be symptom free for an additional 7 days. When she came back to work, she had to wear a mask and she has been fine ever since. He stated that they will be discussing testing on the next call on Thursday. They want testing and/or antibody testing done on EMS personnel, Fire personnel and Police personnel. They are working a lot with Wentworth Douglass Hospital regarding this. He said that our Medical Director works there and they have provided them with a lot of things that they have needed.

Mr. Barker stated that we have no confirmed cases in town. They have transported a lot of people with signs and symptoms, but the tests have come back negative. He said that they have transported most of these people to Wentworth Douglass. One thing that they have learned is that a lot of the tests are only 40% accurate so it has a 60% chance of being a false negative. He

stated that multiple tests were given to multiple patients that were negative, but they were told, for their own purposes, that the doctor will be making the final diagnosis. He stated that they were all wearing the proper PPE, so it was fine. He said that the State issued them a whole list of guidance. They have the lists on a bulletin board and in the ambulances. He stated that they have converted the old ambulance and it is the one that they use to go on the suspected calls. He said that they have started using a company that has been doing disinfecting for us. They have been doing it for all public agencies around Southern York County and in New Hampshire once a week at no cost. They have also done the Fire Department and Police Department as well. Mr. Barker said that they just received a delivery of cleaning supplies that they had ordered a month ago. He stated that, overall, they are doing okay.

Chairman Cowan asked Mr. Barker if there was anything that his department needed at the present time. Mr. Barker said that there is nothing that they are in need of right now. He is staying on top of all the EMA calls to keep up with all of the changes. He stated that there is a group in the State that wants EMS departments to set up testing sites, but he said that we are not really equipped for that. Some of the bigger cities and towns are as well as some of the for profit companies would be able to provide this service.

Mr. Barker stated that he just wanted to touch base with the Board to let them know what they have been doing and to see if they had any questions or comments for him. Chairman Cowan said that her main concern was to know if we had any positive cases in our town. Mr. Barker stated that he has fought to get this information and Art Cleaves, the Emergency Management Director has been on his side. He said that he works full time in Massachusetts and that information is readily available. He knows that New Hampshire is also getting this information. He said that they don't want it for public consumption or know any names of people. He would just like to have a number for planning purposes. If he has 100 pieces of PPE and has had 0 cases but Sanford has 100 cases and has 10 pieces of PPE left, he doesn't want to hoard the supplies. He could lend them some if they needed it.

Mr. Barker stated that he knows the Board is there to support them and he does speak with Dwayne regularly. He said that it is reassuring that they don't get asked a lot of questions and are trusted to go out and do our job. He said that they have a good group of people and morale is high. They have had a couple people come work for them that were with other departments because they heard that it was a good place to work. Mr. Barker said that it is a good thing for his Department as well as a good thing for our town. He said that they have had a good working relationship with Hannaford and Dollar General who have been open during this time. He has worked with them to provide them guidance and information that they needed to operate.

4. Unfinished Business:

A. Budget FY21: Discuss Budget for FY21, Town Meeting Discussions

Dwayne stated that, with the Governor's new opening plan, it doesn't look like we would be able to hold the Annual Town Meeting until September. This puts us in a pretty bad situation. He said that MMA has asked the Governor to look at it, but she hasn't done that yet. Her concentration has been on the businesses and other things. MMA had sent a letter giving her 4

options to choose from to give us some sort of guidance but, to date, that hasn't happened. He has a meeting with the Department of Economic Development and Hannah Pingree, who is the Governor's Liaison, on Thursday at 11:00. All towns have been invited to join in on that ZOOM meeting. Hopefully a decision has been made on what they are going to do for the towns.

Dwayne stated that, if we are not able to hold Town Meeting because we can't have more than 50 people gather, we have a couple of options. The Law says that if we go past our commitment date, the Board can set commitment. The problem is that we can't spend any more than what was approved in the last year's budget. Our budget is just about the same as last year, but the problem is in some of the different locations. If we had to do it this way, we would have to lay off some people because we wouldn't have enough money to pay for some of the positions based on last year's budget.

Dwayne stated that the only way that he sees to get around this is to do a Referendum. This is a little scary as well because in the July 14th election there will already be a State ballot, a Federal ballot and a School ballot. If we throw in a Town ballot on top of that, people are going to be in those voting booths for quite some time. He stated that if the Board decides to do a Referendum vote, they will need to decide that by May 15th.

Dwayne spoke to the attorney to find out how to move forward with this if they decide to do a Referendum. First, he asked her if we can actually do a Referendum and she said that we could. We do not have any Ordinances or Charter that says that we can't. Some towns have an Ordinance that they have to do a Town Meeting so they will probably hold one even though it is defiance of the State rules. He asked if they could make it simple and just have the people vote on the budget as recommended by the Budget Committee. The attorney said that we can do that, but we may want to think about it first. There are some items like collection of taxes and other non-money Articles that would have to be decided on separately.

Dwayne stated that in the Selectmen's packet starting on page 10, he put together some of the options. On pages 10, 11 and 12 have 10 questions on them. These questions will have to be answered by the people because they are the non-money Articles and are not budget related. The first one is regarding the collection of the taxes. The second one is for the excise tax going to the equipment fund. The third one is the unforeseen purchases. The fourth one is about accepting gifts throughout the year. The fifth one is regarding Affordable Housing. The sixth one is regarding wiping us out for the year and starting new. The seventh question is to allow us to utilize the revenues that we will receive to offset any tax commitment that we would have. The eighth, ninth and tenth questions are regarding the roads. The eighth one has to do with Linscott Road, the ninth has to do with the transfer of property to the Healey's and the tenth one is to accept Deerfield Estates as a town road.

Dwayne stated that they then need to decide what to do regarding the budget items. There are 2 options to consider. The Attorney stated that if the Board feels confident and comfortable, we can do a question like this:

Alternate Budget Funding: Shall a Town appropriate the \$4.8 million to run the town next year?

We would then add the Budget Committee recommendation and the people would vote on it. This would be a lump sum budget. It would be quick and easy, but the concern would be if it fails, we would be in trouble. Chairman Cowan stated that there was a fairly high level of risk if we do this. Dwayne agreed. He said that going back the past 15 to 20 years, the people have followed the Budget Committee recommendations. Chairman Cowan stated that for those votes, people were on-site and could ask questions if they had some. It is very different if it is just a piece of paper.

Dwayne stated that the other option is to break it down into questions. On pages 13 and 14 of their packet, it basically is taking our 40 Warrants and putting them into 10 questions. Chairman Cowan stated that she would prefer this approach because it allows people to weigh in on different aspects of the budget. Selectman Johnson, Jr. stated that it is a good way to find out what areas the people may have an issue with. This would help for future reference. Selectman Johnson, Sr. asked what happens if the people vote down one of these questions. He stated that we still have to make our payments. Dwayne said that we would have to forfeit our payments and hurt our credit rating. Dwayne said that if they vote down a specific question, then we would have to go back to the voters with another round of proposals. This costs us a lot of time because it is a process. Dwayne said that his biggest concern is that if we go on Referendum on July 14th and something gets voted down, we won't have the opportunity to have another election put together before we need to set commitment.

Selectman Johnson, Jr. asked what the consequences would be if we did like some other towns and went against the Governor and held our Town Meeting. Dwayne said that they couldn't arrest us. He said that if somebody came to vote and got sick, we may be held liable in some way.

Selectman Galemmo thinks that we should go with the single question. First of all, at Town Meeting they get to vote on each individual item even more than the 10 questions that Dwayne is proposing. The other thing is that the School budget is going to be there as one question and it is a \$42 million budget. We are asking for \$4.8 million. He said that if we break it up, he can see where there could be a split vote on a lot of things and having some questions failing. He thinks that breaking up the questions is just inviting trouble. Selectman Hall agreed. He believes that a straight up or down vote on the budget is least likely to fail. He said that if the School budget fails, we will probably be in a situation where the Town budgets will fail too. He believes that there are too many things for the people to vote on at this election. Selectman Galemmo stated that this is an unusual situation and people are going to be understanding.

Selectman Johnson, Jr. stated that, the worst case scenario would be that if it fails, we would have to put it together to have them vote again. Dwayne said that this was correct. He said that it would be some costs involved. If it fails in July, hopefully we would be able to have an open Town Meeting sometime in September. This would mean not committing taxes until September and our collections would be off. We would not do anything all summer long such as road projects. We would have to wait to have an approval before doing anything.

Chairman Cowan asked how we prep the citizens for this. Dwayne stated that all of the newsletters that he had printed before the virus hit are all down in the basement. In the

newsletter, he doesn't state it by Article. He just gives descriptions of everything that we are doing. If we do a Referendum, a minimum of a week before the vote, we would have to hold a Public Hearing through ZOOM. We would allow them to ask questions of what the budget is all about so if people had a concern over a certain Article or certain amount of money, they would have the ability to ask those questions to get more informed. We wouldn't be able to change the number but at least, that number could be explained. Dwayne recommends that we send out the current newsletter and add a different color insert stating that this was the newsletter that was printed prior to everything happening. It would explain why we can't have the open Town Meeting and why we have to vote on the budget in this way. Chairman Cowan said that it should also state what the consequences would be if the budget is not passed.

Selectman Galemmo motioned to have a Referendum using the single budget question and doing the newsletter as Dwayne described above. Selectman Hall seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

Dwayne stated that he did get the budget from the Superintendent and it was in their packet starting on page 17. He said that he is not happy with it. It is an increase over last year's budget. It does represent to our town about a \$.25 increase in our mil rate. Selectman Hall said that he reviewed it quickly, but he didn't see a section regarding the new Lebanon School. He asked if it that was going to the ballot on the 14th. Dwayne said that he was told that it was, but he does not see it in the budget. He said that we would typically not see it because we would vote on it this year and it would be in next year's budget because you borrow the money this year and don't have to make a payment until a year from now.

Dwayne stated that there is a half a million dollars in new hardware. Chairman Cowan noticed that too and wondered what it was for. He said that there are some increases in staff salaries which you anticipate because there are contracts. You also expect to see increases in health insurance. Dwayne said that he was a little surprised to see the amount for the hardware. He is not able to tell what it is for. Selectman Hall asked what section that was under and Dwayne said that it was under Student/Staff Support. Last year, they budgeted \$7,700 and this year they are budgeting \$476,000. Selectman Hall said that he knows that the staff are all getting new Chromebooks, but he is not sure if this is what makes up that amount. He said that usually when they replace the High School equipment, they move it down to the next level. They do this on a 2-year cycle.

Dwayne noticed that there is also a reshuffling of positions. Under Facilities/Maintenance, they are going to have an Assistant Director. Under Special Education, it looks like they are going to have another Administrator. Chairman Cowan stated that there was also a big increase under Purchased and Contracted Services.

Dwayne believes that they are doing what is best for the School District, but they are not considering how it affects the towns. Chairman Cowan said she knows that there has been some discourse between Dwayne and the Superintendent. She believes that once the new Superintendent starts, they should reach out to her and maybe meet with the School Board as well. Dwayne agrees.

Dwayne stated that the other issue is regarding the elections and the school not wanting us to hold the elections there. He stated that he got approval for the July and November election only. He thinks that they need to have a meeting with the School Board to discuss their concerns with this. Selectman Galemmo agreed. He doesn't believe that the School Board has fully grasped the implications if we are not allowed to use the school. He stated that if they do not allow us to use the school anymore, he suggests that we put up a ballot to build a building so we can do our elections and have the bond measure and tax implications on the same ballot as the School budget and tell people that this is what we have to do. Dwayne said the whole thing could be solved by scheduling a teacher workshop on election day.

Selectman Hall stated that his issue has to do with the bond. He wonders what the impact will be and when are voters going to find out about it. Dwayne was told that they are going to hold an open Town Meeting which will be interesting because they will be violating the State Law for not having more than 50 people gathered. They are doing that at the end of June for the July vote. It is his understanding that this is when they will talk about everything. He is assuming that they will have a mailing at some point that explains all of this.

Chairman Cowan asked Dwayne if he had anything else regarding the Budget. Dwayne said that he is concerned about revenue projections for the next budget. There is nothing that says that the Board can't curtail spending because our revenues don't come in. If this happens, we would have to let all of the departments know this would happen. He has heard talk that our Revenue Sharing will be reduced and that the road funds that we get will be significantly reduced. In years past, whenever there is a recession, we have seen a drop off in excise tax. The good thing is that he doesn't budget our full amount of excise taxes. He budgets using figures from 2 years before. He thinks we will be okay at this point.

B. Memorial Day Parade: Discuss Cancelling for the Year

Dwayne stated that he doesn't see how they can hold it under the Governor's reopening plan. The Board agreed.

Selectman Galemmo motioned to cancel the Memorial Parade for this year. Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

Selectman Hall asked what the American Legion had decided to do and Dwayne said that he didn't hear back from them.

C. GWRLT: Discussion on Negutaquet Conservation Area Parking Lot

Dwayne spoke with Great Works Regional Land Trust regarding our decision to put signs up for No Parking on Lebanon Road. Most of the signs were put up on Monday. They are waiting for 4 more signs. The poles are up for those and we just have to put the signs up on them. Dwayne stated that GWRLT has plans for that parking area. They are planning to move the parking lot on the other side of the current access road. They just obtained the easement to be able to start moving forward with the project. In order for them to obtain that easement they had to agree to fix the road that goes down to the property owners house. They have the money because they

were given a grant for engineering for the bridge that was going to connect our 2 areas. The engineers have decided to gift them that work, and they will not charge for their work on the bridge. They got permission from the grant key to utilize the money to improve the road. However, they do not have the money to do the parking lot yet. Dwayne offered to help out with equipment and manpower to complete the project. They will get back to Dwayne once they have the money to complete it.

Reminders: Next Board of Selectmen's Meeting – May 19, 2020 – 6:30 pm Zoom Meeting

5. New Business:

B. COVID-19: Discussion of Town Reopening Plan

Dwayne provided the Board with the State's reopening plan. He stated that it doesn't specify what towns are supposed to do. He stated that he has a York County Manager's meeting every Friday morning to discuss what everyone will do as a town. He also meets with Cumberland County Managers as well to find out what they are doing. The majority of the towns are looking to open on May 18th. The main reason is to try and get some car registrations. The other thing is to see how our opening plans are going to work. The Town of York is actually opening up tomorrow and will be the first town in York County to open. Kittery is opening up next Monday.

Dwayne has put together a plan to open up either on the 11th or the 18th. He is leaning more towards opening on the 18th. He wants to get some signage done and he doesn't think he can get it completed by the 11th. He stated that they tried to look at everything that they can do to make it work.

The first big thing is that they want to change the office hours. On Thursday, they usually work from 1:00 to 7:00. He is concerned that the staff would not have access to the Police Department if something occur so they would temporarily like to change the hours to 9:00 to 4:00. All the other hours would stay the same. In order to maintain a 10 person limit, we will allow only 3 people in the Town Office. It would be 2 people at registration and 1 on the administration side which is the Assessing, Town Manager and CEO's office. They have added plexiglass across the front counter in the office which Roger Frechette installed for them. They have reshuffled the furniture on the administration side so they can't come into the office. There is a big plexiglass shield up there as well. They will use the security system to let people in and out of the building. They will put a barricade at the front steps, mark off the sidewalk so they can get social distancing if people have to wait and they will buzz people in through the door. He moved the computer system that does that to the window so the ladies in the office can buzz people in. They will put signage up to let people know that. When they leave the door, instead of going down the stairs, they will go down the handicap ramp so we keep separation from other people. We will encourage people to wear mask. On the administration side, if the administration wants to bring somebody into their office, he has instructed both Craig and Roger that they can do that, but they must maintain a 6 foot distance. We have set a chair in each office that meets that 6 foot separation.

Dwayne stated that for the Police side, they will limit it to 1 person in the office at one time or 1 family unit. If the Police need to do criminal investigations, they would go down to the big interrogation room which will allow the 6 foot separation. If a developer wants to meet with the Code Enforcement Officer, we will use the conference room upstairs so we can keep large separation between staff and other people.

Dwayne stated that they will keep a dirty pen and a clean pen on the counter. This way we can clean the pens in between customers. He just bought 2,500 sanitization wipes to wipe everything down several times a day. Dwayne stated that HVAC will change the filters every 3 months instead of every 6 months. They are also looking into a UV device that we can put in our air handling unit that would zap our filters. UV light kills all viruses. They are looking to see if it is practical and cost effective for us instead of changing the filters. He said that we have always used hospital grade filters. He has 400 masks for the employees if they want to wear them and they have plenty of gloves.

All Selectmen and Planning Board meetings will be conducted via ZOOM. After June 1st, we are allowed to have 50 people gather. He will restructure the conference room upstairs so they keep to social distancing. He will remove a good number of the seats so it limits the number of people that can sit in that room.

Dwayne stated that they had spoken about putting the tax information up on the web. He believes that that this would limit the number of people coming in and out of the office. He said that the majority of people that come into the office other than to register their cars are real estate agents, appraisers and others looking for tax information. We don't have a budgeted expense, but he will find the money somewhere. He asked TRIO how long it would take them to generate our web page so we could get it available to people. They said that they could do it within a week. The cost was \$2,750 and then it would be \$500 every year.

Selectman Galemмо motioned to allot \$2,750 to get the tax information up on the web. Selectman Hall seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

Dwayne stated that for Parks and Recreation they will continue to keep the playgrounds closed until we go to the 50 person limit on June 1st. We will also start to rent out the Community Center at this time and they will also be limited to 50 people. No one will be allowed in the Fire Stations and Rescue Departments at this time. If they have a non-emergency, they can call the administration lines. We changed the fire burning permits. We joined a free service called Warden's Report. It an ex-fireman out of Brunswick that is running it. Our Fire Chief controls it. We will stop giving out permits in the Town Hall and they can go online and get a free permit. He sets when the permits are allowed to be issued and how many can be issued. Every time a permit is issued it is emailed to the Chief and all of the Officers as well as to our 911 Dispatch Center. The permit comes through an email from Warden's Report. It can be accessed on the town website.

Dwayne said that we will continue to do the Transfer Station like they have been doing. At some point we will need to figure out what to do with certain things. We haven't been doing returnables, the free house, clothing, and other things that we usually collect. Hopefully, we can

relax that as summer comes in because it is a loss in revenue. For now, for the safety of our employees, we should continue the process that we are currently doing. We will continue to do what we're currently doing with Public Works. No one is allowed to access the Town Garage. We are doing very limited stuff because the revenue is not there, and he doesn't want to spend money that we don't have. We are going to start a roadside cutting program and other little projects to keep the guys busy. We are currently down a person for an unrelated health issue so there has only been 3 guys working since mid-March.

Dwayne asked the Board if their preference opening up is for May 11th or May 18th. Chairman Cowan stated that the 18th gives him more time to get prepared. The others agreed.

Selectman Galemmo motioned to adopt the Reopening Plan with the Town Office opening on May 18th. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

C. Medical Marijuana: Review Application Packet for Licensing

Dwayne stated that, last year they passed the Licensing Ordinance for Medical Marijuana but one thing that wasn't included was the application process. He stated that they have been getting a lot of complaints about the Buffum Road facilities. There have been complaints about the traffic and the amount of people. When Recreational Marijuana became legal, they also changed the Medical Marijuana rules and regulations. They used to be able to have 6 people, but a caregiver can now have an unlimited number of people to sell to. It also allows them to sell to out of state residents. The owners at the facility are entrepreneurs and have reached out to their fellow Medical Marijuana people in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Rhode Island, New Jersey, and other places. This is resulting in a lot of traffic coming into their facility. The people on Buffum Road are complaining about it but unfortunately, they are still in compliance with the State Law.

Dwayne said that they had said that they would have a licensing process and this would allow us to review the facility every year. The owners would have to explain in more detail as to what they are doing. Once they get their conditional use permit, we can't do that, but the licensing would. Dwayne stated that they have put together an application including a checklist of everything that they need to provide to us. This is all based on our Ordinances. On the application, they need to tell us what they are doing and the name of their Officers. The people involved need to have good moral character and the Board determines the good moral character. They have to basically follow the State Alcohol guidelines. We need to see if they have been convicted of any felonies. They need to provide us with a \$1,000 fee and then we will process the application. He has included a list of the various departments that need to approve the application such as Fire Chief, Police Chief, Health Inspector, Code Enforcement and Board of Selectmen. Chairman Cowan suggested that we have the Police Department review the applicants to make sure they have nothing significant in their background and make sure that they do have good moral character. Dwayne stated that we have 4 growers in town right now that are grandfathered and we would send it to all of them to complete.

D. Assessing:

Dwayne stated that last year they had done a mini bump on our assessment values to try to keep pace with the rising values. We received our audit back and even with the bump that we did, we took a step backwards. The real estate market is so robust. We did about a 7% increase in values and last year we were at 92%. This year, with the bump, we are at 91%. They ran some numbers today and looking into next year, we will drop to about 87%. If we don't do something, we will lose significant State revenues because we will drop below 90% and we will not be able to claim 100% anymore. This means that everybody's Homestead Exemption will be reduced, Veteran's Exemption will be reduced, our BETE will be reduced and our Revenue Sharing will be reduced.

Dwayne stated that he is proposing to do another 10% bump in values. Selectman Hall asked if this would be in addition to the \$.25 increase in the mil rate. Selectman Galemmo stated that it is 2 separate issues. If we bump up the rates enough maybe we don't have to raise the mil rate. Dwayne stated that if they bump up 10%, our mil rate will drop regardless but the taxes will still go up because the value will be higher. Selectman Hall stated that taxes are going to go up whether the mil rate goes up or not. Dwayne disagreed. He said that if everything stays the same and our mil rate doesn't go up, your taxes don't go up because your value is your number. Selectman Hall stated that he knows that they have to do something. He is nervous because we bumped it up last year, we're bumping it up 10% this year and last year there wasn't really an impact like there probably would be this year. Dwayne said that last year they had only 1 person question their tax bill out of 2,800 parcels. We thought we would have a lot of abatement requests, but we only had 1 inquiry into it.

Dwayne said that he really doesn't want to do this but with the numbers coming in he doesn't see any other option. He said that houses that we have valued at \$200,000 are selling for \$400,000. Selectman Galemmo stated that this increase in valuation should be more even across all properties. Last time, people in older houses saw bigger increases than people in new homes. Dwayne stated that Craig is looking at 2 different things. We didn't adjust land prices last time, but we will have to do so this time. We are going to adjust the land schedules with the exception of a couple properties that we know are good such as Deerfield Estates. He is also thinking on adding 10% on the building values and a 10% increase on land values. Last year we did 5% on commercial property. Craig is going to look at these to see if we should increase these as well.

Dwayne stated that the silver lining in all of this is that it says that we are a desirable town to live in and your investment is doing very well. He said that we haven't had to adjust our values very frequently but most towns, especially along the coast, bump their values up every year. Another good thing for this year is that the Homestead Exemption goes from \$20,000 to \$25,000 unless the Legislature changes that.

Dwayne has included in their packets a list of the sales from July 1 to today. We had 107 sales of which 60 qualified and it showed what we are actually selling the homes for compared to what we have for values.

Selectman Hall asked how this would impact our school funding formula. Dwayne said that it would impact it because the State valuation grows. When we do a reval it shrinks our school valuation a little bit. The good thing about our school sharing, our valuation is 50% and Berwick and Lebanon are growing at the same rate that we are. Last year, our State valuation increased by 15% but Lebanon's grew by 14% and Berwick grew by 16%. They are seeing the same type of increases that we are having.

Chairman Cowan asked if he had any projections on the impact. Dwayne stated that he didn't, but he thinks that it will be similar to last year. A lot will depend on Pratt's numbers and we don't have that yet. He also needs to know the new value that we will capture. Craig is working on those numbers right now. Once he gets these numbers he can figure out where we would have been and see what it actually will be. If it holds true like it did last year, he thinks that it will be very similar to last year and maybe even a little bit better because the Homestead Exemption is going to go up.

6. Other Business:

There was no other business at this time.

7. Review and Approve Warrants and Correspondence:

Warrant:	April 28, 2020	- \$	0.00
Warrant:	May 5, 2020	- \$	275,726.65

Selectman Hall motioned to approve the Warrant from May 5, 2020 for the amount of \$275,726.65. Selectman Galemмо seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

8. Adjournment:

Selectman Johnson, Sr. motioned to adjourn at 8:25 pm. Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

Respectively Submitted,
Susan Niehoff, Stenographer

Original to Town Clerk

Chairman: Wendy Cowan

Selectman: Jonathan Hall

Selectman: Michael Johnson, Jr.

Selectman: Charles Glemmo

Selectman: Michael Johnson, Sr.