

**TOWN OF NEWMARKET, NEW HAMPSHIRE
JOINT TOWN COUNCIL-SCHOOL BOARD MEETING**

August 30, 2017 7:00 PM

TOWN HALL AUDITORIUM

Approved September 20, 2017

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Council Chairman Dale Pike, Council Vice Chairman Toni Weinstein, Councilor Gretchen Kast, Councilor Kyle Bowden

COUNCILORS EXCUSED: Councilor Amy Thompson, Councilor Amy Burns, Councilor Casey Finch

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: School Board Chairman Kimberly Shelton, School Board Vice Chairman Elizabeth McKinney, Al Zink, Mike Kenison, Ingrid Ahlberg

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator Steve Fournier, School Superintendent Meredith Nadeau, Finance Director/Business Administrator Lisa Ambrosio, Director of Facilities Greg Marles

AGENDA

School Board Chairman Kimberly Shelton welcomed everyone to the Newmarket Joint Town Council-School Board Meeting, and called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm. Council Chairman Dale Pike led the Pledge of Allegiance.

SHARED SERVICES UPDATE – August 2017

School Board Chairman Shelton stated that there had been conversations around Shared Services for years, and as a result of a lot of hard work by the Charter Committee it was mandated that the Town Council and the School Board would have an annual joint meeting. She said it was then decided that towns and schools should share services, and as a result a Sub-Committee had been formed to work on initiating some shared services between the Town and the School, with members reporting back to their respective boards.

WHERE ARE WE – Town Administrator Steve Fournier

Town Administrator Steve Fournier said that in 2013 the Town Council and the School Board had decided to hold an annual joint meeting, and had decided to begin looking into Shared Services. He stated that in

March 2017 they began sharing a Finance Director/Business Administrator who was an employee of the School contracted by the Town. They next looked at sharing a Facilities Director, and that individual started in June 2017 as an employee of the Town contracted by the School Board. He said they were now conducting an ongoing review to find common efficiencies.

Town Administrator Fournier said that the Superintendent attended all Department Head meetings of the Town and reported back to the School, and he would soon begin attending School Operations meetings that pertain to the Town along with other Department Heads. He said another area they were working closely on was Emergency Management Planning. Superintendent Nadeau added that it was important to note that they were only a short time into Shared Services at this point.

FINANCE – Finance Director/Business Administrator Lisa Ambrosio

Finance Director/Business Administrator Lisa Ambrosio stated that they first started sharing services with the Finance Department, and pointed out that previously there was a fulltime School Business Administrator and a contracted Town Finance Director position. She said she had been onboard since March as the primary contact in overseeing the combined operating budgets of close to \$29 million. She said since then she had coordinated multiple bond issues with a \$38 million School Bond and another \$10 million for a Water & Sewer Bond. She said her position had oversight of payroll and administrative benefits for 216 employees, and the New Hampshire Retirement System had also chosen to audit the School this year.

Finance Director Ambrosio said primarily she would be looking at the consolidation and successful closing of the FY2017 budget and the opening of the FY2018 budget for the Town and the School, including all reports to the State by September 1st. She said this would also include support to Department Heads, the Town Administrator, and School administrators, as well as separate audits and audit preparation for the Town and School. She said she had worked with the Boards of Trustees of the Trust Funds to get better protocol there, and had recently put out to bid for a new Financial Software System for the Town and was working on the timing and implementation of that.

Superintendent Nadeau pointed out that the volume of work for the position was the same with only one person, and said that was where the savings came in. She said they had crossed the 6-month milestone, and after closing this fiscal year, starting FY2018, and getting through the audit they would see where they were in March. Town Administrator Fournier said the big thing coming in for the Town was the Financial Software. He said the Town side was a lot more revenues and collections, and the School side more expenditures and grant management, and said the software systems would be different, but they were looking to make it similar for cross-training considerations.

FACILITIES – Facilities Director Greg Marles

Facilities Director Greg Marles said his position was new this year and he felt it was working well. He said this year one bid had gone out for the Town and School for heating oil, and they also secured a single bid for electricity with a single supplier for the Town and School and only one process to manage. He said the staffs of the Town and the School were working together and creating a lot of synergies. For example,

Buildings & Grounds was helping the School by providing equipment to repair Pole Lights and Custodial Services would help Buildings & Grounds this winter with stripping and waxing floors. He said they had put a single reporting and electronic system in place for work orders to help track service calls and streamline operations and would be rolling it out to the School in a few weeks.

Facilities Director Marles said one of the first things he worked on was the new Phone System for the Town, which they would be able to tie into the School side. He said they would be doing the same thing with the cameras to have one system that manages all of the security measures and access surveillance systems for both the Town and the School. He said recently Town employees were cleaning SAU offices and there was now one vendor doing all roof maintenance for every building. He said they would also be working together with Town and School employees for training, and said they were not only saving money, but were building a stronger community.

Discussion: Council Chairman Pike encouraged Town Council and School Board members to make comments, and said the meeting would only be valuable if they took the opportunity to comment. He said there was a significant amount of work going on even before the State allowed sharing services, and felt it was impressive how many additional items of cooperation and sharing had occurred in only a few months. Town Administrator Fournier said a big one was snow removal which was already happening, and said he had great communication with Superintendent Nadeau.

School Board Chairman Shelton said they had two leaders in their fields directing them and doing strategic planning for the future with both the Budgetary Process (Finance) and Facilities Management. She said their feedback at School Board Meetings had been invaluable to the School, and she thanked Finance Director Ambrosio and Facilities Director Marles for bringing their level of expertise. Mr. Kenison stated that Facilities issues had taken up a lot of time for quite a while for the Business Administrator and the Superintendent, and he felt it a huge benefit was already being realized. Superintendent Nadeau said it saved her a lot of time and preparation for meetings, and Town Administrator Fournier said the Facilities Director was now handling a lot more of the Town purchasing and contracts typically done by each department.

School Board Vice-Chair McKinney said future planning for the CIP Committee had been lacking, and she felt that they could now share and save for the future together. Mr. Zink felt it was important that they were the first town in New Hampshire to share services, and said if it was going to get screwed up, it would probably be because of the Boards. He said at some point they would just have to apply faith and might not be able to articulate savings for particular items, and hoped that the Boards would not interfere with the Shared Services process. Town Administrator Fournier said priorities would have to be set and some projects addressed later.

Councilor Weinstein said part of the reason for their success was that the stars aligned at the right time. She said there was a shift in the Town, State Law allowed sharing services, and everything came together and they really pushed it forward. Mr. Zink said that Superintendent Nadeau had come onboard with experience of shared services. Finance Director Ambrosio stated that communication had been key, and said she had been able to get support from Town Administrator Fournier and Superintendent Nadeau to help balance all the different priorities, and said it was really a team effort of working together.

FUTURE – Superintendent Meredith Nadeau

Superintendent Nadeau said that she and Town Administrator Fournier became aware of things through natural conversation. She said when Facilities Director Marles came to look at Security issues for the Town, he reached out to the School as well. She said with RFPs for a new Financial Software System, they wanted a similar look and feel so employees could cross-train. Town Administrator Fournier said while looking at email servers, IT Director Doug Poulin suggested he use the same system as the School, and they were now using the same system as well as Police, Fire, and Public Works.

Superintendent Nadeau mentioned supporting the CIP Process moving forward, and Town Administrator Fournier said the CIP was a planning document and not a budget document and it was actually tied to the Master Plan and how they can change impact fees for development. He said with both the Town and the School at the table, they could have a conversation about CIP and discuss priorities. He said ultimately the Planning Board could use that document, look at the Master Plan, and make suggestions to examine the current impact fee structure.

Town Administrator Fournier stated that Technology was another area they would be addressing in the near future as a Shared service, and said they were currently having a conversation with regard to long-term planning on the department side. Superintendent Nadeau said on the School side they were much more reliant on other software systems for information and data, and had to report to the State for Student Assessment. She said their Systems Management piece had grown considerably and they definitely wanted to look at how they could collaborate and move forward. She said it might take more people for IT because of increasing and changing needs in technology.

Town Administrator Fournier said for years they had saved money in the Capital Reserve Fund for IT in case of a server failure, and said he had spoken with the IT Director to come up with a plan to use the money that was put aside and look at what technology was needed and what it would look like. Superintendent Nadeau said Fire Department folks were coming in to train all Town and School employees, and Town Administrator Fournier said they also planned to schedule Liability Insurance training together. He said he wanted to thank the School and the School District, and said the collaboration between the Town and the School had been a great experience for him so far.

NEWMARKET CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP) PROCESS

Council Chairman Pike said there had been conversations on both sides about the Capital Improvement Plan Process, and said like any process there was a time to look for improvements. He said a lot of good work was being done, but that it was not fully realized as an opportunity especially with regard to longer-range planning. He said the Town and the School had different regulations that governed their processes, but that if the goal was to accomplish the same objectives, they could learn from each other. He said he could book the joint Town Council/School Board meetings well into the future, rather than wait until they had decided what they wanted to discuss at the meeting.

Council Chairman Pike said he wanted to make sure that as the CIP requests started to come in they would have a chance to talk about those deliberations, and said he had spoken with Town Administrator Fournier about providing more education at the Town Council level on some of the finer points of the process. He said they had a chance to get feedback from the Facilities Director and the Finance Director and bring the process more to the forefront. He said one thing they should be able to do as a one-town concept was to make sure they did not hit the citizen tax rate. Mr. Zink said with the CIP plan due by the end of this month, they did not have a lot of time to think about how they would like to do things, and said he hoped that their recommendations this year would hold stronger than in the past.

PLANNING FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

School Board Chairman Shelton said because the CIP had to be done by the end of the month, the process would not be changed for this year. She suggested that for the joint meeting next year they have a quick update on Shared Services and a longer session on the CIP Process. She said she and Council Chairman Pike were committed to having ongoing conversations to continue communications between the Boards, and said they would talk with Town Administrator Fournier and Superintendent Nadeau about setting up an annual timeframe for the joint meeting to discuss the CIP Process.

Mr. Kenison felt that time needed to get background work done was more important than a timeframe at this point, and suggested they set goals now on topics to be covered. Councilor Kast felt that a drive toward more long-range planning would get the momentum going for specific goals. Councilor Weinstein said she liked the idea of the CIP Committee presenting to both Boards at once, and Mr. Zink said that bonding might be the right way to attack the CIP issue. Town Administrator Fournier said the Town had two large projects coming up with reconstruction/drainage on New Road and the Macallen Dam, and said he would need to work around the Bond Schedule for the School to keep the tax rate manageable and they needed a more formal way to do that. He felt having a certain amount of debt was a good idea, and said debt could be retired and reissued to maintain a constant funding level.

Council Chairman Pike said the meeting had given them an opportunity for this type of exchange and a chance to reexamine bonding and decide what was best for the whole community. Town Administrator Fournier said though the Town had two large projects coming up, they were making great strides on the paving side with the plan they had in place. Mr. Kenison said he thought they could borrow on some of the success of the Facilities efforts in terms of communication on the CIP front. He pointed out the Town did have debt, as taxpayers did not care whether it came from the Town or the School.

PUBLIC COMMENT – None

ADJOURNMENT

School Board Vice-Chair McKinney made a motion to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Mr. Kenison. The Joint Town Council/School Board Meeting was adjourned at 8:09 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Joint Town Council-School Board Meeting
August 30, 2017

Patricia Denmark, Recording Secretary