

## **Notes on Meeting with the Select Board May 29, 2018**

On May 29, 2018 Lorraine L. Hansen of the Ad Hoc Committee to Study Town Manager met with the Rollinsford Select Board (SB) to discuss the challenges faced by the board when managing the town's affairs.

Over the past several years, there have been reporting requirement changes as well as additional knowledge required to keep up with federal, state and local regulations. For instance, the **Department of Revenue Administration** (DRA) now requires reporting through its new tax portal. In the past, a report was filled out and emailed to the DRA. The new portal requires all information be entered on line, printed on the town equipment, signed, scanned and sent through the portal. In another example, while the **US Environmental Protection Agency** (EPA) has required an annual report since 2003. Reports may have been filed by previous boards, but by some error, this reporting requirement was not communicated as the board membership changed. One of the current SB members only realized the issue after discovering a letter from the EPA referring to a fine for failure to file. A new permit for storm water management is presently required, a daunting task as the 18-page application must be completed and submitted timely to avoid a fine.

Each year issues arise requiring more administrative attention – from the annual elevator inspection report to the land fill closure report. The retirement fund reports are now more time-consuming because the town now has more employees and because there are different classifications necessitating different financial information be included for each class. The town must file annual reports on the health care plan offered employees. Now that the town has shifted to SB2, the calendar has shifted, and the board must prepare the budget on an earlier schedule even as they must prepare a “default budget”. While the “default budget” is based on the prior year's spending, it cannot include certain budget items per state law.

The above examples reveal the need for a calendar to be prepared listing all of the required reports with the due dates. The Select Board has wanted to do this, but, because there have been so many emergent issues in the past few years along with a busy weekly meeting schedule, this issue has not been addressed.

For instance, during the past few years the Select Board has had to address emergency road/ culvert work, the need to replace a fire engine before it failed and required construction at the transfer station. To accomplish this, the Select Board was able to arrange to borrow by issuing two municipal bonds and a USDA bond, as well as a grant for \$110,000. The work, however, fell largely on one select board member, mainly because she was no longer working full-time. Had this same member not been going to a number of meetings of organizations which support small towns here in the state, she would not even have known about the grant the town received. It was this board member who spent numerous hours applying for the bonding and writing the grant. Additionally, the information needed for the bonds was not uniform, as there were two different types of bonds, with the USDA bond requiring an even more onerous process. At the same time, the Board had to manage these complicated construction projects as well as the run-of-the-mill town affairs. This whole process has taken a toll on this member's health. On the upside, all of the projects came in at or under budget.

Besides an event calendar, the Select Board identified many other areas requiring attention, some of which are listed below in no particular order:

- work on welfare policies, even though there has been consistency in administration of welfare since it has been run through the administrative office;
- complete job descriptions for town employees;
- improve the personnel evaluation process;
- expand the purchasing policies to allow for department heads to independently purchase lower cost items;
- build more redundancies into the job description of the front office staff so pay checks can be issued even if one person is absent from the front office;
- consider professional management of website, partly because it is now depended upon by so many of our residents;
- develop social media policies;
- develop policies for appointments to boards and commissions;
- develop business processes;
- review all town ordinances and put them on line;
- review all fees;
- cost/benefit analysis of energy consumption/conservation; and
- review the systems used at the transfer station, considering pay-per-bag or other ways to conserve money.

The Board realizes there have been lost opportunities (cell tower revenue), and that there should be a regular review of all contracts, policies and procedures. Members of the Select Board expressed frustration at having good ideas but no time to institute them. The economic development commission might have been more successful had the SB been able to spend more time preparing an overall vision for the town rather than spending countless hours reviewing small expenditures by departments and administering other routine day-to-day affairs at long, weekly meetings.

In addition to these weekly meetings, one member of the SB must attend meetings of the Budget Committee, Planning Board and certain other committees, and a quorum must attend all public hearings and special meetings..

To be better prepared for their work on the SB, each of the board members have been dividing up the tasks of attending meetings of the Lamprey Regional Solid Waste Coop, the Strafford County Regional Planning Commission, Seacoast Stormwater Coalition, Piscataqua Regional Planning Project, etc., all of which offer technical advice to area towns and cities. Other communities just send their staff to these, but we don't have the staff available to do this.

At the same time, our Select Board, under the Chairmanship of Suzanne Huard, has been able to institute many long-term planning tools, such as the **Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)**, the **Road Surface Management System** and the **Ten-Year Financial Projection Model**, all of which are designed to provide the best information possible to the voters.

The Select Board is thrilled that our residents are becoming more involved, even as this in itself presents new challenges, such as researching how the historical committee is able to accept gifts, etc. In consideration of this increased civic engagement, the Select

Board would like to adopt a system to better handle the administration of town affairs, to better allocate their time and to encourage a diverse Select Board, as board membership should not be a full-time job.

*The SB suggests that we obtain additional input for this report from the Chief of Police, Town Clerk, Tax Collector, Fire Chief, Administrative Assistant and Road Agent.*