

FARMINGTON SELECT BOARD
Tuesday, February 27, 2024

The conduct of the meeting included remote access by telephone, video, and electronic means. The public could attend in person or by viewing the live stream at <http://mtbluetv.org/program-live-streamfarmington-selectmen.html> or Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/MBTV11/> or calling 578-7395.

Selectman Matthew Smith called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M. with the following members present: Joshua Bell; Byron Staples; and Dennis O’Neil. Erica LaCroix, Town Manager; Fire Chief Tim Hardy; Lauren Turner, Associate Development Officer of Avesta Housing; Leah Giusti, Executive Assistant; MBTV Camera Operator; and members of the press and members of the public were also present. Members of the press and public participated remotely as authorized by PL 209, c.617.

ITEM 1: Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Chairman Smith led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ITEM 2: To approve Polling Hours for Municipal Election on March 25, 2024

The Select Board reviewed the memorandum.

Selectman Smith made a motion to approve; Selectman Bell seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 4 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 3: To approve Contract Renewal for Tax Map Maintenance with Cartographic Associates, Inc.

Selectman O’Neil asked about the language stating that “there will be no additional charge if property record cards are not provided.” It was determined that if we don’t send them property cards, they will update regardless. They provide digital web hosting and maps.

Selectman Bell noted that this saves employees a lot of time.

Selectman O’Neil noted that it is critical to have the correct information on the maps

Selectman Staples asked if this is part of the revaluation/transfer of documents. Ms. LaCroix stated that we will be moving to a new program in 2025 as part of the revaluation, but we need to stay with CAI until then.

Selectman O’Neil made a motion to approve; Selectman Bell seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 4 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 4: To discuss Town Tree Ordinance

Bill Haslam from Conservation Commission approached the Select Board. There were a couple of drafts that went around, this new draft is a good combination of the two and will codify what we are doing now. If Public Works or Code Enforcement have any questions, the Conservation Commission is there to help. This new ordinance sets up a Board which Tree City USA wants. The Conservation Commission will be considered the Board. Street trees within the right of way will be subject to this ordinance.

Selectman Bell asked how they would deal with trees on the side of the road that need to come down. Mr. Haslam stated that if it is presenting a public hazard it should be taken down. If it is surrounded by other trees, there is no need to replace it. Patty Cormier stated that there is nothing in the ordinance that requires replacement. Ms. Cormier also noted that ownership of a tree ends at the boundary of the property.

The Select Board appreciates the work that has gone into preparing the ordinance. Ms. LaCroix will follow up to see if they need to schedule a public hearing.

ITEM 5: To discuss Avesta Housing's request for a Credit Enhancement Agreement

Lauren Turner approached the Select Board. Ms. Turner is a project manager with Avesta Housing. Avesta Housing has over 100 properties, including 3,000 homes and 4,400 residents.

Avesta is seeking a Credit Enhancement Agreement (CEA) for the Edgewater Project on Willow Springs Drive. This project is a 2-story building for 55+ senior affordable housing. The total project cost is around \$9.2 million. Funding sources include Maine Housing, tax credits, Community Development Block Grant, and the Silver Heart Fund for seniors through Avesta. With all these sources, one of the assumptions is that you will also be getting assistance from municipal and other local levels. One way they do this is through a T.I.F. They are looking to do that here and the plot of land being purchased from Farmington Land LLC is in the Farmington Downtown Development T.I.F. district established in 2015. This would allow the town to capture 100% of the new value over the assessed value. It would help Avesta to reduce operating costs and allow them to borrow more money for the project upfront.

Avesta is proposing a 75/25 split of increase only difference after construction around \$27K. 75% to Avesta and 25% to town. Avesta pays tax on the current assessed value plus 25% of the increased assessed value. Numbers are from an appraisal of the full lot. For more specific numbers they would need to work with an assessor. This would more than double the taxes received by the town.

Selectman Smith asked what time frame they were looking for. Ms. Turner stated they have a 30-year T.I.F. established in 2013 and would ride that out until it expires in 2044. The language in the TIF agreement states that at any point the Select Board can enter into a CEA Agreement.

Ms. Turner stated that Avesta is receiving between \$4-6M in state funding. With state funding, the amount of debt is under negotiation depending on their ability to acquire other funding

sources. It depends on operating costs, construction costs, etc. Selectman Bell asked if federal funding was included in that sum. Ms. Turner stated that the state funding comes from federal government allocations. She also stated that developers are encouraged to seek local funding when it comes to affordable housing.

Selectman Bell asked what their estimated revenue on this project would be. Ms. Turner stated that Avesta is a non-profit, and whatever margins they may make would go toward paying operating costs, paying off debts, and the like. She further stated that margins are minimal in affordable housing.

Selectman O'Neil asked how many affordable units are in town now and if market surveys were done. Ms. Turner stated that she believes a market study was done about a month ago, and she will send it along.

Ms. LaCroix noted that in most TIFs with a CEA, the CEA tiers down over time, it doesn't stay 75/25 over the entire term of the TIF. We shelter additional tax revenue. The additional value does not go on until the end of the TIF, so when the county looks it does not apply to valuation or revenue sharing with the state. There is a benefit, not quite a push. The monies would have to be used for Downtown Development through Downtown TIF.

Some questions for the developer: is the developer open to a step-down arraignment over time? If someone at Avesta has any preliminary research on demand in the affordable housing market. Is this going to serve Farmington residents? What is the need in Farmington? Only serving seniors, which is important, limits the scope of who is being serviced.

There is no rental assistance, rental assistance is through a voucher program which this does not have. These apartments will have to be set at a certain rental amount. They will not be receiving any rental assistance. The requirements for subsidized housing are highly restricted at state and federal levels and cannot be adjusted.

Selectman Smith stated that the Select Board will need more information and will hold an executive session in the near future to see where to go from here. Ms. Turner stated that Avesta is prepared to bring a draft as soon as the next meeting.

Selectman Stephan Bunker arrived.

ITEM 6: To discuss placing ad in Discover Maine Magazine's 2024 Western Maine issue

The Select Board reviewed the ad.

Selectman Smith made a motion to place an ad in Discover Maine Magazine's 2024 Western Maine issue; Selectman Bunker seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 7: To review the Transfer Station Agreement with the Town of Industry

Selectman O’Neil asked about household trash. Archies is contracted for household trash, it is not done through the town. Phil Hutchins told Ms. LaCroix that there have been no changes to the agreement from last year.

Selectman O’Neil made a motion to approve the Transfer Station Agreement; Selectman Staples seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

ITEM 8: To review the 2024 Budget

The Select Board reviewed and discussed the Warrant Articles.

Selectman O’Neil made a motion to amend the Select Board stipend to remove \$2,100; no second.

Motion failed.

Selectman XXXX made a motion to 99,2; Selectman XXXX seconded.

**VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 4 OPPOSED 1 MOTION CARRIED
(O’Neil)**

Article 5 – Code Enforcement

Selectman Smith made a motion to accept Article 5 as written; Selectman Bunker seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

Article 6 – Police Department

Selectman Smith made a motion to accept Article 6 as written; Selectman Bunker seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

Article 7 – Fire Department

Selectman Bell made a motion to accept Article 5 as written; Selectman Smith seconded.

**VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 4 ABSTAINED 1 MOTION CARRIED
(Bunker)**

Article 8 – Parks and Recreation and Community Center

Selectman Bell made a motion to accept Article 8 as written; Selectman Smith seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

Article 9 – Other Protections

Selectman Smith made a motion to accept Article 9 as written; Selectman Bell seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

Article 10 – Public Works

Selectman Bunker made a motion to accept Article 10 as written; Selectman Smith seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

Article 11 – Recycling

Selectman Bunker made a motion to accept Article 11 as written; Selectman Smith seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

Article 12 – Capital Reserve Funds

Selectman Bell asked if there was a plan for the monies in the Municipal Landfill Capital Reserve. Ms. LaCroix believes it is for equipment that is needed.

Selectman Bunker asked if this is a change from prior years. Ms. LaCroix noted that all capital has been moved from operating funds into capital reserve funds and it is noted in the statement of facts for the article.

Selectman Smith made a motion to accept Article 12 as written; Selectman Bunker seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

Article 13 – Debt Service

Selectman Bunker asked if there was a rule of thumb regarding amount of indebtedness. Ms. LaCroix does not know the number off the top of her head, but we are well below the threshold.

Selectman Smith made a motion to accept Article 13 as written; Selectman Bunker seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

Article 14 – Legal Reserve

Selectman Smith made a motion to accept Article 14 as written; Selectman Bell seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

Article 15 – ADA Reserve

Selectman Smith made a motion to accept Article 15 as written; Selectman Bunker seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

Article 16 – Library

Selectman Smith made a motion to accept Article 16 as written; Selectman Bunker seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

Article 17 – Gay Cemetery

Selectman Smith made a motion to accept Article 17 as written; Selectman Bell seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

Article 18 – Franklin County Animal Shelter

Selectman Smith made a motion to accept Article 18 as written; Selectman Bunker seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

Article 19 – Refunding Snowmobile Registrations

Selectman Smith made a motion to accept Article 19 as written; Selectman Bell seconded.

VOTE AFFIRMATIVE 5 MOTION CARRIED

Article 20 – Nonprofits

Selectman Bell asked why the warrant article is needed as there is no money going into it. Ms. LaCroix stated it is there because there was money in it last year and, at town meeting, someone

