

Notes from Concord, July 2017

David Kerrick and Mary Anne Broshek

On June 22 our Representatives in Concord finally passed a budget, which Governor Sununu has promised to sign. As you may remember the House did not pass an operating budget so the joint Committee of Conference worked to tweak the budget passed by the Senate to make it acceptable to the various Republican factions in the House and the State Senate. There was an up and down vote in both the House and the Senate on the revised budget with no amendments. All but 14 Republicans in the House voted for the budget while all but 5 Democrats voted against it. The Senate voted along party lines with 14 in favor and 9 against.

The \$25 million per year revenue sharing the House Finance Committee had previously included to be paid by the State for local property tax relief is no longer in the \$11.7 billion spending plan for the biennium. This has been suspended since 2010. Also, the statutory catch up formula for rooms and meals tax distributions to the towns is suspended for another 2 years even with the ever increasing revenues from that tax. The towns were supposed to get 40% of that tax while with the suspension they get only 20%, a \$5 million annual hit to the towns' budgets.

There is, however, some help to towns in the budget. Some of the brighter spots are \$35 million for highway block grants, \$6.8 million for municipal bridge aid, \$12.7 million for state aid grant (SAG) funding through Dept. of Environmental Services, for water and wastewater projects already approved by the Governor and Executive Council, and full funding for payments of \$866,250 each year in lieu of town taxes to the affected towns for lands taken long ago for flood control.

Some other bills passed recently that should help our towns. Senate Bill 38 provides an additional \$30 million to municipalities for highway improve-

ments which will be treated by towns as "unanticipated revenue" so money can be used in the current year. House Bill 371 increases the dollar threshold from \$35,000 to \$125,000, above which municipalities must be required to purchase a bond for a construction project.

Other State news affecting towns is the New Hampshire Supreme Court affirming decisions of the Board of Tax and Land Appeals approving municipal appraisals of utility property despite challenges to those appraisals in more than 60 municipalities. Briefly the Court has affirmed using local appraisals for town utility property taxes rather than the often lower Department of Revenue Administration's statewide appraisal method favored by the utility companies.

Senate Bill 191, the Kindergarten Bill, was also passed by the House and Senate. It is now known as the Kenogarten Bill since, as amended, it ties legalization of Keno to funding for all day Kindergarten. Keno might not raise enough money to fund universal all day Kindergarten. In that case the distribution of money raised would supposedly depend on the financial condition of school districts. Not exactly what Governor Sununu promised.

We have heard a lot of talk from the Freedom Caucus in the Legislature about a need for more tax cuts as a job creator. We believe that the most important tax to lower is the local property tax. The opportunity to use increased State revenues to send promised funds back to our towns has been largely rejected and instead, the budget provides yet another decrease in business taxes.

As Senator Feltes says, "This budget spends more on business tax cuts than on combatting the opioid epidemic". We believe that returning promised funds to the municipalities for local property tax relief would benefit both businesses and individual home owners.



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registrations and to monitor the funds received with the registrations. Delaney seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Roy will send a W-9 to Alan Hanscom. Murphy will contact Mainstay regarding setting up on the Town Web site.

Hilltop Public Solutions: Sean Downey represents National Grid. Downey explained that this project is called the Granite State Power Link. The project is set up to bring renewable energy, hydro-electric and wind, from Quebec to Massachusetts. It will encompass 168 miles of line in New Hampshire and will cross into 24 towns. The Right of Way will not be expanded in 106 of those miles from Monroe to Litchfield. For Andover, it is approximately 4.6 miles. Basically, they will be using the existing power corridor already in place with minimal upgrading changes.

The price of power in New England through this project will decrease because there will be more power available thus cheaper rates. There will be absolutely no cost to New Hampshire residents unless a power company that supplies power to New Hampshire resident's purchases power from them. Andover will receive revenue from this project. Information packets are available at town hall.

The next step is to hold a Community Open House event where an expert will be on hand to discuss the project and answer any questions. They are committed to working with towns.

Road Agent Report: The road crew remains involved in spring clean-up getting the cemeteries ready for Memorial Day, cleaning the debris from the culverts, getting the bath house at Highland Lake ready, and the baseball field prepared. The baseball field has been thatched, fertilized and seeded. It will be re-seeded in June, July, and September.

The crew took care of the washout on Maple Street recently.

Thompson is trying to get the bridge work on the schedule as soon as possible.

The Board discussed with Thompson the bad condition of the dirt roads in town. Priority needs to be given at

this point to the dirt roads. Thompson will come up with a priority plan.

Beach Sand – In mid-June last year, the Town planned on replenishing the sand at Highland Lake Beach. At that time, DES indicated that a Permit by Notification be filed along with a check for \$200.00. On July 28, 2016 when Roy spoke with Dale at DES, he suggested that since towns can only replenish the sand every six years, and because it was so late in the season, that the Town should wait until the Spring of 2017 to replenish the sand.

At this time, Roy wants to have a DES representative come to make sure the Town is applying for and receiving the correct permit and to make sure there are no wetland issues. The Board agreed.

Other Business: Delaney wanted to know what was going on with the following issues:

Replacing the library door – Barton will replace the library door as soon as the rain stops.

Moving the wall in Town hall, getting a secure door down stairs in the meeting room, burying the gas tanks, installing a window in the file room, and landscaping – Roy is working on getting estimates for all of these items.

The pile of dirt by the library – will be moved to the other side of the library.

Conservation Commission

April 12, 2017

Condensed from approved minutes

Present: Nan Kaplan, Jerry Hersey, Tina Cotton, and Jesse Schust.

Minutes: Tina made a motion to approve the March minutes with small corrections/additions, Jerry seconded, and all were in favor.

Correspondence:

Newsletter from Wadsworth Woods lands.

Supply Lines 2017 newsletter.

Merrimack County Conservation District notification of Annual Dinner/Farmer Appreciation Night.

Letter and booklet dated February 21, 2017, from DES, Beyond the Beaver Dam: The Success of the New Hampshire DES Aquatic Resource

See Minutes on page 9

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