

**Minutes of the
Board of Selectmen (BOS) Special Meeting**
Town of Redding CT
April 16, 2024 at 7:30 pm
Town Hall Hearing Room
100 Hill Road, Redding CT

Board of Selectmen in Attendance: Julia Pemberton; Margaret O'Donnell; Michael Thompson.

Others Attending: Janet August, Recording Secretary; Jim Sanders, Finance Director; Wes Higgins, Town Treasurer; Tom Ryder of Landtech; New Pond Farm representatives Thomas Saggiomo, Bruce Ward, Ann Taylor, Penn Johnson; Chief O'Donnell and Captain Succi of the Redding Police Department (RPD); members of the public.

1. Call to Order

First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton called the meeting to order at 7:31pm.

2. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Mr. Thompson moved to approve the minutes of March 12, 2004. Ms. O'Donnell seconded the motion. The motion was approved. Ms. Pemberton abstained.

MOTION: Ms. O'Donnell moved to approve the minutes of March 18, 2004. The motion seconded by Mr. Thompson. The motion was approved.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Discussion and Possible Action: ARPA-Funded Marsh Restoration Project at New Pond Farm (NPF)

NPF provided the BOS with copies of a Landtech Wetlands Evaluation and Impact Assessment and a letter from NPF outlining the revised plan with details and a timeline. Tom Ryder, a Wetland Scientist and Certified Ecologist and Biologist from Landtech

provided an updated presentation on NPF's Wetland Restoration Project. NPF wants to restore the habitat from the destruction created by Hurricane Sandy. The pond will be dredged back to its original depth. The culverts on the pond will be replaced to allow easier water flow, and the dam will be taken down to restore fish migration. Wetland systems will be restored, non-native plant species removed, native species will be planted, and a wildflower meadow will be created. These plantings will include the areas around the vernal pools.

Phase 1: pond dredging, vernal pool creation, and planting.

Phase 2: remove and replace the culverts and remove the dam.

Ms. Pemberton commented that she knows the project has changed somewhat. She asked how much of the original goal has changed. Mr. Ryder says none of the original goals have changed. NPF Board President Thomas Saggiomo stated that the original plan had project (scope) creep, so they stopped and looked at the whole plan and reworked it. NPF Executive Director Ann Taylor described the areas children will have access to in the education program, including access to native plants. She noted that taller plants will be used to keep geese out of the pond.

Ms. O'Donnell asked how long the project area would be out of service due to the restoration efforts. Mr. Ryder expects that to be about one month for the pond, 1-2 days for the culverts, about one week to create the vernal pools, and the boulder removal can be completed anytime. Mr. Thompson asked about the impact of removing the existing dam. Mr. Ryder stated that the dam is small and is not a registered dam per DEEP. He added that DEEP is interested in and supportive of removing these dams. The impact is that the pond area with the dam removed will no longer block fish-passage. He added that they will be working with the Conservation Committee and getting a permit for the dam removal. Ms. O'Donnell asked if there is any way the Town could help this effort. Ms. Pemberton stated that the Town could help with DEEP contacts if needed. Ms. Taylor noted that the revised plan has much less soil/dirt removal, and it can be used elsewhere onsite.

Ms. Pemberton asked if they were on track to select a contract. Mr. Ryder stated that yes, all was on track now. Ms. Pemberton thanked the NPF representatives and leadership for their hard work on this project. Ms. O'Donnell added that NPF and its educational programs are a town treasure and hopes to ensure that they stay important to the Town. In answer to Ms. O'Donnell's question on pond dredging, Mr. Ryder answered that the dredging is needed due to the silt buildup over the years. The selectmen and NPF leadership discussed the recent "open days" at NPF and the successes. Ms. O'Donnell stressed the importance of introducing NPF to new residents.

Finance Director Jim Sanders inquired of the past and current budget for the project. He added that now that they have a set of milestones for the project, and all can be updated for the June BOS meeting and determine if ARPA funds can be released. Ms. Taylor

reported that the revised budget moved money for certain items and areas. She added that NPF has raised their portion of the funding. Mr. Johnson stated that NPF hears the deadlines loud and clear. Mr. Sanders noted that the DEEP work (Phase 2 – culverts and dam replacement) would not be started until 2025, and asked if NPF is contracting for this work in 2024. The need to be contractually obligated by 12/31/2024 (per ARPA rules) was discussed, including contracting before the DEEP water diversion permit is granted. Mr. Ryder answered that by the end of 2024, they will have a good understanding with DEEP, and added that DEEP is supporting dam removals across the state. Ms. Pemberton stated that she can speak with DEEP and discussed dam removal projects that DEEP has approved in the area. NPF will report back to the BOF in June to give an update on their efforts by then. Town Treasurer Wes Higgins congratulated the NPF board on meeting the challenges they faced and creating a great new plan. Mr. Higgins asked about the “closed campus” view of some. Ms. Taylor stated that is why they are giving “free passes” and having “open days.” She added that they work with visitors to understand the rules of the property and hazards as well. New signage will be erected. The group discussed the value of NPF to the town.

5. Discussion and Possible Action: Police Officer Overtime Budget & Line-Item Transfer from the Current Year FY24 Budget to Fund Police Officer Overtime

Mr. Sanders stated that there is an increase in overtime due to officer disability, injury, desk duty only, and one resignation. RPD is \$78K over budget. Chief O’Donnell and Captain Succi discussed the reasons for the increased overtime. The overtime is mainly due to circumstances outside the control of RPD. He discussed the impact of injuries and manpower losses on the overtime budget. Mr. Sanders informed the Board that due to the size of the line transfer, it would need to go to a Town Meeting. The BOS discussed the change in retirement expenses in FY 24 and suggested a line-item transfer from there to the overtime budget.

Ms. O’Donnell added that this is a good discussion because the BOS needs to understand that the RPD cannot operate in a perfect world. She urged her fellow selectmen to give more flexibility in the budget. Chief O’Donnell stated that budgeting is stressful, and he works hard to not go over budget. Ms. Pemberton adds that the situation is not his fault and not in his control. She suggests that in next year’s budget, we should think about adding back another police officer position. Mr. Thompson asked when short-term disability ends, and long-term disability takes over. The group discussed disability dates.

MOTION: Mr. Thompson moved for the BOS to request the Board of Finance (BOF) to make a line-item transfer from the retirement line to the police overtime line. The motion was seconded by Ms. O’Donnell and the motion carried unanimously.

6. Discussion and Possible Actions: Set the Date for a Special Town Meeting to Consider and Vote on Proposals to 1) Reallocate ARPA Funds to Purchase Capital Equipment for the Highway Department, and 2) Approve a Line-Item Transfer for Police Department Overtime

ARPA funds returned were \$200K from the NEST Project, \$180K for the Lonetown Marsh Dry Hydrant Project, and some money from Georgetown Signage. The BOS discussed redeploying the funds to the Highway Department. It would fund a dump truck for \$280K and a pickup truck for \$85K. Mr. Sanders stated that it would need to be brought back to a Town Meeting. Ms. Pemberton noted that the RPD transfers and the Highway Department transfers could be done in late May. The BOS discussed dates.

MOTION: Ms. O'Donnell moved to authorize reallocation of \$365K in ARPA money for Highway Department vehicles and send the reallocation to a Town Meeting. Mr. Thompson seconded the motion, and the motion was carried unanimously.

7. Discussion and Possible Action: Blight Ordinance

MOTION: Mr. Thompson moved to table the Blight Ordinance discussion until the next meeting. Ms. O'Donnell seconded the motion, and the motion was carried unanimously.

8. Adjournment

MOTION: Mr. Thompson moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. O'Donnell seconded the motion, and the motion was carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.

Submitted by:
Janet August, Recording Secretary