TOWN OF EAST KINGSTON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES
Friday, December 20, 2019

Present: Richard Poelaert, Chairman, Justin Lyons, and Robert Nigrello.

Others Present: Paul Deschaine, Community Partners, LLC., Highway Agent Mark Brinkerhoff, and Dennis Quintal.

Richard Poelaert called the meeting to order at 4:18 PM. This is a special meeting to continue the discussion from the Monday, December 16, 2019 meeting regarding the new proposed plow rates and to further discuss the proposed 2020 Budget.

The Board proceed to discuss the proposed contractor winter maintenance rates for the 2019-2020 season. Mr. Lyons moved to accept the plow rates as proposed. Mr. Nigrello seconded the motion for discussion. Mr. Nigrello felt the proposed rates particularly the rate for the 6-wheeled trucks were excessive since the minimum increase proposed was 50% higher with the largest increase nearly 80% over last year. Mr. Nigrello had alternatively proposed to keep the present rates from 2018-2019 season but to add an incentive by guarantying a minimum number of hours each month.

Mr. Lyons agreed that the increases were needed and felt the rates are the best place for covering the plow drivers' costs. Mr. Nigrello said the new rates were higher than any of the surrounding towns. Mr. Brinkerhoff said what Mr. Nigrello said may be true but the Town of East Kingston does things differently than the surrounding towns. The Town does not assist with the fixed costs of the drivers. He also noted that East Kingston drivers usually do the same work in less time than surrounding towns. For instance, in the last major storm the Town's drivers completed their routes in 32 hours while the state drivers took 47 hours and Kingston's drivers needed 56 hours to complete their routes. The invoices are calculated based on two variables—the rate and the hours needed. We do better with the hours needed. Consequently, the rates need to be higher to recover those fixed costs.

Mr. Brinkerhoff also noted that most of the surrounding towns have a local shed to go back to for restroom breaks, rest, eat, get warm, and/or stretch. Our work conditions lack this space and are therefore undesirable.

Mr. Brinkerhoff then observed that plowing snow if full of uncertainties both in terms of frequency of storms, and the duration. These drivers also have full-time jobs to back to, so they need an incentive to stay and continue plowing.

Mr. Quintal asked if the Town needed to adopt a different model for paying for winter maintenance in order to make this work for the Selectmen. He said the Highway Agent in East Kingston is not like may other Agents in the area. Mr. Lyons asked what value does the current model bring to the table. Mr. Brinkerhoff said our roads are black for the most part after a storm. Other towns are not because of different expectations.
Mr. Nigrello said he has heard that our current rates are close to the rates paid by the state with the only difference being a guaranteed minimum of hours paid by them. Mr. Brinkerhoff stated that was not all they get. Mr. Nigrello asked if we guarantee minimum, would that result in a more modest rate increase. Mr. Brinkerhoff felt changing mid-season without basic policies and procedures in place would not be wise. Mr. Quintal said it would depend on the fixed rates and the final hourly rates.

Mr. Nigrello said the average number of hours per season appears to be 125 hours with 8 trucks and a loader (7 one-ton trucks and one 6-wheeler) and the large truck being the only one with a wing and a large sander. He admitted a large storm is hard on the one-ton trucks.

Mr. Brinkerhoff stated he was comfortable with keeping the operations as they are for equipment. The loader is the only one we have and there is no back-up if it breaks down. He then offered to give the 6-wheeler to the Town. They can assume all the costs of operations and maintenance of the truck. Mr. Brinkerhoff said he only keeps it for Town work. The Town can then employ a driver, store it, and assume all the other costs of operating a large truck. These concerns need to be addressed long term. If he were to quit, this does not solve the long-term problems being discussed. It is not profitable to be working for the Town right now.

Mr. Nigrello suggested a 10 hours per month minimum for 5 months. This would guarantee 50 hours per season. Mr. Brinkerhoff asked if the time variable be unchanged. He is firm on the minimum hours needed and a guarantee usually results in added time needed to plow.

Mr. Nigrello said he could support a 50 hours per season but he did not know who would it get paid to. Mr. Lyons said each truck owner. Mr. Nigrello said it would be paid at the end of each month from November to March. Mr. Lyons asked at what rate if there was a guaranteed minimum. Mr. Nigrello answered that it would be at the current rates. Mr. Nigrello said the guarantee would be fixed regardless of the hours worked.

Mr. Poelaert asked if a 25% increase in the rates plus a fixed 50 hours worked was being considered. Mr. Nigrello said he was not proposing that. He supported the current rates. Mr. Brinkerhoff said he could support Mr. Nigrello’s proposal. He stated he has problems with his people based on what he promised them. He asked if the proposed rates can be paid for work performed from November through December and start the new rate model on January 1, 2020.

Mr. Nigrello moved to amend the motion to pay the new rates from the beginning of the season to now. Going forward from today, it would be at the old rates and starting on January 1, 2020 a 10 hour per month minimum be paid. Mr. Quintal asked to have some time to consider the offer and to see if the drivers will accept the offer. Mr. Lyons offered to do a spreadsheet to show the effects of the several different options that had been discussed. There was no second to the motion to amend. Mr. Lyons moved to
amend his original motion to pay the new proposed rates until December 31, 2019. Mr. Nigrello seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Mr. Lyons provide information on the options being considered.

Motion by Mr. Poelaert and second by Mr. Nigrello to enter into nonpublic session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II (a) matters dealing with personnel & (c) matters related to the reputation of another not on the Board at 5:00 PM.


At 6:37 pm, Mr. Poelaert moved to come out of non-public session and to seal the minutes. Mr. Nigrello seconded the motion which passed unanimously with Mr. Lyons having to leave at 6:45 pm.

Motion to adjourn at 6:38 pm by Mr. Poelaert and seconded by Mr. Nigrello. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul R. Deschaine

Richard S. Poelaert  Justin B. Lyons  Robert L. Nigrello  3/9/2020