

**Board of Selectmen
Regular Meeting Minutes
Monday, February 05, 2024**

Members

Beth Cacciotti, Chair
William Baldwin, Vice Chair
David Paquette
Robert Worden
Gregory Spero

Others Present

John Apple, Town Administrator
Erik Thomas, Fire Chief

6:00 PM Open Public Meeting:

Chair Cacciotti opened the February 5, 2024 public meeting of the Atkinson Board of Selectmen at 6:00 PM.

➤ **Pledge of Allegiance**

Fire Chief Erik Thomas led the Pledge of Allegiance.

➤ **Attendance**

Selectman Spero, Selectman Worden, Vice Chair Baldwin, Selectman Paquette and Chair Cacciotti are present.

Public Hearing:

Pursuant to RSA53-C:3-a Franchise Applicant Considerations, the Atkinson Board of Selectmen will vote on the updated Comcast Cable Television Franchise Agreement Renewal.

Chair Cacciotti requested a roll call vote to open the public hearing.

Roll Call Vote: Selectman Spero – yes; Selectman Worden – yes; Vice Chair Baldwin – yes; Selectman Paquette – yes; Chair Cacciotti – yes.

Chair Cacciotti reminded the Board that David Williams, Director of Communications, has done a fantastic job with the cable franchise contract renewal. The Town of Atkinson receives 5% of the gross receipts and Mr. Williams negotiated some higher definition signals that Atkinson was missing and changed some wording but otherwise it is the same.

Chair Cacciotti requested a roll call vote to leave the public hearing.

Roll Call Vote: Selectman Spero – yes; Selectman Worden – yes; Vice Chair Baldwin – yes; Selectman Paquette – yes; Chair Cacciotti – yes. Vote: 5/0/0. All in favor.

The Board left the public hearing.

Chair Cacciotti requested a roll call vote to approve the Comcast Cable Television Franchise Agreement Renewal.

Roll Call Vote: Selectman Spero – yes; Selectman Worden – yes; Vice Chair Baldwin – yes; Selectman Paquette – yes; Chair Cacciotti – yes. Vote: 5/0/0. All members of the Atkinson Board of Selectmen voted in favor of approving the Comcast Cable Television Franchise Agreement Renewal pursuant to RSA53-C:3-a.

Mr. Apple has the contract and it is ready to be signed. Comcast will continue to be cable provider for the Town of Atkinson.

New Business:

Chair Cacciotti requested to change the order of the agenda and start with Fire Department on-call hires.

Appearances:

➤ Fire Chief Erik Thomas – On Call Hires

Mr. Apple has informed the Board that Chief Thomas told him that the background check for the first applicant has not been received but everything for the other two applicants has been.

Fire Chief Thomas reviewed the applications for the Board.

Chief Thomas stated that the first applicant is Mr. Shaun Nicholas of Atkinson. Mr. Nicholas has applied for the position of EMT. Mr. Nicholas is currently an employee of a private ambulance service and holds a national registry EMT certification. He is licensed in both New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Prior to becoming an EMT, Mr. Nicholas worked as a technical recruiter for Entegee Corporation in Billerica. In addition to his EMS credentials he has had specific training in Means to the Command System and Children's Advocacy. Since he is already an EMS provider Chief Thomas recommends he be hired at the on-call probationary rate plus the EMS credentials for a total of \$15.50 per hour.

The next applicant is Mr. Ryan McKenna. He is a resident of Atkinson and is applying for a dual role as EMT and Firefighter. He is a retired Marine and is currently employed at L3Harris in Londonderry New Hampshire as a manufacturing engineer. Mr. McKenna has training in Tactical Combat Casualty Care, First Aid, CPR and Defibrillation. On his own initiative he is taking training for the EMT B Course in preparation for his application to the Fire Department. During the interview process, he expressed interest in cross-training as a fireman when the opportunity becomes available. Among numerous awards and achievements that accompany his application, he was the recipient of a letter of recommendation for professional conduct on and off duty, eagerness to support the needs of the Marine Corps, a degree of mentorship to subordinates and establish a standard of proficiency. Chief Thomas feels that Mr. McKenna will be a team player for the Fire Department. Chief Thomas recommends Mr. McKenna be hired at the on-call probationary rate of \$14.00 per hour.

Next, Chief Thomas discussed the third candidate, Mr. David Jakes. He is currently a resident of Salem, living about six miles from the Atkinson town line. Mr. Jakes is currently an employee of a private ambulance service and like Mr. Nicholas, holds national registry in EMT basic in both New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Prior to becoming an EMT, Mr. Jakes was an intern with the Salem Fire Department. During his internship, he had the opportunity to ride along during medical calls and also trained daily with the Salem fire staff. During his high school years, Mr. Jakes was active in football and track as well as being appointed captain of the wrestling team. This appointment required organizational skills to balance his work, school and extracurricular activities. Chief Thomas believes Mr. Jakes is a good fit for the organization and upon completion of the initial firefighter training will be an asset with regard to covering current or future full time vacancies. Chief Thomas recommends hiring Mr. Jakes at the on-call probationary rate plus the EMS credentials for a total of \$15.50 per hour.

Selectman Spero asked what the total number of on call members in the department would be including these three. Chief Thomas replied that Deputy Chief Holigan retired last month and there are still a couple on medical leave so the department has around 30 at present.

Selectman Spero made a motion to hire Mr. Shaun Nichols for the on-call position at a probationary rate of \$15.50 per hour contingent on his passing his background check.

Discussion: Chief Thomas informed the Board that the background check for Mr. Nichols came back and the Department was waiting for the results of his pre employment medical exam.

Selectman Spero amended his motion to hire Mr. Shaun Nichols for the on-call position at a probationary rate of \$15.50 per hour contingent on the results of his medical exam; Mr. Ryan McKenna for the on-call position at a probationary rate of \$14.00 per hour; and Mr. David Jakes for the on-call position at a probationary rate of \$15.50 per hour all starting February 5, 2024.

Discussion: Chief Thomas stated that the Department was starting ice rescue training next week so he would like the applicants to start immediately.

Vote: 5/0/0. All in favor.

There were no further comments. Chair Cacciotti asked Chief Thomas to pass on her congratulations to the new hires and thanked him for choosing Atkinson.

➤ **Fire Warden Appointment – Andrew Murphy**

Mr. John Apple stated that it is standard protocol to have a fire warden. In the past, the fire warden has always been the chief. In the absence of the Fire Chief, Deputy Chief Murphy has been acting as fire warden. The Town has hired Erik Thomas as fire chief and Chief Thomas has requested that Deputy Chief Murphy continue as fire warden.

Chief Thomas stated that he would be the deputy fire warden.

There was no further discussion. Chair Cacciotti requested a motion.

Selectman Spero made a motion to appoint Deputy Chief Andrew Murphy as Fire Warden and Chief Erik Thomas as Deputy Fire Warden for the Town of Atkinson starting February 5, 2024. There was no second.

Discussion: None

Vote: 5/0/0. All in favor. The motion passes.

Note: This motion was amended as follows at the February 26, 2024 regular meeting to show that Selectman Worden seconded the motion.

Selectman Spero made a motion to appoint Deputy Chief Andrew Murphy as Fire Warden and Chief Erik Thomas as Deputy Fire Warden for the Town of Atkinson starting February 5, 2024. Selectman Worden seconded the motion.

Discussion: None

Vote: 5/0/0. All in favor. The motion passes.

Chief Thomas left the meeting. Chair Cacciotti requested the Board discuss other appointments before the non-public session and the Board moved to the Scenic Byway Council appointment.

➤ **Scenic Byway Council – New Appointment**

Mr. Apple explained that the Scenic Byway Council was established to maintain oversight of the Robert Frost/Old Stagecoach Scenic Byway which was designated in 2014 and is designed to celebrate and interpret the historic Boston – Haverhill – Concord stage coach route that followed New Hampshire Route 121. Mr. Alan Phair has been representing the Town on this council and has agreed to another 2 year term. Mr. Apple is requesting the acceptance of Mr. Phair.

Vice Chair Baldwin made a motion to appoint Mr. Alan Phair to the Scenic Byway Council for a two year term. Selectman Paquette seconded the motion. Vote: 5/0/0. The motion passes.

Chair Cacciotti thanked Mr. Phair.

Selectman Worden requested that Mr. Apple make a note to include Scenic Byway Council membership in the Town budget for 2025. The cost is \$100 to the State and he has been carrying the tab.

➤ **Conservation Commission Recording Clerk Hire**

Mr. Apple explained that Mr. Zack Gilberti is resigning from the position. He has served as recording clerk for several boards and committees as well as the Conservation Commission and has always done a fantastic job. The job has been posted with no applicants and Ms. Karen Wemmelmann has offered to take over as recording clerk for the Conservation Commission. She currently serves as recording clerk for the Planning Board as well as the Board of Selectman and has done a fantastic job. Mr. Apple requests that she be hired as recorder for the Conservation Commission at her current rate of \$21.50 per hour.

Vice Chair Baldwin made a motion for the Board of Selectmen to give Ms. Karen Wemmelmann additional duties as recording clerk for the Town of Atkinson Conservation Commission at her current rate of \$21.50 per hour. Selectman Worden seconded the motion. Vote: 5/0/0. All in favor.

Chair Cacciotti thanked Ms. Wemmelmann for offering to take on additional duties and requested the Board move to the next order of business.

Old Business:

Assessing:

Chair Cacciotti requested a motion to approve the following land use change tax.

➤ **Land Use Change Tax**

- Map 13, Lot 21 Tax: \$1,000

Selectman Worden made a motion to approve the Land Use Change Tax for Map 13, Lot 21. Selectman Spero seconded the motion. Vote: 5/0/0. All in favor.

Chair Cacciotti requested the Board turn to 2024 veterans tax credits.

➤ 2024 Veterans Tax Credits

- Map 6 Lot 34 Rec: Grant \$750
- Map 11 Lot 34 Rec: Grant \$750

Selectman Worden made a motion to approve Veteran's tax credits to Map 6, Lot 34, grant for \$750, Map 11 Lot 34, grant for \$750. The motion was seconded by Selectman Spero. Vote: 5/0/0. All in favor.

Chair Cacciotti requested the Board turn to 2024 solar exemptions.

➤ 2024 Solar Exemptions

- Map 7 Lot 47 Grant: \$15,500
- Map 19 Lot 52 Grant: \$9,000
- Map 22 Lot 22 Grant: \$8,500
- Map 22 Lot 107 Grant: \$14,500

Selectman Worden made a motion to approve Solar Exemptions to Map 7, Lot 47, grant for \$15,500, Map 19 Lot 52, grant for \$9,000, Map 22, Lot 22 grant for \$8,500, Map 22 Lot 107, grant for \$14,500. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Baldwin. Vote: 5/0/0. All in favor.

Chair Cacciotti requested the Board turn to donations.

Donations:

➤ **Elder Services Transportation Fund - \$535**

LAST	FIRST	ADDRESS		DATE	AMOUNT
Geisser	Jean	14 Pope Roadt	Atkinson NH 03811	1/13/24	\$50.00 in memory of Edith DeVeau
Pelletier	Denise	278 Peabody Ave	Manchester NH 03109	1/18/24	\$100.00 in memory of Kenneth Pelletier
Rivers	Carroll	8 Stevens Ct	Atkinson NH 03811	1/21/24	\$25.00
Murphy	Pamela	13 Ayrshire Ave	Atkinson NH 03811	1/23-/24	\$100.00
Russell	Charles	PO Box 2124	Concord, NH 03302-2124	1/21/24	\$50.00 in memory of Edith Deveau
Shaw	Mary Ann	109 Fieldstone Ln	Atkinson NH 03811	1/21/24	\$25.00
Rivers	Carroll	8 Stevens Ct	Atkinson NH 03811	1/24/24	\$25.00
Staples	Nancy	PO Box 371	Atkinson NH 03811	1/26/24	\$50.00
Markle	Sharon	34 William Pond Rd	Atkinson NH 03811	2/1/24	\$100.00

TOTAL \$535.00

Selectman Spero made a motion to accept the donations by the citizens of Atkinson totaling \$535 to the Elder Services Transportation Fund. Selectman Paquette seconded the motion. Vote: 5/0/0. All in favor.

Chair Cacciotti requested the Board move to approval of minutes.

Approval of Minutes:

➤ **January 22, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes**

Selectman Paquette stated that he had some corrections.

- Line 45 – the word “how” needs to be inserted
- Line 225 - the word “right” needs to be “write”.
- Line 270 – closed parentheses after station
- Line 286 – delete the word “his”
- Line 292 – end the sentence after “note”.

There were no further amendments. Chair Cacciotti requested a motion.

Selectman Paquette made a motion to accept the Monday, January 22, 2024 regular meeting minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by Selectman Spero. Vote: 5/0/0. All in favor.

➤ **January 25, 2024 Special Meeting Minutes**

There was no discussion. Chair Cacciotti requested a motion.

Selectman Paquette made a motion to accept the special meeting minutes of Monday, January 25, 2024 as written. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Baldwin. Vote: 5/0/0. All in favor.

Chair Cacciotti asked for liaison reports.

Liaison Reports:

Fire Department: Selectman Spero stated that he and Mr. Apple met with the new fire chief regarding the current situation with the ambulance contract. Selectman Spero stated that another town may potentially pull out at the end of the year. He is recommending that the towns regroup, meet and get an idea of who may be staying in the group and who may pull out. They are working with Chief Thomas to decide what the next steps for Atkinson will be and then will meet with the other towns to discuss. Chair Cacciotti thanked Selectman Spero for keeping up with this important topic.

Recreation Commission: No report.

Elder Services: Selectman Worden thanked Mr. Ted Houlihan and the Recreation Director, Noriko Yoshida-Travers for completing an application with the Rockingham County Transportation Subcommittee to procure a grant of \$90,000 to purchase a wheel chair accessible van for the community. The grant will require a small match. The application was completed and forwarded to the group. The grant has received a positive response.

Capital Improvement: no report

Budget Committee: Selectman Paquette informed the Board that the Budget Committee will meet Tuesday, February 6, 2024 at 7:00 PM for a review of the recommendations on warrant articles.

Department of Public Works: no report.

Police Station Steering Committee: Vice Chair Baldwin stated that the Police Station Steering Committee has met. They did an outstanding job of presenting at the Deliberative Session. Vice Chair Baldwin asked everyone listening to come to the open house on March 2, 2024 from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM at Town Hall. He also encouraged everyone to email the Police Chief and Captain Fiset if they would like to tour the old police station. He believes that once people see the conditions in the old police station, they will realize the importance of constructing a new one and why it is on the ballot in 2024. The Town needs a new police station. If anyone has questions, they can email Committee members. Contact information for members is posted on the Police Station Steering Committee website. Lastly, Vice Chair Baldwin stated that the Police Chief has made a video showing the conditions at the present police station and he encourages everyone to watch. There was also an interview with members of the Police Steering Committee. Both videos are currently on ACTV and YouTube.

Chair Cacciotti stated that someone brought up “right to know” laws. She stated that everything that the Board of Selectman and the Police Station Steering Committee does is recorded and documented according to these laws. The Board cannot discuss anything on a site that is not owned by the Town. It is not legal for the Board and the Police Station Steering Committee to use other sites. There are videos on line and there are in person meetings if people want to know the issues.

Tax Collector: 98% of taxes have been received.

Atkinson Public Television: no report

Cemetery Trustees: no report

Library: no report

Conservation Commission: no report

Planning Board: no report

➤ **Police Chief Tim Crowley – Police Staffing Retention Plan**

Police Chief Crowley did not appear.

FYI:

- Town Offices will be closed on Monday, February 19, 2024 in recognition of President's Day

Future Agenda:

- The Next Regular Meeting will be held on Monday, February 26, 2024, at 6:00 PM.

Non-Public Session:

- RSA 91 A:3, II(a) Compensation

Vice Chair Baldwin made a motion to go into nonpublic session at 7:30 PM under RSA 91-A:3 II (a) compensation - the dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee or the investigation of any charges against him or her, unless the employee affected (1) has a right to a meeting or (2) requests that the meeting be open, in which case the request shall be granted. Selectman Spero seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Selectman Spero – yes, Selectman Worden, yes, Selectman Paquette, no; Vice Chair Baldwin; yes; and, Chair Cacciotti, yes. Vote: 4/1/0. The motion passes.

8:10 PM- Re-enter into public meeting:

Vice Chair Baldwin made a motion to approve the Master Patrolman Ranking as proposed by Chief Crowley for options 1 and 2. Member Paquette seconded the motion. The motion passes 5-0.

Vice Chair Baldwin made a motion to give direction to Chief Crowley to consider the best option for officer retention proposals of either \$2k per month for one year, or \$1k per month for two years for the current full time officers, taking into account how withholding amounts affect the bonuses. Member Paquette seconded the motion. The motion passes 5-0.

The Atkinson Board of Selectmen meeting was adjourned at 8:20 PM.