
OFFICE OF THE TOWN MANAGER

TO: SELECTBOARD
FROM: NEIL FULTON
SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO MARY LAYTON'S PAPER DATED APRIL 15, 2015
WITH THE TITLE OF "PUBLIC VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE."
DATE: APRIL 15, 2015

This memorandum is in response to Selectboard (SB) Member Mary Layton's paper that was distributed to the Selectboard this morning with the title "Public Vote of No Confidence." The paper contains gross inaccuracies. My response to her paper follows.

Salary Increases

Members of the Bargaining Unit have had a step and grade plan since the late 1990s. Non-members had not had a step and grade plan for a number of years and significant internal inequities had developed. The SB approved a compensation study that was conducted by a nationally recognized firm and a majority of the SB concurred in the recommended salary adjustments.

Communications Tower

As a result of an FCC mandated reduction in bandwidth a seriously deficient emergency services radio system became dangerous for emergency responders. On average the requirement for narrow-banding reduced effective coverage by up to 40%. Under the previous Town Manager the SB approved a contract for a communications study. I provided a timeline to the previous Town Manager of the FCC narrow-banding requirements so that the improvement to the system could be done before the new requirements took effect. Subsequent to the study, and after I became Town Manager, VTel offered to build and maintain the recommended tower meeting the Town's and VTel's needs. Initially the SB supported entering into an agreement with VTel for the construction and maintenance of the tower but later withdrew their support. A citizen petition was filed requesting a bond article for Norwich for \$275,000 to build the tower which was approved. The Selectboard decided not to lease space on the tower to help offset debt service costs during the 10-year period for paying off the bond. A lease-purchase agreement, approved by the Selectboard, was entered into along with grants received by Norwich and Hanover to fund the rest of communication system improvements. I managed the project and once the SB gave their approval to the project it was finished within budget and on an expedited schedule. It is just one of the major capital projects I have managed that were finished on schedule and within budget. The final system met, or exceeded, performance objectives and improved citizen and emergency responder safety.

Second Grader

This happened under the previous Town Manager. The Public Works Department requested that their second grader be replaced. Steve Flanders did an economic analysis that demonstrated the economies of continuing to have two graders and the Selectboard approved the replacement of the older grader.

Ladder Truck

When I joined the Fire Department in 1995 the Department had a 1952 ladder truck that had been purchased from the Hanover fire department. At the annual inspection of the aerial portion of the ladder truck in 1995 it was determined that the aerial was unsafe. Leonard Cook and I found a used 1979 aerial ladder truck that Valley Fire Equipment had in Bradford New Hampshire. The Selectboard approved the purchase of the used aerial and the necessary upgrades to make it serviceable. In 2010 the 1979 aerial ladder was replaced with a 1991 used aerial ladder with a pump (Quint). This allowed the Fire Department fleet to be reduced by one vehicle and Engine 3 was retired. The purchase was approved by the previous Town Manager and Selectboard and was consistent with the Fire Department's equipment replacement plan. While I supported the purchase of a Quint, I opposed the purchase of a used 1991 Quint with limited water and operating range. Later models provide a greater operating range and are safer.

Parsonage

The purchase of the Parsonage was the idea of the previous Town Manager.

Purple Trash Bags

I recommended that we move from selling coupons to selling bags as a way to comply with Act 148 and to increase the incentive for removing more recyclable materials from the trash compactor and the Selectboard initially concurred in this recommendation. There is strong evidence that selling bags is a very effective way to increase recycling and more and more towns are taking this approach. Lyme New Hampshire has sold bags for a number of years and reports that selling bags has significantly reduced the amount of trash that goes to a landfill. There was a strong community reaction against selling bags and I revised my recommendation and the Selectboard concurred.

Paving of Main Street

Before the paving project in 2014 Main Street had last been paved in 1997. The pavement was in bad condition. As part of preparation for the repaving the storm sewer system was extended to the north terminus of Hazen Street. Over the past few years curbing had been extended to Beaver Meadow Road and granite curbing had been extended from Turnpike to Koch Road. Andy and I proposed that the curbing be extended from Beaver Meadow Road to the north terminus of Hazen Street. This would have improved drainage, reduced the amount of erosion and of materials being carried into the storm sewer system, improve parking and better define the edge of paving keeping cars from parking on the grass and the sidewalk. I was concerned about the public reaction to the proposed change in road configuration so I held a public forum on May 27, 2014 and it was clear there was not public support for the change in configuration. The Selectboard held a subsequent

public forum on the same subject and Main Street was repaved between Beaver Meadow Road and the north terminus of Hazen Street with the same pavement width and no curbs.

Public Safety Facilities

The need for improvements to the public safety and Public Works facilities has been studied and under discussion since at least 2000. Six proposals were received for the development of a program for the facilities, conceptual drawings and estimated costs sufficient for a bond issue. The Selectboard concurred in my recommendation that Bread Loaf Corporation be retained for the studies. The Selectboard approved the program that was used by Bread Loaf to develop conceptual drawings and costs. The Selectboard added an article to the March 3, 2015 Town Meeting for a bond issue which failed and subsequently called a Special Town meeting for May 12, 2015 to vote on a slightly reduced bond. The net size of the program unanimously approved by the Selectboard on April 8, 2015 is 4,805 sq. ft. The net size of the program previously approved by the Selectboard in 2013, which was used by Bread Loaf for conceptual designs and order of magnitude costs, including the two story design in October of 2014, was 5,177 sq. ft. I took no action that was not consistent with the position of a majority of the Selectboard.