**Board of Selectmen**

**Special Meeting**

**Lyman Memorial High School**

**December 13, 2021 — 7:00 PM**

**MINUTES**

Selectmen present: Kevin Cwikla (First Selectman), Betsy Petrie McComber, Kathleen Smith

Also present: Hayley Wagner, Lebanon Town Finance Director

1. **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by First Selectman Kevin Cwikla at 7:00 pm.

**2.0 Public hearing on ARPA funds**

Mr. Cwikla explained that this is the first of several meetings to be held regarding the use of ARPA funds. The Lebanon allocation totals $2,114,271. Roughly half of that sum, $1,057,135 has already been received, and another $1,057,136 is expected in June 2022. The key objectives of the funds are to:

* Facilitate broadband installation
* Support public health initiatives
* Replace public sector loss due to Covid
* Invest in water and sewer facilities to improve access to clean drinking water and invest in wastewater and stormwater infrastructure
* Address negative economic impacts

Projects should be committed to by December 31, 2024, and the monies expended by December 31, 2026.

Projects already committed to by the Board of Selectmen are as follows:

* Fiber network connectivity to the town hall to include a ring insertion
* Support of the farmer’s market 2 years
* An affordable senior housing feasibility study

Other projects currently under consideration:

* Fiber network connectivity to all town facilities
* VOIP for the town
* Installation of self-pay electric car charging stations at town facilities
* Creation of a long-term maintenance plan for town facilities
* Creation of a long-term maintenance plan for roads and bridges
* Installation of new HVAC systems in town buildings
* Town wide radio system.

Jay Schall, Clubhouse Road, representing the Lebanon Volunteer Fire Department spoke. He explained that the low band frequency and radio technology currently being utilized by the department is becoming obsolete. Lebanon covers a large area, and with only one location firefighters and emergency personnel often must travel long distances to get to the station and then to get on scene. All members have been given radios so that there is the best possible communication, but there are areas out of range at this time. Mr. Schall gave some history on the radio technology that has been implemented over the years. Today an old system is in use and the equipment is outdated and failing. Parts are difficult or impossible to come by. If the radios in the trucks fail, they cannot be replaced, and nothing can be substituted. The system is also in legacy control and can only be maintained by one individual. The two radio towers used are on a favor basis over which the town and fire department have no control. There is no backup system in place and if the tower by the high school fails there is no backup solution. Additionally, there is no interoperability between the fire and police departments.

Mr. Schall explained that there are two possible upgrades available at this time.

1. The town builds a simulcast system for a cost of one (1) million plus
2. Connection to the Connecticut Land Mobile Radio Network (CLMRN). For this there is no infrastructure cost, and the State is responsible for maintenance of the system. This network has many benefits providing for public safety and reliability with 24x7x365 monitoring by a dedicated team of experts. The system is interoperable with other agencies and there is about a 98% coverage in the state. This option cost less than building our own system. Some advantages of CLMRN are:

* Safety – good communication is vital
* Minimal infrastructure cost
* Municipal control of system with State partnership
* It’s a homerun replacement for low band
* Interoperability with other agencies
* Extension of the command-and-control reach of the department
* Increases emergency operations center operability
* The current system could be used as a backup should the state system fail which is unlikely
* The system would extend throughout Connecticut which is a plus as LVFD is made up of volunteers who may be at work or out of town when an emergency occurs.

Mr. Schall displayed a map of municipalities that are currently on the state system. If we to join we would be in the middle of a connected cluster which provides for communication between towns when necessary. Schall also explained that Life Star has notified us that they are getting new aircraft that will not contain communication systems compatible with low band. LVFD pagers are also on low band today and the deadline to move off quickly approaching.

The LVFD believes that moving to a new system allows Lebanon to be proactive rather than reactive. They propose the Board of Selectmen form a Radio Advisory Committee composed of the police department, schools, LVFD, DPW, emergency management, the fire marshal, and the first selectman’s office. This committee would be charged with formulating a plan that would incorporate the needs of each area. They would considerer vendors and manufacturers and facilitate implementation of the upgrade.

Rick Cane, Goshen Hill Road asked Mr. Cwikla if the BOS are soliciting feedback on these proposals currently. Mr. Cwikla said at this point they are gathering ideas.

Kelly Lawer, Olenick Road praised the job that the LVFD does. She asked if there would be infrastructure required in Lebanon to support the new system. Mr. Schall explained that towers are already in place around the state so would not be needed here.

Jay Tuttle, Card Street asked for clarification on the low band service ending. Mr. Tuttle suggested that the BOS put this on the top of the list of items needed in town if we are in this situation.

Mr. Cwikla then described how the BOS will move forward with this study. They will:

* Continue to meet with all town departments and residents
* RFP’s will be solicited once decisions are made
* Invest in best uses for long-term recovery and results

Cwikla indicated that Connecticut towns are fortunate as the Department of Treasury has established a 4.1% growth rate when determining revenue loss. For Lebanon this came to approximately nine hundred thousand dollars.

Dennis Cronin, Babcock Hill – There is a proposal for portable senior housing. He would like to see the senior designation removed. Mr. Cronin also pointed out that there are other projects that have been considered under TIP that can now be covered by this money. He recommends that the TIP money be used for replacement of the Department of Public Works facilities.

Mr. Parlin, Ryan Terrace asked that funding for a drainage master plan, and other items relating to roads be considered.

Joyce Clark, Deepwood Drive, stated that stormwater drainage is an issue as catch basins near Amston Lake are not working properly. She described specific examples.

Jane Cady, Trumbull Highway asked that the microphone be used for all speakers as it was difficult to hear.

Danelle Person, Exeter Road asked what the total amount was that was given to the town. Ms. Smith outlined the amounts. Ms. Person asked what was already committed. The answer was the connection to the Fiber optic network for town hall, funding for the farmers market, and funding of the study of the feasibility of senior housing. Ms. Person noted that she has been working with the Board of Education regarding replacement of the seating for the baseball field. Her committee has raised some money and the Recreation Department, and the Board of Education have contributed. They would like better access and seating - especially for handicapped individuals. They have permits, a plan, and $50,000 thus far and are looking to town to fund phase two (2) of the project. This would allow for handicapped bleachers, ramps, and seating. They need $45,000 to $50,000 to complete phase two (2).

Chief Schall again took the podium to point out that the taxpayers have already funded the CLMRN. The system continues to evolve and become better.

Joe Russo, Beaumont Highway asked when the funds would be available. Selectman Cwikla noted that we already have half of the funds and there are projects proceeding.

Alan Olenik, Beaumont Highway asked where the approval of projects would come from – BOS or town meeting? Cwikla said the BOS would decide.

Joyce Clark asked how decisions would be made. Cwikla explained that there are some rules regarding the funding. The BOS will work with the Finance Department to determine what projects would be compliant.

Kathleen Smith told everyone to reach out to selectman’s office with ideas and to provide documentation as appropriate.

Betsy Petrie McComber asked Chief Schall to provide his power point to the BOS. She noted that the road issues will probably be covered under infrastructure programs outside of this money. She also reiterated that all projects must remain within the rules of the grant. Additionally, she indicated that one of the goals for the BOS is that implementations do not come with long-term maintenance costs.

Mark Tollman, Cook Hill Road gave a special thanks to the LVFD, and to the Recreation Commission for their work. He believes the radio system replacement needs to be done and noted that the ball field access is also very important.

Kelly Lawer asked about the future meeting schedule. Mr. Cwikla will decide along with the BOS and hopes to have the next meeting in January. Ms. Lawer was assured there will be follow-up meetings.

# 3.0 Adjourn

Hearing no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:58 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine McCall