

MINUTES OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING
Hope Board of Selectmen
Tuesday November 12, 2019
6:30PM
Hope Town Office

Board Members Present:

- Brian Powers Jr, Sarah Ann Smith, Wendy Pelletier, and Thom Ingraham

Others Present:

- Samantha Mank, Larrain Slaymaker, and Ellie Goldberg

Call to Order:

- The meeting was called to order at 6:34PM by Brian

Public Comment:

- Larrain Slaymaker said that she wanted to make a statement to the Selectmen about the Knox County Fish and Game Association shooting range issue. She began by saying that she understands that in town government the wheels move slowly. However, it appears that the wheels have stopped altogether, and she would like to get them rolling again. In February 2018, she sent a letter to the Town Administrator outlining her concerns about the increased noise and use at the range. She met with the Town Administrator some time later and had collected some data regarding the decibel levels and times of the shooting at the range. The Town Administrator has not acted on this. She spoke to the Planning Board and the Planning Board has not acted on this. She sent an email to Brian Powers Sr. who is the Chair of the Appeals Board asking how to get a hearing with the Board of Appeals on October 6th and resent the email. It has been 5 weeks and says she still has not received a response from him. She further stated that it has been 650 days since she started this process and no real steps have been taken to move this thing forward. Larrain asked, "How do we get the wheels turning again? And How does one get a response from the Appeals Board?"

Wendy asked Larrain what progress she was looking for. Larrain stated that the range has expanded its use, no request for a change of use has been presented, so she would like to have a hearing. Larrain said that she had talked with someone in the Town of Rockport and was told that the Appeals Board has the jurisdiction on this issue. She asked, "Where does a citizen go to get this going?" Wendy asked if her complaint was regarding a change of use or a change of frequency of use. Larraine responded by saying that she has a group of people who are ready to speak. She has data and knowledge of the law. She has a coherent presentation that can be made to the Appeals Board. "Not only is the Knox County Fish & Game Association not shooting as a sports facility, they are not being

good neighbors. There are many many many things they can do to mitigate the noise. The Town could help make the co-existence of the range and the neighborhood livable.”

Brain told Larrain that the Selectmen had sent the Town Administrator to the range leadership with a list of questions. She came back with answers. This information is in the meeting minutes and is all public record. He stated that some of the answers seemed a little loosey goosey because there is no real way to know for sure who is using the range. However, he was satisfied that mostly the shooting has happened during the advertised time frames. Larrain interrupted Brain and said “there is absolutely no oversight of the range. Anyone with a key or the combination can use it. It is important to note that there is no oversight and over 500 members. It is naïve to think that the people who are using it are members only”.

Several of the Selectmen asked questions about how much the range had changed since it’s inception. For instance, were there ever any agreements regarding the hours or days of the week the range could have actual shooting take place? Larrain told them that none of those things mattered because its all grandfathered.

Sarah stated that she didn’t even know there was a range in town let alone several of them. She said that she would go stark raving mad if she had to listen to that all of the time. Ellie stated that they’ve cut down trees and eliminated the sound buffer. Sarah replied that if they are cutting down trees and vegetation this could potentially be an issue. Sarah thought perhaps the Selectmen could ask the Appeals Board to hear this concern. Ellie said, “the law is very clear on this”.

Brian asked Larrain if she has ever talked to the people from Knox County Fish and Game Association. Larrain said she had not but thought the Town Administrator was going to talk to them and then she would find out what they had to say. Larrain went on to say, “The Knox County Fish and Game Association does not have a good reputation of being nice to their neighbors. I am afraid of them. My neighbors have driven by them and both them and me have been given the finger. They even turned and pointed a gun at me. I would have been happy to meet with them if the Town had presented the opportunity.”

Brain said that the folks at the range are willing to do things such as planting trees in the Spring to help with sound mitigation. Again, Larrain interrupted him and said “it is a good start. So now let’s have a meeting vis-`a-vis the Town.” Larrain compared Knox County Fish and Game to Boeing and “consequently people died”. She went on to say self-regulation and self-oversight are not useful.

Ellie said that as a taxpayer, she has already told people to not rent anywhere on the lake because of the range.

Brian said that he would like to run this by the Town Attorney. Specifically, what warrants an appeal hearing. “Can I complain about something and down the line get ten of my neighbors to complain too. Does this automatically qualify for an appeals

hearing?” Brian asked. Lorrain rebutted that she is “speaking for over fifty people. I feel out of the loop. You [Selectmen] don’t tell me what’s going on. This is not transparent...transparent. You are not being transparent.” Sarah quickly responded that she disagreed. “Every meeting has minutes posted online. Just as you [Larrain] are here speaking to us right now, it is not on the agenda, but you are still here, even though no one else knew you were going to be here in advance. It will be in the minutes though and those minutes will be online.”

Wendy asked for clarification about what exactly Larrain was asking for. “Are you saying all of this about getting the sound mitigated or are you saying they are breaking the law?” Larrain answered Wendy by saying, “last month in October they shot every single day. It was loud and it was frequent.” She went on to say, “The bottom line, we are not looking for confrontation. We are not looking to shut the range down. We are looking for them to be responsible neighbors and for them to do something completely within the realm of possibility.... To coexist together.”

Wendy said it sounds like you are asking the Town to restrict their [the range] activity. Thom said not restricting but mitigating. Referring to Wendy’s comment.

Brian said he would still like to know how the shooting range started but, Larrain told him it was irrelevant. Larrain continued, “their [the range] website states it is a sporting range. It is not. There is now training for the police, the Coast Guard and other organizations all of which are not listed on the website. There is no oversight. There are no data points on how many people or entity’s use the range. The range is now a separate entity from Beaver Lodge because it has grown so much. There have been a variety of complaints over the years and never once has the Town held them accountable for anything such as lead in the wetlands or the lake.”

Ellie stated, “We are not looking for a solution, we are asking for a hearing, a reduction in noise.” Larrain asked to be cc’d if there is any correspondence with the range on this matter. Brian assured Larrain that someone would contact her with an answer about an appeal or no appeal. Ellie wanted to know if the Town Attorney worked for the Selectmen or the Town. When Brian said the attorney worked for the Town Larrain stated that she wanted to be present when the Town Administrator speaks with him. The Town Administrator said that she would contact the attorney in the morning via telephone. Not knowing the Town Attorney’s schedule, it is not possible for Larrain to be present. The Town Administrator went on to say that if this does go to the Appeals Board, the Town Attorney would be present at that hearing. Larrain reiterated to speak to the attorney regarding expansion of use because words are very important.

Brian finished the Public Comment portion of the meeting by stating the Town will consult with the Town Attorney and would more than likely follow his advice and/or guidance.

Minutes:

- 10/22/2019 meeting: Wendy made a motion to accept the October 22, 2019 minutes. It was seconded by Sarah.

Motion passed 4-0

- 10/24/19 meeting: Thom made a motion to accept the October 24, 2019 minutes. It was seconded by Sarah.

Motion passed 3-0-1 (Brian)

- 11/5/19 meeting: Thom made a motion to accept the November 5, 2019 minutes. It was seconded by Sarah. Neither Brian nor Wendy were present at that meeting. Bruce is not present at this meeting. There are not enough members of the Board of Selectmen to vote. These minutes will be tabled until the next meeting.

Town Administrator Report:

- Conducted ten interviews for the Bookkeeper/Deputy Clerk position last Monday. There was one applicant that received unanimous approval from all three interviewers. That applicant has been scheduled for a second interview, which will happen tomorrow after the close of business.
- The DEP Permit for the solar Project was approved. All permits, contracts and agreements have been signed and submitted. The work can begin at any time. [According to Thom, the work actually began over the holiday weekend.]
- There has been a lot of time spent at MCSW working with the personnel Committee. There are some conflicts which have not been made public that are disrupting the normal work for the staff and employees. The Board of Directors met last Wednesday. Resolutions were discussed and some interventions are being put in place.
- The Annual Audit is complete. There is a copy for each of you to review. The Auditor, Bill Brewer, will be at the December 10th meeting to present the audit and answer any questions.
- There are 12 outstanding 2018 real estate tax accounts totaling \$19,728.55 with liens that will go to automatic foreclosure on February 14, 2020 if accounts remain unpaid. This remains unchanged since October 22nd.
- There are 24 outstanding 2019 real estate tax accounts totaling \$51,149.09 with liens that will go to automatic foreclosure on February 16, 2021 if accounts remain unpaid. This remains unchanged since October 22nd.
- There are 1,033 RE 2020 tax accounts totaling \$1,656,246.06. The second half of the property taxes are due on April 30, 2020.

New Business:

- None

Old Business:

- None

Other Business:

- Donation from Coastal Opportunities - \$400.00: Thom made a motion to accept the \$400.00 donation from Coastal Opportunities and to designate it for the Hope Chest. It was seconded Sarah.

Motion passed 4-0

- Christmas Eve Selectmen's Meeting Change: Brian noted that this year Christmas Eve falls on the evening of a Selectmen's meeting. All of the Selectmen agreed to change the meeting to Monday, December 23, 2019 at 6:30PM if Bruce was also able to make it.

Review & Sign Warrants #'s:

- The Selectmen reviewed the warrants. Sarah made a motion to approve and sign warrant #'s 40, 41, 42, and 43. It was seconded by Thom.

Motion passed 4-0

Adjournment:

- Sarah made a motion to adjourn at 8:44PM. It was seconded by Thom.

Motion passed 4-0