

## MINUTES OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING

Hope Board of Selectmen  
Tuesday February 25, 2020  
6:30PM  
Hope Town Office

### Board Members Present:

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

### Others Present:

- Samantha Mank, John Monroe, Jacob Esancy, Alan Hinsey, Joseph Moody, Tammy Foss, Alexandra Ruby, Sue Heal, Jestine Sawyer, Jared Sawyer, Missy Tesseo, Duane Wright, Barbara Mason, Nancy Ford, Melissa Hall, Barbara Karp, Rudy Karp, Harold Mosher, James Kimmett, Sheryl Jane Young, James Harrison, Curtis Kozielec, Ginni Fanelli, Dieter Weber, Davis Hall, Regina Rooney, Joe Ryan, Ginny Ryan, Christopher Gilbert, Brendan Curran, Sandie Sabaka, James Hancox, Allie Feener, Stephen Pitt, Kate Bracher, Mike Kelley, Ellie Goldberg, Dave Miramant, and Larrain Slaymaker

### Call to Order:

- The meeting was called to order at 6:30PM by Brian

### Public Comment:

- None

### Minutes:

- 2/11/2020 meeting: Sarah made a motion to accept the February 11, 2020 minutes with a minor edit. It was seconded by Wendy.

**Motion passed 4-0-1** (*Thom*)

### Town Administrator Report:

- February 14th was the date of automatic foreclosures. The Town of Hope had zero foreclosures for the RE 2018 tax year.
- We are moving into the election season. There are several positions on several committees that are up for a vote. Nomination papers can be picked up at the Town Office on Friday, February 28th. [Budget Committee – 3 seats, CSD -1 seat, School Committee – 3 seats, Road Commissioner – 1 seat, and Selectmen, Assessors, & Overseers of the Poor – 2 seats]
- Marc Ratner from Camden has set the meeting date for the next EMS Review Committee Meeting for Thursday, April 9, 2020, but the exact location of said meeting has not yet been determined. Camden and Rockport have decided to negotiate an additional year with Northeast. They are wanting to have some changes to their contract that changes the definition of the response times. I have been in contact with Butch and he has assured both Hope and Lincolnville that we would not experience any change to our contracts. If there

is any increase in the subsidy, Camden and Rockport will be responsible for paying unintended cost difference for Hope and Lincolnville.

- I received an email from Bob Falciani, who is now the Chair of Mid Coast Solid Waste, that Baridi, the MCSW Facility Manager has submitted his resignation. I don't know any details. There is a meeting tomorrow evening though. The Governance Committee is also bringing several items that are changes to the by-laws for the Board to decide on during the meeting tomorrow night.
- We have finally received the paperwork that the bond of \$500k for the school has officially been completely paid off.
- We are on round four for our bookkeeper search. The deadline for resumes was yesterday at 4:00, and we received exactly one resume. We will be conducting that interview tomorrow.
- There are 16 outstanding 2019 real estate tax accounts totaling \$30,669.94 with liens that will go to automatic foreclosure on February 16, 2021 if accounts remain unpaid.
- There are 1,004 RE 2020 tax accounts totaling \$1,546,192.08. The second half of real estate taxes are due on April 30, 2020.

#### **New Business:**

- LCI Broadband/Fiber Optic Internet presentation – Alan Hinsey: Alan gave a presentation regarding providing broadband internet for the Town of Hope. He said the company's goal is to offer 100% access to fiber optic/broadband internet to each home within the next five years, explaining that the company is really divided into three separate entities: Tidewater Telecom, Lincolnville Telephone, and LCI. By expanding the fiber optic lines throughout the town, residents will be able to receive better internet service, as well as better phone and television service.

Alan discussed the various reasons why fiber optic would be a good utility for Hope. He explained that fiber optic is very fast. He likes to call it "future proof," although we do not know what possible connection issues there will be in the future.

In order to get fiber optic access to 100% of Hope, it is going to take money. There are different avenues for receiving that money such as: grant support, a take rate, which is an outreach support for pre-sales, and possibly some kind of low-income subsidy program.

Right now, fiber optic internet access is available to 154 properties in Hope and of that 154, 107 are actual customers. In order to have 100% fiber optic access available in Hope, 25 more miles a fiber optic and poles and wire need to be built and installed. This would pass right by an additional 624 more properties. The average cost range of fiber is between \$15,000 and \$30,000 per mile, which means it could cost roughly \$375,000 - \$750,000 to have all of Hope with fiber optic internet access.

Alan showed a map of where all of the fiber is currently running through Hope. This caused a lot of discussion among the residents that were present, with several people indicating that the map was inaccurate because there is not fiber running in front of their

home. Others were explaining that they had filled out the application several times to get fiber and that LCI had responded that they had not received the applications. The residents voiced their concerns about the customer service being very inadequate and they didn't understand why they weren't receiving responses. Alan said he did not know what the problem was but that he would definitely be checking into it. He also offered to speak with any resident after the presentation to get the specifics on their concerns.

Thom said that the Selectmen really have an interest in knowing what the Town's part is in helping this fiber be installed throughout the town. He also wanted to know if grant money is available to the Town and/or the individual residents. How do we get 100% access?

Alan said the funding sources were through a ConnectME grant which is up to 20% of the project. The remaining money would come from Tidewater telephone, other grants and foundations, federal grants and loans, and the remainder of that would come from the town, with Tidewater doing all of the grant writing.

In order to have a successful ConnectME application, we need to have community support. This would mean that 85% of the residents who live in underserved homes would sign a petition. Underserved is classified as anything below a 25MB download and a 3MB upload. Then, the goal would be pre-application sales and that would constitute 50% of the 85% underserved.

There was a lot of discussion regarding a broadband committee. Alan told everyone to not reinvent the wheel. He explained that the Towns of Lincolnville and Bremen had just gone through this and there are people to contact that can help the town through this entire process and what the committee needs to be doing.

The first thing to do is to identify the unserved. Lincolnville Telephone/Tidewater and the Town of Hope will jointly apply for the ConnectME Grant. The next available grant round is in April.

Ellie stated that since we were about to start our budgeting process. She wanted to know if we could put something in a reserve account to start saving money for this project.

Therefore, we would need to know what the Town's share of the cost would be, however Alan explained that there is no average cost for fiber but rather the range of costs, runs between \$15,000 and \$30,000 per mile.

Brian stated that no money has been put into the poles. Why has a certain amount of fiber been put through the area? Brian also wanted to know if the Town decides who gets it if it is a multi-year project. Alan said that the Committee, the Town and LCI will decide. Brian asked why the Town of Bremen did not choose a company that was closer to them, to which Alan replied that Consolidated Communications said no, and that Red Zone and Spectrum did not feel that there were enough homes to make it cost effective for them.

Sarah said that an Advisory Committee would do the due diligence on what company would best serve Hope.

Brian asked if the Town could partner or work with other Towns such as Union since the

fiber lines would have to go through Union to get to other areas of Hope.

Brian was also surprised that we don't already have better service. With our young people, businesses, and remote education, having fiber optic is important to a town like Hope. He wanted to know what we needed to do at the Town level.

Many of the residents volunteered for the committee and to get petitions signed and to do the legwork for the grant process. Alan stated that he does not want more customer service problems for Hope residents. He said he would go back and get some of the issues handled before we start calling and circulating the petitions.

Sarah suggested that the Selectmen formally recognize an ad hoc broadband committee. Thom, Bruce, and Sarah said that they would like to serve as the Selectmen on the committee. Brian noted that a maximum of two Selectmen can be on the committee.

Hypothetically, if all of the funding was in place, it would take about a year to make the Tow 100% fiber accessible. Thom wanted to know if 100% really is 100%. Alan replied that 100% means all of the homes having access to fiber optic access. Brian asked if there's a difference between Town owned roads and private roads. Hope only has 32 miles of Town owned roads. So, if 100% is based off of Town owned roads, we would only need an additional 18 miles a fiber optic. Alan said that once the committee was established and recognized by the Town, that they would determine if there was a difference between private roads and Town owned roads or if 100% means access to every current and future home in Hope.

Alan said he would be in touch soon, to assist us and give direction on the next step.

- Review/Award Plowing Bids: The Road Commissioner, John Monroe, began by stating that he needed to abstain from this discussion as he has a friendship and employment connection to Mr. Esancy, and he wants this to be a transparent and fair process. John then requested that the Town Administrator to lead the discussion from here. The Town Administrator began by stating there were two bids received: 1.) Esancy Enterprise, LLC bid \$292,950/yr. for 3 years totaling \$878,850 with a 0% increase for an extension period and a \$5,000 performance bond. 2.) Wayne's Landscaping and Excavation bid \$134,106/yr. for 3 years totaling \$402,138 with a 10% increase for an extension period and a \$87,168.90 performance bond. Samantha spoke with a reference for Wayne's Landscaping and Excavation and there were some less than positive remarks made regarding the condition of the equipment and the overall readiness of the winter employees. The bidder stated that he would use a Google Map app to determine if the Town of Hope would need to be sanded and/or plowed since the base location for the trucks and equipment is in Searsport. Esancy Enterprise LLC is already known to the Selectmen as he holds the current contract.

Brian stated that he could not accept a bid of \$292,950 a year for plowing. He would be in favor of putting it back out to bid. Thom agreed that \$9,000 a mile is much too high. Sarah said she really likes the job that Jake has done and if his bid was a little more in the

ballpark it could be considered, but at this cost the Town just can't do it. Brian followed up with a comment saying it doesn't seem like he really wants the bid. Jake responded and said he knows what the real costs are and the responsibility it takes to do the roads. He said he was "losing his shirt" at \$116,000 a year. Sarah said the Town cannot make up for the money Jake has lost over the past three years and we can't have that high of an increase either. Wendy said she understands the situation, but she also thinks the plowing should be put back out to bid.

Brian told the Town Administrator to let Wayne know he wasn't awarded the bid, and then repost the advertisement for another few weeks and have the new bids ready for the second Selectmen's meeting in March.

Brian commented that Rt. 235 – Hatchet Mountain/Buzzell Hill and Gillette Rd. are almost unpassable. John said that the Maine DOT has stated they're only putting 5/8<sup>th</sup> of an inch of paving on Route 235, to which John doubts it will help very much.

John told the Selectmen that there is approx. 300 yards of sand left. We have been using a large amount of salt though. The weather patterns have really changed. The plow trucks have been out sanding, salting, or plowing forty-seven times this season. All of the Selectmen expressed appreciation for Jake's work.

The roads are going to be posted soon. Our roads are coming apart. John said that at this point, it is just going to cost too much money to get it all caught up.

- Quit-Claim deed for Lien Discharge Error – Paul & Patricia Tetreault: The Town Administrator explained that there had been two tax liens that were not properly discharged 18 and 19 years ago [respectively]. Now the property is getting sold and a title search has revealed that these liens were not discharged and is an error. The Selectmen reviewed the deed, and Sarah made a motion to approve and sign the quit-claim deed. It was seconded by Thom.

**Motion passed 5-0**

- Requested Approval for Library open on Saturdays: All of the selectmen agreed that it would be a nice feature for the Town to have open library access on Saturday's.
- Settlement & Discharge of Taxes (36 M.R.S. §763) – Chelsea Summers: Wendy made a motion to discharge the responsibility of collecting \$1,550,420.52 of 2020 real estate taxes from Chelsea Summers. It was seconded by Thom.

**Motion passed 5-0**

#### **Suspend as Board of Selectmen & Convene as Board of Assessors:**

- Sarah made a motion to suspend as the Board of Selectmen and to convene as the Board of Assessors at 9:24 p.m. It was seconded by Thom.

**Motion passed 5-0**

- Recommitment of Taxes (36 M.R.S.§763)- Alexenia Payor: Sarah made a motion to commit the 2020 real estate taxes in the amount of \$1,555,420.29 to Alexenia Payor. It was seconded by Thom.

**Motion passed 5-0**

- Warrant for Completion of Collection (36 M.R.S.§766) – Alexenia Payor: Sarah made a motion to sign the Warrant of Completion showing Alexenia Payor as the current Tax Collector for the Town of Hope with a tax commitment due for 2020 in the amount of \$1,555,420.29. It was seconded by Thom.

**Motion passed 5-0**

- Request for abatement – George Miaoulis Jr.: The Assessors Agent, Vern Ziegler, recommended to the Board of Assessors that the request for an abatement be denied because it was not filed within the legally allowed timeframe. Sarah made a motion to have the Chair of the Selectmen, Brian Powers Jr. sign the abatement request denial letter. It was seconded by Bruce.

**Motion passed 5-0**

#### **Adjourn as Board of Assessors & Reconvene as Board of Selectmen:**

- Thom made a motion to adjourn as the Board of Assessors and to reconvene as the Board of Selectmen at 9:39 p.m. It was seconded by Sarah.

**Motion passed 5-0**

#### **Old Business:**

- None

#### **Other Business:**

- None

#### **Review & Sign Warrants #'s:**

- The Selectmen reviewed the warrants. Bruce made a motion to approve and sign warrant #'s 68, 69, and 70. It was seconded by Thom.

**Motion passed 5-0**

#### **Adjournment:**

- Sarah made a motion to adjourn at 9:45PM. It was seconded by Bruce.

**Motion passed 5-0**