

MINUTES OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING
Hope Board of Selectmen
Tuesday, April 14, 2020
6:30PM
Via Zoom Conferencing

Board Members Present:

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

Others Present:

- Samantha Mank, Langley Willauer, John Monroe, Clarence Keller, Dick Crabtree, Jessica Snyder, Ellie Goldberg, Jake Esancy, Mike Ames, and Tom Farley

Call to Order:

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

Minutes:

- 3/24/20 Minutes: Sarah made a motion to accept the March 24, 2020 minutes. It was seconded by Bruce.
Motion passed 5-0
- 4/6/20 Minutes: Sarah made a motion to accept the April 6, 2020 minutes. It was seconded by Wendy.
Motion passed 5-0
- 4/7/20 Minutes: Thom made a motion to accept the April 7, 2020 minutes. It was seconded by Wendy.
Motion passed 5-0

Town Administrator's Report:

- Mary was scheduled to retire on April 10, 2020. However, because the state, the country, and even around the world has been shut down due to a global pandemic, Mary has agreed to stay on a little longer. Unfortunately, everything was shut down and canceled before Langley or Allie were able to attend any classes and get some of the required training they needed. In addition, Mary has agreed to come in a couple of times even after the crisis is over to meet with the accounting firm from Portland.
- The Town Office continues to be staffed each day. We are rotating so that only one person is working in the office at a time. I am able to do a lot of remote work. However, I do have to do the inspections in person. It seems as though there has been an increased number of inquiries about building and plumbing permits.
- A resident expressed a concern about some large trees that appear to be rotting or dead in True Park. The concern is that the trees could fall which would land on their house. I have been in touch with Rick Bresnahan about it. He has secured some quotes for tree removal. He and I will be discussing the best way forward with how to handle removing the bad trees. The good news is over the past two storms when there was an extraordinarily amount of wind, those trees are still standing.

- Representative Bill Pluecker did get back in touch with me regarding waiving the interest on property taxes. At this point, the Town really does not have the authority to waive interest or defer property taxes. However, the Selectmen can choose to hear abatement request on a case by case basis if needed. I know that we are seeing in the newspaper the other towns are moving their tax due dates and their interest is being waived. I don't know what the repercussions of that are going to be for those towns. They could face lawsuits from some of their citizens. Is my recommendation that we not waive interest and not change our tax due dates. However, you may have residents who are really struggling and need help. That is when you as Selectmen, can go over the paperwork and hear an abatement request on a case by case basis.
- On April 10, 2020, Governor Mills issued executive order 39 which postpones Maine state-wide primary election that was originally scheduled for June 9, 2020. It is now scheduled to take place July 14, 2020, unless were still in this crisis and she issues another word pushing it back. I will figure out what the new dates for nomination paper deadlines and budget and other items like that and get back with you on that.
- There are 16 outstanding 2019 real estate tax accounts totaling \$29,733.66 with liens that will go to automatic foreclosure on February 16, 2021 if accounts remain unpaid.
- There are 810 RE 2020 tax accounts totaling \$1,235,977.27. The second half of real estate taxes are due on April 30, 2020.

New Business:

- Fire Department/EMA Update - Clarence Keller: Clarence stated that we are hoping to keep COVID-19 flat as we have not had any cases Hope. There's nothing new or spectacular to report yet as far as EMA is concerned. Everyone in Hope seems to be doing a good job.

Fire: People from the "Hope Help" made the initial round of phone calls. Clarence just had another video conference with the group on Sunday, perhaps they will make a second round of calls in a couple of weeks.

The fire department crew was out working during the snowstorm on April 9th from 9:00PM Thursday until 5:00AM Friday trying to keep the trees out of the way so that the plow trucks could get through.

It was mentioned that the Mansfield Brook culvert on Rt 235 was a big problem and we could have lost the road. MDOT showed up and did a little bit of work because the road was undermined a little bit.

Thom gave a shout out to Clarence who helped him out personally because a family member needed power for medical reasons. He also said that Clarence was going out and getting gasoline for people whose generator had run out and couldn't get out for themselves to get more.

Thom also wanted to have a shout out for the help Hope callers, Michelle Fong and Rick Bresnahan for organizing the calls. He has received feedback from people who received calls saying how much they liked getting a letter from the Town and getting a follow up call. The communication was really appreciated.

- Roads Update: John Monroe also wanted to publicly thank Clarence and the Hope Fire department for their great help. He also wanted to thank Jake Esancy, who took damage to his truck trying to move trees out of the way also.

Brian asked if MDOT was going to do anything about the culvert in that area on Rt 235? John didn't know for sure what MDOT's plan is at this point in time.

John said that there is a lot of damage out there from the storms. He has two crews and there is still a lot to do. He is hopeful to get FEMA reimbursement money, but he's not sure if a declaration of disaster or emergency has been declared or not.

Brian asked if 100% of the power had been restored to Hope yet. Clarence said that the CMP website was a little disheartening because it wasn't kept up to date. There are still some areas in Hope that are without power.

- Review/Award Snowplowing Bid: There was much discussion surrounding the snowplowing bids. Brian wanted to know what the difference between a three-year contract and a five-year contract would be with Farley Inc. Tom Farley explained that he had a 10% increase for years one and two. But if he were to get the extensions for years four and five then he would only make the annual increase for years three and four be 5% instead of the 10%.

Ellie Goldberg said that she wanted to thank everyone for the hard work and trying to get a snowplowing deal for the town. She said that the numbers are frightening, and she asked the Selectmen to wait on awarding the bid.

There continued to be much discussion between the Selectmen and Tom Farley. John Monroe said that he typically has been trying to stay out of this discussion because of a conflict of interest. However, he is wondering what is happening here. Are the Selectmen attempting to negotiate or are they going to award the bid? Brian ask the other selectmen where do we go from here?

Bruce stated back when Jake made his first bid, that Jake sat down with John Monroe and Dick Crabtree and they helped him with his bid. Both John and Dick denied having any input on Jake's bid.

Bruce said that he has received an MBA degree in 1974 and that he was an Econ. Major so he knows numbers. He went on to say that we are cutting ourselves out by only going with a three-year bid and that he wants to put it back out to bid for five years.

Tom Farley stated that he didn't think the selectmen we're prepared for this process.

Brian said that for now he is going to be tabled the snowplowing discussion. He wants each Selectman to send him an email stating how they wanted to move forward with the snowplowing for the town of Hope and that this would be discussed at the next Selectmen's meeting.

- Hope Corner Fire Station Bond Refinancing: Thom made a motion to accept the Change in Terms for the Fire Station bond payment reducing the interest rate from 4.46% to the 1.76%. and to authorize the Town Administrator to sign the appropriate paperwork. It was seconded by Sarah.

Motion passed 5-0

Thom Thanked Bruce for making that phone call and saving the taxpayers money.

Board of Assessors:

- Sarah made a motion to suspend as the Board of Selectmen and to convene as the Board of Assessors at 7:49PM. It was seconded by Wendy.

Motion passed 5-0

- Farmland Withdrawal Penalty - Christopher & Crystal Robinson: Wendy made a motion to Assess a farmland withdrawal penalty in the amount of \$294.16 to Crystal and Christopher Robinson. It was seconded by Thom.

Motion passed 5-0

- Knox County Administrators Assessment Warrant for Taxes: Sarah made a motion to accept and sign the County Warrant for Hope's assessment in the amount of \$237,477.88 and \$50,747.00 for communications fees (dispatch) for a total of \$288,225.00 in County taxes. It was seconded by Thom.

Motion passed 5-0

- Sarah made a motion to adjourn as the Board of Assessors and to reconvene as the Board of Selectmen at 7:54PM. It was seconded by Bruce.

Motion passed 5-0

Other Business:

- Sarah said that she noticed on Facebook that School Union 69 has hired a new Superintendent of Schools.
- Bruce commented that the snowplowing done by the union public works department costs town of Union less money than what Hope pays for it snowplowing.

Old Business:

- None

Warrant #'s 78, 79, and 80:

- The Selectmen reviewed the warrants. Sarah made a motion to approve and sign warrant #'s 78, 79, and 80. It was seconded by Thom.

Motion passed 5-0

Adjournment:

- Bruce made a motion to adjourn at 8:07 PM. It was seconded by Wendy.

Motion passed 5-0