

MINUTES OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING
Hope Board of Selectmen
Tuesday, July 14, 2020
6:30 PM
Hope Corner Fire Department

Board Members Present:

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

Others Present:

- Dick Crabtree

Call to Order:

- The meeting was called to order at 6:37 PM by Brian.

Public Comment:

- Dick Crabtree asked for a moment to have a public comment. Many in the town are appalled by the lack of decorum and respect to others on the Board, to bidders on the plowing and more. Talked a bit and said, "It has been a spectacle." In Dick's view, the private mailing on the Budget (a flyer sent to residences in Hope), showed a lack of respect to conduct a campaign against the majority vote of the Board.

Lastly, it appears the Board has signed a contract. It appears everyone on the Board signed that contract. If a member of the Board then attempted to undermine the contract, it is at least unethical. At worst it could be considered a lack of good faith in signing the contract which could then open the town up to legal action. Dick was very glad that it was just the five board members and him present.

During the discussion of the snow plowing contract Bruce laid out the choices before the Board when it was up for renewal in 2017. Farley had been the contractor and bid \$132,000 for three years. Jake Esancy bid \$116,000 and won the contract, even though he had no municipal experience, no trucks, no drivers, and no garage. Given the Board's sensitivity to saving the taxpayers' money then, Bruce asked why didn't we give the contract to ourselves? The Town would save almost \$100,000 a year for five years. We [the Town] would start where Jake Esancy started: no trucks (Jake had his 2nd truck by September 25, 2017), no drivers, no experience and no garage. Brian said that only Wendy and he were on the Board at the time. The discussion wandered and the question went unanswered.

Brian replied that the plowing bidding process went poorly from the start. The first round no bidders offered any flexibility in their bids and were way too high so we went to a second round. The second round, again there was no flexibility in pricing from one of the bidders, one person wasn't qualified, and another was also deemed too high. This led to

an executive session with the two bidders whose amounts were too high to discuss the bids and plowing process.

There was a wide-ranging discussion with all five Board members chiming in as well as Dick Crabtree. Dick pointed out that costs are going up all over the state. His problem was with the anger, distrust and disrespect shown during the meetings.

Bruce said, "I signed that contract because I thought it was a done deal."

Minutes: Minutes for June 9, 2020: Thom moved to accept with some edits.

Bruce seconded. (5-0)

Administrator's Report:

- Brian reviewed the Administrator's report: The new fire truck has arrived, but there was no information about plans on selling the old truck. Brian (?) prefers to have it go out to bid with the proceeds to go into the Fire Truck replacement Fund.

New Business:

- Thom moves to have Mr. Matteson appointed to the Rec Committee. Seconded by? Maybe me/Sarah. (5-0)
- Brown Tail Moth: Hope citizen Peggy Pike requested the board discuss the problem with the Brown Tail Moth caterpillars that are destroying many trees in the region. She provided extensive information including a page with the map from the State of Maine website showing Hope and the mid-coast region as the epicenter of the worst infestations. (see below for more conversation on this below). Sarah mentioned she had spoken with Falmouth Town Manager about their efforts which cost \$20,000 per year for five years, was in a limited area, and produced negligible results even though three neighboring towns worked together to deal with the problem. Note: after the meeting Thom contacted Mike Parisio, a Forest Entomologist with the Maine Forest Service; we may be able to schedule an informational Zoom meeting with Mike for the townspeople.

Dick Crabtree noted that due to the nature of the Brown Tail Moth, we are in a cycle where they are especially problematic. We can try to wait it out or look at what the University is planning. (No further info). He did note that the drug used to kill moths in trees is "avamectin" which can be toxic to herding dogs and whippets. The Board decided to task the Administrator to gather information on where people can get information, then add hotlinks and such to the town website.

- Sarah asked permission to talk to Jason Gindel regarding a comprehensive new approach to digital communications including use of social media and emails to inform citizens of town happenings and important announcements. The Board agreed, and Brian stated his support for such an undertaking. Sarah then suggested that as part of the communication

strategy for the future, we may want to add a “You might be interested in” page to the town website for information such as this.

- There was a brief discussion of the Town Report, why it was late in being published—a perfect storm of events that we hope will not be repeated. Bruce asked what has to be included in it, and what about the letters from all the politicians. Are they required? The report costs a lot of money to print, so can we reduce the number of pages?
- Brian then noted that Bruce had sent out emails to some members of the Town privately. When Brian was in the office on Monday, one citizen was very upset and came in to complain. Brian contacted the MMA to determine if Bruce’s emails were illegal. The advisor at the MMA noted that the use of the word “we” in Bruce’s email was misleading as to who is “we.” (note from Sarah after the fact to clarify: The other members of the Board were not consulted and did not receive Bruce’s communication from him.) It was pointed out that some private citizen email addresses are private and cannot be shared. Once an email has become public, it is there forever. There was a discussion that Bruce should not use email addresses he received as coach of the Chess Club for private political purposes. Sarah pointed out that although the MMA may not consider such usage illegal, different rules apply to school-related activities and with things dealing with children.

There was a discussion of assorted complaints over the past couple of weeks.

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- Vote on the warrants 1 and 2: Moved by Wendy, Seconded by Thom. (5-0). Once again, the warrant submitted by the School had only one signature on it, therefore we could not approve that warrant until it has a quorum of the Board members signing it.
- Brian closed the meeting by making a rare motion: To recognize Wendy Pelletier and her 9 years of service to the Town of Hope. He praised her as an exemplary person who has represented the Town in a ton of different ways. The people of Hope have been afforded the luck of having Wendy [on the Board.] Wendy responded “I have been blessed by the people of Hope. I take it seriously and cannot be thoughtful enough. It has been a great ride. Thank you.”
- A vote was taken to approve the motions (I forget who moved and seconded, probably Thom and me but not sure). The motion was approved (4-0-1) with Wendy abstaining.
- Motion to adjourn at 8:24: Moved by Wendy, seconded by Thom. (5-0)
- Presented Wendy with a retirement gift made by Sarah.

Minutes submitted by Sarah Ann Smith