

MINUTES OF SELECT BOARD MEETING

**Hope Select Board
Tuesday, November 14, 2023
5:30 p.m.
Hope Town Office**

Board Members Present:

- Sarah Ann Smith, Charlie Weidman, Mike Brown, Michael Schultz, and Wayne Luce

Others Present:

- Samantha Mank, Chelsea Summers, Matthew Deane, and Bill Kelly

Call to Order:

- The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Sarah.

Executive Session:

- Charlie made a motion to enter executive session pursuant to 1 M.R.S. §405 (6)(E) for consultation with the Town Attorney concerning legal issues regarding a consent agreement for land use violations at 5:31 p.m. It was seconded by Wayne.

Motion passed 5-0

- Charlie made a motion to exit executive session at 6:17 p.m. It was seconded by Wayne.

Motion passed 5-0

- Action resulting from Executive Session: Town Attorney, Bill Kelly called Cam Ferrante, Doug Kelly's attorney, and had him on speaker phone while Charlie made a motion that the Select Board approve and accept this Consent Agreement between Doug Kelly and the Town of Hope and to authorize the Town Administrator to sign the agreement on behalf of the Town provided that Doug Kelly's signature includes being the Trustee for the Douglas Wayne Kelly Sr. Family Trust. It was seconded by Wayne.

Motion passed 5-0

Public Hearing:

- Charlie made a motion to open the Public Hearing pursuant to 22 M.R.S. §4305 regarding maximum levels of general assistance allowed at 6:30 p.m. It was seconded by Mike.
- There were no members of the public present to make comments.
- Charlie made a motion to close the Public Hearing at 6:32 p.m. It was seconded by Mike.

Motion passed 5-0

Agenda Adjustments/Approval:

- The agenda was approved by consent.

Public Comment:

- None

Minutes:

- October 10, 2023: Michael made a motion to approve the 10/10/23 minutes as written. It was

seconded by Charlie.

Motion passed 4-0-1 (Charlie)

- October 24, 2023: Michael made a motion to approve the 10/24/23 minutes as written. It was seconded by Wayne.

Motion passed 4-0-1 (Charlie)

Warrants 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, & 39:

- Charlie made a motion to approve the warrants 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, and 39. It was seconded by Mike.

Motion passed 5-0

New Business:

- Adopt 2023 General Assistance Maximums: After reviewing the state maximum levels of assistance allowed and having conducted the legally required public hearing, Charlie made a motion to adopt and sign the general assistance maximum levels allowed appendices A thru H and Recovery Housing. It was seconded by Michael.

Motion passed 5-0

- Town Investments w/ First Wealth Management: The Bookkeeper has been watching the reporting for The First Wealth Management come in at a rate lower than the checking account over the past 90 days. We had a conference call with Matt Weaver from wealth management to discuss various options since the checking account is earning 4.2% at the moment. We all agreed that in the short term, within the next 1 to 3 years, the banks are offering better rates than bonds and we should take money that we know we are going to use and place it in the higher interest-bearing account. The long-term plan is to invest in CD's which wealth management can get at between 5%-5.5%. The Investment Policy allows the Treasurer the ability to review and direct the Towns investments and reinvestments. Even so, the Treasurer would like a Select Board vote on the matter. Charlie made a motion to authorize the Town Administrator/Treasurer to withdraw funds from Wealth Management those funds which will be needed over the next 1-3 years and place into the Town's checking account. It was seconded by Sarah.

Motion passed 5-0

- 1st Qtr. Financial Report: Chelsea presented the 1st quarter ending September 30, 2023 financial report to the Select Board. Most things are in the 25% range as expected. Select Board accepted the quarterly report.
- Fire Dept. Equipment Reserve: In February of 2022, the Select Board approved the Fire Department 5-Year Capital Equipment Procurement Plan (CEPP). In that plan, Clarence outlined several items if planned to purchase with the money that is being set aside each year in a reserve account. The annual amount for this plan is \$9,170. There are items that are not included in the regular budget and don't rise to the \$10,000 limit needed to use funds from the Fire Truck Repair and Maintenance Reserve account such as fire hoses and couplings. Making these purchases would overdraft the regular budget. A simple solution is to amend the current plan to include language that allows the Fire Chief this type of spending discretion. Charlie made a motion to amend the FY2023-2028 CEPP for the Fire Department to include equipment purchases as may arise from time to time for fire apparatus.

- **Town Server Hard Drive Replacement:** The Town Administrator received an email from Harbor Digital stating that one of the hard drives in the Town's server has failed. Furthermore, the warranty on the server expired over a month ago. Apparently, they were able to still get an extension on the insurance. In the packets, are estimates for both the warranty extension and the work to replace the hard drive. I have talked with Ben Cammeron, the owner of Harbor Digital regarding pricing and services. He is scheduled to attend the January 9th SB meeting to provide additional information. I have also been speaking to other towns to find out how they handle their IT needs as well as budgets. The Select Board wanted to know the cost of a new server versus an extended warranty. Also, to consider whether or not a server is still practical if storage is cloud based. Harbor Digital's service rates are also high at over \$400/month. There is an additional charge of \$150/hour if the Town has an actual need or requires assistance. Charlie made a motion to authorize the Town Administrator to engage Harbor Digital to repair the failed hard drive on the Town's server but not to extend the warranty. In addition, to write a Request for Proposal (RFP) for IT services. It was seconded by Mike.

Motion passed 5-0

- **Animal Control Agreement vs. Job Description:** Recently, there has been a lot of discussion regarding animal control. Our current Animal Control Officer (ACO) works for several local towns. The Town Administrator contacted each of the Towns to determine if there were complaints from residents but also to determine if the ACO is an employee or a contractor. All of the towns have classified her as an employee. For payroll purposes, Hope considers her as an employee but for services, she is treated as a contractor. The Town Administrator suggested that the Town of Hope drops the contractor aspect of the ACO and simply give her a job description (very similar to how we handle CEO/LPI). This also means that each January, the ACO will also receive an annual review from the Town Administrator. This will provide continuity for the ACO and the Town. Otherwise, she should be treated as all other contractors and her services can be bid out each year. Charlie made a motion to stop utilizing the annual agreement model for the ACO position and recognize it as stipend employee of the Town, and to adopt the job description as presented. It was seconded by Michael.

Motion passed 5-0

- **Accept Donation to Cemetery Restoration:** A donation in the amount of \$250 has been sent by Sherry Atkinson-Mallory to assist with the cemetery headstone restoration project. Charlie made a motion to accept this donation of \$250, with thanks, for the cemetery headstone restoration project. It was seconded by Michael.

Motion passed 5-0

Old Business:

- None

Other Business:

- None

Town Administrator's Report:

- I received a call from FEMA today letting me know that the Hurricane Storm declaration does not include debris clean up, therefore the Town will not qualify to be reimbursed for the costs associated with that storm.

- The Road Commissioner has been cutting brush and trees away from the roads and ditches out of the right-of-way. Some residents have called to complain about their trees being cut down or limbs being cut off of them. In addition, one resident told the Road Commissioner that the tree cutting had destroyed his deck because he had tied his dog run cable to the tree and deck. He is seeking payment of some type to repair the deck. Chelsea has suggested that a short note is included with the tax bills indicating which roads will have planned work and tree cutting.
- Chelsea and I had a meeting with Kate and Chris, one of the new employees at the School Union 69 Central Office, last Thursday. Several things were discussed regarding operations and processes. Overall the meeting was positive. We were able to explain what the Town needs including when and why. In addition, they were able to explain how their process works and some difficulties they currently have in meeting our requests. However, they are expecting to have new software installed in April to begin learning it and plan to be functional by July 1st. Each town will have access to that software and will be able to obtain reports as needed. Kate did mention that right now, her top priority is getting the FY23 audit ready and said that Hope was going to be first on their list.
- I've been in contact with David Kinney from Lincolnville. They just received their FY22 audit last Wednesday. He is quite certain that his Board would be willing to meet with Hope and/or Appleton. However, he would like to wait until the auditor, Bill Brewer, meets with the Board and has a formal review of that audit.
- The next Select Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 28th. Three of the Board members will be attending a training course at the same time, leaving us without a quorum. A meeting to conduct immediate business will be held on November 30, 2023.
- There were 0 new building permits and 2 plumbing permits since the 10/24/23 Select Board meeting.
- There are 4 RE accounts for 2022, totaling \$19,440.28. Unpaid 2022 real estate taxes will automatically foreclose on February 27, 2024, if the accounts are not paid in full.
- There are 16 RE accounts for 2023, totaling \$35,206.18. Unpaid 2023 real estate taxes will automatically foreclose on February 11, 2025, if the accounts are not paid in full.
- There are 994 RE accounts for 2024, totaling \$1,775,636.65. The second half is due on April 30, 2024.

Executive Session:

- Charlie made a motion to enter Executive Session pursuant to 1 M.R.S. §405 (6)(A)(1) for a personnel matter at 7:45 p.m. It was seconded by Mike.
Motion passed 5-0
- Michael made a motion to exit Executive Session at 8:07 p.m. It was seconded by Charlie.
Motion passed 5-0
- There was no action taken by the Select Board as a result of the Executive Session.

Adjournment:

- Charlie made a motion to adjourn at 8:07 p.m. It was seconded by Michael.
Motion passed 5-0