

MINUTES OF SELECT BOARD MEETING
Hope Select Board
February 13, 2024
5:30 p.m.
Hope Town Office

Board Members Present:

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

Others Present:

- Samantha Mank, Chelsea Summers, and Damon McClure

Call to Order:

- The meeting was called to order at 5:31 p.m. by Sarah.

Agenda Adjustments/Approval:

- Charlie made a motion to approve the agenda as written. It was seconded by Michael.
Motion passed 4-0

Public Comment:

- None

Minutes:

- January 23, 2024: Charlie made a motion to approve the 1/23/24 minutes. It was seconded by Michael.
Motion passed 4-0

Warrants 61, 62, 63, and 64:

- Mike made a motion to approve and sign the Treasurers and Payroll warrants 61, 62, 63, and 64. It was seconded by Michael.
Motion passed 4-0

New Business:

- 2nd Quarter Financial Report – Chelsea Summers: Chelsea presented the report on the municipal finances for the second quarter of fiscal year 2024 which ended on December 31, 2023. Most everything is on track for the halfway mark of the budget. The notable item is the Emergency Road Repair line showing a negative of -\$299,052. A large amount of this will be reimbursed by FEMA from the May Day 2023 storm. Unfortunately, there have been other storms that are not FEMA eligible in which the Town's share isn't covered by FEMA. The exact amount that we can expect from FEMA/MEMA is still unknown at this time. We are hopeful of receiving 94% of the May Day costs. There have also been many instances of unplanned road work that needed to be done that wasn't associated with a declared disaster.
- Liquor License Renewal – Hope General Store, Damon McClure: The owner of Hope General Store, Damon McClure, owner of the Hope General Store explained that along with renewing his

liquor license, he would like to expand to some outside seating during the summer months. The seating options would include a couple of tables along the front of the store front and the two picnic tables on the Town Office side of the store. He already contacted his neighbors who did not voice any opposition. However, Sweet Tree school did ask that alcohol consumption outside not take place while school was in session. The state requires that the seating areas be well defined and curtained off. No consumption of alcoholic beverages may take place on the premises outside of the designated areas. Charlie made a motion to approve the renewal of the liquor license for the Hope General Store and to approve the expansion for alcohol to be consumed on the premises at the designated outside areas including the store front and picnic tables. It was seconded by Michael.

Motion passed 4-0

Old Business:

- None

Other Business:

- None

Town Administrator Report:

- I met with a resident to assist with the Property Tax Deferral Program application. This is the first applicant for the Town of Hope. The program is income and age based. It allows a resident to have the state pay property taxes to the municipality for as long as the resident lives in the home and continues to meet the guidelines. This year, the guidelines for the program were expanded to assist those who had previously qualified for the now defunct property tax stabilization program. The state will continue to pay the taxes until the resident moves or passes away. Then the state may sell the property to recoup the money paid on that resident's behalf.
- The MDOT won't have any radar signs available until next year. The Town has been placed on the list to receive one once they're available. I'll be contacted at a later date regarding the training.
- North East Mobile Health, the Town's ambulance provider has submitted the cost increase for FY25. Hope's share is estimated to increase \$64,807.76 for a total annual cost of \$118,028.36. This increase was based on servicing the four towns. However, The Town of Rockport is moving forward to have their own municipal ambulance service functional by July 1, 2024. The Town of Camden is also moving toward a municipal based service. However, they were considering July 1, 2025 as their date. It is not yet known how this will affect any future cost for Hope or whether NEMHS will even remain in the MidCoast area. I have had brief conversations with the managers/administrators from the other towns but nothing official has been determined at this point in time.
- We had hoped to have the audit done during the last week of January. There are some new developments regarding the scheduling. It is not known at this time when we will be able to schedule the audit. I will be sending a proposed budget presentation schedule to the Bill Pearse

in the very near future. I am going to try to delay as long as possible in order to allow time for the Central Office to get the grants invoiced. It is my understanding that the State only has to approve and verify that they've been received in order for the auditors to be able to do their part. I have included an excerpt from the Superintendent's Report for February:

“Bobbi Brewer from Brewer and Brewer CPA called and informed us that the auditors would not be ready to set a date to visit the town for the '23 audit until all of the grant expenditures were invoiced and approved by the state. This has not been asked of us during any other audit preparation and was not part of the requests my office had been working on to prepare for the audit, at least not to the level that Brewer and Brewer now expects. A large portion of these grants involve payroll, so can really only be worked on when Paula is in the office. Currently, we are waiting on approvals for 70% of the Title I grant, and 70% of the ESSER III grant. The backend work in the grant has been completed to invoice 100% of the Title V grant, but there is some additional accounting that needs to be finished before that can be invoiced. In some cases, we need to wait for approvals before invoicing the next batch. With the departure of one member of our finance team, we have freed up some funds to contract with Jodi Davis, who has invoiced these grants in the past, to work alongside Paula Emerson and get through the grants for all three schools as quickly as possible. So, while we have made significant progress, we still have work to do to meet this new requirement.”

- Matt and I finished preparing the Notice of Violation for the Loon Lane property. It was submitted to and approved by the Town Attorney. We suspect that the CEO's decision to cite the violations will result in an appeal. The Town will be seeking all legal fees to be paid should the Town prevail.
- In warrant #63, there is an invoice from Maritime Energy for 190.6 gallons of propane delivered to the Town Office on January 24th. This is very unusual as the previous delivery was in November for only 37.6 gallons of propane. A technician came to check for a leak or to try and find some other cause for using so much propane in such a short timeframe especially since the building is primarily heated with heat pumps. The technician wasn't able to find any problems with the system or locate any leaks. We could call Brookside (Mike Eaton) to do an inspection of the system to see if there is something wrong or we could wait and see if it happens again. Because it was a large discrepancy in the normal usage or delivery amount, I am inclined to have it checked out so that we aren't potentially wasting propane or money.
- The third round of property inspections for the revaluation began today. They will be inspecting all of the properties located on maps 23-32. The revaluation is scheduled to be implemented July 1, 2025 (FY26). Vern will be retiring effective June 30, 2024. The new Assessor's Agent will begin July 1st of this year and be able to conduct all hearings and have a good understanding of the Town by the time the revaluation actually takes place.
- Matt discussed potentially using the town owned property on Rt. 17 as a place to relocate

the sand/salt shed. The Road Commissioner is adding having the entrance from Rt 17 developed and paved. In addition, there was some discussion on whether or not the Select Board wanted to move forward with having the property surveyed. How does the Select Board wish to proceed? Michael made a motion to have Matt try to locate the property pins according to the deed. If the is unable to locate the pins, then to proceed with a boundary survey at matt's recommendation. It was seconded by Charlie.

Motion passed 4-0

- There were no new building permits and 3 plumbing permits since the 1/23/24 Select Board meeting.
- There are 978 RE accounts for 2024, totaling \$1,579,512.34. The second half is due on April 30, 2024.
- There are 16 RE accounts for 2023, totaling \$35,547.32. Unpaid 2023 real estate taxes will automatically foreclose on February 11, 2025, if the accounts are not paid in full.
- There are 2 RE accounts for 2022, totaling \$4,037.25. Unpaid 2022 real estate taxes will automatically foreclose on February 27, 2024, if the accounts are not paid in full.

Executive Session:

- 1 M.R.S. §406 (6)(A)(1) – Town Administrator Annual Performance Evaluation: Charlie made a motion to enter executive session at 6:33 p.m. It was seconded by Michael.

Motion passed 4-0

- Charlie made a motion to exit executive session at 7:16 p.m. It was seconded by Mike.

Motion passed 4-0

Adjournment:

- Charlie made a motion to adjourn at 7:17 p.m. It was seconded by Mike.

Motion Passed 4-0