

MINUTES OF SELECT BOARD MEETING

Hope Select Board

Tuesday, February 22, 2022

6:30 PM

Hope Town Office

View the meeting in its entirety at

https://townhallstreams.com/towns/hope_me

Board Members Present:

- Sarah Ann Smith, Dick Crabtree, Wendy Pelletier, Mike Brown, and Bruce Haffner

Others Present:

- Samantha Mank, Matthew Deane, Clarence Keller (*Zoom*), and Paul Smith (*Zoom*)

Call to Order:

- The meeting was called to order by Sarah at 6:30 p.m.

Agenda Adjustments/Approval:

- The agenda was approved as written by unanimous consent.

Public Comment:

- None

Minutes:

- February 8, 2022: Wendy made a motion to approve the 2/8/22 minutes with minor typo corrections. It was seconded by Dick.

Motion passed 5-0

Warrants 61, 62, 63, & 64:

- The Select Board reviewed the warrants. Dick made a motion to approve, and sign warrants 61, 62, 63 and 64. It was seconded by Mike.

Motion passed 5-0

New Business:

- Discussion – Winter Maintenance of Municipal Buildings – Bruce Haffner: Bruce believes the Town could save money by purchasing a truck and sanding equipment and performing the winter maintenance plowing, sanding, and shoveling of the town office, both fire stations, and the elementary school, in house. He estimates that the Town and school pay approx. \$22,000 a year to contract the work out (\$15,000/town and \$7,000/school). The school is currently contracted to pay per storm whereas the town pays per season.

Bruce's initial plan includes purchasing a plow truck with plow and sander to be housed at the Hope Corner Fire Station. This would go under the umbrella of the fire department. As a snowplow truck would be very useful for when roads aren't plowed. For example, during the last storm, Alford Lake Rd. wasn't plowed until 1:00 p.m. Our contract says we need to plow the fire

stations when there is 3 inches of snow or earlier if directed by someone important. If there is 4 to 5 inches of snow on the roads, the fire trucks aren't going to be able to get anywhere. Bruce said he recently discovered that if you put chains on tires, you can go just about anywhere. So, he plowed Alford Lake Rd. three times by 1:00. He said he saw the plow truck go from Rt. 17 to Hackleburnham and back to Rt. 17 and then he was done. People with long driveways that don't have snowplows could be in trouble if there was a fire.

During the fire at Harold Mosher's house, the ice was everywhere. If the town owned its own plow truck with a sander, we could sand ourselves. In addition to the fire department use, it could be helpful for an ambulance or a police operation if we had a truck that we could get almost instant access to, which we don't have right now. There are a lot of reasons to do it.

The financials of his plan include:

- Purchase a plow truck for \$150,000 over 10 years with an annual cost of \$18,000.
- Labor would be for 70 hours a year at \$20/hour with an annual cost of \$1,400.
- Maintenance on an annual basis would be \$2,000.
- Insurance and fuel are calculated to be \$2,500.

This would bring the annual cost of having our own plow truck to just under \$24,000/yr. for the first 10 years. The second 10 years the town would only spend \$6,000/yr. This would bring an ultimate savings to the town of \$140,000 over the next 20 years.

In addition, Bruce thinks the town should purchase an excavator. It could also be used to do summer road work including ditching and installing culverts. It could be a savings to the town of \$160,000 over 10 years. Bruce said that a trailer and a large truck, perhaps a Ford 550 or Ford 600 with a v-plow is what he would suggest.

He thinks that the town could get volunteers to help with the driving and that those drivers would consider it a badge of honor to be able to operate the trucks as a driver. In order to help keep the costs down, he would be willing to volunteer for free for the first year.

It would be comparable cost between the current contracts and the town doing it in house for the first 10 years, but it would be a big savings afterward.

Mike had many concerns about the plan including finding people who would drive for just 70 hours a year and that the town couldn't afford to keep them year-round or guarantee we would have a driver the following year if we didn't. He also was concerned that \$20/hr. was far too low and would not even get anyone to do the work at all. He discussed emissions and the cost of replacing an exhaust could be as high as \$11,000. The maintenance price of \$2,000 a year is very understated.

Dick said he would need to see a complete business plan before he would consider it. He needs a lot more information to convince him. He went on to say that there is way more to doing the job than just sitting behind the wheel and driving a truck.

No action was taken by the Select Board at this time.

- Discussion – Traditional Town Meeting vs. Secret Ballot: The Select Board prefers the Town Meeting model in general. There was some discussion about participation at recent town meetings and how the voters are not attending as they used to many years ago. Sarah felt that more people would be allowed to participate if the warrant items were on a ballot rather than town meeting. Dick pointed out that everyone still has the same ability to participate as they have always had. Dick wanted to know how amendments would be made or how meaningful discussion, questions,

and explanations could be made without a town meeting. These are all questions that would have to be answered before any changes were actually made.

Bruce made a motion to place a non-binding question on the June ballot asking Hope voters if they would prefer to continue with the traditional town meeting or replace it by using a ballot. The wording of the ballot question will be determined at a later date. It was seconded by Sarah.

Motion passed 5-0

- Set workshop date for expending ARPA funds – Final Rule from US Treasury: The Select Board set the ARPA workshop date for Thursday, March 10, 2022 at 5:00 p.m.

Old Business:

- None

Other Business:

- None

Town Administrator Report:

- No building or plumbing permits were issued since the last Select Board meeting. Even so, the CEO has been busy meeting with residents and following up on complaints. In addition, there are pending items for the Planning Board that he is working on.
- The budget books were given to everyone digitally last week. Several hard copies have also been distributed. Bill Pearse has been in contact with me and is trying to set-up the presentation schedule. I will forward it to all of you once it has been finalized.
- The topic of digital signatures for the School Committee to use on warrants has been raised again. I was able to have a more detailed conversation with Kate regarding the purpose of the wet signatures. I also explained that digital signatures may still be possible however, the origin and security of the digital signatures is very much a concern. DocuSign requires a minimum of 500 signatures per year or \$25/month per person. This is cost prohibitive. She is looking into other methods that would be legally suitable. In the meantime, the school has added an alternate to the Finance Committee.
- The audit is still not completed. Paula, the bookkeeper for SU69, submitted her paperwork to our accountant. However, the accountant is tied up with other clients and said she would not be able to get to it for approx. three weeks. Once the accruals and other journal entries have been entered into TRIO, the auditor will return to complete the audit. Paula has requested an extension from the DOE until March 31st.
- A meeting has been scheduled between the four towns and NEMHS for next Monday, February 28th to discuss the new ambulance contract. As of now, all four towns are planning on attending.
- There were several complaints regarding potholes. Some of the complaints indicated that the roads were virtually impassible. Furthermore, a couple of people said they had told the Road Commissioner, but nothing was being done. I spoke with John today, and he said the potholes on Church St. and Pearse St. had been filled it. He wants people to understand that it is not as easy or quick to get the materials needed to patch or fill in potholes or make other fixes as it used to be. He's asked that people try to be patient while he tries to make the needed repairs.
- There are 18 RE accounts for 2021, totaling \$37,018.03. Unpaid 2021 real estate taxes will

automatically foreclose on February 3, 2023, if the accounts are not paid in full.

- There are 963 RE accounts for 2022, totaling \$1,476,218.85. The second half of taxes is due on Tuesday, May 3, 2021.
- The cash has not been out of balance since the last Select Board meeting on February 8, 2022.

Executive Session:

- Wendy made a motion to enter executive session pursuant to the below citations at 7:53 p.m. It was seconded by Dick.

Motion passed 5-0

- M.R.S. §405(6)(F): Consent Agreement negotiations regarding 63 Highfield Rd:
- M.R.S. §405(6)(C): Disposition of Tax Acquired Property – 188 Gillette Rd:
- Bruce left the meeting.
- Dick made a motion to exit executive session at 8:44 p.m. It was seconded by Sarah.

Motion passed 4-0

Adjournment:

- Mike made a motion to adjourn at 8:45 p.m. It was seconded by Dick.

Motion passed 4-0

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