

MINUTES OF SELECT BOARD MEETING

Hope Select Board
Tuesday, May 24, 2022
6:30 p.m.
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 (*Zoom*)

Others Present:

- Samantha Mank, Hillary Hancox, Kate Clark, Danielle Fagonde, Tim Lock, Emily Burgess, Crystal Robinson, Clarence Keller, Rick Bresnahan, Todd Snyder, Beth Gindel, Juanita Hunt (*Zoom*), and Paul Smith (*Zoom*)

Call to Order:

- The meeting was called to order by Sarah at 6:31 p.m.

Agenda Adjustments/Approval:

- Dick made a motion to accept the agenda as presented. It was seconded by Mike.

Motion passed 5-0

Public Comment:

- Department Heads and Committee Chairs attended the meeting to make formal complaints regarding the mowing in the cemeteries, True Park, and the fire stations. The Sexton showed the Select Board bent veteran markers and expressed her displeasure with the quality of the mowing. True Park representatives discussed how it was nearly impossible to utilize the park because the grass was so tall, and they called the contractor to mow early. They also discussed that by waiting for the grass to be so high, it is actually damaging the grass causing it to brown. All expressed that this has been an ongoing problem for the past five years and urged the Select Board to not award the bid to the same contractor in the future, once the current contract expires. Several recommendations were made regarding rewriting the specifications for the new contract, including but not limited to bidding on the cost per mow rather than per season and requiring a consistent mowing schedule.

Minutes:

- May 10, 2022: Mike made a motion to approve the 5/10/22 minutes. It was seconded by Wendy. Sarah made a typo correction. Bruce made an amendment to the wording regarding the Roads Advisory Committee Report.

Motion passed 5-0

Warrants 82, 83, 84, 85, & 86:

- The Select Board reviewed the warrants. Dick made a motion to approve, and sign warrants 82, 83, 84, 85, and 86. It was seconded by Mike.

Motion passed 5-0

New Business:

- Confirmation of Interim Bookkeeper – Hillary Hancox: Wendy made a motion to confirm Hillary Hancox as the interim bookkeeper. It was seconded by Dick.

Motion passed 5-0

- Discussion with Hope Elementary School Superintendent and School Committee:
 - Use of Electronic Signatures: Tim said that it is difficult logistically to always try to get the physical signatures on the warrants, especially the payroll warrants. Differing schedules as well as the School Committee (SC) only meeting once a month when payroll happens at least twice a month makes it more difficult to be able to get those signatures. Kate explained that Paula at Central Office doesn't receive the payroll time slips until Friday. That means she has to work over the weekend in order to have the warrants ready for the SC to sign and get them to the town office in time for the Select Board meetings on Tuesday. It is even more complicated because the town office is closed on Monday.

Dick explained that in a Town Meeting form of government, it is a reasonable presumption on the part of the voters, that if you are signing the warrants in person, you have also looked at the substantiating documents. If you can sign electronically, the voters don't have that same presumption.

There are also conflicting legal opinions regarding the acceptance of electronic signatures. The Maine Municipal Association Legal team has stated that electronic signatures are not secure and did not have continued authorization at the end of the pandemic executive orders. The school's attorney has indicated to Kate that it is legal to use electronic signatures. Dick asked Kate to have the school's attorney present a written legal opinion for the town's attorney to review. If it legal for the town to accept electronic signatures, it must be approved at a town meeting by the voters. The Select Board will revisit this issue once the Superintendent provides the written legal opinion from their attorney.

- Municipal Officers Policy on Disbursement of Municipal Education Costs: Dick reviewed how the policy would work and that there are also some specific requirements that the SC would have to adhere to, such as: **A.)** Either a majority of the School Committee (*3 members*) or in the case of the payroll warrant, the entire Finance Team (*2 members*) along with the Superintendent would have to sign each warrant. **B.)** The school's warrant would have to change a little bit to include a certification stating that in fact, all of the finance committee or a majority of the school committee signed the warrant.

The SC will take some time to review the policy and will get back in touch with the town before the Select Board adopts the policy.

- Facilities Bond: Tim wanted to discuss the most urgent needs. In terms of safety and operation of the school, replacing the roof is the most urgent need. They are already dealing with leaks from time-to-time. This could potentially be an even larger problem than the boiler. Replacing the windows throughout the school and the exterior doors in the elementary wing are also a high priority. These items were already documented in the last capital needs assessment that was done five years ago. This is the worst time to be trying to do construction as the cost of everything has greatly increased. Perhaps costs will come down in a couple of years, but for now we need to try to handle the urgent needs on the list.

Tim also mentioned that the middle school wing of the building is around forty years old, and we should start thinking about how to deal with other possible catastrophic failures. Many of the systems in the building are beyond their typical lifespan at this point. One such system of concern is the plumbing. Tim said he was a little concerned about always having to go to a town meeting to vote on getting funds to fix a catastrophic failure.

Dick questioned whether or not replacing the windows would actually save any money on energy costs. There was a lot of discussion surrounding the R value of the windows. Tim offered to conduct an energy audit. The Select Board agreed this would be helpful especially because the voters are going to want to know if there is an actual economic benefit to having the windows replaced.

Once Tim does the energy audit, the SC will know how much the bond will need to be. The SC also needs to choose a date for the Special Town Meeting. Dick also expressed that there is more work to do in order to secure a bond. The Town will need to hire Bond Counsel. In addition, we will need to know the timing of the projects because we don't want to borrow money and owe interest on a loan that we may not be able to use for a year. Perhaps taking a bank loan in the form of a Bond Anticipation Note (BAN) is a viable option, then once the actual bond is issued, the BAN would be paid off.

The SC and Superintendent will work directly with the Town Administrator in getting the information put together for the Special Town Meeting.

- 3rd Quarter Financial Report: The Town Administrator presented the Select Board with the 3rd quarter financial report. Everything is right on track and in line with the budget. Nothing is out of the ordinary except the emergency road repairs which was caused by the October 31, 2021 Storm. The Town is seeking reimbursement from FEMA/EMMA to cover those overages.
- 2022 Personal Property Taxes 36 M.R.S. 105 §760-A “Minor or Burdensome Amount” of \$3,801.94: Mike made a motion to write off the 2022 personal property taxes in the amount of \$3,801.94. It was seconded by Dick.
Motion passed 5-0
- Appointment as Election Clerk – Holly Miller: Dick made a motion to appoint Holly Miller as an Election Clerk for a 2-year term. It was seconded by Mike.
Motion passed 5-0

Old Business:

- None

Other Business:

- None

Town Administrator Report:

- Matthew and I met with the Town Attorney and Colin Clark from the Maine DEP for the tree canopy survey this morning regarding the Lermond Pond Shoreland Zone violations.
- The attorneys for Mr. D. Kelly have submitted an application to appeal the notice of violation. The Board of Appeals was scheduled to meet last night but there was not a quorum. The meeting will be rescheduled for the first week in June.
- Paving bids will be opened and read on Thursday, May 26th at 3:00 p.m.
- Conducted interviews for the interim bookkeeper position. I have extended an offer of temporary employee to one of the applicants.
- I was finally able to make the first required report for ARPA.
- The EMS Review Committee meeting that was re-scheduled will be this Thursday, May 26th at 6:30 p.m.
- There have been 2 building permits and 3 plumbing permits issued since the last Select Board meeting:

- Rita McConnon - 0 Highfield Rd. – SFD & accessory structure
- Marlayne Brace – 255 Lermond Lane. – Driveway construction
- There are 8 RE accounts for 2021, totaling \$24,686.17. Unpaid 2021 real estate taxes will automatically foreclose on February 3, 2023, if the accounts are not paid in full.
- There are 115 RE accounts for 2022, totaling \$170,670.48.
- There have been pre-payments on 30 accounts for 2023 RE taxes totaling \$11,245.54.
- The cash has not been out of balance since the last Select Board meeting on May 10, 2022.

Board of Assessors:

- Suspend as Select Board and Convene as Assessors: Mike made a motion to suspend as the Select Board and to convene as the Board of Assessors at 8:11 p.m. It was seconded by Wendy.
Motion passed 5-0
- Review and Sign County Taxes and Dispatch Assessors Return: The Select Board reviewed the county documents. Dick made a motion to sign the County Taxes and Dispatch Assessors Return. It was seconded by Bruce.
Motion passed 5-0
- 2022 Ratio Declaration and Reimbursement: Dick made a motion to sign the 2022 Declaration Ratio at 97%. It was seconded by Mike.
Motion passed 5-0
- Adjourn as Assessors and Reconvene as Select Board: Bruce made a motion to adjourn as Assessors and to reconvene as the Select Board at 8:17 p.m. It was seconded Mike.
Motion passed 5-0

Adjournment:

- Wendy made a motion to adjourn at 8:20 p.m. It was seconded by Dick. Sarah thanked Wendy for her time of service acknowledging that tonight was her last Select Board meeting. Wendy is on the ballot to continue serving the town on the Budget Committee.
Motion passed 5-0

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