

SELECTBOARD MEETING
January 25, 2024
Draft Minutes

Present: Bill Cleary
Dave Baczewski
Sean Cushing

Holly Delisle
Callie Hamdy
Greg Barrows

Guests: see page 5.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. The meeting was held in person and via Zoom.

CHANGES TO AGENDA

The Recreation Committee pushed their agenda items to after Discussion.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

MINUTES

Dave motioned to approve the January 8, 2024 Minutes as written. Bill seconded. Motion passed 2-0.

Dave motioned to approve the January 11, 2024 Minutes as amended. Bill seconded. Motion passed 2-0.

Dave motioned to approve the January 15, 2024 Minutes as written. Bill seconded. Motion passed 2-0.

ROAD SCHEDULE

Sean Cushing, Road Foreman, went over the Road Schedule from January 12, 2024 to January 25, 2024. Bill motioned to approve the Road Schedule as presented. Dave seconded. Motion passed 2-0.

HIGHWAY REQUEST TO USE FUND SURPLUS

The request is to use funds to purchase a hot water pressure washer to steam culverts during spring thaw conditions as well as clean other equipment. Milton Rental has one at \$4,737. Sean wanted to take the funds from the Building Improvements line item. We did not have money set aside specifically for this. Sean suggested trading in the riding lawn mower owned by the town to offset the cost since that mower does not get used. Bill understands the utility of the piece of equipment but did not feel like this was part of the Highway's budget request. Dave made a motion to approve the purchase of a hot pressure washer for \$4,737 from Milton Rental. Bill seconded. Motion passed 2-0.

FY'24 HIGHWAY BUDGET STATUS REPORT

Greg Barrows, Treasurer, went over the FY'24 Budget Status Report.

UPDATE ON WASTEWATER ALTERNATIVES WORK

Ron Rodjenski was present. Over the last few weeks Ron, George Lamphere, and Holly Delisle have talked about next steps to review alternatives as well as review the Maple Shade project. They have produced the idea of creating a committee that will support the new engineer when they are brought on board. They proposed a draft of what a mission statement could look like and provided it to the Selectboard. The idea would be to have Holly, Ron, a

Planning Commission member, a Selectboard member, and two members of the public work together. All work produced by this committee would be public and minutes would be taken. Bill recalled when we had a similar set up with the ARPA Committee. There is a new page on the website where all the information will be posted. There is an expectation that the work group/committee will be accelerating the project to the Selectboard, not just discussing. It is possible that during this process the funding agencies will throw curveballs, it will be fluid. The vision is to come back to the Selectboard with alternatives as explored, the net cost of everything and then the board may go in whichever direction they choose. If ideas are excluded there would be a written-up explanation of why.

Having chaired the ARPA committee, Dave thought it would benefit Ron and Holly to be liaisons to the board as the Selectboard cannot take on this entire process. The ARPA Committee built the process as they went, with people breaking off to work on different aspects and later coming back together. ARPA had gone through two phases which Dave thought was beneficial. He thinks the key is that whichever people make up the new committee, it needs a clear and understood mission statement that everybody shares and follows, setting aside personal agendas and opinion. Dave understands the urgency of this decision and thinks it is a great idea.

Bill took issue with the language in the draft mission statement that states the committee is support for the engineer. Ron explained that the engineer role came up when people expressed doubt in Stone Environmental and Birchline Planning. Whether a new firm is needed is the first question for the group. Dave agreed with Bill that the committee needs to be a subcommittee of the Selectboard, like the ARPA committee. It is more in support of the Town's interest. Mark Letorney was present. He thinks it is a good idea and he thinks the Selectboard should be responsible for the timeline since we need to expedite this. One role or project the board may want to consider is to determine how many users they forecast for the Town Office/Library, especially if they plan an office expansion. This is one of the first items an engineer will ask. Ron explained that 450 gallons is the standard number for a small 3-bedroom residential system which would allow for some growth for staff and Library's current use. Bill and Dave proposed changing the committee's directive from "support for the engineer" to "support of the town's interests" in the Mission Statement. Ron volunteered to be the committee's moderator. Dave thought three members of the public would be better. The Planning Commission had decided not to provide names and asked people to contact Holly. So far, two members of the community have reached out. Mark suggested that the committee work to encompass as many viewpoints as possible, not just people from one group of thought so it does not seem like one group is deciding. Ron mentioned that other members of the public not on the committee are welcome to participate in the meetings.

Lori Johnson was present. She is glad the town is looking at alternatives, but reading through the mission statement she is concerned because it says that it is possible the alternatives review may support Maple Shade being the best option for the town, which was voted down on November 7th, 2023. Who is going to make the determination when the voters have said no to the project? Bill is not seeing it the same way as Lori. They are going to look at alternatives, but they do not know how great the alternatives will be. They may have to look back at Maple Shade in a reduced capacity which would be a revote in that case. Nobody is talking about usurping the power of the voters in this situation. At some point we need to have a leap of faith that if we put the right people on the committee, they will give us good results.

Vicky Ross was present. She thinks if the board's intent is to only look at alternatives to Maple Shade, they need to make that clear. That work could, however, lead them back to Maple Shade. Dave would like to see alternatives to Maple Shade, but he would also like to see a

different version of Maple Shade presented as an alternative. He stands by the original plan as presented being voted down, this does not mean that other projects on Maple Shade cannot go forward. Bill thinks the heavy lift will be researching alternatives. If they research alternatives and they dead end, meaning we would need to revisit Maple Shade, he feels that could be done quickly. Ron explained that the current Maple Shade Project works for comparing the alternatives to. Bill wondered if we could pull some of the Maple Shade wording from the document. Ron thought they could say that Maple Shade as an alternative would not be looked at until "Non-Maple Shade" properties are looked at. Carol Winfield, Ira Allen, and Barb Peck were present. They were not in favor of referring to Maple Shade in the mission statement at all. Barb did not think Maple Shade should be any part of the alternatives work.

Mark Letorney thinks we need to make it clear that nobody on the Planning Commission or the Selectboard wants to bring back the Maple Shade project as presented to the voters. He feels very strongly that we should not limit the work of the committee. Their job is to look for alternatives. He hopes that they come up with something the Planning Commission hasn't thought of, but this is going to come down to numbers and expenses for the town. It may be that we look at a whole different type of system on the Maple Shade property since we already own that property. Bill Hill was present. He thinks we should not exclude any alternatives because that could be a slippery slope. Only one is excluded, the one that was voted on specifically. If the call is for alternatives we should start with a very open list and quickly listen to all ideas. The next step is to let the committee talk about that for a while and make their list. Excluding anything is risky. There could be a different project at Maple Shade that works. Vicky Ross disagreed with Bill Hill. She thinks the way to honor the vote is to charge the committee with alternatives to the proposed project or anything on the proposed project site as a first step. She thinks it is safer to limit the project. Bill Hill asked if we would need clarity on what else would be excluded? He thinks the committee should make this decision. Ron felt that Dave had a good way of putting it. Phase one would be non-Maple Shade properties. Report that back to the Selectboard. We may never get to Phase two which is looking at a new project on Maple Shade.

Bill Cleary said there are already plans for Maple Shade. Would a "right size" project be easy to do? He thinks that is easier to do than researching some of the alternatives so leaving that on the back burner is okay, because he does not think re-scoping the project on Maple Shade would take a lot of time. Bill Hill agreed. Dave said it is clear we need to look at all alternatives. He does not want to get hung up on wording on the mission statement. The board adjusted some lines of the mission statement, which made the audience more comfortable.

Holly proposed to fine tune the mission statement in the first meeting of the committee, then bring it to the Selectboard for final approval. It will be published as a draft before fine tuning. Bill also thought the choosing of the volunteers could be contentious. Dave thought volunteering needed a deadline. Holly will post the new draft tomorrow and the board asked for volunteers by their next meeting on February 8, 2024. Dave made a motion to move forward with the organization of a wastewater alternatives study oversight committee, to be refined and published, and seek town volunteers to support it. All applicants must have their applications in by February 5, 2024. The board will decide on committee appointments on the 8th of February, Bill seconded. Motion passed 2-0.

RECREATION COMMITTEE RESIGNATION & APPOINTMENT RECOMMENDATION

Amanda Gifford, the Recreation Coordinator, was present. They have had a position posted in both Front Porch Forum and on their Facebook page since at least January 14, and a community member has stepped up interested in a seat. The resident submitted an intent to

join, and they attended a meeting recently as well. Amanda thinks Kelsey Cross fits right in with the committee and brings a lot of experience. Bill motioned to approve Kelsey Cross to the Recreation Committee. Dave seconded. Motion passed 2-0.

There was also a Recreation Committee resignation. Maria Olsen has resigned. She is still helping with events, however. Bill motioned to accept Maria Olsen's resignation from the Committee and extend gratitude. Dave seconded. Motion passed 2-0.

REVIEW TOWN MEETING WARNING

Holly presented the board with a draft warning for Town Meeting Day. Some articles are ones that Nanette had suggested in a draft she had prepared. Article 7, as presented, is the Fire Truck Bond as written by the Town Attorney. Currently, the warning mentions the meeting taking place at the Westford School at 7pm on March 4th. They struck several articles in the draft. The board discussed putting on the ballot the article to make all articles decided by Australian ballot. Vicky noted that if we do not do this, we would have to do a floor vote for specific things much like we did to increase the Selectboard seats. Bob Bancroft was present. He thinks town meeting is dead whether people like it or not. Not many people attend. Carol thinks it is a good idea to put it to the voters on Town Meeting Day. The board decided to keep this article.

The board then discussed the article on non-binding business, which is where the public could potentially discuss the statement of inclusion mentioned a few Selectboard meetings ago. They chose to keep this as well.

They then went over the Australian Ballot articles including the bond for the firetruck. A necessity resolution also needed to be signed. This is necessary for this sort of bond and lays out the need for the truck.

Dave made a motion to approve the annual town meeting warning as amended. Bill seconded. Motion passed 2-0.

REVIEW SELECTBOARD TOWN REPORT DRAFT

Bill liked the draft, but had a minor change related to the section about the budget. Bill motioned to approve the Selectboard draft of the Town Report as amended. Dave seconded. Motion passed 2-0.

REVIEW CERTIFICATE OF HIGHWAY MILEAGE

This is an annual item. We have not had any changes since last year. Dave made a motion to approve the Certificate of Highway Mileage. Bill seconded. Motion passed 2-0.

FY'24 GENERAL FUND BUDGET STATUS REPORT

Greg Barrows, Treasurer, went over the Fy'24 General Fund Budget Status Report.

REVIEW AND APPROVE ACCOUNTS PAYABLE & PAYROLL WARRANTS

Greg Barrows, Treasurer, went over the Accounts Payable & Payroll Warrants.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was a request for audio improvements for meetings. Several people had complained that there were audio issues when the board held a meeting at the Westford Common Hall. Holly mentioned that when we hold meetings at the school, they provide us with audio equipment, however we do not own our own. We may investigate renting or purchasing said equipment for specific meetings. Bill had no objection to spending money on such equipment.

The board received a resignation from one of the Road Crew members, Thomas Cramer. Today was his last day. Sean and Holly had many promising applications from the last time they were looking for a 4th road crew member, so they do have options for a successor. Bill motioned to accept Thomas's resignation. Dave seconded. Motion passed 2-0.

COMMUNICATION

Holly and Callie made a new town webpage for wastewater alternatives work. It is called "Wastewater." This will include everything that comes out of the Committee meetings for full transparency. This was also an attempt to cut back on public records requests relating to Wastewater.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Cleary, Chair for this meeting
Selectboard

Callie Hamdy
Minute Clerk

GUEST LIST

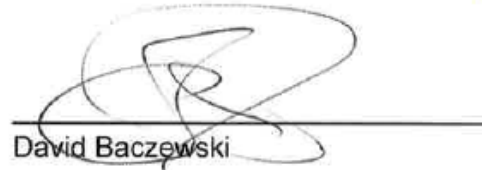
George Lamphere
Ron Rodjenski
Bill Hill
Vicky Ross
Ben Bornstein
Bob Bancroft
Carol Winfield
Kim Guidry
Dick Lavallee
Tess Lavallee
Lori Johnson
Dave Lavallee
Sheila Franz
Joe Franz
Barb Peck
Harmony Cism
Ira Allen
Nanette Rogers
Sue Roediger
Maureen Wilcox
Mark Letorney
Kelsey Cross

ADOPTED THIS 8th TH DAY OF FEBRUARY 2024.

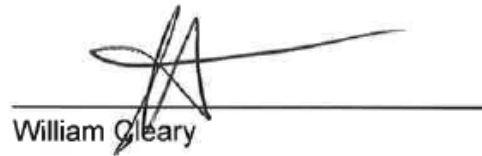
WESTFORD SELECTBOARD



Lee McClenny, Chair



David Baczewski



William Cleary