



BOARD OF SELECTMEN
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MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Monday, February 12, 2024 – 6:30 p.m. – Town Hall Conference Room

Members Present: Randy Bunnell, Laura Malloy, Vaughan Morgan, Steve Smith, Paul Stanley

Staff Present: Paul Sanderson, Town Administrator

Also Present: Dennis Malloy, State Representative

Chair Smith opened the Board of Selectmen meeting at 6:30 p.m. A roll call was taken, and it was announced a quorum was present and the meeting was being live-streamed and recorded.

I. PUBLIC HEARING

1. 2024 Warrant Article 12 – Modify the Municipal Transportation Improvement Fund

This warrant article was done at the request of the Town Clerk to increase the fees in this fund. The CRF was originally authorized by the Town in 2006. The balance as of the end of January 2024 was \$225,381. If the fee is doubled over the course of the year, it is anticipated that approximately \$30,000 will be added to the fund. The Selectmen are not agents to expend this fund; it must be done through a warrant article to approve disbursement. If Warrant Article 12 is approved, funds could be disbursed in 2025 for transportation improvement. This is consistent with remarks made at the Deliberative Session that there was too much money in reserve.

2. 2024 Warrant Article 18 – Rescind the SB2 Form of Town Meeting

This warrant article was requested by the Board of Selectmen. It would be a change in the Town's form of government. In 2015, the Town moved from the traditional Town Meeting to the SB2 format which changes the annual Town Meeting into two parts: the Deliberative Session and the official ballot voting. If the warrant article passes, the Town will go back to the traditional Town Meeting. There would no longer be a Deliberative Session. Determinations would be made in person at a Town Meeting held in March.

SB2 allows more people to attend and vote on an official balloting day which is determined by the people who attended Deliberative Session. TA Sanderson noted that there were 74 people at the recent Deliberative Session, many of which were required to be in attendance as elected officials.

S. Smith opened the hearing to public comments. Responding to R. Bunnell's question, TA Sanderson stated this was posted as a public hearing.

Dennis Malloy, 10 Van Etten Drive: D. Malloy questioned participation and whether more people would be present if the Town went back to Town Meeting. TA Sanderson stated there have been as many as 300 people at a traditional Town Meeting; there were also much less. It depended on controversial items

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on the warrant. R. Bunnell stated many more people were engaged at Town Meetings and more involved than in SB2. V. Morgan also preferred the Town Meetings, which is the purest form of democracy; decisions that were made were educated decisions. With SB2 there will be more uneducated decisions by people talking to each other and not attending the Deliberative Session.

L. Malloy asked if it worked better because it was a Town of 2,000 vs. 4,000. TA Sanderson responded that as the Town grew, new residents had not experienced a traditional Town Meeting or SB2 form of government. They did experience a form of official balloting. P. Stanley stated that in Maine they had Town Meetings; his experience was whoever yelled the loudest won. It seemed practical to allow everyone an entire day to cast a ballot, whether they were informed or not.

Stephan Toth, Palm Drive: Stated that going back to the Town Meeting format would be better for the reasons V. Morgan mentioned. It would also be easier for Town employees by reducing the number of meetings they would have to prepare for.

There being no other public comments, S. Smith closed the public hearing.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Monday, January 29, 2024

MOTION: V. Morgan moved to approve the minutes of Monday, January 29, 2024. Second – L. Malloy; all in favor. MOTION CARRIED

III. OLD BUSINESS

1. Deliberative Session Review

TA Sanderson reviewed that warrant articles were not amended and will appear on the ballot as proposed, which is a highlight. Many comments were received regarding the Budget Committee and rescinding SB2. He felt they were well-debated; people will understand and be informed about those issues. People seemed to be in general support of the operating budget and the reasons for those changes; he is cautiously optimistic that there will be support at the ballot. Minutes of the Deliberative Session have been completed by the Town Clerk and will be included in the Town Report. The recording is available.

R. Bunnell stated that he appreciated the comments about the budget brought to the meeting by individuals. He wished they would attend the meetings to discuss their concerns prior to when the budget was about to be passed. He would like them to be more involved at the Board level. TA Sanderson noted that his comment was well taken. There were discussions with those individuals after Deliberative Session; TA Sanderson hoped they would become more engaged earlier in the budget process.

2. Other Old Business

There was no 'Other Old Business' to discuss.

IV. NEW BUSINESS AND ADMINISTRATIVE

1. MRI Municipal Accounting Software

A work session was scheduled for Tuesday afternoon, February 13th at 4:30 pm. Alan Gould, MRI, will be at the meeting and Christian Pearsall, who implements the MRI accounting software, will be available on Microsoft Teams. TA Sanderson anticipates that the Town will continue with QuickBooks for a portion of 2024 and make the conversion to MRI over a period of time. The program should be ready to go live and to be completely operational in January 2025. The systems can be run in tandem earlier to ensure it was accurate. The MRI product will be fund accounting software and is designed to be in accordance with the DRA chart of accounts. DRA forms will be much easier to create using the MRI software; it will export onto the forms. That will save time and increase the accuracy of reports. TA Sanderson updated the Board that the new company in QuickBooks is being utilized 100% with a new chart of accounts. He will be working on January reports for the Board within the next few days.

L. Malloy noted that A. Gould was extremely knowledgeable and helpful during their initial meeting. She recommended educating the public that municipal finance is a 'completely different animal' than any other finance software program. S. Smith stated that the Board would have A. Gould and C. Pearsall return and make a presentation at a Selectmen's meeting to help the voting public understand. R. Bunnell recommended the software be cloud-based; TA Sanderson verified it was cloud-based. TA Sanderson stated that because the software will be cloud-based, department heads will be able to have access to all or part of the program. R. Bunnell noted that it will be accessible from anywhere because it is cloud-based.

2. Town Hall Space Needs

TA Sanderson reviewed his recommendations for additional space in the Town Offices. His current office could support two people. His recommendation was to move the Finance Department to his office, and he would move into the current Finance Office, which is a one-person office. He also suggested developing a retention policy for the paper in the Town Offices to develop additional space. TA Sanderson noted that the Town Offices are becoming less secure over time, suggesting that Emergency Management be moved to the Police Department which is a much more secure operation. Moving a critical function to a more appropriate space would allow the Town Hall to be redesigned and better utilized. L. Malloy noted that people would not be at the Police Station all the time; they are occasional and scheduled well in advance. It was noted that when the EOC is in operation, they require a training room. TA Sanderson stated that nothing would be done until after the Seabrook drill in April.

3. Solar Exemptions

The assessor has approved the following Solar Exemptions:

- 15 Robin Lane (R6,3C): \$17,500
- 100 Winnicut Road (R10, 18A): \$15,000
- 4 Birch Point (R14, 7): \$22,500
- 15 Van Etten Drive (R10, 30 P): \$30,000

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MOTION: R. Bunnell moved to approve the Solar Exemptions as recommended by the assessor. Second – V. Morgan; all in favor. MOTION CARRIED

4. Veterans Credits

The assessor has approved the following Veterans Credits:

- 10 Old Barn Road (R12, 26F-1): \$750
- 34 Vernita Drive (U7, 26): \$750
- 11 Sage Lane (U7, 10BD): \$750
- 64 Stratham Lane (R11, 22): \$4,000
- 356 Portsmouth Avenue (R21, 8): \$750

MOTION: R. Bunnell moved to approve the Veterans Credits as recommended by the assessor. Second - V. Morgan; all in favor. MOTION CARRIED

D. Malloy, Van Etten Drive, questioned if the Town was at the top of the limits on Veterans Credits. TA Sanderson stated that in 2022 the All-Veterans Credit was readopted in the amount of \$750; disabled veterans is \$4,000. The Town is not at its limit. TA Sanderson stated that the Town is in the process of a DRA required exemption redetermination process. Every Veterans Credit, Elderly Exemption, and other exemptions are in the process of being reevaluated.

5. Other New Business

TA Sanderson stated that tax maps are in the process of being updated (this has not been done since 2021). He is working with CAI Technology on tax maps. Work is continuing on the MS4; TA Sanderson thanked Stephan Toth for working on the MS4 update.

V. APPROVAL OF MANIFESTS

1. Accounts Payable Manifest: \$138,256.92
 - o NH Retirement System: \$48,315.02
 - o Various: \$89,941.90

MOTION: V. Morgan moved to approve the General Fund Manifest in the amount of \$138,256.92. Second – L. Malloy; all in favor. MOTION CARRIED

R. Bunnell noted the payment to Bourassa in the amount of \$13,000. TA Sanderson explained this was retainage for work that was done in 2022, which had held up through an entire season. Altus Engineering recommended the retainage be released.

2. Payroll Manifest: \$75,606.76

MOTION: V. Morgan moved to approve the Payroll Manifest in the amount of \$75,606.76. Second – L. Malloy; all in favor. MOTION CARRIED

VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

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VII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: R. Bunnell moved to adjourn at 6:59 p.m. Second – P. Stanley; all in favor. MOTION CARRIED

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, February 13, 2024 – Work Session, 4:30 p.m., Town Hall Conference Room

Monday, February 26, 2024 – 6:30 pm, Town Hall Conference Room

Submitted By – Charlotte Hussey, Administrative Assistant