

Selectboard Minutes
September 3, 2024

Present: Jenn Jones, chair
~~Andy Artimovich~~
Jon Morgan
Paul Kleinman
Letty Bedard

At 6:00pm, Jones called the meeting to order.

The Board signed the payroll and accounts payable summary register.

Bedard motioned, seconded by Kleinman, to accept the consent agenda which consisted of public minutes from August 20th, the non-public minutes of August 20th, the treasurer's report (found at the end of these minutes), and the following building permits:

- Alfonso & Lisa Leone, 53 Middle Road, Plan Examination
- Matthew & Kelly Scelza, 8 Tanya Lane, Electric
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- Elisa Vega, 113 Crawley Falls Road, Plumbing
- Mark & Ellen Family Trust, 56 Homestead Lane, Electric
- James & Patricia Tompkins, 22 Fellows Road, Minor Projects
- Casey Family Summerwind Trust, 22 Sherry Circle, Plan Examination (ADU)

Kleinman – aye; Bedard – aye; Jones – aye; Morgan – abstained. Motion passed.

At 6:03pm, Jones opened the meeting up to public comment.

Doug Finan, Planning Board, was present to discuss the municipal Green SnowPro Certification. Finan explained that this certification program has been something the Planning Board has been interested in bringing to the town since working on the River Run 55+ development. During the approval process for River Run the Planning Board made it a condition that the roads in the development be maintained using Green SnowPro certified drivers. The Green SnowPro program utilizes best practices in effort to reduce salt use to benefit infrastructure, budgets and the environment. Finan stated the Highway Department seems receptive to getting certified and applying these practices whenever possible. Wayne Robinson, Road Agent, was present, he added that the new truck has a calibration system that would be capable of putting the Green SnowPro methods to use. The cost of the class for municipal workers is \$60/person. Kleinman added that the statute that he has reviewed and utilized in his private practice provides a liability exclusion if you follow the best management practices and keep the documentation.

Jones closed public comment at 6:15pm.

Bedard presented the Police Department window project. Bedard stated that as part of the Municipal Building Committee she has been touring the municipal buildings and in doing so she observed an office on an exterior wall of the Police Department that has no windows, two officers work in that office. Bedard would like to put a window in that office. Jones asked if Bedard had considered that the Police Department could be moving, Bedard stated that moving to a new building is a slow process, best case scenario that could take 2 years. Jones asked Bedard if she wanted to get estimates to bring to the Board. Bedard responded that she was curious how the process typically happens. Clement responded that Kaiser is usually involved, and he prices out the projects. Jones asked if the people working in the office are expressing discontent with not having a window, Bedard stated "they are very polite people." Jones asked if the window needs to be bulletproof, the Board

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agreed this should be discussed in nonpublic. Clement stated there are actually 2 offices in the Police Department that do not have windows.

Jones asked for an update on the status of the Rec windows, Clement stated Kaiser is working on quotes.

Bedard asked about the budget season and the timeline. Bedard stated that in the past the Selectboard has received budgets from each department on a rolling basis, she would like to receive bottom line numbers by a certain time so that if there is a percentage increase the Board would like to stick to, they can make changes as needed as opposed to reopening budgets. Jones asked Clement if department heads would be able to provide a basic budget ahead of when their budget will be discussed with the Selectboard and Budget Committee. Clement stated that typically departments submit their budgets 1 week prior to meeting with the Selectboard. Clement stated that she can send out an email regarding COLA and merit increases and include the appointment schedule to get departments going on their budgets, but the Selectboard would have to understand the initial numbers would be very rough estimates, likely to change. The Board was agreeable to this. Jones confirmed that the Town typically receives its COLA and inflationary advice in September. Clement asked if the Board would like to discuss COLA before the department head meeting or at the same time, Jones stated before. The Board agreed to discuss COLA at the September 17th meeting.

Bedard discussed the Town Office hours. Bedard stated she feels it would be beneficial to have definitive times that offices and departments are open, additionally, Bedard suggested closing the Town Offices from 12:30-1:00 for employees to have lunch. Jones asked how lunch break currently works. Clement stated that the office remains open for lunch, staff typically sits together and if a customer comes in staff will wait on the customer and then return to lunch. Clement stated that the staff had a quick discussion at lunch regarding this proposal, staff would prefer to stay with the current system. Jones asked Bedard if she saw a major benefit to closing at lunch, Jones added that she feels there is a benefit to staying open during lunch.

Jones noted that the Town Administrator's office is now closed on Fridays, following a couple of personnel changes. She asked Clement if this was a permanent change. Clement stated that Benedix works late on Tuesday evening when the Town Clerk/Tax Collector's office is open until 7 and the plan is to have Mark Kennedy, the Planning Board Administrative Assistant, cover the Town Administrator's office on Fridays once he is fully trained.

Bedard added that she does not feel the remote work policy is serving the community as well as it did when it was set up during Covid. Jones stated that remote workdays could be discussed during the September 17th meeting.

The Board discussed the newly cleared area at the Rec and the possibility of utilizing that space as overflow parking. Bedard stated that the Board had discussed getting a quote to stump the area about a month ago. Bedard would like to make the land usable while not doing work that would need to be undone later. Clement stated that Robinson and the highway department did basic clean up a couple of weeks ago; Clement had spoken with Kaiser who estimated the project cost to be about \$5,000, that would be for equipment rental and town employees performing the work. Morgan stated that even temporary additional parking is a high priority for the rec commission at this point. Clement is working with Recreation Director, Gray, to come up with a solution. Morgan asked that everyone do their best not to disrupt the archery or pavilion areas. Clement stated that all parties involved would likely participate in a site walk.

Kleinman asked if the area being discussed presently was the same area with an easement that was discussed previously. It was clarified that the area with the easement is on the opposite side of the property. Morgan stated that he and Becky Dunham, Conservation Commission Chair, will be meeting in the near future to discuss parking in the easement, however the critically endangered black racer snake potentially has a habitat in that vicinity.

The Board began their third discussion on how to distribute the remaining \$131,000 ARPA funds. Jones reviewed the

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previously discussed ARPA funds requests, PFAs free fire gear for approximately \$48,000; amphitheater additional costs around \$10,000; pickleball/tennis courts in the realm of \$80,000-\$100,000; septic and flush toilets for the Grange at approximately \$35,000+; the mold remediation in the Police Department which is estimated to be \$50,000-\$75,000; and unanticipated costs during the construction of the road at the Rec Center totally about \$12,000. The Board was provided with up-to-date budget expenditures. Jones stated that based on previous Board discussions she feels each proposal has general Board support, the matter remains, how to fund each proposal. Jones suggested first discussing the proposals with the most obvious alternative funding sources. Jones explained that the Board does not need to definitively decide on each proposal this evening, the Rec Commission wanted the Board to be aware that their proposal is time sensitive.

Jones stated that the library appears right on track with their budget, they will likely not be able to absorb the additional costs to the amphitheater, so it makes sense to use ARPA funds. Jones stated that at the last meeting 3 Board members voiced support for mold remediation in the Police Department. It was also discussed at previous meetings that the pickleball/tennis courts would be a good option being that they are a potential revenue source, and the land would sit unused otherwise. Jones stated she got the impression from the Board during previous meetings that they felt the overage incurred during the construction of the road at the Rec could be easily absorbed into a highway budget line.

Morgan expressed his gratitude to Bedard for requesting additional quotes for the fencing around the pickleball/tennis courts. The new fencing quote reduced the project proposal from approximately \$100,000 to \$82,000; Morgan reminded everyone that the rec Commission is asking for half of the cost of the project. Morgan stated that the quotes have been reviewed by Kaiser and Gray and meet the specific criteria and specifications needed. The new project total is \$81,901, the Rec is requesting \$41,000 be paid with ARPA funds. Jones asked the Board for any comments or questions regarding the pickleball/tennis courts. Bedard motioned to approve spending \$82,000 for the purpose of constructing pickleball/tennis courts, to be funded, \$41,000 from ARPA funds and \$41,000 of Rec impact fees seconded by Morgan. Morgan – aye; Bedard – aye; Jones – aye; Kleinman – nay. Motion passed 3-1.

Kleinman motioned to approve the purchase of PFAs free fire gear using ARPA funds at a cost of \$48,000. Jones asked Kleinman how he would approach funding the mold remediation. Kleinman stated that he is in favor of funding the amphitheater overages with ARPA funds as well and states the mold remediation can be funded via the Capital Reserve Fund. Morgan seconded Kleinman's motions to approve the purchase of PFAs free fire gear using ARPA funds at a cost of \$48,000. Jones asked if there were any other comments. Bedard stated that she would vote no on this motion as the Fire budget has "plenty of room in it to absorb that expense." Clement stated that she spoke with Fire Chief Bird today and that he is able to absorb some of the costs. Clement proposed that the Board split the costs between ARPA and the fire budget, the Board was amenable to this. Clement suggested allocating \$24,000 to PFAs free fire gear, \$10,605 for amphitheater overages and \$50,000 for mold remediation in the police department. Morgan asked if there was a known cost for the mold remediation, Clement stated that the quotes she currently has are over \$50,000, however they are unsure the extent of the damage, so the cost is likely to change. Clement stated that she should have more information within the next 2 weeks. Morgan asked where the remainder of the costs would be absorbed. Clement stated that she has requested \$50,000 from ARPA and the remainder to come out of the Capital Reserve Fund for building maintenance. Jones added that depending on how much of the capital reserve is used will determine if a warrant article is needed to replenish the funds. Bedard stated that she feels there is enough money in the fire budget to cover the PFAs free fire gear, and that ARPA funds would be better used elsewhere. Bedard reiterated that she is in favor of the PFAs free fire gear. After reviewing the fire budget Kleinman asked Clement if Chief Bird could absorb the entire cost of \$48,000, Clement stated that Chief Bird said "most," he did not give a specific number. Kleinman amended his motion to approve the purchase of PFAs free fire gear using \$24,000 of ARPA funds and the remainder from the fire budget, seconded by Morgan. Morgan – aye; Kleinman – nay; Bedard – nay; Jones – aye. Motion passed 3-1.

The Board next discussed the library's request for \$10,605.72 to cover the remaining amphitheater costs. Bedard motioned to approve the spending \$10,605.72 of ARPA funds to pay the remaining amphitheater costs, seconded by Morgan, all in

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favor, motion carried.

Jones reviewed the remaining projects, mold remediation at the police department, the Grange project and the Rec Road. Morgan suggested waiting to discuss the mold remediation when firmer numbers are had. The Board was amenable to this. Jones stated that there was general Board support for the Grange project during previous discussions. Jones wondered if the Historical Society had considered fund raising to fund a portion of their project, no one from the Historical Society is present this evening, Jones will reach out. The Board discussed alternative funding sources for the Grange project.

The Board discussed the status of the mold remediation. Clement stated that the project was started about a month ago, the bills are being paid out of a due from liability account, they are being tracked, approximately \$15,000 has been spent thus far and is included in the \$50,000 estimate.

The Board signed the Cemetery Trustee alternate appointment slips.

Clement provided the Board with an updated contract from Health Trust. HealthTrust is updating their Medicaid advantage and drug plan package providing comparable coverage and reducing premiums for retirees. Morgan motions to approve signing the HealthTrust contract, seconded by Kleinman, all in favor, motion carried.

Clement provided the Board with a notice of intent to cut for a parcel on South Road which coincides with the land use change tax bill that the Board signed last week. Bedard motioned to sign the intent to cut, seconded by Morgan, all in favor, motion carried.

Clement is in receipt of a pre-disaster mitigation form that needs to be signed. Clement explained the town was already awarded the FEMA grant, the form authorizes the completion date to change from April 1, 2023, to October 1, 2024. Morgan motions to sign the form, seconded by Kleinman, all in favor, motion carried.

Clement gave an update regarding the Waste Management contract. The contract expires in June of 2025 and the district is looking into an extension with Waste Management for 5 years with the potential for a second 5-year extension. The cost to go out to bid is approximately \$30,000 and it is not anticipated to be prudent to the Town. Clement explained that the Town of Epping is potentially going to open a landfill by 2026, because of contracts the landfill will not be usable or an option for at least 8 years. Jones asked if there would be a rate change, Clement stated it appears there will be a 4.5% escalator each year.

Morgan updated the Board regarding Rec business. Morgan states that there is a lot of discussion by the Commission regarding field maintenance and drainage/irrigation. Morgan stated that a considerable amount of revenue has been lost recently due to flooding, particularly on the lower fields. Clement mentioned that she had spoken with Gray regarding opening a Capital Reserve Fund for outdoor maintenance of the fields. Morgan states he anticipates using remaining impact fees for the field maintenance. Morgan also stated the Commission has been discussing a Community Center.

Bedard asked for an update on network speeds at the Town Office. Clement stated she reached out to Block5 last week, she received an updated quote and contract. Clement will update the Board further at the next meeting. Bedard asked if Block5 could do a technology audit prior to budget season. Clement stated that Block 5 does this yearly.

Bedard would like to encourage all boards/committees to stream their meetings. Jones is agreeable, and states that all boards and committees should have someone who knows how to stream their meetings.

Jones stated that Budget Committee has a regular meeting September 16th at 6pm, on the 23rd they will hold a site walk at the library, that is the last official site walk. The committee is discussing a mini site walk at the Town Offices after their meeting

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on the 16th.

Ballot testing was done last Thursday. The Board discussed parking at the election next week. The Town Clerk's Office and the Selectboard would like to encourage volunteers and candidates to carpool and park either behind the school or the Town Office. Town Clerk Woss also suggested clearly delineating handicap parking spaces in the front of the building, Road Agent Robinson will assist.

At 7:25pm, Morgan motioned, seconded by Kleinman, to enter nonpublic for personnel, legal and safety. Morgan – aye; Kleinman – aye; Bedard – aye; Jones – aye. Motion passed.

At 8:21, Bedard motioned to come out of non-public and to seal the minutes, with Morgan as second. All were in favor.

At 8:22, Bedard made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Kleinman. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Jillian Benedix