

## **MINUTES OF THE NEW CASTLE SELECT BOARD**

**Monday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022 – 7:00 p.m. (Macomber Room & Virtual Meeting via Zoom)**

**Members Present:** Thomas Maher, Chair, Dave McGuckin, William Stewart.

**Members Absent:** None.

**Others Present:** Russ Bookholz, Pam Cullen, Larry Doyle, Jane Finn, Normand Houle, Dawn Lake, Ann McAndrew, Ken McDonald, Jennifer Rumph, Curt Springer, Carol White, Patricia Wilson.

Chair Maher called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

### **1. Approve Select Board minutes of March 22, 2022 meeting.**

Chair Maher postponed the approval of the minutes until the next Select Board meeting. A draft version of the minutes is available at the Town Hall.

### **2. Public Questions and Answers.**

Ken McDonald spoke about the annual Town meeting. He is working on reserving the Recreation Building on May 9<sup>th</sup> for setup and on May 10<sup>th</sup> for the meeting. Mr. McDonald is coordinating with Don White to have a police presence as usual. There are no contested races for any position this year. The Supervisor of the Checklist is an open position, and will probably be appointed at the time of the Town meeting. Selectman McGuckin asked if the Town needs to have three Supervisors of the Checklist. Jennifer Rumph responded that she believed the requirement was three. Chair Maher noted that someone will probably be identified to cover the position, though there may be a brief period after the election when there will not be three Supervisors of the Checklist.

Mr. McDonald noted that in a 2009 warrant article, the Town voted to combine the Town Clerk and Tax Collector positions. This year, the proposal is to separate the positions once again. Mr. McDonald stated that this is currently listed as a ballot item, but he and Pam Cullen believed that it should be a warrant article. Selectman Stewart stated that he had spoken with Town Attorney Keriann Roman, who advised him that this should be a ballot article. Chair Maher stated that the Selectmen will iron out the details this week. The preference would be to have a warrant article and vote at the annual meeting so that the Select Board could walk people through the vote. Mr. McDonald thought that if this will be a ballot item, it required a public hearing to allow for discussion before the annual meeting. Ms. Cullen believed that the Town must have a public hearing if pursuing a warrant article, as this gives the public the opportunity to speak and ask questions, whereas if the topic is only on the ballot, the public cannot ask questions at the Town meeting in May. Selectman McGuckin thought that the Town Clerk and Tax Collector positions were previously combined by a warrant article, so they should be separated by a warrant article. Selectman Stewart noted that the prior vote was supposed to be by ballot. Ms. Cullen suggested

that the Select Board ask the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA), as the DRA is supposed to monitor every warrant article. Lori Ruest, Town Accountant, will have to adjust the MS-737 and send back to the DRA if the procedure will be changing.

Patricia Wilson, 27 Colonial Lane, spoke about the snow removal and parking on Colonial Lane, and distributed plans. She noted that last summer, a retaining wall was filled on Town property and curbing was added to the neighboring Barker property, which did not allow the DPW to plow snow properly. This has resulted in cars having to park in front of Ms. Wilson's home. Ms. Wilson wanted to bring these safety concerns to the Select Board's attention.

Jane Finn asked why the Chair of the Budget Committee is responsible for taking meeting minutes at the Budget Committee meetings. She asked if there is money in the budget for a separate person to take the minutes. Selectman Stewart responded that Tom Smith, Budget Committee Chair, volunteered to take the meeting minutes, and there is money in the budget for a separate person to take the minutes if so desired.

### **3. New Business:**

#### **a. Public Hearing – Fee Schedule**

Chair Maher stated that the fees that will be adjusted this year are for the Police and Fire Departments, Historic District Commission, Building Inspector, Planning Board, Great Island Common and the volleyball summertime group, and the Water and Sewer Commission.

Selectman McGuckin motioned to open the public hearing at 7:19 p.m. Selectman Stewart seconded. The public hearing for the fee schedule adjustment opened at 7:19 p.m.

The Historic District Commission used to collect a fee for a work session that was contingent upon the total project cost. The Commission is now moving toward a \$25 flat fee for the work session, which is not connected to the project cost. The project fee will be on a sliding scale based on the full cost of the project.

Police Chief Don White requested to have parking fees be on a sliding scale at the officer's discretion and based on a number of factors such as public safety.

There will be a \$50 shoreland inspection fee. The Building Inspector's fees have also been updated so that the building permits read per \$1,000, not per 1,000 feet.

The Fire Department is attaching a fee schedule similar to that of the Police Department. Details will be a four hour minimum, and there will be an administrative fee of \$12 per hour that mirrors what the Police Department charges. Firefighters and EMTs will be paid \$45 per hour for details, and police officers are paid \$40 per hour.

The Great Island Common will adopt a new fee schedule. The new fees will be \$15 per vehicle, \$7 per vehicle for seniors, \$150 for a bus or trolley, and \$75 for a smaller bus. A full day

pavilion rental will be \$200, and half day rental will be \$100. A full day wedding area rental will be \$250. A season's pass to the park will be \$150, and senior passes are \$50. Selectman McGuckin noted that these fees have gone up roughly 50% for each category. The summertime volleyball group will be paying \$3,900 this year for the beach area rental, up from \$3,600 last year.

The Water and Sewer Commission will be increasing rates for a second meter for irrigation. The fee is currently \$40 for the additional meter, and is proposed to be \$300. Norm Houle, Chair of the Water and Sewer Commission, explained that the previous \$40 fee was wrong because it did not take into account the cost of the meter or labor to install the ancillary pieces, so it did not include all costs borne by the property owner. The new fee will correct this and will be all inclusive.

Ken McDonald stated that he will need to work with the Building Inspector to identify what forms will need to be updated on the Town website. Chair Maher will meet with Mr. McDonald to work through the corrections for the website. Mr. Houle pointed out that the meter fee is not currently on the Town website. He asked when the Common fee changed from per person to per vehicle. Selectman Stewart explained that this change occurred about two years ago.

Russ Bookholz, Town Building Inspector, noted that the building permit application fee is also proposed to increase from \$10 to \$25. This application fee is supposed to cover some of the cost for reviewing the application and passing it to the appropriate Board(s).

Jennifer Rumph asked what the entrance fee is for veterans at the Common. Selectman McGuckin responded that it is usually the same as the senior fee. Ms. Rumph felt that this should be identified separately. Selectman McGuckin agreed to make this change to the fee schedule.

Ann McAndrew noted that Town residents used to be able to use a pavilion at the Common once per year for no charge. She asked if this policy is still in effect. Chair Maher confirmed that this is still permitted for a maximum of one full day per year.

Selectman Stewart motioned to increase the building permit application fee from \$10 to \$25, and to add a second line for veterans for Great Island Common fees. Selectman McGuckin seconded. Motion carried unanimously. Selectman McGuckin motioned to approve all revised fees for the Town of New Castle as previously outlined. Selectman Stewart seconded. Motion carried unanimously. Selectman McGuckin motioned to close the public hearing. Selectman Stewart seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Deputy Town Clerk – Ken McDonald

Ken McDonald will be appointed as Deputy Town Clerk until May 11, 2022. Pam Cullen will assist with these duties, and has already been assisting with property taxes.

Selectman McGuckin motioned to appoint Ken McDonald as Deputy Town Clerk until the day after the Town meeting this year. Selectman Stewart seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Curt Springer pointed out the stipulations in RSA 41:18 regarding Deputy Town Clerks. Mr. McDonald responded that Jennifer Rumph, current Town Clerk, had already sworn him in today as the Deputy Town Clerk, and they have been working with the NH Department of State to ensure they are following the process correctly.

c. Historical Society – Dawn Lake

Dawn Lake spoke on behalf of the Historical Society. The group is looking to convert the land going down to the old fire house next to the Historic Society museum to a garden. The Garden Club would be willing to help and donate plants. Ms. Lake already spoke with the Cemetery Trustees since there is an old cemetery in that area. The Cemetery Trustees wanted to know which trees would be taken down. Ms. Lake noted that they only plan to take down dead trees. The group would also clear brush and weeds to expose the granite ledge and stone wall, while leaving the area as natural as possible. The area would be maintained moving forward. This work would fall under the Historic District budget.

Chair Maher cautioned to be mindful of the retaining wall along Route 1B, and suggested that the Historical Society coordinate with the DPW. Selectman Stewart added that the Select Board would like to look at the plan prior to any work taking place to ensure that everyone is on the same page. Ms. Lake was unsure if the group would be able to come up with a specific landscaping design. Selectman Stewart clarified that the Board would mainly like to see what will be taken out. Selectman McGuckin agreed that it will be important to identify anything that will be removed, such as marking trees that will be taken down.

Pam Cullen noted a previous problem on Ocean Road related to trees being taken down, which resulted in the formation of the New Castle Tree Committee. Selectman McGuckin responded that this Committee has since disbanded.

d. Garden Club

Selectman McGuckin stated that the Garden Club would like to have a garden tour sometime in June 2023. This would be a full day garden tour as a part of the New Castle 400 celebration. Ms. Lake shared that this event will include the Historical Society and New Castle Church so the public can go into those buildings as part of the tour. The garden tour date is confirmed to be on June 17, 2023.

e. Acceptance of the Asset Management Plan for \$65,800.00

Norm Houle, Chair of the Water and Sewer Commission, spoke. The acceptance of the Asset Management Plan will be postponed until the April 18, 2022 Select Board meeting because there was no notice of public hearing. For the Select Board to accept a grant in excess of \$10,000, there must be a seven day notification in the newspaper along with notification in Town, such as on the website or bulletin boards, which did not occur. The posting on the Town website needs to

be mirrored in the newspaper notification. Mr. Houle stated that the grant must be accepted by April 30, 2022.

f. Town Projects

Chair Maher provided an update on the IT projects. Most of the investment into hardware, computers, firewall and servers is nearing an end thanks to a lot of work on Ken McDonald's part. The Town Hall is now using Office 365. The next step is to formally engage the Portsmouth Computer Group in a service contract so that the PCG will be the Town's IT provider moving forward. The PCG will train employees on using technology properly, and will troubleshoot issues that may arise. Chair Maher recommended engaging the Portsmouth Computer Group before July 1. The expense will be \$1,500 per month, which encompasses the cost of Office 365 as well as a number of other services listed in the contract. He added that with the help of the PCG, the Town will now have some degree of security in place so that in the future, credit card transactions may be accepted. Mr. McDonald explained the importance of the PCG being able to assist. He felt that it is time for employees to receive education on pre-steps they can take, such as rebooting the computers and printers, in order to get the most efficient help when needed.

Selectman McGuckin felt that the Portsmouth Computer Group has done a great job overall and is reasonably priced. He stated that now is the time to hire them because the Town has not been current with respect to technology. Although the cost would be \$18,000 per year, it is a service that the Town really needs to embrace and use. Chair Maher wanted to know the specific number of hours of training that PCG will commit to, and wanted to be sure that some other items are specifically spelled out in the contract before signing. He asked if the contract with PCG needs to be kept on the fiscal year. Selectman Stewart suggested doing a 14 month contract.

Selectman Stewart provided an update on the water project. Work is continuing with the Spring Hill Road/Lavenger Lane water line replacement. There was a deep freeze for three days, which resulted in residents on those streets having to use the temporary water lines, which froze up for some homes. The vendor was very responsive and worked through the problem. Selectman Stewart noted that this is not a change order that would result in an additional cost to the Town or the residents of those two streets. The vendor has encountered some ledge, but the overall progress is where they want it to be and the project is moving along on track. Selectman McGuckin asked when Portsmouth expects to take over the water line. Selectman Stewart responded that they anticipate turning over the plans to the City of Portsmouth in the beginning of July after substantial completion of the project. The Portsmouth City Council has already voted to give authority to the City Manager to accept the water line.

Selectman Stewart read through the 17 warrant articles that the Select Board put together. The proposed warrant articles will be attached to these minutes. Selectman Stewart noted that there will be a Budget Committee public hearing tomorrow, during which the warrant articles dealing with money will be discussed.

Selectman McGuckin motioned to approve the warrant articles as written. Selectman Stewart seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **4. Old Business.**

Selectman Stewart spoke with Sam Reed, President of Wood Island Association. The Wood Island Association is proposing fireworks on August 6 this summer to celebrate Kittery's 375<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Mr. Reed wanted to know if New Castle would be interested in participating by keeping the Common open so that people could watch the fireworks from the beach. Selectman Stewart suggested keeping the gate open until 11:00 p.m. for that particular evening. Selectman McGuckin advised to make sure Police Chief Don White is aware of the plans.

#### **5. New Business.**

Selectman McGuckin proposed that after the annual Town meeting in May, the Select Board move back to in-person meetings only, with no Zoom option. He observed that the State does not require meetings to be held virtually now. He would also like to move meetings back to the Town Hall unless there is a large attendance expected.

Patricia Wilson asked if it is a burden to hold a meeting live and via Zoom simultaneously. Chair Maher said that there is a technology aspect involved and that people are shifting back to in-person meetings. There is also the issue of convenience for some people. Selectman Stewart felt that it is mostly challenging for the person running the meeting if there is a lot of activity online. He mentioned possibly making the meeting available virtually in a listen-only mode.

Curt Springer shared that he has done a lot of Zoom meetings and noted that it is unclear how the coronavirus is going to evolve. He felt that keeping Zoom or another virtual option is a good idea. Selectman Stewart pointed out that it is a different element when someone participates in the meeting virtually but is not presenting. Mr. Houle agreed with Selectman Stewart in allowing the public to view the meeting virtually. If there is a particular issue that needs to be presented, Mr. Houle suggested requiring the individual to appear in-person at the meeting.

Carol White spoke in favor of continuing to have a Zoom option for Select Board meetings. She felt that these types of virtual meetings may be the way of the future, and it allows more people to be involved in town government. She believed that people should be able to make brief comments if appearing virtually.

Ann McAndrew added that many elderly people do not drive after dark, and would really appreciate having the option of Zoom meetings moving forward.

The conversation returned to the annual Town meeting. Mr. McDonald stated that Moderator John Poisson needed to know whether the meeting will be set up with COVID-19 precautions, such as chairs spaced apart, and an outdoor venue with audio. Selectman McGuckin felt that the tendency should be to get back to normal as best as possible. He agreed that chairs should be spaced six feet apart, but did not see the need for an outdoor setup. Selectman Stewart responded that the Select Board will work with Mr. Poisson and the supervisors of the checklist on these details.

**5. Committee Reports.**

Chair Maher stated that he received the Fire Department and Police Department reports, which will be attached to the approved minutes at the next Select Board meeting.

**6. Adjourn.**

Selectman McGuckin moved to adjourn the meeting. Selectman Stewart seconded. The motion carried, unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Meghan Rumph  
*Recording Secretary*