

MINUTES OF THE SELECT BOARD

Monday October 4, 2021, 7:00 PM

Recreation Building/ Via Zoom

Present: Tom Maher-Chair, Dave McGuckin-Selectman, William Stewart-Selectman and Jennifer Smith-Administrative Assistant to the Select Board and Recording Secretary.

Public Participants: Chris Robillard-DPW Supervisor, Norm Houle- Water & Sewer Commission Chair, Thomas Smith-Treasurer and Michael McAndrew.

Chairman Maher opened the public session meeting at 7:00PM.

1. Approve Select Board minutes of September 20, 2021

Selectman McGuckin made a motion to approve the Select Board minutes of September 20, 2021. Selectman Stewart seconded and the motion carried unanimously, 3-0.

2. Public Questions and Answers.

No public comments offered.

3. New Business

a. New Castle 10K Road Race – April 22, 2022 – Nick Diana

Nick Diana, organizer of the New Castle 10K Road Race, requested permission to hold their next race in New Castle on April 23, 2022.

Chairman Maher supported the request with the understanding that any approval would be contingent upon Covid continuing to not trend upwards.

Selectman McGuckin offered a motion to approve Nick Diana's request to hold the New Castle 10K Road Race on April 23, 2022. Selectman Stewart seconded and said motion carried unanimously, 3-0.

b. Automatic Meter Reading Presentation – Chris Robillard - DPW

Chris Robillard, DPW Supervisor gave an overview presentation of DPW's proposal to automate the reading of water meters for the town. Mr. Robillard informed the Select Board that the proposed automated system would improve efficiency, eliminate meter reading and billing errors, detect leaks in real time and decrease manpower hours associated with meter reading by approximately 100 hours annually. A copy of Mr. Robillard's Power Point presentation will be included in the filing of the minutes.

Selectman Stewart asked how the system transmits information.

Mr. Robillard responded that it is a mesh network that transmits by radio frequency. The exact system is already being used by the City of Portsmouth in New Castle and the vendor has already agreed in its proposal to offer Portsmouth's rates to New Castle. The initial quote is for \$38,881 for approximately 300 units. The town has closer to 380 units, so this price is not 100% accurate for a final cost. There

would also be a separate annual maintenance fee of \$2,835. Currently, the time frame for installation would be 3 to 5 weeks. After which, DPW would run a third wire to each meter to complete the project. Mr. Robillard closed by stating that the return of investment would be approximately 3 years.

Norm Houle, Chair of the Water and Sewer Commission, stated that the Water and Sewer Commission endorses this project.

Chairman Maher asked if there would be any other level of investment associated with this project.

Mr. Robillard stated that an increased level in electric cost to the town should be anticipated. He further stated that each unit operates by battery, but to date, Portsmouth has not had to replace any.

Selectman McGuckin asked if the proposal cost would increase over time if the town were to do this project in segments.

Mr. Robillard responded that the company has not seen a cost increase in 10 years, but is anticipating going from \$75 a unit to \$80 in the near future. Mr. Robillard opined that, given that information, it is unlikely that once they go to \$80 that they will have another increase in the foreseeable future.

Thomas Smith, Treasurer, inquired if the cost of this project would be paid by the users.

Chairman Maher stated that the funds would come from one of the town's water trust funds.

Chairman Maher thanked Mr. Robillard for his presentation.

c. Sawtelle Bridge Water Line Re-Wrapping – Norm Houle

Norm Houle, Chairman of the Water and Sewer Commission, read a statement into the record regarding the water line hanging from the Sawtelle Bridge and its condition and how its remediation should be paid for. Mr. Houle informed the Select Board that his statements reflect the view of the Water and Sewer Commission. Mr. Houle reported that the Commission feels the path to remediation, especially how to pay for it, is very much in the hands of the Select Board. Mr. Houle stated that the water main crossing the Sawtelle Bridge carries the majority of the water that feeds the New Castle system. The Water and Sewer Commission was told that the town could not upgrade this part of the line during the recent water project because the current bridge could not hold a larger and heavier pipe. According to NHDOT, replacement of the bridge has no identified time frame, but could take 15 to 25 years to do so. The Commission believes this pipe needs to be protected from the harsh elements of the coastline and winter road salts. There are some 74 points on the pipe that are exposed to the elements where the old brackets were replaced. The Water and Sewer Commission believes this remediation is a legitimate water line expense and that a change order should be in place and that the re-painting of the bridge is also a legitimate responsibility of the project. The Commission would like to be assured that the Select Board controlled Water Trust Fund is not going to be a funding source for any water project shortfalls, and in conclusion, presuming the repainting will take place, the Commission would like the scope of work broadened to include the rewrapping of the line where it is exposed and that water project funds be used to pay for this work.

A copy of Mr. Houle's statement will be included in the filing of the minutes.

Selectman Stewart stated that the water project did not do any work on the Sawtelle Bridge. The pipe was left in place. Rusted brackets, which were deferred maintenance for the water system, were identified and those were replaced with new brackets as part of the water project as a way to help the Commission. This situation was not caused by the water project. Selectman Stewart further stated that the town is trying to work with DOT to share some responsibility for repairs to the bridge, especially the painting component.

Mr. Houle reiterated that the Water and Sewer Commission's main priority is the rewinding of the line.

Selectman Stewart asked if there is any danger to the pipe by it being unwrapped.

Mr. Houle responded he did not know.

Selectman Stewart asked if the Water and Sewer Commission has a quote on the cost of the re-wrap.

Mr. Houle stated that a roofer has provided the Commission with an estimation of cost of \$37,000 for materials alone.

Selectman Stewart asked if the Commission is asking the Select Board to contact Underwood Engineering to investigate costs?

Mr. Houle responded that he is asking the Select Board to contact Underwood Engineering and have them approach Evrocks to find out what it would cost to incorporate the rewinding of the line.

Selectman Stewart agreed to speak with Underwood Engineering.

d. Town Projects Update

Chairman Maher stated that the town's IT project has commenced and the IT company's findings report should become available over the next couple of weeks.

Chairman Maher also reported that someone in the Mainmast neighborhood has requested a yield sign be placed where the previously painted yield sign existed.

e. Neighborhood Water Improvement Program Update

Selectman Stewart stated that the project is a little behind, but progressing. The question of weather will dictate how far along the project gets this fall.

4. Old Business

Michael McAndrew, 27 Steamboat Lane, asked if Steamboat Lane is still scheduled to be repaved this fall. He stated that he was previously informed that when the street is repaved, the 3x3 damage to his driveway caused by a town plow last winter would be repaired and repaved as well.

Selectman McGuckin stated that there are 4 streets scheduled to be paved this fall, including Steamboat Lane.

5. Covid Update

Chairman Maher stated that the Select Board and Dr. Kathy Hollister, the Health Officer, are currently working on plans and strict guidelines to reopen the Recreation Building to the public for tennis and basketball. The Select Board hopes to make an announcement regarding this matter at its next scheduled meeting.

6. Committee Reports

Chairman Maher stated that the Fire Department and Police Department monthly reports would be attached to this meeting's minutes.

7. Adjourn

Selectman McGuckin offered a motion to adjourn at 8:17pm. Selectman Stewart seconded and said motion passed unanimously, 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Smith
Recording Secretary