

MINUTES OF THE SELECT BOARD
Monday, March 20, 2017 – 7:00 PM

Present: Dave McGuckin, Chair, Bill Stewart, Selectman, Tom Maher, Selectman, and Bette Jane Riordan, Secretary.

Also present: Dave Borden, Andy Schulte, Laurie Chandler

1. Approve Select Board minutes of February 6, 21st and March 6, 2017.

Selectman Maher made a Motion to Approve the February 6th minutes of the Select Board meeting as amended. Selectman Stewart seconded, and the Motion carried.

Selectman Maher made a Motion to Approve the February 21st minutes of the Select Board meeting as amended. Selectman Stewart seconded, and the Motion carried.

Selectman Maher made a Motion to Approve the March 6th minutes of the Select Board, as amended. Selectman Stewart seconded and the Motion carried.

2. Public Question and Answer.

Andy Schulte expressed concern about a prior action of a Select Board resulting in \$101,000 from the Sewer Trust Fund being withdrawn and paid to the City of Portsmouth as reimbursement to them for expenses for a commissioned study of New Castle's sewer infrastructure, completed by Woodard and Curran and Underwood Engineering. Mr. Schulte recalled that the trust funds were used to pay for a study of not just the town system, but included private systems (Wentworth properties) as well. He did not believe that was an allowable use of trust fund monies. Chair McGuckin explained that at the time conveyance of the infrastructure to Portsmouth was a high priority. He noted at one point both the water and sewer funds were co-mingled, but the Select Board separated them. He further stated that conveyance of the infrastructure is not the chief priority at the present time.

Selectman Stewart told Mr. Schulte he understood his concern and explained that the study was necessary to determine the status and condition of the whole sewer system, including the Wentworth properties, to get a better understanding of what needed to be done to resolve any deficiencies. The funds were used for the study to determine possible effects on rates and needed upgrades. He agreed the matter is a grey area, but legal counsel was consulted and determined the use was reasonable. The Town gained valuable data from the study. He stressed that Mr. Schulte should look at the bigger picture, as the benefit the Town received from the study is part of the basis upon which current decisions are being made. The study is being used for the betterment of New Castle.

Selectman Maher stated that the conveyance of the infrastructure to Portsmouth is presently on hold, as other issues need to be addressed such as critical fire flows,

and the pumping system. The Town needs to fix what it has. It is impossible to separate the two systems as they are linked. Mr. Schulte stated he did not believe that legal counsel understands the whole issue.

3. Items.

a. Rte. 1-B Speed reduction.

Chair McGuckin referred to a recent letter from DOT which seemed to indicate New Castle wanted to expand the area for the speed reduction for four months May 15th through September 15th. After discussion, the Board determined that there will be no change in the area subject to the speed reduction, and not expand it to include the causeway. It will start at the cemetery coming onto the Island, proceed through the village and end at Spring Hill Road.

b. Trustees of the Trust Funds.

Current trustee David Borden advised the Board that David McArdle, who filled out Peter Reed's term, has resigned, effective March 2017, leaving a vacancy to be filled by appointment to complete the remainder of this term. He introduced Laurie Chandler who has been sitting in and contributing and is willing to serve as a trustee. She had already provided her background information to the Board. Mr. Borden heartily supported her willingness and qualifications and asked the Board to appoint her. After brief discussion, Selectman Stewart made a Motion to Appoint Ms. Chandler as a trustee of the trust funds to fill out remainder of the term ending in May 2018. After discussion, it was determined she will however have to put her name on the ballot for the May 2017 Town meeting to be formally elected to serve out the remainder of the Reed/McArdle term. Selectman Maher seconded the amended Motion to reflect she is appointed until May 2017. Motion carried.

c. Town Administrator.

Chair McGuckin reported that the Board now has a preliminary job description, which they hope to get to prospective candidates as soon as possible. The position is included in the budget which when it passes at Town Meeting, will allow the position to be filled July 1, 2017.

d. 18 Ritson.

Selectman Stewart stated there has been no response from DES to date regarding encroachment on the Town's Right of Way, and the non-adherence to the approved plan. The main problems are the location of the dock and the stairs, but only DES has jurisdiction over the dock. Discussion took place about having the Chair of the Conservation Commission contact DES, which has been understaffed and now has a new Commissioner. Selectman Stewart will follow up on this matter.

e. TTHM mitigation plan.

Chair McGuckin asked for comments. Selectman Stewart reported that the plan would include hard flushing of certain pipes a week to 10 days before the next testing in April. Hard flushing means flushing out the residue. If it works then they will hard flush the entire island. He would like to review the entire draft plan which was done by Underwood Engineering for the town. If acceptable, the Board will submit the plan by the due date, which is March 31, 2017.

f. Lower cost sewer pump improvement.

Selectman Stewart reported that this issue was brought to the Water Sewer Commission, which as a whole generally supported this less costly plan to alleviate some of the sewer infrastructure issues. Members of the Commission had several questions which Selectman Stewart has forwarded to the potential vendor for response. There was discussion regarding the options for financing and possible sewer rate adjustments which may have to take place with the improvements and repairs. Inequities in the sewer charges were also discussed, with respect to the Wentworth area. (107 homeowners). Selectman Maher asked if Portsmouth charged different rates for commercial and residential users. There was further discussion about the revision of the water/sewer rates, which are designed to encourage conservation and will be more equitable.

g. Town meeting warrant article.

Selectman Stewart presented a draft chart he prepared outlining the benefits and burdens of various options in a comparative format, showing how, depending on which scenario the Board eventually decides upon, the gains in fire flows, etc. expected, impact the eventual selected option to be placed before the citizens at Town Meeting in May. The Board discussed at length options ranging from a \$4million, \$5.7 million, and \$8 million warrant article to deal with the infrastructure. Also discussed were the options of putting forth a conditional warrant article this May, or possibly delaying this warrant article to a Special Town Meeting in September 2017, when more concrete information would be available. In any event, all agreed that a Public Information Hearing on the Select Board's decision needs to take place in April in a timely manner so as to comply with State laws, and to better inform the public on what to expect at this Town Meeting in May.

4. New Business: None.

5. Committee Reports.

a. Library

Selectman Maher discussed the Library Trustees Budget, which he indicated would be kept flat for the next fiscal year. The matter of the status of the Library Director is solely within the purview of the Trustees, not the Select Board. The Board's function is to set the budget, and it is up to the trustees to determine how to allocate the approved funding.

b. Ad hoc Financial Committee

Selectman Stewart reported he is meeting with a group of local citizens assembled by Peter Tarlton, who have financial expertise to assist with assessing how the repairs to the Town's infrastructure could best be financed. Mr. Tarlton had offered his assistance at prior meetings, and agreed to assemble those individuals who had expressed an interest in assisting with various recommendations in terms of types of and length of terms for financing the various options for the warrant articles. He will report back to the Board.

There being no further business to come before the Select Board, Selectman Maher made a Motion to Adjourn, which was seconded by Selectman Stewart. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.