

MINUTES OF THE SELECT BOARD

Monday June 21, 2021, 7:00 PM

Macomber Room / 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: Dr. Kathy Hollister- Health Officer, Sandra Bisset-Energy Committee and Mary Ann Driscoll-Safe Path

Chairman Maher opened the public session meeting at 7:02PM. Chairman Maher explained the nature of the meeting, indicating it is a hybrid meeting in which Zoom viewers will be allowed to participate during the public questions and answers portion of the meeting. After that, the meeting will move to visual only for those in attendance via Zoom. Anyone with an item on the agenda is expected to be physically present.

1. Approve Select Board minutes of June 7, 2021

Selectman McGuckin made a motion to approve the minutes as amended of the Select Board Meetings of June 7, 2021. Selectman Stewart seconded and the motion carried unanimously, 3-0.

2. Public Questions and Answers.

No comments were offered.

3. New Business

a. Covid Update

Dr. Kathy Hollister, Health Officer, gave a brief presentation regarding the current situation of Covid in the State of New Hampshire stating that since June 18, 2021 there have only been 75 new cases of Covid reported in the state. Fifty three percent of New Hampshire residents have been fully vaccinated. The big state wide vaccination sites are winding down and there will be more “pop-up” tents and vans distributing vaccines instead. These sites will carry all 3 vaccines.

The CDC has been giving the variants level numbers and the Delta Variant, which originated in India, is considered more contagious and is most likely going to become the dominant strain in the U.S. So far, the vaccines do work against the Delta variant. New Hampshire has lifted its State of Emergency and the State of Maine will be lifting its State of Emergency July 1, 2021. Businesses are able to open at full capacity now.

Selectman Stewart asked if the vaccines for ages 12-17 do in fact have potential health risks.

Dr. Hollister stated it does appear that the rate of the heart being involved in Covid is higher than the myocarditis being involved in vaccinations. It is an extremely rare event.

Chairman Maher thanked Dr. Hollister for her presentation.

b. Abatements

Jennifer Smith presented two abatements to the Select Board for their approval.

David McGuckin, 141 Cranfield St. for \$38.18

Jane Finn, 169 Portsmouth Ave, for \$779.53.

Selectman Stewart questioned whether the loss of view for the property located at 169 Portsmouth was seasonal or all year long and suggested the Select Board not vote on the matter without further clarification. Selectman McGuckin and Chairman Maher agreed.

Selectman Stewart offered a motion to approve the abatement for David McGuckin, 141 Cranfield St. Chairman Maher seconded and said motion carried 2-0 -1 with Selectman McGuckin abstaining.

c. HDC Appointment – Irene Bush

Chairman Maher stated that Jeff Hughes will be stepping down as a member of the Historic District Commission (HDC) and the commission has asked the Select Board to appoint Irene Bush as voting member to replace Mr. Hughes.

Selectman McGuckin offered a motion to appoint Irene Bush to the Historic District Commission. Selectman Stewart seconded and said motion passed unanimously 3-0.

d. Energy Committee – Sandra Bisset

Chairman Maher stated that he is currently working with Sandra Bisset, Energy Committee, to draft a letter requesting Eversource perform an energy audit for the Town of New Castle.

Ms. Bisset explained that Eversource requires this letter in order to move forward with an audit. Ms. Bisset further stated that the Energy Committee will be keeping minutes of all their meetings and that it is anticipated that their main focus will be improving the energy efficiency of the Rec Building.

Selectman McGuckin offered a motion to empower the Energy Committee to perform an energy audit for the town. Selectman Stewart seconded and said motioned carried unanimously 3-0.

e. Safe Path – Mary Ann Driscoll

Chairman Maher stated that the Safe Path Committee would like to firmly establish the town's official right of way along Route 1B and the committee has a reasonable quote from an engineer for approximately \$25,000. Chairman Maher introduced Mary Ann Driscoll of the Safe Path Committee to speak to the Select Board.

Ms. Driscoll stated that the Safe Path Committee is looking to improve safety and it is difficult to come up with a design when you aren't exactly certain what is available. Bill Doucette has agreed to do the engineering work and has given us a great estimate. The Safe Path Committee is requesting the Select Board authorize the town attorney review and approve the contract and to also authorize the committee to fund raise \$25,000 to perform the engineering, as well as have some additional funds for unforeseen costs.

Selectman Stewart asked if the committee is anticipating the project to eventually go through the center of town.

Ms. Driscoll responded "yes".

Selectman Stewart asked if the process will be that the town will review the contract with the surveyor, then engage the contract and expend the funds, and the back fill will be raising the money.

Chairman Maher responded "yes".

Selectman Stewart suggested the committee give the Select Board the contract with the engineer to have it reviewed by legal and then it will be ready to go as soon as the committee has the funds to engage him. And when its time to expend funds, we will vote to do so from the trust fund.

Chairman Maher and Selectman Stewart both expressed their support of the project.

All three members of the board were in agreement to instruct the Safe Path Committee to proceed.

f. Town Projects

Chairman Maher stated that the tree outside Town Hall had recently been removed by Eversource. Town Officials had been made aware this past winter that the tree was severely compromised with disease, and arrangements were made with Eversource to have the tree taken down during the town wide process of cutting back trees for safety. While the Select Board did not have much prior notice of the tree's ultimate removal date, its removal had been anticipated.

Chairman Maher also discussed the Town Clerk's Office mandated state need for firewall in the office computer and advised that the town should secure an outside firm to help the with that security.

g. Neighborhood Water Improvement Program Update

Selectman Stewart stated that the town is still waiting on the signed petition to establish the Special Assessment District to be returned from the residents participating in the program. Attorney Larry Leavitt, who represents the group, has a few questions regarding the petition and will therefore be put in contact with the attorney who drafted the petition. Selectman Stewart further stated that he has simultaneously been in contact with the state regarding timing and a few other details. Select Stewart closed by stating that he has drafted a letter to the City of Portsmouth regarding its acceptance of the private water lines as public. This letter will need to be signed by all three selectmen.

h. Reschedule 7/5/21 BOS meeting - holiday

It was decided that the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Select Board will be held on July 6th at 7pm due to the holiday on July 5th. This meeting will be held 100% live in the Macomber Room, with no option of Zoom.

i. Repaving of Wildrose Lane

Selectman Stewart stated that he had received a call from the Portsmouth Public Works Department regarding the work currently being performed on Wildrose Lane to replace the water main. This work is requiring the Public Works Department to rip up a very large portion of the road. Portsmouth is proposing that they restore the road to rough course and the Town of New Castle do the finish course. New Castle's CIP currently has Wildrose Lane scheduled to be repaved in 2028. Selectman Stewart further stated that he has asked Portsmouth to provide the BOS with a quote.

It was agreed that Selectman Stewart would continue discussions with Portsmouth with the board supporting a possible "quid pro quo" solution.

j. Adjourn

Selectman McGuckin offered a motion to adjourn at 8:03pm. Selectman Stewart seconded and said motion passed unanimously 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Smith
Recording Secretary