

MINUTES OF THE NEW CASTLE SELECT BOARD
Tuesday, July 6th, 2021 – 7:00 p.m. (Macomber Room)

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

Members Absent: None.

Others Present: Laurie Chandler, Jane Finn, Ann McAndrew.

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

1. Approve Select Board minutes of June 21, 2021 and June 29, 2021 meetings.

Selectman McGuckin made a motion to approve the June 21, 2021 minutes as amended and the June 29, 2021 minutes as amended. Selectman Maher seconded. Motion carried unanimously by a vote of 3-0.

2. Public Questions and Answers.

Ann McAndrew, 27 Steamboat Lane, stated that she heard that there were numerous trees cut down at the Coast Guard Station field, commonly referred to as the dog park. Selectman McGuckin responded that he had given approval to the Great Island Garden Club last November to cut down invasives in that area, but he should have talked to NHDES first given the proximity to the shoreline. The Town has spoken with DES, who would like the area to be replaced with native plantings. Selectman Stewart clarified that there is a 50 by 25 foot grid established within 50 feet of the shoreline, which gives points to determine how many plantings need to be in that area. The Town Garden Club and Conservation Commission will work together to make sure the bank is stabilized and replanted appropriately. Selectman McGuckin noted that the remedial planting will not occur until at least the fall, when planting conditions are more suitable.

Jane Finn, 169 Portsmouth Avenue, asked if this will be a joint project between the Conservation Commission and Garden Club. Selectman McGuckin responded that the Garden Club will likely drive the project at least in terms of the proposed layout. Ms. Finn also asked about restoring the area in front of her house that was affected by the Town's ongoing water project. Selectman Stewart stated that he will follow up with the contractor for an update.

3. New Business:

a. Town Clerk/Tax Collector.

Selectman McGuckin motioned to appoint Jennifer Rumph as the new Town Clerk and Tax Collector. Chairman Maher seconded. Motion carried unanimously by a vote of 3-0.

b. Abatement – 169 Portsmouth Ave.

Chairman Maher noted that this topic was handled at the June 29 meeting of the Select Board. Selectman Stewart added that he did follow up with Avitar Associates to go over their criteria for determining the value of Ms. Finn's view. He explained that Avitar looks at the difference in value if a house with a view were placed in an area with no view. He noted that partial views are considered as well, such as if a neighbor plants trees on his/her property that obstruct another person's views. If the trees are on the land of the homeowner, then 75% of the value of the view is given because that person can control the trees via pruning, etc. If a neighbor controls trees such that the homeowner cannot prune them but still has some view, 50% of the value of the view is attributed to the property. There is subjectiveness in how obstructed the view is and where the view is.

The Selectmen looked at the views of 169 Portsmouth Avenue from the road and determined that it is a somewhat obstructed view, so they approved 50% of the abatement request, which reduced the assessed value by \$60,000. The assessor with Avitar recommended approval of 100% of the abatement request, which would have reduced the value by \$120,000. This assessor found that the view was entirely obstructed in his opinion, but he deferred to the Select Board for final determination. The Select Board did not think the entire view is obstructed.

Ms. Finn stated that Avitar had explained the views totally different to her, and that the calculations were broken down based on the type of view (river view, back channel view, etc.). Chairman Maher noted that it is the Select Board's understanding that the overall package of views was assessed at \$120,000. He felt that there is still a view at the property, but it is reduced.

Selectman McGuckin suggested that Selectman Stewart participate in a phone call with Ms. Finn and Avitar so that everyone is on the same page. Selectman Stewart pointed out that the Town will be conducting a new assessment across Town, so they will get a whole new read on everything soon. Chairman Maher suggested inviting the assessor from Avitar into the home if possible so that the assessment is more accurate.

c. Trustees of the Trust Fund Appointment – Laurie Chandler, Alternate.

Selectman McGuckin motioned to appoint Laurie Chandler as an Alternate member of the Trustees of the Trust Fund. Selectman Stewart seconded. Motion carried unanimously, 3-0.

d. Town Projects Update.

Chairman Maher stated that 12 to 15 private aerial lights need to be transferred to LEDs. These are basically street lights and once transferred, would be owned as part of the roster of Town street lights. Chairman Maher is working with Ken McDonald to get figures on the costs to pay off the current lights and to pay for the new LED lights, which may cost between \$110 to \$150 per street light but are much more efficient. The aim is for a two year return on investment.

Chairman Maher noted that firewall is needed for the Town Clerk office. A vendor is needed to do the work, which will ideally be done by the fall. Selectman McGuckin stated that Town Accountant Christiane McAllister had some ideas about putting together a request for proposal. Selectman Stewart added that money was allocated in the budget for technology purposes.

Chairman Maher stated that Rockingham Electric should be finishing the lighting project at the library. They have experienced delays due to supply chain issues.

e. **Neighborhood Water Improvement Program Update.**

Selectman Stewart stated that the Select Board is waiting to receive the signed petition from homeowners to begin the process. The petition is to designate Spring Hill Road/Lavenger Lane as a special assessment district. Residents on the streets were concerned that the petition would not provide them an “out”, as the petition itself did not lay this out. Selectman Stewart explained that residents do have the option to opt out, but would still have to pay for the engineering costs. He is expecting to have the signed petition in a week or two. The Select Board already has the paperwork from Underwood Engineering to start the engineering work, which is estimated to cost about \$1,500 per house, or \$30,000 total.

4. Old Business.

Chairman Maher noted that he received Committee reports from Chief White and Chief Hartmann. These reports will be attached to the minutes. Ms. Finn asked about recent break-ins that she has heard about occurring in Town. The Select Board had not heard anything about this, but will consult with Chief White to get further information.

5. Adjourn.

Selectman McGuckin moved to adjourn the meeting. Chairman Maher seconded. The motion carried, unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Meghan Rumph
Recording Secretary