

**MINUTES OF THE SELECT BOARD**  
**Monday, December 2, 2019 – 7PM**

**Present:** Damon Frampton, Chair, Tom Maher, Selectman, Bill Stewart, Selectman, and Pam Cullen, Secretary.

**Also present:** Chief Ted Hartmann, Dave McGuckin, Tom Smith, Ken McDonald, Mike and Ann McAndrew, Fire Chief Ted Hartmann, John Ireland, Bob and Ann Miller.

Chair Frampton opened the meeting at 7:00 PM.

**1. Approve Select Board minutes of November 18, 2019.**

Selectman Maher made a Motion to Approve the minutes of the November 18, 2019 Select Board Meeting as amended. The Motion was seconded by Selectman Stewart. Motion carried.

**2. Public Questions and Answers.**

**a. Town Administrator.**

Tom Smith stated he is before the Board this evening to address a subject he had raised at the last meeting of the Select Board: namely the possibility of hiring an Administrator. He noted that in addition to some of his previous comments he believes that the present Board is one of the most effective he has experienced, and stands before them with respect. He did not want to infer that the Board was anything but well run, and did not want his prior comments to be misconstrued in any way. He stated that he recognizes that more and more responsibilities are being asked of municipalities. Continuity for the employees is important. He believes it would be helpful for all in promoting consistency in the running of the Town. He apologized for any other inference and thanked the Select Board.

**b. Year to date tax collections.**

Pam Cullen reported the Town has collected \$902,400.00 on 2019 taxes to date. She believes this is positive as they are not due until December 20.

**3. New Business.**

**a. Non-profits. – Pam Cullen and John Ireland.**

Pam indicated that she had provided the Board with a report compiled by Jon Ireland based upon his research. She noted that there are twenty non-profits that the Town gives annually. She asked the Board to thank John for his excellent work. She also noted that a correction was being made to the total amount.

John noted that we have received requests from all but two of the entities, and also received thank you communications for last year's donations. He was not able to contact Community Tool Box (#6), but did provide some information he learned about them, and he believes they are a good organization. Seacoast Visiting Nurses

also has not sent any communication. He noted they do help the Town. Cross Roads & Wildlife sent the Town generic letters. He supported both organizations and suggested that Wildlife be given more than \$50 as the Town uses them. With respect to Crossroads they asked for a range from \$25 to \$300. John discussed some of the other entities such as Gather. A total of \$13,380 was requested. Last year the Town gave \$11,000. This does not include anything for MHT. He referred the Board to the book he assembled for additional information.

Selectman Stewart thanked John; noting the information would be very helpful as the Town enters its budget season.

Dave McGuckin asked about the criteria. Is it does the agency provide a service to the Town and/or do they request a donation? Selectman Stewart explained that originally it was not a clear process but they began to focus more on what the entity could or could not provide to New Castle residents. He noted that some may or may not have requested, like the American Red Cross, but the Town would support donating to them given their level of services in emergencies. Selectman Maher believes the process has been effective. In his tenure one agency has been added: One Sky. Selectman Stewart and Pam Cullen noted that Community Tool Box and Women Aid have also been added since the inception of the donations. Selectman Stewart noted that when he was on the Budget Committee the list was much longer, and the Committee narrowed the number of recipients. Tom Smith asked if the \$1000 for MHT was on this list. Selectman Stewart stated it was not. In 2019, \$12,000 was budgeted. They distributed \$11,000 and kept \$1000 for the scholarship. This still needs to be clarified.

Pam Cullen explained the importance of Cross Roads as it related to the welfare service for people needing shelter. It is a State law that we must service these individuals after initial evaluation. We can't turn anyone away. Selectman Maher asked John and Pam if there are any missing. Selectman Stewart asked if we received letters of request from those we haven't previously donated to. Pam recalled one agency, but no follow up was done at that time. The Select Board will review this again at budget time, and thanked John and Pam.

**b. Preliminary DRA (Department of Revenue Administration) Assessment Sales Ratio. – Pam Cullen**

The report is due to the DRA by December 15. New Castle had 20 sales last year (from Oct 1 2018 to Sept 30 2019). DRA determines the equalization rate based upon these sales. 11 of these properties were over \$1,000,000.00. Only 13 of these sales were considered "true" by Avitar. She stated it was difficult to determine what Avitar means by a "true sale". She did give some examples of what might not be qualified. (I.e.: putting the property into a trust, or selling to a relative for low price). Currently the rate would be 89.1. We cannot go below 80. Avitar thought the 89.1 is excellent. In response to a question by Ann Miller, Selectman Stewart noted that Avitar uses the gross sales price. He stated we had 20 sales and were able to use 13, and were therefore able to use some 2018 sales to get to the 89.1 as

opposed to 83. He noted that if we go below 80% there has to be a mandatory reassessment. Otherwise the assessment only has to be done every 5 years. Selectman Maher noted that New Castle's next assessment is 2021.

**c. Robbins' properties, Piscataqua Street.**

Pa Cullen noted that recently when the Robbins' came into pay their taxes they had three bills. One of them was not in a trust. After some debate, and conferring with their lawyer, it was learned that in 1965 when they bought the property, it was only two pieces of property. One had three houses, 2 homesteads and a garage, and one property across the street. After Pam conferred with the lawyer, the Robbins will be asking for abatement. This will not go back to 1965 but for only one year. The home and the rental will be combined, and the drop in taxes will amount to about \$1,000.00. Pam will prepare the abatement, and has advised Avitar.

**d. Water Update:**

Selectman Stewart did not have any new updates since the holiday, He will have an update for the next meeting. He does not have anything specific about the loops.

**e. Planning Board—Selectman Stewart**

Selectman Stewart updated the Board on two items he wanted them to be aware of. The first is the Escrow process. The land use boards can ask a property owner to place money in escrow to assure that certain requirements are met, and then request release after certain procedures are followed. Certain sections of the Zoning Ordinance need to be changed to reflect these changes. Chair Darcy Horgan of the Planning Board has suggested that RPC be involved in the drafting of the needed ordinance changes which will have a cost associated with this: specifically the revision of the subdivision and site plan sections of the ordinance. The Select Board approved the lower cost option request.

The second matter concerns a recommendation from the Planning Board regarding the subdivision on the Weston property at 165 Portsmouth Avenue. The back lot was approved with a right of way access to the back lot. Our attorney has suggested that that the Town treats this as a private road, for a variety of reasons. The attorney will draft up paperwork for the private street if authorized by the Board. He read from the attorney's recommendations. It would be beneficial for the Town if it were a private road as opposed to a right of way, which could be contested. Once done it will be included in the deed and recorded in the registry. Pam Cullen asked about tax consequences. Selectman Stewart did not think this would be a problem. He noted the purpose of this is to clarify any ambiguities, and receive approval from the Select Board to expend funds for legal expenses. After further discussion regarding taxation of private roads, and other issues regarding right of ways and taxation, the Select Board considered the current Planning Board recommendation.

**4. Committee Reports:**

**a. Fire Department – Selectman Maher**

The complete report is an Attachment to these minutes. Selectman Maher reported on the highlights of the report. There were 11 calls for service, 4 medical aid, 4 fire alarm activations, 1 structure fire (contents in a room), 1 fire alarm and 1 service call. Chief Hartmann reported that the Department is making good progress. Maintenances have been streamlined. The Department has a new member going through background check and is interested in being an EMT. The Chief is optimistic about going forward through the winter season.

**b. Police Report – Selectman Stewart.**

Selectman Stewart highlighted the Police Report, noting the full report will be an Attachment to the minutes. Building and property checks: 242, Traffic Stops 58, and Traffic Enforcement 45 were the usual significant numbers. The Chief reported no major issues or problems.

There being no other 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 7:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Bette Jane Riordan  
Recording Secretary

Attachments:

Report on Non-Profits  
Fire Department monthly report  
Police Department monthly report.