

TOWN OF ALSTEAD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Select Board

Approved Minutes for Meeting of July 9, 2024 at 5:00 PM

Town Offices, 15 Mechanic Street, Alstead, NH 03602

SELECT BOARD PRESENT: Joel McCarty, Chair, Gordon Kemp, and Matthew Saxton.

STAFF PRESENT:

Name	Position	In Person	Google Meet
Misty Gratacos	Town Administrator	•	
Shelley Steuwe	Recording Secretary	•	
Prescott Trafton	Road Agent	•	
Jesse Moore	Director of Sanitation, EMS & Grounds	•	
Kim Kercewich	Fire Chief	•	
Richard Beringer	Fire Department	•	

COMMUNITY MEMBERS: **In person:** Jonathan Landry, Barbara Viegner, Joe Levesque, Marge Noonan, Judith Willis, and Rich Nalevanko; **Google Meets:**

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. McCarty called the Select Board meeting to order at 5:00 PM and then proceeded with leading the agenda-based discussion.

ACTION ITEMS: Review & sign Payroll manifest (\$36,869.35); review & sign Bills manifest (\$297,529.56); review & sign Tax Liability manifest (\$7296.20); review emails received throughout the week; review & sign SWNH Electric & HVAC Contract for generators

MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS: 7/2 meeting minutes were reviewed, amended and approved as amended by the Board.

OLD BUSINESS:

- A. **Washed-out glass** – Mr. Trafton reports they are continuing work on the ditch. The glass removed last week is currently being stored at Bragg Lane. There is one more culvert to

put in (waiting on the rain to pass). Mrs. Gratacos reports she is still awaiting a response from NHDOT and Ruggerio. Mr. Landry expresses his frustration about the amount of time it's taking to get this resolved. Mr. Saxton feels they have been following through on a variety of ideas. Mr. Landry suggests connecting with someone at Connecticut River Valley Landscaping. Ms. Willis asks about the crews that helped clean up the flooding in Vermont last year. Mr. McCarty asks Mr. Trafton if there's a representative at FEMA who could help. Mr. Kemp says they've surveyed the road with FEMA and were told there's nothing they could do to help. Director Moore asks about the Student Conservation Association in Charlestown, and Mrs. Gratacos will reach out to them. Mr. McCarty says he originally brought this issue to NHDES in Concord, and was told by the experts there that they could not provide guidance. Director Moore suggests putting an RFP out, and Mr. Trafton responds that this will still need to go to ballot and won't be done until next year. Mr. McCarty and Mrs. Gratacos will draft up an RFP to get the process started.

- B. **Thayer Brook bypass** – Mr. Trafton reports they are wrapping up the H&H studies, and will be sending this to FEMA within the next couple of weeks.
- C. **Bridge projects** – Mr. McCarty reports that Timber Transit has awarded \$911,000 to Cheshire County, and we are the only project applicant at this time. It will be administered by the Southwestern Regional Planning Commission, and they will begin meeting at the end of the summer.
- D. **Dams** – Mr. McCarty reports Dubois and King performed their assessment on 7/1, and we are waiting for a quote from them.
- E. **Status of property at M11 L2 (abuts Town Hall)** – No updates.
- F. **Model T MOU** – Mr. McCarty sent Michael Kercewich information about 10 days ago.
- G. **Langdon Library Fees** – Mrs. Gratacos will call Langdon to follow up on this.
- H. **Employee Health Insurance** – Mrs. Gratacos reports she spoke with Teresa from Health Trust. There are some changes to the retirees' policy, so she is working with her on getting our retirees who are still on the Town's health insurance updated to reflect these changes. Once that is done, they will discuss prices and costs for next year, and review other policies with lower deductibles. Mr. McCarty asks if she has interviewed every Town employee to get their input on health insurance, and she confirms that every employee has had an opportunity to speak with her.
- I. **Department & Board**

GUESTS: Penny Dudley; concerned about ability to safely turn left onto Route 12, Pleasant Street and River Street. The property at that corner has shrubbery/trees that are causing visibility issues. Mr. Trafton suggests this is a NHDOT issue, as this is their right of way. Mr. McCarty suggests Ms. Dudley can reach out to NHDOT to request that they come and perform a safety review. Mrs. Gratacos offers to provide her card to Ms. Dudley to assist.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

Town Office Administrator – Mrs. Gratacos reports that Mr. Bouchard has resigned effective immediately, and they will be listing his position soon.

Fire Department – Chief Kercewich reports they have received 54 calls to date. He is meeting with Bindy Curtis on 7/14 to update the spreadsheet for the Air-Paks. The three air tanks are due for Hydrostatic Testing and will be sent out of town for this, one at a time.

Highway – Mr. Trafton reports his team just returned from vacation. They are continuing ditch work on Cobb Road, and have a couple culverts they want to put in after the forecasted rain. He has received some calls about the radar signs on Pine Cliff Road not being “on”. He says they are still collecting speed data, despite the signs not flashing. He believes having the radar signs flashing would skew the data (drivers would not drive naturally past them). He will provide the speed data to Mr. McCarty to review with the public at the 7/16 Public Hearing. He plans to work on the ditch in the Fall, as he worries doing so now would worsen runoff into the Lake every time it rains. He said that all the catch basins are “open”, and notes that the one closest to Arbor Way fills up with debris after every storm. Mr. McCarty asks if silt barriers would help reduce silt runoff from Arbor Way, and Mr. Trafton says they (along with water bars) will just delay the inevitable runoff into the Lake. Mr. McCarty believes we’re using data to pitch NHDES and Southwest Regional Planning Commission to design a bigger project that addresses the drainage, catch basins, etc., to reduce the turbidity that enters the Lake. Mr. Trafton worries about the amount of time that the ditches and catch basins need to be maintained throughout the summer due to rainstorms and that impeding his team’s ability to get other projects completed. Mr. Saxton asks if there are any methods to keep runoff from Arbor Way from getting into the Lake. Mr. Trafton does not know of any. Mrs. Steuwe expresses concerns with conflicting information being provided to her regarding the function of the ditch and catch basin. Mr. Trafton clarifies that when the ditch effectively collects sediment from runoff, it eventually fills up and needs to be dug out once more. This results in a period of time where it is ineffective (until new vegetation grows and lines the ditch). She asks if there are other barriers that could be used in place of the vegetation, e.g., silt socks. Mr. Trafton explains he has used them in the past and while they work, they also have limitations, especially with the torrential rains we’re getting now. She asks why the catch basins were installed if they are so ineffective, and he says this was mostly due to complaints of water collection in the road. Finally, she asks if there are any measures that can be taken this summer to help reduce dust and runoff, and he says chloride can help keep reduce dust, but each time they grade the road they have to reapply chloride. He believes the best we can do right now is to keep vehicle speeds low, and one way to do that is to stop grading the road so often so that potholes deter speeding, and to keep cleaning in front of the catch basins. Mr. Saxton asks if it’s possible to install an underground pipe to redirect runoff from Arbor Way to Warren Brook, and Mr. Trafton says this really needs to be evaluated by an engineer. Mr. Saxton asks Mrs. Gratacos to add this to the list of possible warrant articles.

Transfer Station, Ambulance, and Parks –

Director Moore reports:

- Ambulance – They are just shy of 100 calls to date. They have postponed the day-long session at the Heartwood School (7/12) due to training conflict.
- Parks – Mowing is up to date.

- Transfer Station – Mr. Moore reports that so far they have not received any complaints about not being able to burn. Mr. McCarty asks for an update on implementing the stages of their safety audit. Director Moore says yes. He found out at a recent training that we are not in compliance with the required height for fall prevention, so this is being addressed now. Ms. Viegner asks if Walpole will take brush for burning, and Director Moore will look into this. She also wanted to make him aware that she saw people picking from the metal bins recently, and Director Moore confirmed that there are signs being made telling residents not to pick from any of the containers. Mr. Trafton asks why Alstead has been “targeted” by the Fire Ranger, and why we need access to a large water supply. Mr. Beringer says he was in touch with the Fire Ranger about this and was told a small tank with a pump would be sufficient. Director Moore is seeking additional clarification on this.

School Board – The School Board met 7/8, and they signed an MOA with the Teachers Union about a retention policy.

BOARD REPORTS:

Mr. McCarty – Circulated an audit report about the money that we handle for the DMV, and we passed all tests. He suggests that the Selectman direct him to write congratulatory letter to Ms. Bacon for a job well done on this. The text for the 7/16 Public Hearing public notice has been approved. The Melanson invoice for the library roof repair is \$29,643 (less than raised and appropriated), and was sent to Library instead of the Town, so he will get it in the right hands by the end of the week. He signed the fuel agreement 7/8. PSA - Summer School is in session 4 days a week for 3 weeks starting 7/8; plus there is a Summer Camp under way at Orchard Hill Breadworks. Finally, Jean Kelly resigned from his position at the Transfer Station.

Mr. Kemp – Has had an abundance of hours working on the ambulance. Mr. Bouchard has resigned from his position.

Mr. Saxton – In the absence of Mr. Bouchard, he has been the point person for Zoning Board issues. A residence on Arbor Way is being torn down and a new home built, so that will be coming to the Zoning Board.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Town nepotism policy:
 - There are now three versions (Mr. Kemp’s, Mr. Saxton’s, and Mr. Beringer), and no one is in agreement on any of them. None have been reviewed by HR at Primex, but Mr. Kemp based part of his on a model of theirs. Mr. Saxton worries about them being more stringent than what is necessary. Ms. Willis thinks it should be kept simple. Mr. Beringer reiterates last week’s summary, and that “friendship” should be included alongside “relationship”. Mrs. Gratacos provides a summary of several towns’ policies to the Board for review. Mr. Nalevanko feels this looks like a conflict of interest policy. He feels that if there are decision making situations, the person in question can recuse themselves from decision making. Ms. Willis

asks what situation that Mr. Saxton's policy does not cover? Mr. Kemp feels that Mr. Saxton's version means nothing without a good Selectboard. Ultimately the Board decided that the current Town policy will be extended to apply to all employees (not just FT).

- FD Policies:
 - Mr. Beringer reports that the Firefighters Association Committee meets 7/10. He asks if the Board would like them to update all of their SOGs and present them as a package down the line? Mr. McCarty asks if he thinks that is necessary and Mr. Beringer confirms. Mr. Kemp offers to attend the FFA Committee meeting on 7/10 as a Selectman to hash out the two policies in questions, but Mr. Beringer is not in favor of this, and would like to present them to the whole Selectboard. Mr. McCarty asks to proceed with Mr. Kemp's suggestion and to bring revised versions to the Board on 7/23. Mr. Beringer asks if the Board will accept two versions of each for review, should they not reach an agreement with Mr. Kemp on revisions, which the Board is ok with.
- Vilas Pool Committee request for credit card:
 - Ryanne Schoonover is a Vilas Pool Committee member, but not a Town employee, so the question is whether it is ok to provide her with a credit card. Mr. McCarty is concerned with extending liability to non-Town employees, so he suggests seeking guidance from Derek at Primex and has tasked Mrs. Gratacos with that.
- Update on Pine Cliff Rd – see notes under Highway Department updates and Mr. McCarty's Board report.

PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS:

Next regular Select Board meeting:	Tuesday, July 16, 2024 @ 5:00 PM, Town Offices, 15 Mechanic Street.
Next FM School Board meeting:	Monday, August 12, 2024 @ 6:00 PM, High School (2nd Monday)
Next 5-Town Select Board meeting:	TBD – Reschedule in progress

On a motion made by Mr. Kemp and seconded by Mr. McCarty *the Board Chair adjourned the public meeting at 7:07 PM.*

EXECUTIVE SESSION/S:

Respectfully submitted,

Shelley Steuwe

Recording Secretary

DRAFT