

TOWN OF ALSTEAD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Select Board

Approved Minutes for Meeting of June 25, 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	•	
Jody Kercewich	Cemeteries	•	
Stephen Murrell	Police Chief	•	
Ben Kercewich	Fire Department	•	
Jesse Moore	Director of Sanitation, EMS & Grounds	•	
Kim Kercewich	Fire Chief	•	
Bobbie Wilson	Supervisor of the Checklist/Ambulance Lt/Vilas Pool Committee		•
Richard Beringer	Fire Department	•	

COMMUNITY MEMBERS: **In person:** Bob Quaglin, Tom and Rose Dowling, Ken Bergeron, Ginny Markle, Marge Noonan, Barbara Viegner, Lisa Tusveld, Jeanne Brooks, and Judith Willis;
Google Meets: None.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. McCarty called the Select Board meeting to order at 5:02 PM and then proceeded with leading the agenda-based discussion.

ACTION ITEMS: Review & Sign payroll manifest (\$33,249.24); review & sign Payables manifest (\$358,689.11); review & sign tax liability manifest (\$6,751.35); review & sign Auditors

questionnaire; Review & discuss Election update email; Review letter from Comcast; review letter from SWCS; Review letter from Payroll Matters regarding breach; review & sign bills for Vilas Pool; review & sign new hire for cemeteries

MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS: 6/18 meeting minutes were reviewed, amended, and approved as amended by the Board.

OLD BUSINESS:

- A. **Washed-out glass** – Mr. Kemp reports that within the next couple of days the excavator will be there to start replacing culverts. Mrs. Gratacos reports she has not had a response from Serve Pro or the Department of Corrections as of yet. She will reach out to Ruggiero Trash Removal to see if this is something they can do.
- B. **Thayer Brook bypass** – No updates.
- C. **Bridge projects** – No updates.
- D. **Dams** – Mr. McCarty asks that Director Moore mow by the Lake Warren Dam. Mr. Levesque reports that Federal funding has been provided to the State for dam repair and support via the FEMA National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The funding period closes at the end of July. Mr. McCarty asks Mr. Levesque to send information to him to follow up on (and to copy DuBois and King, Inc).
- E. **Status of property at M11 L2 (abuts Town Hall)** – No updates.
- F. **Model T MOU** – No updates.
- G. **Langdon Transfer Station & Library Fees** – Mrs. Gratacos reports she has not received a response from the Langdon Administrator.
- H. **Employee Health Insurance** – Mrs. Gratacos reports she spoke with someone from HealthTrust and is setting up a time in August to discuss insurance options for next year.
- I. **Department & Board**

NEW BUSINESS:

- **FD Policies** –
 - Mr. Beringer reports their committee met 6/24 and they will be typing up proposals to submit to the Board for final approval on 7/2.
- **Town nepotism policy** –
 - Mr. Beringer reports he spoke with several agencies/organizations, including a law firm who handles civil suits for the Firemen’s Association, the former Deputy Fire Chief of Boston, the Keene Fire Department, NH DOT, and staff at the State House, to gather information about their experience with nepotism policies. He reports the common thread between each person he spoke with is that if you’re going to create a nepotism clause in your town policy, you will likely increase the number of complaints. If you’re going to have one, it should be specific, rather than broad or vague, and should point out that it pertains to compensation, advancement, and hiring/firing. He also found that they all reported including “friendship” in the clause. He points out that if the Fire Department is allowed to administer their own nepotism policy, they can tailor it to fit their needs and he

added that the Town can disregard his feedback for their nepotism policy. Mr. McCarty is interested in having Primex weigh in on any policies created, to ensure they support the verbiage. Mr. Saxton believes a nepotism policy is unnecessary and problematic; however, he agrees that there should be a policy that places responsibility on the Selectboard to review and follow up on any inappropriate behavior/concerns with Town employees. Chief Murrell asks if our current draft has been run by our Town attorney, and Mr. McCarty confirms that it has not, but will be. Mrs. Gratacos feels the Town needs a nepotism policy, regardless of its language, as it is standard Human Resources practice and protects the Town from possible litigation. Ms. Willis suggests that the policy simply focuses on favoritism and discrimination, rather than nepotism. Mr. McCarty asks Mr. Beringer to draft a nepotism policy specifically for the Fire Department and to provide that to the Board for review.

- Lake Warren Preservation Association Annual Mtg –
 - The LWPA held their first of two summer membership meetings on 6/22. During that meeting, they discussed remediating water quality in the Lake, and came up with a list of potential short-term solutions for the Town to consider:
 - Temporarily dead-end Pine Cliff Road at Prentice Hill from 7/1-10/14 (Columbus Day)
 - Narrow the dirt portion of Pine Cliff Road
 - Improve/create ditch on side of Pine Cliff Road opposite of the lake (dirt section only) and change pitch of the road to angle away from the lake
 - Ensure all catch basins are free of debris and in working order
 - Position radar speed sign on dirt end of Pine Cliff Road
 - Temporarily add "No Through Traffic" signs to each end of Pine Cliff Road from 7/1-10/14 (Columbus Day)

Chief Murrell expressed concerns about the impact on EMS with the dead-end option, but confirms that the radar speed sign can be made available as long as it is not needed for other town projects. A heated discussion between members of the LWPA, Chief Murrell, and the Board ensued regarding issues with traffic speed, excessive dust, and runoff into the Lake. Mr. McCarty suggested that a Public Hearing is necessary in order for the Board to be able to make any decisions. He will discuss re-creating the ditch, adjusting the pitch, and ensuring the catch basins are operational with Mr. Trafton this week. The Public Hearing to discuss all other options is set for 7/16 at 6:00 pm at the Fire Station/Town Hall at 9 Main Street. In preparation for that meeting, Chief Murrell will collect speed data from Pine Cliff Road, Mr. McCarty will seek legal guidance regarding the Board's ability to put up signage about through traffic and temporarily creating a dead end on Pine Cliff Road, and he will connect with staff at NH Department of Environmental Services to confirm that the most effective and immediate measures the Town can take is controlling dust and runoff on Pine Cliff Road. A postcard communication to the public about the hearing should be mailed out no later than 7/9, and the LWPA will provide language for this communication to the Board.

- Instream Flow Hearing information –
 - Mr. McCarty reports the hearing was held to provide the public an opportunity to officially comment on the Protected Instream Flow Study Report. NHDES will continue to accept comments until 7/22 at 4:00 pm.
- Safety audit of Vilas Pool & historical society – **WAS THIS DISCUSSED?**
- **OTHER ITEMS:** Select Board Admin will be out of the office on June 27th & July 3rd, the Office will be closed those days.

GUESTS:

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

Transfer Station, Ambulance, and Parks –

- Ambulance – Director Moore reports they received 2 calls in the last week. Also, the new pressure washer has been installed and is working well.
- Parks – Director Moore reports he began mowing the Alstead Center town common, and will finish up on that tomorrow, along with the Lake Warren Dam and East Fire Station.
- Transfer Station – Mr. Saxton asks how much plastic we recycle, and Director Moore reports that we're only collecting #2 plastic (milk jugs) due to storage capacity. He also reports that we are making two cardboard "bales" per day, and have sent in 20 "bales" of aluminum since March/April (we received \$3,000 for those)

Police Department – Chief Murrell reports they have received 571 calls to date. There were some technical malfunctions during their routine weekly generator test. He reset it and it successfully tested after that. He will have Mr. Fuller evaluate the generator as well. Mr. Fuller will also be there Thursday to look at the duct work so he can finish putting together his estimate for the new AC. Chief Murrell called Power Wash NH, LLC to get a quote for power washing the Town Offices. As this service will cause paint issues he has also reached out to Mr. Bellows to get an estimate for painting. He has a meeting on 7/2 at 9:30 with Amer Electric Inc to look at security for all the Town buildings. Mr. Kemp asks if we have a new contract for generators from Mr. Fuller. Mrs. Gratacos confirms we do not. Mr. Kemp asks Chief Murrell to follow up with Mr. Fuller about this when he's here on Thursday.

School Board – Mr. Levesque reports that Fall Mountain has decided to take some of their residual funds to purchase two of the buses they're leasing, and to buy vape detectors for the high school. This brings their residual funds from \$2.1 to \$1.5 million, which will be returned to the taxpayers.

Fire Department – Chief Kercewich reports they have received 52 calls to date. The majority of the Fire Department members attended training last week at the Langdon Station, put on by the State. Mr. Saxton asks how the East Station cleanliness is, and Mr. Beringer and Chief Kercewich both report it's much better.

Town Office Administrator – Mrs. Gratacos reports the auditors came and went in two days, and that everyone was very prepared and things went smoothly. There are a few items that the Auditors had left that still need submission and she is working on submitting those promptly.

Supervisors of the Checklist – No updates.

Vilas Pool – No updates.

Town Clerk/ Tax Collector Office – No updates.

Emergency Management – No updates.

Highway – No updates.

BOARD REPORTS:

Mr. Saxton – Spoke with Carolyn Locke about the tower on her property (Cobb Hill). She will not pay for it to be taken down, but will grant access for someone else to do that. He will call Mr. Fuller and remind him that we need outlets in the town hall.

Mr. Kemp – There is an issue on Baine Rd. (a Class VI Road) where some residents have been modifying the road. He asks the rest of the Board to confirm that Selectboard permission is needed to make changes to Class VI roads, which Mr. Saxton and Mr. McCarty confirmed to be true. Mr. Kemp will relay this to the residents involved.

Mr. McCarty – We have received approval from the Department of Transportation Bridge Division to continue with the same design firm for the Drewsville bridge that we're using for the Hill and Comstock Road bridges. He reports his next steps include asking the engineering firm how much money and how much time. The permits are generally good for 5 years, and we expect construction to begin no earlier than 2027. Our payroll firm announced they had a data breach, but there were no action items associated with this. The State is providing funding for small towns to either purchase a ballot counting machine or eBook (a more streamlined voter registration mechanism). The moderator has asked him to start a discussion with the Town about this, so Susan Norlander is going to convene a meeting with the Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Supervisors of the Checklist and the Selectboard to discuss. Comcast is discontinuing football coverage. Southwest Community Services has published a set of fuel and electric assistance guidelines, which Mrs. Gratacos will include in all Town welfare applications. Mr. Levesque will talk to us next week about affordable housing. The asbestos abatement project taking place on the Hakey property on Corbin Road has been completed, and the building has been approved for demolition.

PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS:

INFORMATIONAL:

Next regular Select Board meeting:	Tuesday, July 2, 2024 @ 5:00 PM, Town Offices, 15 Mechanic Street.
Next FM School Board meeting:	Monday, July 9, 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 6:50 PM.***

Respectfully submitted,

Shelley Steuwe

Recording Secretary

DRAFT