**TOWN OF ALSTEAD, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**Select Board**

**Approved Minutes for Meeting of July 23, 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 |  |  |
| Stephen Murrell | Police Chief |  |  |
| Jesse Moore | Director of Sanitation, EMS & Grounds |  |  |
| Kim Kercewich | Fire Chief |  |  |
| Richard Beringer | Fire Department |  |  |

**COMMUNITY MEMBERS:** **In person:** Barbara Viegener, Joe Levesque, Marge Noonan, Rich Nalevanko, Beth Porter, Tom Dowling, and Rosemarie Dowling; **Google Meets**: None.

**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 and sign Payroll manifest ($34,820.87); review and sign Bill manifest ($59,247.41); review and sign Tax Liability manifest ($7009.72); review and sign 2 new employee’s folders; review and sign 2 Vilas Pool purchase requests; review and sign abatement request; review email from town moderator, Susan Norlander; review request to apply to Primex’s Supervisors Academy (for Misty to attend).

**MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS:** Minutes from 7/9 amended and approved as amended. Minutes from 7/16 will be reviewed and approved on 7/30. The unapproved 7/16 Public Hearing minutes will be posted to the Alstead page, and reviewed by the Selectboard this week and approved on 7/30.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

1. **Washed-out glass** – Mr. McCarty reports that an RFP seeking contractors and consultants has been posted to New Hampshire Municipal Association. Mrs. Gratacos emailed the Student Conservation Association and is awaiting a reply. She also heard back from Cheshire Dept. of Corrections, who directed her to their Superintendent. She is awaiting a reply. Ms. Noonan asks if they can look into getting a mini excavator to do some of the cleanup. Mr. Kemp notes that Mr. Landry did some initial cleanup with a similar machine, but there are still areas where trees would need to be removed to continue the cleanup. Ms. Viegener notes that Mr. Landry isn’t concerned about trees needing to be removed.
2. **Thayer Brook bypass** – No updates.
3. **Bridge projects** – No updates.
4. **Dams** – Mr. McCarty reports that engineers from Dubois and King were on site today taking measurements.
5. **Status of property at M11 L2 (abuts Town Hall)** – Mr. Kemp reports that the out of state lawyer has hired another attorney to pass ownership of the property from him to the family.
6. **Model T MOU** – No updates.
7. **Langdon Transfer Station & Library Fees** – Mr. McCarty reports there is still some confusion with the Library Treasurer about what money has been received and when. He will continue to seek clarification on this.
8. **Employee Health Insurance** – Mrs. Gratacos reports that she has a training session scheduled with Teresa from Health Trust on 8/1 regarding retirees’ insurance updates. Once that is complete, they will discuss options for future coverage.
9. **Fire Department Policies** –
   1. #201 (Guideline):
      1. Mr. Beringer reports that the guideline has been updated and is awaiting signature from the Selectboard. Mr. Kemp notes that there was more detail originally, so he and the Fire Department Committee agreed to split the original into individual SOGs. He asks that the Committee work on the individual SOGs that came out of #201 next. Mr. Beringer agrees.
   2. #100 (Policy)
      1. Mr. Beringer reports that there was a conflict of opinion regarding the cover sheet. As it stands, officers (with exception of the Chief) are voted on by the Membership, and that’s the way the Committee would like it to stay. He notes that the Membership has to follow guidelines when electing officers, and that the current arrangement mirrors several surrounding towns with a similarly sized population. When polled, 15 of the 17 active voting members opted not to make any changes to the election process. He notes that there is a concern for nepotism if the Chief is solely responsible for electing officers. Finally, the Membership believes that they are the most appropriate people to elect officers, as they have first-hand experience responding to calls with them and know who they want to “have their backs”. Mr. Kemp proposes a compromise - leave it up to the Chief to pick officers, but allow them to use elections to do that, if they so choose. Mr. Beringer notes that they are making a policy for the future and the future Chief may choose to use elections. Mr. McCarty asks if they addressed the qualifications issue by requiring the candidate to be Level One certified, and Mr. Beringer confirms that that’s the way it is now and the Fire Department is happy to keep it that way. Mr. McCarty asks if they addressed any nepotism concerns by using a secret ballot? Mr. Beringer confirms that yes, this makes it a lot easier for the Membership to vote honestly. Mr. McCarty asks if it is fair to say that by virtue of setting the bar at Level One certification, and keeping the ballot secret, Membership is most likely to vote for the person best qualified for the job? Mr. Nalevanko suggests having a nominating committee, and the Chief can participate to nominate a slate of people who meet qualifications (and also have the possibility for someone to nominate from the floor). Mr. McCarty asks the Board to vote on whether to proceed with Mr. Kemp’s suggested compromise. All were in favor.
10. **Pine Cliff Road information/updates** – Mr. McCarty reports that he found a communication with Fish and Game where they expressed interest in improving runoff on the boat landing side of things, and this communication has been posted to the Town website (dated 1997). He is working on getting all of the resources discussed at the public hearing up on the website, but the Board needs to review the hearing minutes (will publish to the website now as unapproved) and try to approve them next week. He gave the Emergency Management staff a chance to provide their advice/ opinion on structurally changing the road before the hearing and asked if any wanted to change their advice/opinion after hearing, and all said no. He is awaiting legal guidance (Legal Affairs at NHMA, Primex, and Town attorney) regarding a scenario in which structural changes to the road impacts EMS response time. He will add these responses to the Town website with the other resources. Ms. Porter asks if they have experience with any other roads that have been modified and affected EMS. Mr. McCarty says that in the case of Cold River Road the Board asked the voters if they wanted to spend money to improve it, and they voted not to. Director Moore notes that in the case of Cooper Hill Road EMS has no options, the road is gone. Mr. Kemp notes that it’s different considering it wasn’t a decision to change the road, extreme weather conditions closed the road. He also notes that any of the proposed changes to the road that would slow down EMS, he is against, regardless of liability. He is only in favor of road maintenance. Ms. Porter asks if the road is changed to one-way, why can’t they employ traffic control to allow them to travel in the wrong direction and avoid accidents/traffic jams? Mr. Kemp and Director Moore reply that first responders won’t have anyone ahead of them to do traffic control. Chief Kercewich notes that if you make the road narrower, you can’t fit two vehicles, especially when ambulances and firetrucks (which are very wide) are involved. Mrs. Steuwe asks Mr. Kemp if he’s open to the implementation of speed tables, or if they will cause an issue with EMS. He says that he would need to think more about it, but he will always opt for a road that allows two-way traffic and is wider versus narrower, as it’s easier for EMS vehicles. Mr. McCarty notes that NHDES has money to help with paving. Ms. Porter says that paving only addresses the dust, and we would still need to address drainage, which she feels voters are not going to be in favor of due to the expense. She says that making the road one-way or a dead-end are much less expensive options and more effective than just paving. She mentions that some metropolitan areas use flashing signs on one-way roads to indicate closure due to maintenance (e.g., plowing) and emergency situations. Ms. Viegener suggests that something be done about unmaintained septics in the watershed. Mrs. Steuwe notes that the Town can pursue an ordinance or regulation requiring residents in the watershed to keep their septics up to date. Mr. Levesque asks if the Lake Warren Preservation Association does water testing, which Mrs. Dowling confirmed that they do (three times a summer), but tests do not look for fecal presence in the water. He also asks the Board to direct Mr. Trafton to put together a quote for paving the road. Mr. McCarty will do this. Mr. McCarty recently learned about Lake Smart, and wonders if it would be worth looking into tax relief for residents who complete a Lake Smart assessment. He is looking for incentives for residents, rather than compulsions. Mr. Dowling asks if the Town has the capability to require septic inspection upon transfer of property. The Board confirmed they do not, but banks often do. Mr. Levesque notes that the Complete Streets Committee may be able to procure signage for the road via grant funding.
11. **Department & Board**

**NEW BUSINESS:** None.

**OTHER ITEMS:** None.

**GUESTS:** None.

**DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

**Town Office Administrator** – Mrs. Gratacos reports that she met with Lisa Mudge from NH Department of Revenue Municipal Property Division to discuss the Town’s revaluation. She is looking into quotes for a possible expansion downstairs, and will have two put together next week. She is seeking permission from the Board to reorganize the records room. Mr. McCarty asks for more detail, which she will provide next week. She would like to learn more about the bill pay process for Vilas Pool. The Board confirms that there is a Vilas Pool trust from which money is directed for bills and reimbursements. Mr. McCarty summarizes that the Town Treasurer administers the reimbursements, after the Board has signed off on them. Mrs. Gratacos asks if receipts from purchases made with Mr. Kemp’s credit card should be submitted for reimbursement, and he confirms that they should. Finally, she asks if there are any updates on the wage study. Mr. McCarty reports it is still ongoing and did not provide an estimated date of completion.

**Fire Department** – Chief Kercewich reports they have received 59 calls to date. They completed training on 7/22 with the North Walpole rescue boat on Lake Warren. They purchased fire hose via a VFA grant. Mr. Saxton asks what percentage of the Fire Department’s calls are for actual fires? Mr. Kercewich replies that if rolling mutual aid into their calls, it’s between 60-70% (but they also don’t take EMS calls). He asks what the limit for purchasing something without a purchase order is, and Mr. Kemp said he’ll need to look it up and will get back to him.

**Police** **Department** – Chief Murrel reports they have received 667 calls. He pulled some historical data for call volume and reports that last week they received 645 calls, and at the same time in 2023 it was 572 calls, in 2022 it was 432 calls, and in 2021 it was 228 calls. They are trialing a panic button from a new provider. He notes that the cost of two panic buttons from our current provider, One Source, is $1,700, plus monthly monitoring fee. He has not gotten a quote for the new provider yet, but will ask for one if they are happy with the trial. He notes that without the internet (as was the case today), the one they’re trialing may not work (he needs to confirm this), but the ones provided by One Source will work without the internet. Finally, he reports that Corporal Underwood attended active shooter training at the high school and found it to be very informative and beneficial.

**Transfer Station, Ambulance, and Parks –**

Director Moore reports that:

* Ambulance – They have received 110 calls to date and have been very busy. Mrs. Gratacos asks for a report on reimbursements for the ambulances and he reports that in May they received about $13,000, in June $12,000-15,000, and he estimates July will be the same as June. One of the ambulances needed a new tire rim (one was bent and they never had a spare), and Mr. Trafton was able to get them a deal on two used rims. They replaced the damaged rim and rotated the tires. They have two new applicants going to the free Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) class in Keene, and two EMRs enrolled in Emergency Medical Technician school. He put out their first OSHA training on hazardous material and everyone has been tasked with completing the National Traffic Incident Management Responder Training via the National Highway Institute.
* Parks – Needs to mow (ambulance calls have prevented him from getting to this yet). There is a big tree that came down on the Alstead Center common. They’ll need a tree company to come pick this up, and he has spoken with Mr. Trafton about this (it is within the Highway Department budget). He informed the Board that he was notified by a group who recently rented the Town Hall that they saw snakes in the hall. Mr. McCarty said to let the Board know if they receive any more reports of snakes, at which time they’ll contact animal control.
* Transfer Station – He heard back from the Fire Ranger on 7/22, and was told we can burn in the burn pit if the Fire Warden is there with a firetruck. If the inability to burn at the Transfer Station becomes an issue, we can discuss this further. The Board recommends not changing anything at the moment.

**School Board** – Mr. Levesque reports that Cory LeClair will serve as acting superintendent until they can find interim. They were contacted by a former Fall Mountain School District superintendent, Debra Livingston with interest in serving as interim. She is being interviewed for the position. With the exception of science, teachers are implementing the new curriculum purchased. They didn’t have time to vet and prepare the science curriculum for the fall, and plan to possibly implement that in January. Summer School has been going well, as has the free lunch program for the Vilas School and the Fall Mountain High School.

Side note about Complete Streets: Their last meeting is this Thursday (7/25) and he will send the finalized policy to the Board to sign after. Since the window closes on implementation grants on 9/27, he asks that the Board respond urgently to the policy to ensure they are able to obtain grant funding. They would like to get an engineering study funded to start in the fall or winter.

**BOARD REPORTS:**

**Mr. Kemp** – He is planning to talk to Fidium about switching Town internet to them. He relisted the Land Use Admin position on Indeed. He has more paperwork to sign for the lighting rebate for the village station, and asks the rest of the Board if they are ok with him signing it. All in favor. He asks if a decision was ever made about awarding the outlet job. He reports that EE Houghton) asked Director Moore when they should be out to complete this job, but he wasn’t aware that they’d been awarded the job. Mr. Saxton reports that he told Mr. Fuller to do it, and will confirm that he’s aware of the amount awarded from the warrant article (will also let him know about snakes). Mr. Kemp proposes to the rest of the Board merging 210 Gilsum Mine Road, the two plots in Shadowland, plus the triangle at end of Birch Road, to create and sell it as a building lot. The Board approves, and he will bring it up to the Planning Board. Mr. Saxton asks if the Planning Board is still having trouble making quorum, and Mr. Kemp confirms that they are. Finally, he is working on confirming ownership of the strip of land from Pine Cliff Road to Lake Warren (snowmobile trail).

**Mr. McCarty** – The internet has been out all day, and he will check with Director Reynolds about a back up plan for when this happens in the future. He is awaiting a couple of items to upload to the Town website for public hearing (front page).

**Mr. Saxton** – Starlink is 33% more expensive now.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS:**

**INFORMATIONAL:**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION/S:**

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| --- | --- |
| **Next regular Select Board meeting:** | Tuesday, July 30, 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. McCarty and seconded by Mr. Saxton ***the Board Chair adjourned the public meeting at 7:00 PM.***

Respectfully submitted,

Shelley Steuwe

Recording Secretary