

ST. GEORGE SELECT BOARD & ASSESSORS

St. George Town Office

MEETING MINUTES

February 26, 2024

The Select Board meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Select Board members present were Steve Cartwright, Rick Erb, Wendy Carr, Randy Elwell, Irene Ames, Jane Conrad, and Chair Van Thompson. Also present were Michael Smith, Amy Drinkwater, David Percival, Chris Williamson, Scott Vaitones, Kevin LeCaptain, Tammy Willey, Ben Nosten, Greg Soutiea, Susan Ellis, Michael B. Jordan and Josh Coggeshall.

Via Zoom: Present were Loreen Meyer and Sandra Roak “user”.

Quorum

A quorum was present.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Adjustments to the Agenda

The Budget Committee Review of the Proposed 2025 Municipal Budget was moved to the beginning of the agenda.

Budget Committee Review of the Proposed 2025 Municipal Budget

Thompson

The first section is Administration.

Conrad

For our current website contract, because we are interested in updating the website, but we have not heard from them.

Thompson

I'm getting correspondence from this (Inaudible) out of Kentucky would like to.

Conrad

I'm sure they would.

Thompson

(Inaudible)

Conrad

First, we're going to try and upgrade with what we have without spending any extra money but if we need to look to other vendors, we will do that.

Thompson

So overall we're up twelve percent.

Elwell

Why did the town report bring it down?

Erb

It could be based on what we spent.

Thompson

It was appropriated in FY 23/24.

Erb

When you look at the overall increase, the bulk of that is in the insurance line, and that's because last year we had included workers comp for the ambulance and for the ambulance budget this year we took it out and put it with all the other insurances, which is the more standard way of doing it.

Cartwright

I'd like to suggest that we increase it. I like to be frugal. But \$4000 sounds like it's barely going to cover a new alert program. Maybe that should be \$5000 so you have a little wiggle room.

Thompson

We can increase it by \$1000 I suppose. Let's keep that in mind and we'll see how we end up when we look at the final mill rate.

Speaker

Are the utilities based on a projection or a crystal ball and do you have a real sense of what it's going to be?

Susan Ellis

Rick, did you figure in owning the solar panels for this next question?

Erb

I personally did not. I will check that.

Conrad

Is that where that would have gone in the past, under Utilities?

Susan Ellis

Our electricity price should go down because we will own the panels and they can't charge us anything, only for delivery.

Erb

Let me get back to you on that.

Thompson

You think that's covered in the utilities, and that may change.

Erb

It may.

Conrad

We were talking about possibly shifting that money into a resiliency budget.

Susan Ellis

That's different. Greg has a question.

Greg Soutiea

On the on the utilities, do we have fixed rate contracts for the oil through Dead River or are we floating?

Erb

We float and we've been doing business with the one up the street here, Maine Coast Utilities.

Greg Soutiea

Do they offer fixed-rate contracts at all?

Erb

I haven't asked. We floated in the past.

Susan Ellis

For Property Maintenance, is there any big project plan or should we cut that back a little bit?

Erb

We tend to hold on to that until closer to the end of the year, because we don't know what is coming yet. One of the things I'd like to do is if at the end of the year it looks like we have funding to make some improvements in this room we're in right now and if we're going to use this on a more regular basis, whether it's flooring or tables and chairs, I'd like to see some upgrades in this room. We hadn't used this room for quite a while. It could use some work.

Thompson

Moving on to the Select Board and Assessors, are there any concerns there?

Erb

The Assessors Agent isn't an item we will be over this year, so I did bump that up.

Conrad

I have a question. We have several properties we were planning to take ownership of as a result of failure to pay taxes. Are there expenses related to that that we need to think about?

Erb

Typically, not. We inform our insurance carrier of tax acquired property, but it does not impact our rates or require us to do anything.

Conrad

And there isn't any legal fee or anything that we incur? It is so surprising to me that automatically they become owned by the town. In a lot of other states there would still have to be a court proceeding.

Thompson

Let's move on to the Fire Department. I see the training costs have gone up there. We've rearranged things a bit relative to fire fighters and fire officers.

Erb

Mike can explain this. Some of this is good news in that they've been able to recruit new members to the Fire Department.

Mike Smith

Training is up at the moment and there are seven new members at the moment.

Erb

We're happy to spend money on that. Is equipment also impacted the same way?

Mike Smith

Yes. For our firefighting equipment purchase, we're going to buy five sets; we have a few and can make do with five sets of turnout gear. That is going to be \$30,035 from head to toe. We have some money this year to do it with and for some of us the gear is coming to the end of its cycle.

Elwell

Ten years is typical.

Elwell

What about the generator Mike?

Mike Smith

We are still saving, and we actually did (Inaudible) recently and it's running fine.

Elwell

Are you going to try to level it this year?

Mike Smith

Next year they'll replace it. Part of the price on the generator is the transfer switches which are \$50,000 alone. They won't have to come downstairs here and manually throw switches like they had to do the last few years. That generator was never tied into the side of the building originally. It just ran on the other side, the firehouse side of the building. We finally got it tied in so it would run this because the girl would just go home, and the paramedics would have lights and heat. They finally got it all tied in correctly. You have to come downstairs and manually throw all these switches so when it's time to do a new generator, the cost has gone up just because of all the electrical. We have to do rewiring and everything. (Inaudible) away from the building.

Susan Ellis

Does this complete the savings for that Mike? Will this allow that to happen in 2024/25?

Mike Smith

It should if everything doesn't keep going up.

Susan Ellis

It probably will. Should we plan a little more?

Mike Smith

We could add another \$5,000 or so to be safe.

Elwell

Is the generator something that should get fixed if it needs to be replaced?

Mike Smith

It is twenty years old. It is getting tired.

Elwell

Do we need to do it or can we wait two more years to replace it.

Mike Smith

I think we can make it, but everything has a shelf life.

Susan Ellis

You are suggesting \$10K in this budget year and \$10k in the next budget year and that'll do it?

Mike Smith

I need to know what we have in reserve. Rick, do we have \$40,000 in reserve?

Thompson

The generator reserve is \$30,000.

Mike Smith

That would not be enough.

Susan Ellis

Did you say we are at \$75,000 now?

Mike Smith

I bet we will be.

Elwell

Have you looked into getting prices or what it would cost?

Mike Smith

We started some of the legwork with Light Out Electric and they scared us (Inaudible). Maybe we need to budget more. The fire department is taking this on. It's a piece of town equipment there that runs the whole complex.

Elwell

I'd like to see you guys get a price on what it would cause sooner than later before we finalize this. That way we know and have a rough idea of what it would cost to have a new one put in.

Susan Ellis

I wonder if we should put this at \$20K this year and next year if it's really going to be \$75,000.

Elwell

Let Rick know and once you find out we can look at it again before we finalize anything.

Mike Smith

Is this something you'd be wanting three bids on?

Elwell

I think if you had one bid it would be close to everybody else, and it just gives us a rough idea. Then we can put out an RFP.

Susan Ellis

Do we really need that \$50,000 switch?

Irene Ames

Yeah, that was my question. If we don't mind coming down and flipping the switches manually when we come in in the morning, could we do the generator and then do the electrical switch later?

Mike Smith

It's easier to do the whole project at once.

Irene Ames

I understand in a perfect world we would do it that way, but could we get the generator in place and continue saving and then do the switch later?

Mike Smith

We could.

Elwell

Get an overall price and then we can hack it up as we go.

Erb

Do you want to leave it at \$10,000 at this point?

Elwell

Leave it there. If Mike can get back to us before we finalize it, then we can hack it up a little bit if we have to.

Dave Percival

I have a question on dispatch. How was it broken out between fire and EMS?

Erb

It is split in half.

Speaker

Does the \$35,000 reserved currently include the \$10,000 set aside for this year?

Thompson

No. There is \$30,000 in the reserve right now. We would add that \$40,000.

Conrad

Is the dispatch number paid to the county?

Thompson

Yes.

Greg Soutiea

Mike said it would be at least \$30K to get everybody outfitted with equipment. We only have \$25K in there at the moment and there's probably going to be other equipment that you'll need over the course of the year.

Mike Smith

We're going to order some now and some in the next budget.

Erb

Some will come out of this year's budget.

Mike Smith

It is the turnout year. We have all the other equipment.

Thompson

Let's move on then to the Ambulance.

Erb

There is additional funding that is available now to the ambulance from a couple of sources. I'll start to explain it if anybody needs to fill in more details, that's fine. The state appropriated funds last year to stabilize ambulance services. I think it was especially targeted to rural areas. St George has received one check of \$49,000.

Amy Drinkwater

We haven't received a check yet; we've applied for it.

Erb

Okay, but we know the amount for the first one. And then there will be a second one. At this point you might assume that it's going to be an equal amount but it's hard to know yet. At this point, it certainly looks like the total for both years will be just under \$100,000. That can only be used for certain purposes. One purpose would be stabilizing wages, and a portion of it can be used for an ambulance replacement. The other source of revenue is the grant that the ambulance service received about the time that they came into town government and that is for community medicine which will also help pay for wages.

Susan Ellis

How much was that, Rick?

Erb

\$99,150. Amy, was the breakdown \$22,000 for community paramedic wages?

Amy Drinkwater

Yes.

Erb

And that covers people that we have on.

Amy Drinkwater

And people that come in after hours to help with community paramedicine.

Erb

We've had some discussion about what should happen with ambulance wages. All towns and ambulance providers are struggling to pay people because there is such a shortage of employees in that line of work. We have an unusual system here where all the full-timers are scheduled for 48 hours per week, but we pay them on more of a monthly salary basis. It's been a problem in some ways. If you're familiar with the Fair Labor Standards Act, I'm not sure all of them really qualify as salary. What we've discussed is could we set up a system where if everyone works (Inaudible) which they do, could they be paid their regular straight pay for forty hours and time and a half for the eight. I looked into it, and what it would look like if we added enough people so that there was no overtime, but it's not cost effective to go that route. Amy, I do have the sheet that you put together and I can hand that out and we can talk about it and what we might want to do next year.

Speaker

Would the 48-hour workers qualify as salary, and some would not I assume because at least one would be a supervisor.

Erb

It's the system that was in place when the ambulance came over to us and we're just trying to figure out the best way to approach this from a legal and cost-effective point of view.

Elwell

Amy, Are we compatible with everybody else on regular employee wages?

Amy Drinkwater

Yes, we are, per diems, etc.

Erb

The proposal that you have came from Amy and the ambulance service. This would cost more than what we have put into the budget right now. But we also haven't figured in the revenue from the grants.

Cartwright

That would offset it considerably, wouldn't it?

Erb

Yes.

Susan Ellis

For more than one year?

Speaker

That's the question. Can you put some money aside and use it for a second, third, or fourth year?

Erb

I doubt it.

Amy Drinkwater

That's what we're working on at the state level right now. The first one just rolled out and we applied for it. We had to apply for a certain time and the rules come out in March that goes to the media and so forth. So, then we'll know more on the second amount of money, on how much that's going to be. It's still going to be used for stabilization of wages and capital reserve education, the certain things that it can only be used for.

Erb

On the positive side. The state recognizes that they have a huge problem here. And they also realize that paying for it but just one year is not going to be a solution. So, I feel actually pretty confident there's going to be an ongoing state of assistance on this but every legislature makes its own decisions. They can't bind future legislators. You can't be 100% sure.

Cartwright

We're sure not alone facing this.

Conrad

Is the community paramedicine money already spread out into the budget draft that we have?

Erb

No.

Cartwright

Is the suggestion that we increase the budget to cover some of this, what are you recommending?

Erb

I would recommend that we do a little bit more work to see what other towns are paying. I think that going to a system of straight time plus eight hours of overtime is the right direction to go because it will mean that we are operating within the law.

Amy Drinkwater

And you have (Inaudible) that work 40 hours and if they work 48 hours, they're getting time and a half. You have full-time people that are getting time and a half after 40 hours. So, we just need to make it fair.

Erb

I would suggest we look at what other towns are paying before we make that decision.

Thompson

Do we have a timeframe to come back on that?

Erb

I could do it in two weeks.

Amy Drinkwater

What do you want from me, and what other towns are paying hourly?

Erb

You can work with me Amy, and we'll figure out who we want to contact and what information we're looking for.

Conrad

And where are we in the cycle of replacing an ambulance if we have \$80,000 in reserve, and we potentially have \$50,000 - \$100,000 coming from the state that could go in there.

Amy Drinkwater

A brand-new ambulance is almost \$400,000. (Inaudible).

Conrad

Okay, so you're basically there.

Amy Drinkwater

Pricing our remounts, which is remounting our box to a new chassis. I am looking at that and can bring that to you to see the cost differential, so you have an idea. As long as it can be warrantied after it's remounted with the electrical and those pieces, our box isn't bad.

Susan Ellis

Are there other grants that might be available?

Amy Drinkwater

There are other firefighter grants that we can apply for.

Erb

There's \$75,000 that's already in the proposed budget to go into an ambulance capital reserve. How much were you anticipating from state funds?

Amy Drinkwater

We can do \$50,000 for capital reserve total between the two checks.

Susan Ellis

Would part of the \$99,000 also be available?

Amy Drinkwater

No.

Conrad

There's a vehicle we did expense.

Carr

Yes, (Inaudible).

Elwell

What's the timeframe for when it really needs to be replaced?

Susan Ellis

We are there now.

Conrad

We have to figure putting \$50,000 in there.

Amy Drinkwater

Yes. We need to have some type of plan on replacement and right now it's a quarter (Inaudible) and it's two to three years out.

Elwell

What would it be like to finance that and then use the reserve?

Erb

I haven't asked yet but I can.

Elwell

If we can borrow the money, get a new ambulance and use a reserve to make the payment.

Susan Ellis

Don't we finish a loan payment in the next budget year.

Irene Ames

We need that to pay for the boat. I don't think it was safe for him to be in that thing last year.

Speaker

There's no existing ambulance reserve beyond the \$75,000, right?

Erb

No, there wasn't any that came over.

Greg Soutiea

Looking at the ambulance wages here and the other town departments, rec was affected. I think the federal salary increase is going in next year and there's legislation at the state level about minimum salaries to be paid a salary instead of hourly, including overtime. I think it's going up to around \$60,000 next year.

Irene Ames

We are within that.

Greg Soutiea

Okay, everybody would be hitting the threshold.

Speaker

What's the turnaround for a rebuild if the turnaround for new is two to three years.

Amy Drinkwater

It depends on the chassis stock and what we want for our chassis.

Thompson

Investigations to undergo.

Amy Drinkwater

Kyle said that he could probably meet in the next week or so and could find out what the remount would cost. They would give us a loaner.

David Percival

For the new versus the one you have now, is there different equipment on board or more sophisticated?

Amy Drinkwater

It is updated and new. We would have the same equipment. It is really just the truck.

Elwell

Under shift pay, is that a \$5 increase? It is not what they're paid an hour is it?

Amy Drinkwater

We have shift pay for people that stay at home, which is under shift pay.

Elwell

They don't get \$5 an hour to stay at home, do they?

Amy Drinkwater

Yes.

Elwell

Are we legal with the minimum wage if we're only paying \$5.

Amy Drinkwater

Yes. It is on call. If they are at the station, they get paid hourly.

Greg Soutiea

What are the current shift pays right now.

Amy Drinkwater

A current shift pay right now is \$5 So, it will be \$6.

Susan Ellis

Why is the Workers Comp at zero?

Erb

Because we moved it over to the Administration Account.

Thompson

Okay, we'll move on then. Let's go to Roads, Property Management and Public Works.

Elwell

Who's the sexton right now?

Erb

Don Goutiea.

Erb

The big piece of equipment here is the three-quarter ton pickup that Stevie has been using and is nearing the end of its life. We are spending more than I would like on maintenance now, so we're planning on replacing that. If we're going to replace the truck, I would like to have some consideration of replacing it with a one ton with a dump body.

Elwell

I talked to Stevie. I'd like to see that too.

Erb

It is a very versatile piece of equipment and sort of the mainstay in previous towns where I've worked. The other thing is right now we use Stevie's own truck to plow for us. I'd like to have him plow in a town truck instead of his own. That's what you're seeing there.

Thompson

Can we get along with that reduction and resurfacing that you're putting in here?

Erb

I think so. Here's where we are on that. The roads that we have scheduled for 2024 are a piece Cold Storage Road which we weren't going to do until we finish the project down there because bringing in steel is hard on roads. Also, Drift Inn Road, Horse Point Road and Raspberry Lane have not been paved in at least ten years.

Speaker

How about Marshall Point?

Thompson

We have FEMA money.

Conrad

I was wondering about storm damage repairs.

Erb

Those are sort of a different category. We know we have to pave those.

Speaker

Will that cover Drift Inn Beach?

Erb

It may. They were already on the list before the storm so that's why you're seeing it there. That might allow our budget to be stretched further, because they'll be picking up a piece of that.

Susan Ellis

Is there a project plan for property management? It's gone from \$1000 up to \$2500.

Erb

I don't recall what that was. I'll have to look it up.

Elwell

I see you had the backstairs done. Are there other buildings that need to be taken care of? I know Stevie did a lot of painting here last summer.

Erb

He did save us a lot of money.

Elwell

Ryan has been working on floats so that is saving some money.

Erb

I'll get you an answer. I'm not sure.

Greg Soutiea

For our annual contracts, the mowing in the summer maintenance, are those contracts already out or are we not expecting any increases in those agreements?

Erb

As far as the roadside mowing, we had to change contractor this year. The former one retired from the business and I braced myself. I figured the price would probably go up. It's hard to find people to do things like that. It actually went down. I think I budgeted the same amount even though we didn't spend quite that much this year. The contract that goes along with the winter maintenance contract. And it just depends on how much work we're able to do.

Greg Soutiea

It looks like the winter maintenance is going up a little bit.

Erb

That's the end of the contract with Kallak, so I don't account for a new bid on that. Do we pay per storm or by the inch?

Erb

It is a flat fee.

Cartwright

It seems like they've done a good job.

Erb

Almost no complaints, which is unusual.

Thompson

Can we move on to Solid Waste?

Erb

We changed the contractor for transporting solid waste as we had a lot of problems with the previous company so you can see a pretty good-sized increase there.

Erb

Tipping fees went up this past year. They kicked in after the first quarter this year. They went up this year. They'll go up a little bit more next year. There is a cost-of-living adjustment.

Conrad

What does that mean, tipping fees?

Erb

That's what you pay when you dump it at a landfill?

Carr

Per ton.

Susan Ellis

Why did the payroll go down.

Erb

I wanted to talk about that. For the staffing at the transfer station, I think we're overstaffed based on the amount of work and I've had a lot of conversations with Ben who oversees the operation, and we really believe that we can and should operate with one less person on that. There just is not enough work there for three people.

Elwell

That will come and go.

Erb

We will work that out. There's so much stuff there now. We haven't used Stevie that way but, in the past, he has filled in. I tried to keep enough in there so that if we can find somebody willing to do part time, we'll still be able to fill in the spot. We have a very good crew.

Susan Ellis

What about equipment maintenance?

Erb

Looking at what our costs have been this year, which have been substantial, we are just trying to keep up with the actual costs.

Susan Ellis

Is that the actual compacting equipment or is this the truck?

Erb

It would not be the truck. There isn't a vehicle for solid waste, but we had substantial repairs necessary for the compactor. Basically, anything down there that's a piece of equipment that needs repair would come out of that account.

Elwell

You lost your regular maintenance guy so that could go to someone else.

Erb

We put money in every year for the compacter building and have had a great deal of difficulty finding anyone who would come in and give us a quote at this point, because you could say that we're going to come in and not show. We're still working on that.

Cartwright

In general, are we getting anything back for recycling?

Erb

The market is still quite poor if you have seen any of the stories in other places.

Cartwright

I read an interesting story. He pointed out that a lot of plastics cannot be recycled economically.

Carr

Ours are. I always feel when people read those articles, then they don't recycle here. It might take a long time to find a proper market, but we do send them to places that do recycle them.

Cartwright

Looking at the overall feasibility.

Carr

Right. I don't like those articles because then people stop recycling.

Thompson

What we're going to do on the budget is wait to get some of the updates for you and we're looking at Monday the 11th.

Susan Ellis

We won't complete it on the 11th, but will we hear everything?

Thompson

That's the idea.

Erb

We have gone through every department, I think.

Susan Ellis

So, we'll fine tune on the 11th. You guys will vote, and we will vote and will let you know.

Erb

I have heard some recommendations that I can plug in. I think we found an error somewhere in there that we will correct. I will send out new sheets to everybody and hopefully we can get a lot done on the way. The other thing is we have not talked about revenues yet if you wish to do that. That's the last page.

Susan Ellis

I wonder here about investment interest.

Erb

It looks a little shady, doesn't it?

Susan Ellis

I think it might not be enough.

Irene Ames

If interest rates stay the way they are, and our account balances stay the way they are (Inaudible).

Susan Ellis

Are you looking at \$120K?

Irene Ames

If interest rates don't go down.

Susan Ellis

What if we put it at \$100K? That makes you a little less (Inaudible) and more money in the coffers.

Irene Ames

I need to look at the actual numbers year to date before I feel comfortable.

Susan Ellis

\$65,000 in the first six months of 23/24.

Conrad

Do we have \$25K?

Susan Ellis

We have \$75K.

Irene Ames

Not necessarily all of that is general fund money that would be able to be used.

Susan Ellis

Take one more peek at it.

Irene Ames

I will do that.

Elwell

Have there been any numbers on how the new over 65 property tax has affected us?

Irene Ames

Going forward, that's a non-issue.

Irene Ames

Essentially, we've received a payment for 56% of it and then the state legislature had passed a bill to fund the remainder of it.

Elwell

The state hasn't backed out. We are still not going to get that.

Irene Ames

Last I heard it was sitting on the governor's desk waiting for signature.

Thompson

Is there anything else to talk about relative to moneys coming in.

Greg Soutiea

Have the mooring fees been increased at all within the last four years?

Thompson

I thought we increased them last year.

Elwell

I think it was two years ago.

Susan Ellis

There was a fair amount of noise when they went up.

Elwell

We are still cheaper than any town around.

Cartwright

I've heard from people who don't live in the town. It's still considered a bargain.

Speaker

For the ambulance revenue, I recall there was some discussion about how that's coming in slowly. Is this number accurate?

Erb

It probably wouldn't be a bad idea to do an update on that. It's been about two months since I've looked at it so I should probably go back to that.

Irene Ames

It is also a little seasonal.

Speaker

When people get sick?

Irene Ames

In the winter, they don't do nearly as many rounds as they do in the summer. The population doubles and retirees come up for the summer.

Thompson

All right, anything else?

Erb

I think it'll be helpful. When you get a new summary and a projection on the effect on the tax rate.

Elwell

I haven't talked to Mike and Casey. Have they finalized the school year?

Erb

No. They started later than us.

Conflicts of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest.

Minutes

A motion was made by Elwell, seconded by Conrad, to approve the February 5, 2025 Select Board Meeting Minutes as revised, and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Warrant

Thompson

I didn't see anything unusual. Were there any other thoughts?

Irene Ames

There are three payrolls. There's three weeks of invoices. Amazon charges of \$47.76 are for the fire department gear bags. They had ordered six of them. They only had two in stock, so they sent us the two and we needed them, so we canceled the order with the first company and reordered them with a second company. This amount represents the increase in price for those four bags. The Fire Department training from Maryland is the once-a-year federal matching. The balance of the EMS bank account went down because I've transferred \$50,000 into the general fund checking account. That EMS billing account is

just a place for the ambulance billings to land. It can take as much as three weeks from the time I get the bank statement to when I'm able to reconcile because of the billing company getting me enough information so that I can reconcile the bank account so it's much easier to keep it separate. Other than that, it is straightforward.

The warrant was signed.

Committee Reports

Planning Board - Carr

Carr

We have not met.

Appeals Board – Conrad

Conrad

We have not met.

Harbor Committee - Elwell

Elwell

It is on the discussion list.

Budget Committee – Thompson

Thompson

The Budget Committee has met.

Resiliency Committee – Thompson

Thompson

The committee made some contacts through Susie with South Thomaston.

Susan Ellis

We are looking at applying for a grant for a paid position that would facilitate a climate action plan for both South Thomaston and St. George.

Comprehensive Planning - Conrad

Conrad

Continuing to work.

Shellfish Committee - Elwell

Elwell

We meet next month.

Solid Waste – Erb

Erb

There is nothing to report.

Cemetery Committee – Carr

Carr

They have not met.

Affordable Housing - Cartwright

Cartwright

We have an ordinance to consider.

Town Manager Report

Erb

I have a lot of items to talk about in the regular agenda. I will point out the roads are posted right now due to forecasted warm weather about the break. We are still doing some repairs from the January storm. Factory Road is being worked on right now. There was a stretch of the hill with some pretty serious erosion so we're having to rebuild part of that, but we believe this will all be eligible for reimbursement. It's not as if we have a whole lot of choice anyway, so we go ahead and do it and have not had problems in the past with that. I cannot tell you when the auditor will be in since the school doesn't know, and we don't know exactly when that's going to happen. We're still waiting for the 2022 audit, as is the school department. It is really frustrating at this point. If there's something you think you can do, I will ask you to do so but we're not the only town in this situation, but this has gone on way too long. Other items I think I will address under the agenda items.

Report on an RFP for a Townwide Revaluation

Erb

The proposals were due at two o'clock today, and I was pleased we had three of them. I didn't really expect three. I was hopeful for two.

Thompson

Part of that reason is because of the extension.

Erb

That is true. We had put this out to RFP in December and had no responses at all. A few other towns have had the same problem. There's great demand for reappraisal right now because soaring prices have put everybody's ratios totally out of whack, so it is not too surprising. Three submitted. I will give you the information in order of price. The lowest price we received was from KRT Appraisals from Massachusetts for \$310,000. They will begin with some preliminary work from May 13 - 24. They will complete the evaluation by August 13, 2027. We had requested proposals to complete the revaluation by 2026 but allowed people to submit alternative schedules if they couldn't meet that because nobody could. It's one reason why we're here. The next lowest was Parker Appraisals which is Bob Gingras' company. Bob is our Assessor's Agent, and the quote was \$330,000. He would start in July of 2025. He would complete it by July 2026. He was not able to meet our request. And the third appraisal, which I hadn't heard from, so I didn't necessarily expect them to submit, was RJD Appraisal of Pittsfield Maine for \$348,000. That would start in June of 2027 and be completed by July 2028. I saw on some of the references that some of these are not to be completed until 2029. I think that we should move quickly on this if we can. I was going to make a suggestion for a subcommittee of the board to review the proposals.

Elwell

Would it be better for Gingras to do since he already does a lot of work for us?

Thompson

Completing it a year earlier could make a big difference.

Elwell

Was his figure \$330K?

Susasn Ellis

And the cheapest one was \$310K.

Thompson

But that would be a year longer.

Erb

The most expensive was also the one that was furthest out for completion.

Elwell

I'd say we use Gingras.

Susan Ellis

It'll probably pay for itself.

Conrad

I'm in favor of a couple of people working with you to come back with a recommendation. It's too much for me to process and decide on the spot.

Thompson

Would anyone be interested in volunteering to work on this.

Conrad

I'll do it.

Update on the Port Clyde Landing Project

Erb

We continue to have problems with subsurface obstacles, and it is increasing the cost of the project. We knew that it would. We have met with CPM contractor and with their subcontractor Fleming and there's a substantial cost to change this. It's going to be in the area of \$580,000.

Thompson

I think it's \$586K.

Erb

It's more than 10% but we have reviewed it with the engineers. There is very little that we can do about this. On the positive side, financially, we're in a position to do it. Prior to this change order our surplus amount in the project budget is a little over \$1.3 million. So, barring a totally unforeseen problem or act of God kind of thing, we have the money to complete the project.

Conrad

We need to decide right away so that they finish close to on time. They have their equipment sitting down there and ready to go.

Thompson

The recommendation of the Harbor Committee was that we proceed reluctantly, but it's necessary.

Elwell

If we want to finish the project, we've got to jump into it.

Conrad

They've also said they don't expect it to be done now until closer to the end of July. People should be aware of that.

Elwell

If they have to move the equipment out to another job and bring it back...

Erb

The other problem is if you can get them.

Conrad

Rick, as far as the timing of this, at what point does the parking lot get paved? Is that after this other work is done? I would assume, so we should not expect that people are going to be able to park down there until maybe August. You should be just thinking about that. Obviously, The General Store and The Dip Net are there now, so it changes things, but there will be food trucks and whatnot.

Carr

The general store will be.

Conrad

That's right. But she's renting a bunch of parking spots from the boat line to accommodate people going there.

Thompson

What I am concerned about down there is as we work to completion of that project, what are we doing relative to Cold Storage Road and are we going to raise it or not because we really have to plan that.

Erb

I've had conversations with Gartley and Dorsky. Their proposal is to raise the level of the road by two feet to accommodate for The General Store.

Thompson

As well as getting to the landing and planning for the future.

Elwell

If we plan, it can be cost effective to do it and everybody is there versus going in and out.

Carr

Given what we've shown, two feet doesn't seem like enough.

Thompson

It depends on what you're aiming for. The idea is kind of to get you through 2050 if at all possible. But after that, there is a big decision to be made by the town on whether you abandon that.

Carr

It seems to me like it would be smart to think about all these issues right now.

Erb

We are. There are also issues with the driveways on the other side.

Carr

I understand but this is life now.

Conrad

What will happen next? Well, the Resiliency Committee be talking to us about this? Are you talking to Gartley and Dorsky?

Erb

You're going to see a sketch by Will Gartley on what the proposal looks like.

Thompson

And a quick cost estimate.

Conrad

And Linda Bean's crew is aware of all this discussion.

Thompson

Yes, because they're doing the engineering for her too. It does raise the question of what the projections for the longer term are and where we are.

Erb

We will also have to work on who pays for what.

Thompson

By the end of March, we should be hearing from Sebago in terms of what they're proposing engineering wise and costing.

Erb

The only other thing I haven't mentioned is we did get some feedback in the last week or so about the town being in the business of making (Inaudible). It certainly has been discussed already at the Harbor Committee, and to some extent here at the Select Board, in putting together fees and a fee structure. We're trying to be mindful of what it is that we are offering to people and how that compares with what other privately owned wharfs have to charge. I heard some pushback on that but not in the last several days. It has sort of quieted down. We'll wait and see but just to let you know.

Warrant Articles and Public Hearings on:

Port Clyde Landing Proposed Uses and Fee Structure

The Transfer of Town Property at Kinney Woods Road

Updating the Town Land Use Ordinances to comply with State Law Land Use Ordinances

Erb

I was in touch with Bill Kelly, and he worked on language for a ballot question. My assumption is that both of these will be going on secret ballot. You could do it at an open town meeting if you choose to, but the discussion so far sounded like it was going to be an election day decision.

Conrad

Is that for all three?

Erb

All three.

Conrad

We're talking about the Port Clyde landing question, the transfer of the Kinney Woods Property and changes to the land use ordinance to comply with the accessory dwelling unit. There's a sign ordinance issue in here too.

Thompson

If anybody wants them, they are here. I thought we went over these previously.

Erb

Some we might have a decision for tonight. These will go on the ballot.

The warrants for the public hearings were signed.

Conrad

I had a comment on the Port Clyde landing proposed language. The proposed language we got from Bill Kelly said that the fee structure shall be consistent with the recommendations and the Harbor Committee report. Since all of the town's committees are advisory to the Select Board, I don't think we should have language that binds us to whatever the Harbor Committee says. I fully expect that we're going to defer to the recommendations they've made, since that's what we've talked about at the last meeting and a couple of months ago.

Thompson

What would you substitute for "consistence"?

Conrad

Where it says, "shall be established following due consideration by the Harbor Committee or taking into consideration recommendations of the Harbor Committee", or something like that. Also, they gave us this year's proposal, but we'll be updating these in future years. This is just the first time.

Erb

What Bill was trying to do was to be able to tell the voters what it is that this is about. He and I talked about it. You could make this as simple as giving the Select Board the authority to do this without telling them what it is you're planning to do. I think he felt that it has a better chance of passing if we're able to advise people.

Thompson

How about saying a license agreement shall be consistent with advice given or something like that.

Conrad

I still think that the legal authority rests with the Select Board. The Select Board could, if they wanted to, do something dramatically different from the recommendation of the Harbor Committee, however unlikely that is. I don't think we should be putting before the voters something that says we have to do what the Harbor Committee told us. That would be neglecting our own responsibility to independently make a judgement about the fees.

Carr

Would you take that clause out?

Conrad

My suggestion would be for the last sentence, right after where it says, “fees and license agreements” to say, “shall be established following due consideration and recommendations by the Harbor Committee”.

Erb

Bill actually gave me three different options. I thought this was the best one, but all three actually deal directly with the question you have.

Thompson

You can say “under advisement with recommendations.”

Conrad

Where would you put that?

Erb

Or they shall be compatible with the recommendations. Is that any better?

Conrad

No. I think the problem is that the authority to decide the fees rests with this group, and all the committees, the ones that are boards and commissions are different, but the Comprehensive Planning Committee can come to this group and make recommendations, but ultimately, the responsibility rests with this group. And so, it would not be appropriate for the voters, some group of Harbor Committee or town volunteers that are not elected. Essentially, they are setting the fees and that's not how it's supposed to work.

Carr

Why not just end it at Port Clyde then because, in your scenario, what if we decide to come up with a completely different fee structure and we're not going to do we're not going to give due consideration to what the Harbor Committee has recommended? Why not just be silent?

Conrad

We definitely could do that. I assume we're always going to want to listen to the Harbor Committee. They've worked really hard on making these recommendations. I think it's appropriate to give them credit for the fact that they do this, and they make recommendations. Another option is if we did end it at Port Clyde period, as Wendy said, we could have a note just like the Kinney Woods Rd. That's not something the voters would be requiring for information purposes.

Carr

I think you could give them credit for that.

Conrad

You could have a note that said the first set of recommendations have been provided to us by the Harbor Committee in the report and that'll be on the website.

Erb

I think the reason that he took this approach was one to give the voters an idea of what it is that you're planning to do. And two, you already have the luxury that you already have the recommendations before you and if you endorse them now, I don't think there's anything wrong with saying so.

Conrad

That's true, but are we going to do a warrant every time we update them and there is going to be a different set of recommendations? That's silly. Right? We don't want to stick with this particular proposal from 2024 when two years from now, there will be different recommendations and a different title.

Carr

Right. We've been told that it might need to be adjusted once the data comes in, in terms of usage. Also, even if we went with this language, I would think we'd have to note the Port Clyde landing use plan proposal. That hamstring our other options to go in a different direction and change the fees.

Conrad

I think we should end it where Wendy said after Port Clyde, and then we should have a note that explains that. On the website and stuff, there can be a link.

Erb

What are you suggesting for a note?

Conrad

We haven't voted on this at the moment. We heard those.

Thompson

The Harbor Committee has made recommendations as to usage and fees.

Conrad

In the dated Port Clyde landing use plan proposal, by May 9, or whenever this election is, after it's printed at the end of March... We didn't technically adopt those last time. We haven't decided precisely what the fees are going to be. We haven't decided when they will go into effect. I don't know how much we want to say in a note.

Thompson

Other than saying we're taking it under advisement.

Conrad

Current recommendations of the Harbor Committee are set forth.

A motion was made by Conrad, seconded by Cartwright, to use the modified language ending after Port Clyde period, with a note, explaining the current Harbor Committee recommendation the Board will take under advisement, and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Thompson

Moving on to Kinney Woods.

Erb

A couple of you have weighed in on this and adjusted accordingly.

Carr

I have an issue saying all or a portion of approximately 78 acres. In my view, we are deeding over to them the amount of land that will result, as the note explains, in seven residences, but I don't like that it looks like potentially we're giving them 78 acres. The explanation in my mind is there are a lot of wetlands on that parcel and developers, you can say whatever you want about them, but they always wreck wetlands. My concern is that if we give them the whole 78 acres, they're going to use some of the other acreage and do bad things on wetlands. So, my view is that we only give them enough land to create the seven residences. If they want to come back to us and want to build another seven, okay. I don't like giving them 78 acres.

Elwell

The original conversation we had was to give them only enough to do what they need.

Erb

Do you want to say a portion of?

Greg Soutiea

That's not what Rob said.

Conrad

Rick, did you send Bill Kelly the language that we voted on in the minutes at the last meeting, because we specifically said that we were going to grant them sufficient acreage for them to do what they needed to do with seven and it could have been 10 or 20. And the other thing that's inaccurate about this is that

in his note he says that because of the wetlands, it limits it to seven residences, and that's not my understanding. My understanding is that their current budget and everything else...

Greg Soutiea

Phase One is what we're looking at, up to seven units in that one buildable space of land that we've identified.

Thompson

You can leave off the seven and the note.

Conrad

Or limit the number of feasible buildings.

Greg Soutiea

I thought we talked about the language in the sense of seven residences that address the housing shortage. Then at the last meeting, he talked about adding the word workforce in there or something like area housing shortage. We talked about not using affordable. I thought that we wanted to clarify that a little bit.

Conrad

It does say housing shortage in the warrant section. I guess the reason we're not doing affordable is now there's a statutory definition.

Erb

I would be concerned about using the word workforce. That would make it sound like you are restricting it to a certain type of person and I don't think that's what we're doing.

Conrad

I wondered if it would be useful to voters if after "at no cost", it said "to St. George taxpayers" because then people will realize if they didn't already that this is free to the taxpayers.

Erb

I'm sure that the "at no cost" means that we're not getting anything from the CDC.

Conrad

I think he meant at no cost to the taxpayers.

Erb

I don't think so. I'm pretty sure he's saying that they're not going to pay us for that.

Greg Soutiea

Would we say, “or to the St. George taxpayers” after that.

Conrad

I thought that the voters would appreciate knowing precisely what was proposed. But that was also what I thought it meant, as opposed to what Rick thought it meant, which was at no cost to the CDC.

Carr

You could spell it out and list both parties. It's a little wordy.

Conrad

If you could just revise both of those and send them to all of us just to see before they get printed.

Erb

Is there a proposed change to the note?

Thompson

Limiting the number of residences; take out the seven.

Conrad

It's not even the proposed. I think it is limiting the number of residences that are feasible.

Thompson

We already talked about the town ordinances.

Conrad

We need to approve that. There's just a typo. I would point out in a moment amendment number one, the third paragraph, there's an “e” on the end of land that needs to come out.

The warrants were signed.

I did have a question about the Kinney Woods Road transfer. This also relates to the land use about how developments have to be in a designated growth area. In the Comprehensive Plan, currently the only designated growth areas are in the two villages and not on Kinney Woods Road. This is a question for Bill Kelly. It's not like the Planning Board is going to be approving next week for the Kinney Woods Road Subdivision Development. And our goal is to get the updated Comprehensive Plan to the voters in May of 2025. But the question is whether in a plan that didn't go to the voters until May of 2025 is that soon enough for Kinney Woods Road to be designated as a growth area.

Greg Soutiea

It doesn't need to be designated as a growth area for the size of the property and land that we're proposing. It is already fine with the current regulations.

Erb

I would assume that there's no problem because it's a pretty conventional subdivision.

Thompson

Are there other concerns about the amendment here for the land use ordinances?

Thompson

I thought we went over them thoroughly. Thank you.

Conrad

For anything Michael Jordan does, I'm pretty happy to make a motion on.

A motion was made by Elwell, seconded by Cartwright, to revise the language of the warrant to transfer the Kinney Woods Rd. town property to the CDC, as noted, and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Greg Soutiea

I have a question. I don't know if this has been talked about at all during this conversation, anything about putting any sort of cap or other restrictions on short term rentals, Airbnbs, etc.

Conrad

No. That's something that because of the number of comments about that to the Comprehensive Plan Survey. I think that in the future, the town might want to have a public hearing for people to air their views about that and have some consideration about that.

Greg Soutiea

I know Rockland just put in their cap and Camden is getting ready to announce their plan this week.

Conrad

And there were a lot of people that were very concerned about that, and I think it needs to be discussed. That hasn't made it to the front burner in St. George yet.

RESOLVED, that Amendment No. 1 to the St. George Land Use Ordinance, in the form of the draft dated February 15, 2024, as presented to this meeting, is ordered to be placed on the ballot for the annual town meeting to be held on May 13, 2024.

FURTHER RESOLVED, that Amendment No. 2 to the St. George Land Use Ordinance, in the form of the draft dated February 15, 2024, as presented to this meeting, is ordered to be placed on the ballot for the annual town meeting to be held on May 13, 2024.

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the St. George Planning Board is directed to give notice of, and to hold, a public hearing on the amendments described in these resolutions in accordance with law.

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town Clerk is directed to file a copy of these resolutions in accordance with law.

Town Manager Search

Erb

It'll be quick. There are thirty-one applications. We are scheduled to meet at 4:00p.m. on Wednesday.

Conrad

In Executive Session on March 28th.

Take up Appointments to a Traffic Safety Committee

Cartwright

I have five people that would like to be appointed to an ad hoc committee and I'm proposing that we do it for one year, but if you think we should do it for six months or something, I'm open to any suggestions. I was thinking these are people that are dedicated and of course, every meeting will be public so others can come in and comment on part of it. The idea would be to say that that they have this timeframe in which they can make recommendations to the Select Board on various ideas of how we might be able to slow traffic down and make our villages and rural roads safer.

Thompson

You're proposing we establish an ad hoc committee for at least a year. What are the names?

Cartwright

One individual is here, Josh Coggeshall from Port Clyde, Bonnie Percival of Tenants Harbor, Patty Thermal from Wiley's corner, Jessica Thompson from Port Clyde and Maggie Moran from Tenants Harbor. They have all checked in and are all willing to be on this committee as appointed members of an advisory committee.

Elwell

Do we need alternates?

Conrad

If people come forward, you can have alternates. Usually there are two alternatives, but it would be good if somebody from the Clark Island area were recruited because you've done a good job of representing everybody else.

A motion was made Cartwright, seconded by Conrad, to appoint Josh Coggeshall from Port Clyde, Bonnie Percival from Tenants Harbor, Patty Thermal from Wiley's corner, Jessica Thompson from Port Clyde and Maggie Moran from Tenants Harbor as members of the ad hoc Traffic Safety Committee, and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Greg Soutiea

Is there any data or hard information on speeding tickets or accidents on the peninsula.

Erb

Accidents.

Elwell

I might be able to find that for you. We had this discussion with Richard Bates a few years ago and came up with a state statistics map for the town and where the most accidents were over a period of time.

Erb

I can help with that.

Conrad

That is old information. The DOT does keep all of that.

Josh Coggeshall

There is a state agency where you can see where all the crashes have been and what they were in the Town of St. George, where there were rear-ended, hit head on, hit an animal, etc. I was on this committee, I think ten years ago in 2014. I see there was one, the same thing, in the Town of St. George. We've had three meetings. At the last one we had two law enforcement people. That was pretty interesting. Starting off, the state senator, I drove her over these roads and had a meeting with Rick. She'll be in the next meeting. We'll organize a meeting around her. I agree with these people from Spruce Head and Clark Island. Absolutely. These people are just from here. It hasn't been publicized well. We did put a notice up in all the post offices. That would be a good idea. There are a lot of loud concerns the first meeting and starting from of course Route 131, Kinney Woods Road, Wallston Road. Glenmere Road and even Mosquito Head and Martial Point. They're all a little bit different. The purpose

of this committee is to find ways to make the road safer for vehicles and pedestrians. Their hazards include speeding distraction, OUI and indifferent. There's a 2017 report ordered by MDOT for DMT and they came up with this word indifferent meaning, "I don't care if what I'm doing is dangerous to someone else." There are those kinds of drivers. There are some things that we may be able to do fairly quickly and easily. The first one is getting a data collector. What that is, it's a device you put it on the road and it will measure, it'll count the number of cars and how fast they're going. This is a really good place to be because you're here and you're not on a camera. There are five things here. So that would help in the future what we do, whether that or law enforcement. The second would be dynamic feedback signs. I don't know what those are. It's a screen that's 11" by 11" or 15" by 15" and it flashes the speed you're going. They usually have it by a speed sign and that does seem to work. We have one on a trailer and where that is, it seems to work. When you move the trailer, the speed goes up again. It does seem to work, and each road is different. The third thing is are what's called rubber cushions. The first meeting we had people who were adamant they wanted speed bumps and actually those are really awkward. They're extreme. They're not acceptable to a lot of people. And these recycled rubber cushions are enough to slow the traffic. They're also narrow enough that the EMS vehicles can go over without hitting them. It doesn't do that, so they seem to be popular. Now the MDOT (Inaudible), I did find a company, Traffic Logics in Montreal and they speak English. You can speak English or French. That's good. MDOT uses them for these devices and that was good to hear. The next thing is crosswalks with signs that work quite well in a number of towns. Unfortunately, most of our roads don't meet the criteria for it so you cannot have crosswalks. We used to have them in Port Clyde. In Port Clyde occasionally you have 144 people going in one Monhegan Boat. There's a parking lot with 100 cars. There's a playground; there's the post office; there's an ice cream shop, a lot of reasons to slow those people down and they come through there as much as 45 miles an hour. When you have that it doesn't happen as much, and the crosswalks used to work. Now we can't do that. MDOT is firm about that, the requirements to do it. They cut out in somebody's driveway. They just don't work so we don't have any anymore, which is really too bad because they really did work. The only other thing that worked was chickens. Some of these chickens would slow the traffic down pretty well.

For Horse Point Rd., we had a duck with eight ducklings and then went once a day she'd go down to the pond and come back and when she did everybody stopped. I want to go to picture this big truck and this big guy, and he stopped and his truck walks across for the duck line. That works too. That's a dead-end road; that's a little different. So, there are two ways you do this. Maybe if you influence the drivers. How do you do that? I went to Rockport the other day and there was a sign that said, "Drive as if your children were playing on this road." It's a little different. You try to get their attention, maybe that works. And the other is you hire an off-duty sheriff. We've talked about that. Would that work? That's harder.

Thompson

Josh, I appreciate this. I'm looking forward to you getting together with the committee and finalizing some things on specific areas.

Josh Coggeshall

So, that's what we're going to be doing hopefully. Maybe we don't need to budget. Maybe they'll lend them to us.

Thompson

We look forward to the committee getting back to us with recommendations in four specific areas and then we will consider them.

Cartwright

We can let these five people decide who they'd like to chair.

Conrad

Right, and you can let us know if they have any budget requests or whether something like a data collector can be acquired on loan from DOT or someplace.

Elwell

I believe the new school zone signs I installed last summer keep track of speed data. They flash and advise to slow down to the 15mph. I'm pretty sure Paul said they keep data on cars approaching and that type of thing. But that's something to keep an eye on. The town sign does the same thing. I believe that roadside signs keep data. It would give you numbers and stuff and you could have Steve put it in different spots.

Thompson

We look forward to hearing more from this committee.

Potential Town Acquisition of Property at Old Woods Road (Executive Session)

A motion was made by Conrad, seconded by Elwell, to enter executive session at 9:15pm for the purpose

of discussing the possible acquisition of property on Old Woods Rd. as allowed under Title 1 Section 405, 6c of the Maine Revised Statutes: "Discussion or consideration of the condition, acquisition, or the use of real or personal property permanently attached to real property or interests therein or disposition of publicly held property or economic development only if premature disclosures of the information would prejudice the competitive bargaining position of the body or agency.", and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried.

A motion was made to end the Executive Session for the purpose of adjourning and by a unanimous vote the public meeting was re-opened.

Adjournment

A motion was made by _____, seconded by _____, to adjourn the Select Board meeting, and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammy Taylor
Recording Secretary
Town of St. George, Maine