

ST. GEORGE SELECT BOARD & ASSESSORS

St. George Town Office

MEETING MINUTES

March 11, 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 and Jane Conrad. Also present were Amy Drinkwater, Greg Soutiea, Susan Ellis and Alison Briggs.

Via Zoom: Present were Loreen Meyer, Sandra Roak “user”, Ken Oelberger, Judy, 2023macbookair, Jane Conrad, Van Thompson, Tammy Wiley, Jean Payne and Jonathan Coggeshall.

Quorum

A quorum was present.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Adjustments to the Agenda

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

Meeting with the Budget Committee to Review the Proposed 2025 Municipal Budget

Erb

I sent around a revised budget. I have copies here as well. Just in summary, I want to point out that the Town budget shows an increase at this point of 8.7%. We know what the county budget is for this year because it's done. It was a pretty substantial increase; it's 15% for the county tax.

Conrad

Rick, why don't you go back to the county increase.

Erb

I was talking about the county budget that went up 15%. So far, what we've done on the Town budget looks like an 8.7% increase. The school department has told us that they're in the area of 5%. If things stay as they are, I expect that the tax rate would go up by roughly .75%. We are at \$11.10. This year, we would go to \$11.85 per \$1000 next year, which is roughly an 8% increase. We are helped by the school being the largest part of the tax bill. In this particular case, it looks like they will be the smallest increase.

Elwell

Is it per \$1000 or \$100,000?

Erb

It is per \$1000. I don't know how you want to approach reviewing the budget figures at this point.

Susan Ellis

Maybe we can hear about the ambulance and then the overall revised budget.

Erb

We can do that. I sent around the information on ambulance wages, what Amy had put together and a summary that I had put together. It basically shows what the current ambulance wages are for the full-timers. There is a proposal from the ambulance department to increase each of those by \$1, and as we discussed at the last meeting, we're trying to deal with the overtime situation, where we have not been paying overtime after forty hours. In my mind, the highest priority was to straighten out the overtime situation. I looked at what the increase would be, by going to overtime after eight hours with a \$1 per hour increase, which is roughly the same as the 3.2% cost of living adjustment that we have used and came up with an increased cost and an increase in wages of roughly 4.1% if we did that. In playing with the numbers, if I took out the \$1 per hour increase, that brought the cost down to an 8.3% increase. That's what I put together and presented to you and that's what I plugged into the budget. Amy and the ambulance staff may have a different view on that. I want to give her the opportunity to speak if she wishes to. We have used 3.2% as the cost of living this year and that's basically what other staff will be getting. The other thing I would point out is that among the Town employees, the Town Manager is the highest paid, but the next four people are the four full-time ambulance employees. It's a significant part of our budget, obviously. I'd welcome any questions or if Amy has anything she wants to add to that.

Amy Drinkwater

I put down, as you said, the increased cost of living prior to the overtime. The reason for that is stabilization. We need to get some stabilization funds to make sure that it's in our budget this year, and

next year which is going to help with the overtime piece also but still get the cost of living raises for hourly to forty hours. The increase of the overtime is for over forty hours, which is the eight hours that you've been working, but just getting straight time at this point. We rotate 24-hour shifts, so we work 48 hours a week. We work nights, weekends and holidays. It's not a normal forty-hour workweek. We work the holidays; we work the nights. I thought it was fair and the EMS thought it was fair to get our cost of living raise for the forty hours and stabilizing the extra time and a half for what they're working outside of their normal forty-hour work week. My understanding is an increase of living (Inaudible).

Conrad

Rick, I have a question about the money from the state. How is that going to be used with respect to these proposed increases?

Erb

It would be applied to the operating costs and the capital reserve for the replacement of the ambulance. It should end up being about \$100,000. \$50,000 of it can be used for capital and the other \$50,000 can be used for wages.

Conrad

Does it all have to be used in one year?

Erb

I believe we can put it in capital reserves.

Conrad

Right, but that half we can't put in capital reserves. Is that supposed to be used in one year?

Erb

It was anticipated it would be, but I don't know what the rule is on that. Maybe Amy does.

Amy Drinkwater

The first one that we'll be getting by July will be the \$49,000 and then we have to apply for the second half which can be used into the next year.

Erb

You're talking about the calendar year though?

Amy Drinkwater

Yes.

Susan Ellis

That's all going to fall in our fiscal year because our fiscal year is July 3rd. When you did your survey of hourly rates for other ambulances departments, we were sort of in the middle. We're certainly not the top paying. We certainly don't want to be the bottom paying. We are about where we want to be with the increases that you have.

Thompson

Amy, would you agree with that?

Amy Drinkwater

Yes. I would.

Speaker

Rick, in your budget documents, under the ambulance service, it looks like wages will have gone down for next year.

Erb

No, I think that's the way it's broken down.

Susan Ellis

There is hourly, full time and shift pay.

Greg Soutiea

Good question. Rick, the number you plugged in is just adjusting for the overtime and cost of living. That doesn't include the dollar, (Inaudible).

Erb

Correct.

Susan Ellis

Is the dollar in lieu of the 3.2%?

Susan Ellis

They kind of balance out.

Greg Soutiea

We're counting that as overtime in other positions. Is that one of our standards? We're bumping you up to 3.2%. In any other position, they're getting a 3.2% raise based on a forty-hour work week which doesn't seem exactly fair to me.

Amy Drinkwater

What he has proposed is that EMS wouldn't get the cost of living for over forty hours.

Greg Soutiea

They would get paid more because we're doing the overtime we should be doing legally. There's not really any increase in wages for the staff. Everyone else is getting an increase in wages.

Amy Drinkwater

The one that I exposed was the cost of living, the dollar.

Greg Soutiea

Which to me seems fair.

Cartwright

What difference does it make in the overall budget?

Thompson

The overall budget is probably only a percent or two.

Carr

Are we going to risk losing people?

Erb

My concern is that we have to look at the entire picture here. We're talking about 3% increases for the rest of the staff, and this is a 12% increase in my mind, because its people are working the same number of hours and doing the same type of work. Nothing has changed but now we're spending 12% more.

Greg Soutiea

We have not been paying them what the law currently states. That's where, in my mind, the discrepancy is because we're only making this adjustment that is being suggested as a raise because we have to legally pay them forty hours plus the time and a half for the extra eight hours, which we hadn't been doing.

Ames

We're paying them salary.

Greg Soutiea

Right. As of a couple of years ago, we had to change some of our staff as well, because they changed the salary requirements. So, we changed the way we were paying our staff when that law went into effect a year and a half or two years ago.

Susan Ellis

So, isn't the department satisfied with what's being proposed here?

Erb

The EMS service, that is 8.3% I think, is what you're what you're asking about.

Amy Drinkwater

What is the EMS Department cost?

Susan Ellis

3.2% plus the dollar.

Greg Soutiea

No, without the dollar.

Amy Drinkwater

What everyone else was getting at forty hours.

Susan Ellis

And so, at this point, you're not getting that; you're getting time and a half. Is that right?

Amy Drinkwater

That's what they're proposing? Yes. That's not what we're getting now.

Speaker

Your approach to this is to bump up the overtime, the time and a half, which is a legal requirement, and not to touch the basic forty hours.

Speaker

That is true.

Susan Ellis

He's trying to walk a balance.

Speaker

I understand. Another approach would be to say to everybody instead of 3.2% it's 2.9%.

Susan Ellis

We set a policy with the Budget Committee.

Speaker

I'm playing devil's advocate.

Erb

What is the 2.9%?

Speaker

I hypothetically picked a number to balance it out across everybody. Right now, the ambulance personnel are not getting the same raise.

Greg Soutiea

They're basically getting no raise.

Speaker

We are correcting an illegal situation.

Greg Soutiea

Which leaves the Town liable if any of these employees did want to come back and say we owe them back wages.

Conrad

Is the overtime for people who are on call versus...?

Erb

No. In order to staff at the desired level, it takes 48 hours per week. The only alternative would be to add additional staff, which would not be cost effective. So, there are eight hours of overtime built into the weekly schedule.

Conrad

Some of which are on call.

Carr

No.

Conrad

You're just there.

Susan Ellis

So, for the difference on the 40 hours, is that a \$10,000 increase?

Greg Soutiea

Yes, 48 hours times 4 people.

Susan Ellis

I think we should bite that bullet.

Thompson

I would think that there's general agreement that we have a combination of things coming together. This is probably the soundest approach. We can quibble about it, but I think this is what we need to do if we're going to move forward and not have to put on additional staff.

Erb

Are you talking about additional ambulance staff?

Thompson

Yes.

Erb

I agree. I think everybody agrees that probably doesn't make sense.

Elwell

In the overall scheme of things, \$10,000 really isn't much if you look at the whole budget.

Cartwright

I like sending the message to all of our dedicated staff that they all get a raise across the board and overtime is a separate issue even though I understand how they're linked in this case, because we're saving money over getting more staff but if I was working 48 hours, I would like to get a raise. I haven't done that in a long time.

Greg Soutiea

Would it be helpful, in following the legislation that came into effect a few years ago, if I explained why it is there or how that changed?

Susan Ellis

We are okay with that.

Speaker

I get your approach here, which is to bump up the overtime piece.

Erb

I do think that this points out, we really should be taking a harder look at wages across the board in Town government. I see a lot of inequity there.

Conrad

It would be helpful for us to get that from you before you leave. Before you leave Rick, we could use your input on that.

Erb

My suggestion on that would be why don't you let me update all of the position descriptions we have so we don't have anything that was ever formally adopted. When I had to work on the Town Manager's description, it needed a lot of work. Honestly, some of the other ones are in better shape than the Town Manager's description was but they all need work. I don't think they've ever been formally adopted. I think I would start with that, and perhaps leave you with new and accurate job descriptions. Then, the next step after that, either with me or without me, would be to try to address them from a wage perspective too.

Susan Ellis

I think it would be really useful to have your viewpoint on that before you go. Thank you very much.

Speaker

Just to carry that forward Rick, do you want to pass on the question? Is this an area of inequity that we're talking about here with the ambulance?

Erb

I think it's unusual that when I look at all of the Town salaries, salary numbers two through five are all EMTs. That would be unusual.

Greg Soutiea

Does it look the same if we only look at a 40-hour work week?

Thompson

I have got to say, you're comparing apples to oranges with 48 versus 40.

Erb

I have not run that number.

Conrad

Maybe this isn't the time to talk about all of that. We need to think about that, and it'll be helpful to have your input about that, but we should probably just wrap up the ambulance issue and move on to other budgets.

Thompson

I was about to suggest that.

Thompson

Is there anything else that we need to review relative to the proposed budget at this time?

Erb

Did you want to go through them department by department?

Thompson

We can but only if we have concerns that have been brought up?

Susan Ellis

I don't think we need to, Rick.

Thompson

Other than answering that question, I think we agree to those things. We move monies around. We try to establish some reserve funds looking into the future but I'm welcoming anybody who has a concern about a particular area.

Speaker

Can you just tell us what your numbers will be? Is that \$10,000 to the shift pay or (Inaudible).

Susan Ellis

It is on the very first line; add \$10,000 at the very bottom. That's the nine number.

Thompson

Okay, anything more? So, we're looking for and waiting for the school budget.

Erb

Yes. I think it's appropriate to take up with the Budget Committee. We will need to set the interest rate on overdue taxes. Last year, the state maximum was 8% on overdue taxes and we've received notice that this year it is 8.5%. They do it based on what the prevailing interest rates are for various items. Typically, towns will go with a maximum rate in order to spend that, in order to avoid being the cheapest loan in town. Should I assume that we will go with 8.5% for this year?

Susan Ellis

Let's just confirm that.

Conrad

Does the Select Board need to vote on that? How does that work?

Erb

Eventually, you will be able to when we approve the entire warrant article. It wouldn't hurt to have a motion from the Select Board for 8.5% and the Budget Committee can also if they choose to.

A motion was made by Cartwright, seconded by Conrad, to approve the warrant article for 8.5%, and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Susan Ellis

The Budget Committee is with you on this.

Thompson

Are there any other details on the budget?

Erb

I don't think so.

Thompson

I only had a black and white printer. I think I noticed the changes.

Susan Ellis

All the changes were just as we had transcribed them.

Thompson

That's what I thought. We will wait for a final school budget but I would like each of the Board Members and the Budget Committee to think about how we present the increase to the Town. Because last year, I wrote something, and I think it was just adequate for the moment because we're moving forward. This is something that's equivalent plus a little bit. I think it's something that we need to think about crafting appropriately. I can think about putting some positive things first, but then we have to talk about all the other things we have to handle. If any of you can give me a hand like that, I'd appreciate it. I'll start on something, but I would like to see what other people's thoughts are. It's something I throw on to all of you as Board Members. I'm looking forward to having that in hand by late March. Any thoughts along those lines?

Conrad

I'd be happy to send you some recommendations.

Thompson

I may lean on you regardless or have you help me craft the language appropriately. I'll throw out some ideas and we can work from there.

Cartwright

I'd be happy to help you with that Van.

Public Hearing on behalf of The Caignair Inn for a Maine Community Development Block Grant for the purpose of job creation.

Susan Ellis

Couldn't the Budget Committee just say that we approve the budget as it is stated. Are we allowed to do that?

Thompson

Absolutely. I think it will say the Select Board in conjunction with the Budget Committee.

Conrad

But we won't be voting on the final warrant article until we have all the pieces on the scoreboard.

Thompson

I appreciate you doing that and being here. We're actually now in the process of having the Public Hearing on the application by the Town of St. George, on behalf of the Caignair Inn for a Maine Community Development Block Grant. The purpose of the grant is to provide public or working capital for job creation. So, it's publicly available to businesses that would be interested. The Caignair Inn is setting an example here in St. George.

Erb

Community Development Block Grants have been around for decades; they're among the most popular of the state grants available to towns. You often hear about them improving infrastructure, extension of sewer lines, and lots of different public works kinds of projects, but they also have economic development programs that involve job creation. This would fall under that category. It is to provide assistance to businesses seeking to expand their operations or their numbers of jobs. They do not apply directly to the state of the grant; they need to go through their municipality. Greg asked if the Town would be willing to put in an application, more or less on his behalf. We've had some discussion on this

at a previous board meeting, and there seemed to be a positive feeling about doing that. This would be to create a new position. Greg, you want to describe what that is?

Greg Soutiea

For the last five years, we've been utilizing marketing firms that are out of state, Chicago, Boston, and a couple of different firms over the years. As most of you who have been to our restaurant know, we try and do everything we can to support the local community and the people here. So, we started talking about trying to bring this position in house back in October or November on Indeed and we got a lot of applications and very skilled people. We went through several interviews and ultimately decided that we want to move forward with a St. George resident, Gillian Fidel, and she couldn't be here tonight. She wanted to but I have a quick statement from (Inaudible) in a second. Ultimately, bringing that position and keeping that money here in our Town and in our community, we thought was important to us. There were some other qualifications for the person, some income requirements that they couldn't be already making over a certain amount, in order to qualify for the grant and for this to qualify as a new position. So, we'll essentially be giving her the Marketing Director position. She'll be in charge of our website, a lot of our email, communications, a lot of the back-end things like our Google ads, social media and a wide number of things across our business that we've been outsourcing. We thought it was a good opportunity to utilize the grant because what we were concerned about most with making that change is the transition, somebody who knows us and knows our business a little bit, but doesn't know our marketing strategy, and how we've been spending our ad dollars and budget for the last five years. Maybe, going into busy season, losing a step there and missing something that Lauren Ryan might not notice right away that the other companies have been doing in the background. This grant will help us to bridge that gap where we've already communicated with Gillian and our marketing company. They're willing to do a couple of months, a sixty day overlap and work with her very closely, which is very great of them as well, because they're losing the business, but they understand that's our mission in general and so, they've been very supportive of that. That will allow us to pay both Gillian and the marketing firm, which we wouldn't really be able to do. That would be a big expense for us to be paying both people at the same time. So, this grant will help us to keep the marketing firm on so that the business doesn't suffer from bringing in a local person to take over the position.

Erb

It's going to be in the area of \$13,000.

Greg Soutiea

The grant is up to \$30,000. We are thinking of getting a new laptop. The two months of marketing was \$13,000 plus a new upgrade of software and a computer. I think I applied for \$18,000 or \$20,000. She is actually finishing her last night tonight at the front desk at 250 Main Hotel. She worked there part time for a couple years. She wrote this for me: "I am Gillian Fidel and I moved to St. George three and a half years ago, having previously lived in New Haven, New York, Mexico, LA and Rockland. I am a single mother raising her two daughters happily in a beloved chosen community. Violet, aged 12, is in seventh

grade in St. George and is looking forward to playing catcher in Little League and on the school team. She's involved with the robotics team and was a finalist in the geography bee and is acting in the spring school play. Mina is nine and in the fourth grade with a passion for participating in extracurricular activities. She excels at basketball, soccer and softball, is a Girl Scout and a dance student. Mina is enthusiastic and devoted. She especially loves Story Hour at the library and reading aloud to her kindergarten buddy. Gillian teaches dance at the wellness studio Saturday mornings at 9am and volunteers at school with the parent's group as often as she can. She's a Board Member of our church, the UUA in Rockland, and has published a book on eating in Maine. She dreams of one day owning her own home here, some cottage in this good place where she has found her whole heart. We're very happy to have her on board and she's going to make a great addition to our team.

Thompson

Okay, so we're open for comments from the public. Hearing none, I think this is something that is available to any number of businesses, if they look at it. The Town would be happy to support it and hopefully they might be successful. I look forward to the Craignair going further. I would like to close the public hearing.

Conrad

I think it's worth reiterating that the Town will not be making any expenditure related to this. We're solely supporting Craignair's application for this grant.

Erb

I was going to point that out. The Town will have some bookkeeping responsibilities, but we don't believe it will be a burden and if someone else were to come along with a similar application, I believe we could add them as well. It is pretty simple compared to most grants.

Conflicts of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest.

Minutes

A motion was made by Elwell, seconded by Cartwright, to approve the February 26, 2024 Select Board Meeting Minutes, pending final review by Conrad, and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Communications

The following online message was received regarding the Port Clyde Landing Project from Rosemary Stanek regarding a concern that there was a maintenance of the green space on the back side to the well and approaching it to the right side of the landing project.

Submitted on Sunday, March 3, 2024 - 10:12am

Submitted by anonymous user: 2603:7081:6ff0:8310:9ddb:1b40:773:9201

Subject: Selectboard

Message: Regarding the Port Clyde Landing Plan Proposal. Greenspace is not in the proposal other than as a suggestion. As I recall, greenspace was included in the proposal presented to St George's residents prior to the referendum seeking approval for funding. Greenspace was part of my motivation for voting yes to the purchase, and planned usage. Therefore, I encourage the Board to proceed with creating the public greenspace on the elevated area as suggested in the post referendum Port Clyde Landing Plan Proposal now listed under the St George website's Announcements.

==Please provide the following information==

Your Name: Rosemary J. Stanek

Your E-mail Address: rjstanek1@gmail.com

Organization: St George Resident

Phone Number: 6085136681

==Address==

Street: 61 Old Woods Rd

City: Tenants Harbor

State: Maine

Zipcode: 04860-5678

Conrad

I do think we're going to need to put on a meeting agenda a discussion about what we're going to do on that part of the landing, because I raised this at a Harbor Committee meeting, and they did not feel that they had been asked to make recommendations about what we would do in that area. I know some of us remember discussions about picnic tables or landscaping. Before spring, we probably should have that on our agenda, so the Select Board decides what we want to do there.

Thompson

I would suggest we immediately make that a public meeting. I think that that would save time, in terms of our moving forward.

Conrad

Then we'll hopefully know where we are moneywise, and what we would have available to spend on something in that area.

Thompson

Any other comments on that?

Cartwright

I think it's a good idea. It could be an attractive area there and a little landscaping might go a long way.

Warrant

Erb

Irene stepped out but I can probably answer any questions that you have.

Conrad

I have a question. There were some kind of professional fees. I didn't know what they were. Can you look at that?

Erb

I'm not sure if I have that section of the warrant with me.

Conrad

Let me pull it up.

Amy Drinkwater

For Redwood Communications, did you want the ambulance costs?

Elwell

We can take it up for discussion. Thank you, Amy.

Conrad

I did find my question. In the warrant. It was the Kelly and Associates expenditure for \$2,501.

Erb

Bill Kelly.

The warrant was signed.

Town Manager Report

Erb

I am happy to do that. I don't have too many things to report on, but I will mention the most recent storm damage. I think that we would agree with people who have said that this was not as severe as the January storms were, but still did do some damage, particularly to areas that had been previously hit. On Drift Inn Road, some of the gravel that we had put down as a temporary fix was washed out, but for the most part, the rocks stayed in place where they were supposed to and protected the roads. That basically was a positive from my point of view. Marshall Point was pretty much the same, although the damage was not as heavy to the roadway at Marshall Point. Drift Inn Rd. is now passable after work today, and tomorrow morning. They will be at Marshall Point doing the same. There has been some sort of ongoing damage at Tenants Harbor, which is also being repaired as some of the pavement had been damaged by previous storms and became further damaged yesterday, so that's a priority fix as well. It does provide access to the boat launch there. We will be taking care of that. Speaking of previous damage at the lighthouse, we are working with Gartley and Dorsky on what to do about the crib work that supports the walkway out to the actual lighthouse itself. There is a woman who I've not worked with before, named Carmen Bombeke. She is an engineer with Gartley and Dorsky. I have asked her to put together some specifications for repair to that crib work. It's a pretty good-sized job; I don't think it's something we want to try to put together ourselves. We do know of at least one contractor interested in doing it. I've had conversations with Nat from the Lighthouse Committee. We were concerned it would probably not be as repaired as we would like in time for the summer season. It's just going to take longer than that. But one question that we have for Gartley and Dorsky is could we make some temporary repairs to the walkway, because they would like to have people able to walk out there. That's part of the appeal of going so we're going to talk to the engineers about what could be done on a temporary basis. As far as the overall repairs, I'm a little disappointed. The federal designation hasn't come through yet, which is sort of surprising to me, but I don't feel that there's any problem. If I ever saw one that was going to be qualified, it was that one. Sometimes they scrape together enough damage to justify the national designation. We did not have much problem with that. I'm just surprised it hasn't happened yet. In the meantime, we really don't have much choice but to go ahead and make the repairs.

Elwell

Does that fall into the National Register where it has to be fixed a certain way?

Erb

Well, that's a really good question and we thought of that as well. Carmen put together an appointment with someone from the Maine State Historical Society to review what we're doing and take recommendations.

Committee Reports

Planning Board - Carr

Carr

It was a very short meeting. We just talked about the ballot questions.

Appeals Board – Conrad

Conrad

We have not met.

Harbor Committee - Elwell

Elwell

We have not met.

Resiliency Committee – Thompson

Thompson

I forwarded to you the report from Sebago that I then sent to the Resiliency Committee. We're going to be reviewing that and chatting with you about it. I gave it to you as well so that you can review it. We're trying to set a date in early April for the presentation from Sebago to the Town so that we can advertise appropriately. That would actually finish the last parts of our project with Sebago. They've given us a fairly extensive report, which I'm pleased to see. (The date for the Sebago presentation is now set for 7 pm on Thursday, April 4th at the school auditorium)

Comprehensive Planning - Conrad

Conrad

They continue to work. We did have a resignation from the committee; Alison Fongemie resigned. I have a person that we are interested in nominating. I wonder if I can go ahead and vote for someone, even though that wasn't on the agenda, or if we need to wait. The person we would nominate is Leanne Kennedy Harty. She works at the school. Randy may know her. She works there as an Ed Tech. This is a seat where we really wanted somebody familiar with the school, and so we're happy that someone has come forward who's willing to do that. I would nominate her to serve on the Comprehensive Planning Committee.

A motion was made by Conrad, seconded by Cartwright, to confirm Leanne Kennedy Harty as a Member of the Comprehensive Planning Committee, and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Conservation Committee

Cartwright

I was unable to attend. Ken is online here. I don't know if he wants to add anything now or just wait.

Oelberger

The main thing we discussed at this last week's meeting was the proposal to Land for Maine Futures. There is a grant opportunity there and we finished up our all the work that we want to do on it. We had reviewers take a look at it. And we've incorporated reviewer's comments now. And we just have to wait for one letter to come in so that we will then be able to submit our proposals to LMF.

Shellfish Committee - Elwell

Elwell

We met last Thursday and discussed the recent rains and how to try and get places opened up due to the rain.

Solid Waste – Erb

Erb

There was no meeting. I think they expect to resume meeting in April when some of their members are back in St. George.

Cemetery Committee – Carr

Carr

They have not met.

Affordable Housing - Cartwright

Cartwright

I have nothing to add to what we already know about the warrant article.

Traffic Safety Committee - Cartwright

Cartwright

We had a good meeting today. Fifteen people attended including our State Senator, Pinny Beebe-Center who has worked for the Department of Transportation (DOT) for twenty years. The people we appointed as a board voted to make Bonnie Percival the Chair and Josh Coggeshall the Secretary. And so, they're

organized now, and they really want to stay positive and come up with some recommendations to us which we can discuss and consider at some future date. They are already planning their next meeting and that's about it. The sheriff's deputy that came to an earlier meeting, came again to this one. I think they like coming. I don't know why. Maybe they're hoping to get some work here.

Conrad

Steve, make sure that they let Tara Elwell know the meeting dates, and then they'll get it on the Town calendar. She's the person.

Erb

I actually believe this one was on the calendar.

Next Steps for Proposals Received on a Townwide Property Revaluation

Erb

Van and Jane met with Megan and I to discuss the proposals that were received. Since there are only three, I will go through them quickly. The lowest cost would be from KRT appraisals at \$310,000, with the work to be completed in 2027. Next lowest was Parker appraisals for \$330,000 with work to be completed in 2026. And the highest was from RJD Appraisals for \$348,000 with work to be completed in 2028. The Board Members can speak for themselves on this, but I think we were all in agreement that the KRT proposal was complete, and the Parker appraisal bid proposal was far less complete. It raised questions. So besides being the lowest of the proposals cost-wise, it also was the most complete and had very strong references and a lot of experience in the area. I know that there has been some interest from the board in the earlier completion date that Parker appraisals proposed. I have had further conversations with people and understand that from Maine State Revenue Services, it's more important that the Town have a plan in place, whether it'll be completed in 2026 or 2027. I don't know if we took a formal vote with only two board members there, but my understanding was that the recommendation would be for KRT appraisals.

Thompson

There was strong agreement that KRT had the most in-depth proposal and had the most experience. Jane, Rick and I felt strongly this was the company to go forward with.

Conrad

Yes, and their packet also included letters from Town managers, such as the Camden Town Manager, highly endorsing them and the process that they've gone through. It was very clear that that was the best of the RFPs. Rick, I don't know if you recall that we talked at our last meeting about the letter we received from the state and we had a very busy meeting that night. I had not realized, until we met with Rick, that Rick received a certified letter from the state on the issue of taxing personal property. That is

the law. We are going to have to comply with that even though it will be tedious. It will be a significant amount of work for the staff, and we'll have to figure out how we're going to address that. We talked at our meeting about the RFPs and about whether Rick might approach KRT about whether they would be able to help us with assessing personal property as well when they do the revaluation. The letter that we got from the state said they're expecting us to start taxing personal property in April of this year, two weeks from now. Rick, I think they've told you that if we have a plan, and we're working toward compliance, they're not going to come down on us.

Erb

That's very accurate. I did have discussions with KRT and I was actually encouraged that they did not think that in a town the size of St. George and with the makeup of St. George, it is not going to be a major effort, compared to a Town with a lot of commercial development. This is not a particularly large project for them. They're happy to take it on. They do have someone on staff with that specialty. We've tried to arrange a time when he and I can talk and haven't been able to coordinate that yet. The appraiser who I've been dealing with on their proposal said he believes that the Town has some latitude on what things they include in personal property for taxation and what they don't include but he did refer me to the person on the staff who is expert in that field. I'm encouraged by where we are that we're going to be able to.

Thompson

But that raises the question, was the proposal worded such in establishing the personal property end of things or is this going to be an add-on that we have to anticipate in time for the budget?

Erb

This will be an add on.

Conrad

I do think it's important for the minutes of tonight's meeting to reflect that the Select Board is committed to complying with state law. If we are required to tax personal property, we will do it to the extent that we have discretion, to decide some aspects of that. Then we'll be looking at that.

Thompson

Is that a separate amendment? What I'm really working on at the moment is whether we're going to do KRT.

Conrad

That's a separate issue. I want the state to hear from us that we are committed to complying with the law.

A motion was made by Conrad, seconded by Cartwright, to contract with KRT for the revaluation process for the proposals received on a Townwide property revaluation, and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Erb

Before we go on, I was going to suggest, and I mentioned this to KRT, that it might be helpful for the board to have them attend a meeting, either in person or more likely by Zoom, just to give you an idea of what to expect in the revaluation. They've done dozens of them around the state, including many in the Knox County area. Would you like them on the agenda for the next meeting if we have time.

Thompson

If it's at all possible, let's do it.

Conrad

It doesn't matter what meeting it is. Sometime this spring, when you don't have a lot of other items. People should be aware that one thing that was good about their proposal was that it included them holding public meetings for our community to educate them about what this process involves and answer questions from property owners and will help us communicate with the public about what to expect.

Erb

Okay, I'll stay in touch with them.

To consider local approval for the St. George Community Development Corporation's application for a State Bingo License

Thompson

Perhaps you can bring us up to date here, Rick, on the approval for the CDC and their state bingo license.

Erb

Before they are able to submit to the Department of Public Safety in Augusta for approval, they need the local municipal officers to sign off. It says, "The undersigned municipal officers of the City and Town of St. George hereby certify that we consent to the registration by St. George CDC to operate Vino Bingo in accordance with the provisions of 17 MRSA Chapter 13 in accordance with rules promulgated by the State of Maine Department of Public Safety Gambling Control Unit governing operation of Vino/Bingo. There really aren't any local standards to apply here but before the state will issue a license, you do need to sign off.

A motion was made by Elwell, seconded by Conrad, to approve the application to register for Vino/Bingo, and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Conrad

I love all the fun stuff that the CDC is doing, waffles and bingo. It's great.

Erb

I have three to sign. I think that should do it.

To Discuss Assigning a Charge to the Traffic Safety Committee

Thompson

Steve, you came up with a charge to the Traffic Safety Committee.

Cartwright

I don't have it in front of me. Do you have it there?

Thompson

I'd have to go searching in my emails.

Cartwright

Maybe people know what it is if they read it.

Conrad

Let me see if I can find it. Okay, so it says, "Members of the St. George ad hoc Traffic Safety Committee are appointed by the Select Board for one-year terms. Their mission is to make recommendations to the Select Board by the end of the year or earlier on possible measures to reduce speeding in the Town and create a safer environment for pedestrians, runners and cyclists. All meetings, monthly or otherwise, will be posted on the Town website and the public is always welcome to attend. Members of the committee shall decide on a chairperson. The Town Manager shall be notified of all meetings and agendas." That's it.

A motion was made by Conrad, seconded by Cartwright, to approve the Traffic Safety Committee Charge, and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Thompson

You can get that to the committee, Steve. Thank you.

Update on the Port Clyde Landing Project

Erb

Work has started back up. We're all glad to see that. Steel is being driven, and they are still struggling a little bit with obstructions, but not a size that creates a major problem. It is just slower going than they would like, and they are using the crane with a clamshell to remove larger rocks from the area.

Cartwright

There is a giant pile of boulders there.

Erb

The pile that you see there will actually be used because they will not be driving them as deep as originally expected. The engineers have come up with a plan that if they use those rocks to fill on both sides of the steel sheets, that will be adequate to support the steel. That's the plan. It's not a bad thing. They shouldn't have to haul in material from outside in order to do that. There'll be a meeting tomorrow with the Town's Engineer, Greg Johnston, and CPM at two o'clock tomorrow, so I will attend that. There was some minor storm damage to the site, but nothing that will slow them down. On the warrant, you probably saw the work payments to CPM tonight. Those have gone through the appropriate channels and have been approved. That's pretty much what I have to report on that.

Cartwright

I take it the floats are okay. They launched them the day before the start.

Erb

They are okay, although we had some of the same problems that we've seen before, which will be addressed at a later date, as far as the extremely high tides that create a problem where the chains more or less slip over.

Elwell

They came too high on the piling.

Erb

We're right in the process. CPM is doing it for us. It's outside the regular contract, but they're doing it for us because they're on site. We hope it addresses that. But speaking of floats, there are also brand-new floats that are part of the project and those are now being completed, obviously off site. It took a little while to agree on design, and to find a contractor that would build exactly what we want. Things do seem to be under control at this point.

Update on the Town Manager Search

Erb

I believe we had thirty-four applications altogether. The board has met and narrowed it to five interviews, and those will take place next week on the 19th and 20th. You should be getting a packet from Dave Barrett this week that will include ideas for questions and assistance in that area.

Potential Town Acquisition of Property at Old Woods Road

Thompson

Is there anything further related to Old Woods Road? Do we need to consider going into Executive Session?

Erb

I don't really have anything that requires Executive Session. What I would point out is that we have provided a draft purchase and sale agreement to the seller. He has informed me that he has passed it on to his own attorney for review, which I would consider to be a positive sign. I have been in touch with Ken on this. We do need a letter from the landowner basically agreeing that he understands that we are applying for state grant money for this project. It does not say that he would be selling it to us or at any price obviously, but it does say that he understands we are applying.

Thompson

We didn't have any language to that effect in the bill of sale we put together.

Conrad

No, because without getting into the details, it's kind of a separate requirement. I think it is worth the public understanding that the Town would like this to happen and for us to be able to buy this parcel. The Conservation Commission has worked hard on this application. If awarded, we'd have some state money to help pay for it, but we don't know at this point if the seller is going to agree to the offer that we've made.

Thompson

Just clarification. Thank you. Ken, I appreciate your allowing me to speak on the phone and trying to work things out.

Conrad

If we're going to apply for this money for this year, we would need the seller to provide this letter very soon. Is that right, Ken?

Oelberger

Yes. I'm speaking to Rick today. We'd like to have it by the end of this week, because then we have to put everything together to submit to the state.

Conrad

He needs to understand that for us to get money to help make this happen, we really need to hear from him.

Erb

I communicated that to him today.

Thompson

Thanks, Rick.

Other

Erb

Van, do you want to talk about the referendum questions before we adjourn?

Thompson

That's a good idea. I think the one we had particular concerns about, in my opinion, was the wording on the Kinney Woods Road.

Erb

It was more difficult.

Thompson

The last I saw, which is the one you had modified updating what Wendy had said, I thought was appropriate language. Does anybody else have any concerns?

Conrad

I think we should have Rick read that, so it's reflected in the minutes. I did have a comment on the other one, but we'll have Rick go ahead with that first.

Erb

All right, I'll talk about the Kinney Woods question. "To vote by secret ballot to authorize the Select Board to transfer by municipal quitclaim deed a portion of an approximately 78 acre Town owned parcel of land located on the Kinney Woods Road Map 238, Block 28 to the "Community Development Corporation, Inc. St. George Housing I LLC", which is a subsidiary of the St. George Community

Development Corporation, sufficient to establish a project of up to seven residences that addresses the housing shortage; the Select Board shall be authorized to negotiate terms and set conditions of the transfer, including but not limited to a requirement that the property reverts to the Town if an approved project has not commenced construction within ten years of the transfer". It is followed by, "NOTE: The property includes wetlands that limit the number of potential residences and will affect the number of acres required to be transferred. A detailed explanation of the purpose of the proposed gift of land, titled, "Plan for Residential Development on Kinney Woods Road", is available for inspection at the Town Office during regular business hours, or maybe reviewed on the Town website.

Thompson

What do we think about that? Wendy, does it address your concerns?

Carr

It does address my concerns.

Erb

Thank you for the reminder on that. What I find with these things is we're trying to keep it as simple as possible and at the same time trying to include all of the issues that were raised. At the same time, we're also thinking about this actually appearing on a ballot, so it is a challenge.

Conrad

Do we need to approve that language?

Erb

We're going to need to. One reason I wanted to talk about it before we left tonight is I would still have time to put notice in the paper for a public hearing for your meeting on the 25th. For this, and for the Port Clyde landing question, if you choose to do so. We have a little bit of time to hold the public hearing, it just has to be, I believe, 31 days prior to the vote. So, it needs to be, I would say, the next meeting or the one after. Do you want it for the next meeting?

Thompson

I suggest that's a good idea. That gives a chance for all of us to cogitate on it a little bit.

Conrad

And then, on the other warrant regarding the Port Clyde Landing Question, my suggestion was in the note where it's talking about considering recommendations of the Harbor Committee, that it would read, "...such as those contained in the report...", so that it was clear that that's the example for this year. But in future years, there would be different reports and different recommendations about fees and so forth.

Thompson

Should it say we're going to review it on an annual basis?

Conrad

I would say periodic. We might decide every three years or five years.

Erb

Help me understand where that goes Jane?

Conrad

Okay. I have to find that.

Cartwright

She was talking about the note.

Erb

I can read the note if that helps.

Erb

“When establishing rules and user fees, the Select Board will take under advisement recommendations received from the Harbor Committee, as contained in the report entitled Port Clyde Landing Use Proposal available at the Town Office, and on the Town website.

Conrad

My insert would be before the word “contained”, so that it would say, “such as those contained”. I think it makes it clear that it's an example rather than the one and only.

Thompson

That’s a good way to put it.

Erb

I'll just read that section of it. “The Select Board will take under advisement recommendations received from the Harbor Committee, such as those contained in the report titled Port Clyde Landing Use Proposal.”

Conrad

And then you can give Tammy the whole warrant article and note to put in these minutes too.

A motion was made by Conrad, seconded by Elwell, to approve the warrant articles regarding Kinney Woods Rd. and the Port Clyde Landing Project, as amended, and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Conrad

Van, you might want to tell people about the change and leadership of the Resiliency Committee.

Thompson

I'm sorry. I should have thought of that. The Resiliency Committee had on board Richard Bates. The actual chair of that committee these days is John Maltais.

Conrad

John is the Chair of the Comprehensive Plan Committee. Wasn't Richard the Chair of the Resiliency Committee? I thought he was. He just resigned.

Thompson

In effect, but I think that was done earlier. Either way, Richard is no longer going to be on the committee. And so, it's very unfortunate in that regard but we're now in the process and I would appreciate any help from anybody, as well as from the committee itself, to see if we can find somebody else who has the interest to be involved in the Resiliency Committee.

Conrad

And I believe that, at least for now, Susan Ellis said that she would be happy to chair the Resiliency Committee in addition to the Budget Committee.

Thompson

Let me follow up on that.

Conrad

Okay. We had heard at the last Select Board meeting in the context of budget discussions, that Susan and the rest of the Resilience Committee were talking to South Thomaston about the possibility of getting a grant for someone to help both Towns do resiliency work. As a result of that, John Maltais and I contacted Richard and spoke to him about that, kind of making sure that what the Comprehensive Planning Committee is doing, and the Resiliency Committee are doing are in line with each other. He told us he was going to step down. You were gone and apparently, Susie is interested in taking that on. I just thought people might want to know that Richard was stepping down.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Cartwright, seconded by Elwell, 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