

ST. GEORGE SELECT BOARD & ASSESSORS

St. George Town Office

MEETING MINUTES

January 11, 2021 – 7 p.m.

The Select Board meeting was called to order at 7 p.m. via Zoom. Members present were: Richard Bates, Chair; Randy Elwell, Jerry Hall, Wayne Sawyer, and Tammy Willey. Also present: Tim Polky, Terri-Lynn Baines, Loreen Meyer, John Falla, Ken Oelberger, Dale Pierson, Tom Gorrill, Susan Ellis, Scott Vaitones, and David Percival.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None.

REGULAR SESSION:

- Adjustments to Agenda - The following adjustments were made:

- Quarterly Financial Review was moved from New Business and taken up under Regular Session.
- Fort Point Ad Hoc Committee was moved from Old Business and taken up under Regular.

- FY'21 Quarterly Financial Review: The Budget Committee and Select Board reviewed the Second Quarter Financial Report. Budget Committee Chair Susan Ellis led the review.

Town Office:

Property Maintenance for the Town Office and Fire Department. The majority of the expense was for replacing the current lights with new LED bulbs.

Elections. There was an increase due to the outside drop box that was installed so residents could have a contact-free way to make payments, drop off absentee ballots, or any other correspondence during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of that expense was reimbursed by the State.

Dues/Membership. This expense was low for the town office and the fire department but that was due to a question of timing.

Medical. When will drug testing be scheduled? Polky stated most everything like that was on hold due to the pandemic.

Select Board/Assessors:

Assessor's Agent. Expense was low. Baines noted that the agent usually does not come until springtime.

Property Maps. This item had been paid for. There is a remaining balance in the account.

Planning: There were no questions about this Department.

Fire Department:

Fire Fighters. This item was low because there were fewer fires.

Employee Benefits. This item was low due to having fewer fires this quarter.

Property Maintenance. This line showed an increase due to a planned expense for LED bulbs.

Animal Control: There were no questions about this Department.

Roads/Property Management:

Cemetery Maintenance. There were no expenses for this line item. Mowing is covered under a different line item.

Solid Waste:

Supplies. This line item showed an increase. Was there enough money in the budget to continue to buy PPE supplies? Polky stated they would get the supplies, somehow. He said some of the expense was reimbursed by the State.

S/W Tipping Fees. This line showed an increase. Ellis stated tipping fees were 30% higher than it should have been for the quarter. Selectperson Hall said year-on-year spending is up; transport is up 3% and tipping fees are up 21%. Why? Polky stated there are people who used to sort their demo waste and they no longer sort it. More is going into the demo and being sent to a landfill. That is causing some of the fees to be increased. The transport costs are paid so much a trip and the more the town can get into those containers, the less it will cost. For example, if it costs the town \$500 a trip whether we send 5 ton or 20 ton, the 20-ton trip will be cheaper; it will show savings. Polky, "The transport fees are based on trips. We pay them so much a trip." Selectperson Hall said if there is heavy demo on the truck, it could cause the mismatch.

Social & Community Services: Ellis stated all the donations were made to the agencies.

Recreation:

Utilities. The expenses on this line item were for the installation of the scoreboard, the porta-potties, and ballfield lighting.

Harbors: The overall expenditures were quite high because of the scheduled timing of the debt payment which has been made.

Unclassified: There were no questions about this Department.

Second Quarter Revenue.

Town Office:

Investment Income: This line item was quite behind and may need to be budgeted differently. It is not investment income. It is interest from checking accounts.

Roads & Property Management:

DOT Reimbursement of Rt. 131: The Budget Committee had discussed whether the state was on time with their payments for Rt. 131, and Baines said those payments generally started around January. Selectperson Hall said overall, the state's payments were slightly higher than in previous years.

Budget Chair Ellis, "Are we saving money with our electricity expense by having the solar panels? We thought with Baines's help, we would look at least a year and maybe two prior to the

installation of the panels, compare the two years since the panels (CMP expense line and the ReVision expense line), and do a summary of how that is going so far.”

Chair Bates suggested they review the net kilowatt-hour cost because the number of kilowatts would have changed due to a lot of factors not least of which was LED bulbs being installed, etc.

Selectperson Willey asked if they would eventually do a similar study on fuel usage on the tanks at the Transfer Station, and if there might be any costs savings on fuel for the school and the town. Chair Bates believed the town was paying quite a bit less for the fuel. Polky stated the town was paying less per gallon. He thought they could work up a fuel usage report.

Selectperson Elwell said the school already did a fuel usage report, and that Baines could talk with Cassie Kilbride about it.

- Fort Point Ad Hoc Committee Report: Chair Bates said the status report written by the committee regarding the Fort Point Trail Project was a good report and he thanked the committee for putting it together. He felt the report was very comprehensive and liked the clear way it was written and that it included recommendations.

Ken Oelberger: The primary purpose tonight would be to discuss the abutters’ concerns and discuss the committee’s recommendations. The committee is hoping to be looking for direction from the Select Board, not for solutions but looking for directions as to how they should proceed forward. A lot of the recommendations are not simple to implement and you have to look at the pros and cons of various alternatives. And when you look at alternatives, you have to think what are the unintended consequences there might be from the solutions you are looking at.

Oelberger: The committee spent some time looking into the concerns and determining how to proceed forward. Did any of the Select Board have any further questions about the list of concerns?

Chair Bates felt the list of concerns made a lot of sense and felt it was unfortunate that many of the abutters did not bring the concerns to the Select Board’s attention before. He felt it was one of the valuable things the committee had achieved, enumerating these issues which will help the Board realize these are areas that need attention.

Oelberger: I think it caught us all by surprise especially having been on the Conservation Commission for 10 years and never heard anything about any of the issues in all that time. We knew there would be some concerns but not to the extent we heard about.

Concerns:

- People wandering off-trail property onto private property
- People accessing the trail property from private property
- Dogs running loose on trail property and onto private property
- Illegal and immoral use of the parking lot
- Trash being left on and around the trail property
- Access of the trail property and parking area during the night
- Parking lot intrusion on private property

- Parking on private property

Recommendations:

- Obtain a survey of the property to identify boundary lines, including the parking lot area. Chair Bates suggested Town Manager Polky contact the surveyor about having a survey done and contact MDOT to find out what agreement may have allegedly been made with them and the Paulsen's. Polky felt once the survey was done, it would help aid some of the other issues.
- Provide screening or signage to mark property boundaries. Town Manager Polky will investigate this and the committee can then deal with the issues of trespassing as well as the parking area. There were two different concerns: the boundary line where the parking ended and the private property started, and the boundaries for the length of the property going all the way to the point.
- Provide screening or signage to clearly mark the trail's parking area and access point. Once the committee knows where the boundaries are, some screening or signage could be implemented to address those boundaries and minimize any trespassing. There are no signs in that area. There may be cases where a fence will need to be put up or more trees planted to delineate a boundary. It was noted and disappointing that the survey markers for the wetlands had been pulled out, but GPS positioning of the area had been done, so the markers can be re-staked.
- Adopt appropriate policies and actions to provide for daytime only use of the trail property. This recommendation will need to be given more thought as there are no good recommendations at this point. Selectperson Hall suggested this recommendation may fall to the Town Manager. At a previous meeting, it was discussed that if things seemed to get out of control at that spot, to call the sheriff; but there are limits to that.

Chair Bates had questions. Some people may want to get the spring water at night, so should a sign be put up that restricts nighttime use? Should the spring only be accessed during daylight hours? Is that realistic? Oelberger stated they could say the trail is only used in daylight hours. From first light to last light or something similar. Selectperson Elwell asked to keep in mind that clammers will take the night tide down there. Should there be an unenforceable and ignored sign in that area?

Hall noted a number of the issues were outside the purview of creating a UA trail. Hall, "We have residents in town who have some valid concerns they'd like to see the town do what it can about them. We are reporting back and saying, here is what we have learned, can you do something about those things?"

Oelberger stated screening and signage is an area to think about. There were concerns about people using the parking lot at night, but the concerns were not necessarily from the trail users.

- Adopt appropriate policies and actions to provide for a clean and attractive trash-free area. Oelberger said that is a goal for any area in town that gets public use. In the past, people used trails and it was a carry-in and carry-out philosophy that people should not be trashing those areas. He was not sure about a proper solution for this; maybe a periodic swing by, by a town employee to collect the trash. It is probably less on the trail than it is at the trailhead. Oelberger stated that from his observation, that is true.

Chair Bates asked Polky about the receptacle at the Drift Inn Beach parking lot and did Jarrett pick up the trash there in the summer months? Polky said yes. Chair Bates said that would be a comparable issue and it meant they would have a garbage can there. Hall asked if the town really wanted a garbage can at the trailhead/parking lot. He said if a garbage can was there, it would be filled. Gorrill pointed out that was not just a problem for that parking lot. There was quite a bit of trash at the town forest parking lot; bags, small appliances, coffee cups, paper bags, etc., and he had seen a bit of it on Meadow Brook in that parking lot as well other lots.

Chair Bates asked if Gorrill had any suggestions. Signage? Gorrill said most of the trails he worked with were more wilderness trails but carry in/carry out signs were posted. Beyond that, there was not a lot you could do. Hall and Oelberger thought a lot of the trash was not from people using the trail, but people using the parking lot at night and at other times as evidenced by the type of paraphernalia on the ground.

- Provide communications with abutters relative to actions in response to their concerns. It was noted that abutters asked what the committee and town officials were doing without talking with them. The committee believed that signs would help alleviate some of the abutters' concerns but first they needed to determine where the boundaries were.

Chair Bates stated that once a survey was done and the committee and town understood the exact boundaries of the parking lot, hold a meeting with the abutters to explain that signage could help protect their privacy and protect their land. Selectperson Hall recommended meeting with the abutters before Recommendation #1 was done. Oelberger agreed. He felt that once they got through the recommendations (tonight), they should reach a consensus on what ought to be done next. Then communicate to the abutters that the committee and town were taking some action and that it could take a little while, but these were their thoughts.

- Suspend action of the Fort Point Trail Ad hoc Committee pending further direction from the Select Board. Oelberger thought the committee had a few loose issues to tie up with the state. He said if the Select Board did not assign any of these recommendations to a specific committee, the Ad hoc committee would hopefully be suspended until further notice and resume at some point once the issues were addressed.

Oelberger, "This whole effort started way back trying to figure out how do we maintain the trail and keep it from deteriorating. We have discovered some issues related to that which are also not simple solutions. Potential safety issues with the bridge. There are possibly things that can be done incrementally but whatever we do, we would not want to preclude future implementation of a UA trail there."

Chair Bates asked to discuss suspending action of the Ad hoc committee. He said the Conservation Commission had accumulated the knowledge of the problem and thought it would make a lot of sense for the Ad hoc committee to go back and talk with the abutters based on what they had on their report. Selectperson Hall and Oelberger agreed with Bates's recommendation.

Suggestions made:

- The abutters need to understand the boundaries of the trail and the parking lot.
- Let abutters know the intent is to help preserve and protect their property by signage.
- Engage the abutters in the process. An abutter or abutters might want to be involved in helping with the choice or the wording of the signs.
- If the committee continues, get an abutter to sit on the committee.

Selectperson Hall believed the trail should not be left a mess, that there were things they should do to improve the trail, and the trail should be more accessible for people in town. Selectperson Hall stated it was very important that the committee and Select Board communicate with the abutters. Selectperson Elwell agreed but, "You have to listen as well as they have to listen to you."

It was discussed that a letter from the town to the State of Maine be drafted by Scott Hodgkins. It was suggested the letter include Scott's concerns and issues about the foot traffic at Fort Point and the wear on the environment. The Select Board agreed to have Town Manager Polky talk with Scott and review the draft letter before sending it out. The Select Board also agreed to leave it to the discretion of the Town Manager about contacting an abutter, taking into consideration the suggestions made by some of the Ad hoc committee and Select Board members.

- Charge the Conservation Commission with investigating approaches for maintenance and improvement of the Fort Point Trail that does not preclude future implementations of a UA trail. Chair Bates hoped the Conservation Commission would continue with the maintenance and improvement of the trail. At this point, a UA trail may be a long-term goal as there are nearer-term goals needed, i.e., a safer bridge. It is anticipated that the CC budget will request funding to continue the necessary maintenance on that trail.

Chair Bates asked if the town could get grant money for a bridge, and how much would need to be requested in the budget to make a more secure bridge and re-route the trail to avoid the steep banking.

Oelberger said from the first estimate they received for the trail work when it was just going to be the town property, the bridge alone was around \$30,000. He felt they needed to discuss how they would do it piecemeal over multiple years and whether they should still try to apply for smaller grants. Some of the grants may require the town to come up with 50% matches. Smaller grants like the Recreational Trails Program ones are 20% matches.

Chair Bates felt that in this current economic climate, it would be hard for the town to come up with \$15,000 this budget year. He could see the town approving \$6,000 (a 20% match) to take care of the bridge. The Select Board asked the CC to return with some options on how to make a safer bridge and maybe include a long-term plan to gradually enhance the trail and a budgetary request.

Summary of tonight's meeting: Oelberger felt the takeaway was for Polky to investigate how they can get the property survey done, to go back to the abutters with the ideas of how they plan to proceed, that they heard their concerns, and are looking into the most appropriate ways to address them.

Chair Bates felt they would need to meet with all the abutters and then meet with their spokesperson. Selectperson Hall thought they needed to talk with the abutters before a survey of the property.

Gorrill suggested when they talk with the abutters, tell them they want to move ahead with the survey to address some of their issues, and they do not want the meeting to be a re-hash of the information from the last meeting. Selectperson Hall suggested taking the abutters eight points of concern and explain this is what we heard you say, and these are the things we think the town needs to do about it and what we are proposing to do.

Selectperson Willey suggested the group meet at the Wiley's Corner Grange as they could get out of the weather and physically distance themselves inside. Polky felt it was a small enough group to be able to meet inside. When the meeting date is set, Selectperson Willey will arrange to open up the hall.

Chair Bates thanked the committee for doing all their work on Fort Point.

- Minutes - The minutes of January 4, 2021 were corrected as follows:

Page 2, second full paragraph, line 3, delete the word **do**

Page 4, under Executive Session, (Those) Present: add **Tim Polky**

A motion was made by Selectperson Elwell, seconded by Sawyer, to approve the January 4, 2021, minutes as corrected. The vote was 5-0. Motion carried.

- Executive Session Minutes – The minutes of January 7, 2021 were corrected as follows:

Page 1, under Regular Session, paragraph 2, line 2, the vote was **4-0 (Elwell was absent)**.

A motion was made by Selectperson Willey, seconded by Hall, to approve the January 7, 2021, executive session minutes as corrected. The vote was 4-0 (Elwell abstained). The motion carried.

- Communications: None.

- Warrant: The warrant for the week of January 7, 2021, was reviewed. The total expenses were \$70,956.19 and included two weeks of payroll, a January payment of \$40,672 for the winter road contract, and other regular expenses.

The Select Board will sign the warrant electronically. Baines stated the new process worked wonderfully.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT - Tim Polky reported the following:

The Town Budget. The Administration worked on the town budget and it should be ready by the January 25th Select Board meeting.

Salt Shed. There had been damage to the salt shed this week. Someone backed into the salt shed doors which made them inoperable. The doors had to be rebuilt.

Neighboring Towns. Some of the neighboring towns have had to shut down their services more than St. George because of COVID-related incidents. Polky said he and Amy Drinkwater, EMTP (Ambulance Director) have been putting a lot of time into looking at procedures that the town may have to change. They have been discussing vaccinations and are unable to report anything at this time.

Training Facility on Rt. 73. The last large pour of concrete happened at the training facility. They have two smaller pours left to do.

Terri-Lynn Baines. Polky received a letter from Finance Director Terri-Lynn Baines giving notice that her last day of work would be Friday, February 5, 2021. Polky said the town of South Thomaston needed help and Baines wanted to go back there to work.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- Conservation Commission (CC): Selectperson Willey reported the CC met on January 7, 2021, at 4 p.m. They are planning more updates for their town web page, and it will include updates related to insects and resources for residents who are thinking about installing solar panels. The CC met with three members of the staff at St. George School to talk about solar panels. The staff said they were still interested but could not think about it at this time with all the other things they had going on, dealing with COVID-19, and trying to keep the school going and keep everybody safe.

The CC decided the marsh is too low for the alewives to survive so they are putting that project on hold. They realize to go move anything forward on this, there will have to be a dam built to hold fresh water in and keep the saltwater out, as much as they can. She thought it was said there is too much saltwater in the marsh now, so the fire department cannot use the water for their trucks.

The CC wanted it noted all the town trails were clear of trees and now open. A representative from the Georges River Land Trust discussed an interesting topic about a solar farm that is being planned for Rt. 131 in South Thomaston. They are looking at an 85-acre plot of land this side of Westbrook Street to build a solar farm on.

Selectperson Sawyer stated the COVID-19 and CDC committee group he attends via Zoom, would like him to be more active in reporting information on their meetings to the Select Board.

Chair Bates said he is hesitant about having a full report every week on this committee because it is an unofficial citizen's committee. Bates suggested that anyone who has concerns come to the Select Board meeting and make them directly rather than putting the onus on Selectperson Sawyer.

Selectperson Elwell suggested if the committee has information or concerns, to attend the Select Board meeting via zoom and comment during Public Comments, or they should talk with Amy Drinkwater or Town Manager Polky. Chair Bates stated many groups in town are doing good work and he did not think the Select Board should single them out, particularly.

OLD BUSINESS: Fort Point Ad hoc Committee Report was taken up under Regular Session.

NEW BUSINESS: Quarterly Financial Review was taken up under Regular Session.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Present: Richard Bates, Wayne Sawyer, Tammy Willey, Jerry Hall, and Attorney W. Kelly

At 8:21 p.m., on a motion by Selectperson Sawyer, seconded by Hall, it was voted 4-0 to go into executive session pursuant to Title 1 MRSA Sec. 405(6)(E) for consultations with legal counsel. The Select Board came out of executive session at 9:36 p.m.

REGULAR SESSION:

At 9:37 p.m., on a motion by Selectperson Hall, seconded by Sawyer, it was voted 4-0 to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marguerite R. Wilson
Select Board Recording Secretary