

ST. GEORGE SELECT BOARD & ASSESSORS

St. George Town Office

MEETING MINUTES

February 8, 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, Tara Elwell, Beth Smith, Terry Brackett, Susan Ellis, Scott Vaitones, Richard Cohen, David Percival, Ben Vail, Ryan Cline, Robert Kelley, Alane Kennedy, Jeff Boulet, John Maltais, Peta vanVuuren, Van Thompson, John Falla, Ken Oeleberger, Michael Felton, Loreen Meyer, Judy Smith, and Peggy Williamson.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None.

REGULAR SESSION:

- Adjustments to Agenda: The following items were moved from New Business and taken up under Regular Session:

- Abatements
- Budget Review

- Minutes: The minutes of January 25, 2021, were corrected as follows:

Page 2, paragraph 3, line 5, correct to: ... rights of way...

Page 2, paragraph 4, line 10, delete the word **instance**; change to read: ...very unlikely happen.

Page 4, paragraph 1, line 5, delete the word left and change to **rear**.

Page 6, paragraph 8, line 1, correct to \$2**5**

Page 7, paragraph 2, line 1, delete the word going and insert the word **proposed**.

Page 8, under Fort Point Trail, line 2, correct the word to step**s**

Page 8, under Planning Board, line 1, delete the repeated word: **at**

A motion was made by Selectperson Elwell, seconded by Sawyer, to approve the January 25, 2021, minutes, as corrected. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

Abatements Requests:

Beth Smith presented the following abatement applications which had been reviewed by Assessing Agent Bob Gingras.

- Athena Joan Boulware-Small. Requested an adjustment to acreage (from 1.52 to 1.34) but more documentation is needed. The recommendation of Mr. Gingras is to deny the application for an abatement.

- RNCS Revocable Trust. An adjustment had already been made prior to tax commitment. The recommendation of Mr. Gingras is to deny the application for an abatement.

- Hale Miller. Needs to combine with his abutting property with the same name or provide proof that the property is unbuildable. The recommendation of Mr. Gingras is to deny the application for an abatement.

- Jimena Canales. Valued similarly to abutters. She will be looking into Tree Growth. The recommendation of Mr. Gingras is to deny the application for an abatement.

The Select Board had no questions regarding the denials recommended by Mr. Gingras.

Beth Smith presented the following abatement applications which had been reviewed by Assessing Agent Bob Gingras.

- Dana Michael Stetser, Map 235, Lot 021. The property was assessed in the amount of \$2,125.44. Mr. Gingras made an adjustment for the property and an abatement in the amount of \$129.60 was recommended. A roll call vote of the Select Board was taken. The vote was 5-0 in favor. None opposed.

- Cary and Cindy Desjardins, Map 207, Lot 012. The property was assessed in the amount of \$1,224.96. Mr. Gingras made an adjustment for an unfinished attic and an abatement in the amount of \$93.12 was recommended. A roll call vote of the Select Board was taken. The vote was 5-0 in favor. None opposed.

- Louis Violette, Map 234, Lot 024. The property was assessed in the amount of \$4,966.08. Mr. Gingras made an adjustment as the Homestead Exemption was mistakenly removed and an abatement in the amount of \$240.00 was recommended. A roll call vote of the Select Board was taken. The vote was 5-0 in favor. None opposed.

- Budget Review:

The Budget Committee wrote a "Letter of Concerns" to the Select Board. Chairperson Ellis reviewed their FY'21-22 concerns as outlined in the letter.

A thank you to town employees and volunteers for all the work they do, and particularly those who volunteer at the community gardens and at the Blueberry Cove gardens for donating to the Community Food Cupboard. The Board hopes these efforts will continue and expand.

Areas of Concerns:

- How will the pandemic fiscally affect the town in the following areas?
 - 1) increased insurance costs
 - 2) decreased revenue from the State of Maine
 - 3) delays in the work at Cold Storage Road
 - 4) demands on and funding for our ambulance and volunteer firefighters.
- School funding. Will the school be affected by the pandemic in both cost and excellence despite ongoing work by school staff? Encourage transparency by studying the audits of both the school and the town in order to make better decisions on what courses of action to take.
- The health of our local population and to be sure we are offering effective health insurance for town employees and supporting such resources as the ambulance and Neighbor to Neighbor.

- Climate change and its effect on sea-level rise in our coastal community. Support the Sea Level Rise committee in studying what can and should be done to mitigate the impact.
- Affordable housing. Recommending the town and CDC pursue a housing study when the pandemic is over.
- Encourage the Select Board to prioritize keeping the mil rate for property taxes flat for at least one more year.

Chair Bates stated the Select Board would not be covering the issue of school funding, but Superintendent Michael Felton was in attendance, and he was able to answer several of the budget committees' questions.

Felton: In terms of next year, we are working hard to limit impact on the mil rate. We have had a challenge in that we are going to lose \$176,000 in subsidy because the Free and Reduced Meal percentage fell below the state average. That is a challenge. We are going to get some federal aid through the ongoing Coronavirus Relief Funds and that will help. Cassie and I are in the process of taking all the budget requests, putting them together, and figuring them out. We will spend next week pulling all the pieces together.

Felton: Thus far this fiscal year, our finances have been very strong. We have not had to tap into some of the contingencies we built-in or some of the reserve funds yet. Anything can happen but I feel very comfortable and confident about where we are right now for this year. I've said it before and will say it again, that our kids aren't just in school, they are getting a world-class education every day. And the cost to this country for all the kids who have not been able to go to school is going to be a generational cost. We are really fortunate.

Felton: The only reason why we can do that is because of the support of the town, the community, the families, and the staff. We came together so we could do something that a lot of other groups couldn't do. I think this year we are really in good shape. Next year (we are aware of the pandemic) we are going to do everything we can to be fiscally responsible moving forward.

The Select Board and Budget Committee reviewed the Town Manager's FY'2021-22 Budget.

General Assistance. The request is \$2,500.00. Chair Bates noted the town is constrained by the criteria of the law for giving general assistance to the public. There was no discussion.

Social and Community Services:

- AIO. The request is \$2,000 but \$3,000 was requested by Chair Bates because of the following: This agency operates food pantries, works with the Good Shephard, does weekend meals for children, does heating vouchers, and has an electric connection and prevention programs. AIO has seen a 50% increase in visits and AIO relaxed the rule of one visit a month to be able to go anytime.

Selectperson Willey asked Kennedy if they might need to increase their food pantry budget or do they work in unison with AIO? Kennedy said the CDC food pantry can go to AIO for requests. Select Board roll call vote was 5-0 in favor.

- Coastal Opportunities. The request is \$100. This agency serves individuals with physical and intellectual disabilities. Selectperson Willey stated they do very good work. They have residential homes where they provide care for people that are disabled or have other issues. They teach them life skills. Select Board roll call vote was 5-0 in favor.
- Health Equity Alliance. The request is \$250. They now have an office in Rockland. The primary population is HIV Aids education and care, LGBTQ client services, and Harm Reduction for people using drugs. Selectperson Willey asked if this was a new organization asking for a donation. Bates stated the town has not funded them in the past because they did not have a local office. They have five offices around the state. Select Board roll call vote was 3 in favor, 2 opposed (Elwell & Willey)
- Knox County Health Clinic. The request is \$2,000. They offer medical, dental, mental health services and help with prescriptions. Select Board roll call vote was 5 in favor.
- LifeFlight. The request is \$648.00. LifeFlight explained in their documentation they ask for 25 cents per capita. Their documentation also showed their income from individuals is more than 10 times that from each town. Select Board roll call vote was 5-0 in favor.
- Maine Coast Heritage Trust. The request is \$1,000. Chair Bates said Clark Island is a beautiful place to visit and a real asset to the town. Ellis noted that many people are using the Clark Island trails. Select Board roll call vote was 5-0 in favor.
- Maine Public. The request is \$200. Select Board roll call vote was 5-0 in favor.
- Mid-Coast Maine Community Action. The request is for \$1,000. The WIC program, Head Start, fuel assistance requests are part of this agency. Ellis stated the Budget Committee reviewed this organization last year and they are confident in recommending MCMCA to the Select Board for a donation. Select Board roll call vote was 5-0 in favor.
- Neighbor to Neighbor. The request is \$3,000. This non-profit group provided 251 rides last year, considering they had a five-month shutdown and they delivered food from the community cupboard. Their budget is \$13,620. They received a \$2,000 grant from Spectrum Generations last year. Select Board roll call vote was 5-0 in favor.
- New Hope for Women. The request is \$1,045. The Knox County office is in Rockland. The Budget Committee researched this organization last year and recommended continuing support of this agency. Select Board roll call vote was 5-0 in favor.
- Penquis CAP. The request is \$807. Per the agency's letter, this represents 1.3% of the monetary of services that the town has received, and that the town has received \$62,000 of services this past year for Head Start, Home Energy Assistance, Weatherization, and Home Improvements. Select Board roll call was 5-0 in favor.
- Rockland District Nurses Association. The request is \$3,000. Peta vanVuuren reported that in 2020, the agency worked with 23 St. George residents and had 243 visits. Services included help with medication management, help with footcare, and performed blood draws. vanVuuren stated the RDNA and the Community Paramedic program have worked well together over the last few years. Each group offers a different skill set and each has different regulatory licenses. They both have ended up working in parallel with each other. She noted that the Community Paramedic program was a huge resource for them in figuring out many of the Covid protocols needed to keep going. Select Board roll call was 5-0.
- Spectrum Generations. The request is \$3,000. They served 28 residents, served 265 Meals on Wheels, offered counseling, gave care to older community members, and provided services to help understand and navigate health insurance options. Spectrum gave a grant to Neighbor to

Neighbor and a grant to the CDC which allowed them to buy incontinent supplies for adults. Select Board roll call was 5-0.

- Trekkers. Susan Ellis sits on the Trekker's finance committee. She will talk with the Board and ask them to provide a request letter to the St. George Select Board. There are a number of young people from St. George who participate in the program. Trekkers recently purchased a building on Old County Road and though their virtual fundraisers were surprisingly successful, it was not enough to meet their budget goals. They did receive some PPP money this year which helped to meet their overall budget. No vote was taken.
- Veteran Graves. The request is \$4,230. Select Board roll call was 5-0.
- Cemeteries. The request is \$5,000. Funds are used mainly for mowing and stone repair. The request is \$1,500 less than last year because the cemetery had more sales than they budgeted for and they do not need to request as much assistance this year. Select Board roll call was 4 in favor, 1 abstention (Hall).
- Jackson Memorial Library. The request is \$50,000. The letter was just received and did not include a budget. Chair Bates wrote them back and requested a copy of their budget. This past year it was announced that JML received a \$100,000 Maine Economic Recovery Grant. Bates felt this grant must have impacted the library's finances and wanted the Select Board to better understand their finances before making a decision. No vote was taken.
- Shellfish Management. The request is \$3,000. Each town pays one-fifth of the organization's budget. Select Board roll call vote was 5-0 in favor.
- Community Development Corporation. The request is \$10,000. Rob Kelley stated the request was the same as last year. He noted with the pandemic and the community need, it had been an unprecedented year. His letter provided statistics regarding Community Board and what they were proposing.

In the CDC's letter, Chair Bates noted the vast majority of the programming and much of the personnel budget went to community services; but the budget had administration management at \$16,850, payroll at \$52,500, Cupboard wages at \$16,200. Bates said when he looked at the services, \$20,000 was spent on food, gas cards, dental clinics are \$3,000, emergency assistance funds are \$5,000, and the program funds are \$8,000. He is concerned that the ratio of overhead compared to the actual financial services provided is out of balance with the other organizations the town has been reviewing.

Kelley stated it is an accounting problem and they are aware of it. If they were doing a program level of accrual accounting what would be happening is a lot of Alane's time would be allotted to the various programs. The Community Cupboard covers the vast majority of her hours, the true overhead, accounting, administrative paperwork would have been lower.

Kelley stated they have made some accounting changes; they don't have the proper reporting to document her hours but are working to fix it. Bates noted that AIO which is a larger organization has a relatively lower overhead for the services they provide. Chair Bates stated that some residents have spoken out about people using the Community Board who are not necessarily needy. Kelley stated as clients of Good Shepherd and AIO, the CDC does collect paperwork on the clients of the Community Cupboard. They self-serve using USDA guidelines. It is not open to just everybody. The CDC follows the process that AIO is required to. Chair Bates felt that answered the question which has come up quite a lot.

They offer three days of food assistance a month. He said the CDC may be less efficient because they are smaller but can provide a quality of service and attentiveness to family needs that AIO cannot. Kelley said this year the Cupboard often had to go to retail, to institutional providers to get food so the expenditure was significantly higher.

Felton asked if the overhead was mainly the salary benefits for people delivering services to clients. Kelley stated the vast majority was. Selectperson Willey asked if any of the clients or family members gave back to the CDC in donations or volunteering for the help they received? Kennedy stated they do not give back as they are not in a position generally to donate back; the CDC does not require clients to donate time or volunteer. The Select Board roll call vote was 5-0 in favor.

- CDC Broadband Initiative. The request is \$10,000. Kelley explained that the advisory committee the town commissioned to work on the issue of broadband found there was need but there was a lot of work to figure out the details. He stated Broadband is an important aspect of living in the 21st century and they want it to be available for every member of the community regardless of means.

Boulet stated that Connect St. George is a group of concerned residents and the mission is to ensure all residents have access to reliable high-speed broadband. The group feels it is an important component to maintaining and building a strong community. In the past two years, the committee identified nearly 200 residences that do not have broadband access and have developed a road map on how to get this done.

In the past two months, they received a cost estimate from Spectrum for \$437,000 to build new infrastructure and provide new service to 172 residents. Spectrum has agreed to pay \$271,000 or 62% of the cost. That leaves \$166,000 needed in order to provide service to those unserved residents. The next step is to apply for grant funding to raise the remaining funds. The grant period is scheduled to open in late February. The committee has seen drafts of the scoring matrix and thinks they have the potential for a strong application. If they applied tomorrow for the amount, the cost per new service would be \$966.00 per person.

Boulet stated there are many requirements to the grant. According to the Island Institute and members of the Connect Maine Authority (the granting body), grants are more favorable when there is additional funding from the community whether through donations or money from the municipality. He stated if Connect St. George does not get the grant, the \$10,000 contribution will be returned to the town.

Selectperson Hall stated that showing strong community support in the grant application is very important and there are many ways to show the support, i.e., letters from residents highlighting specific needs, individual contributions, and participation by the town. Select Board roll call was 4-0 in favor, and 1 abstention (Bates).

- Ambulance Service. The request is \$130,000. President of the Ambulance Association, Tim Polky said they tried to fund the ambulance through fundraisers and billing for services, but the Association did have to go to the town to ask for support. He noted that they have been

getting donations and hopes that will continue, and Amy Drinkwater has been successful in getting some grant money for the association. Ellis had asked about the demands on the ambulance. Bates noted the calls were way down for a while perhaps due to Covid-19 but have increased again. Polky noted the Community Paramedicine calls have increased again, and they can now bill for those calls. Ellis asked if the Select Board has seen the Ambulance Association's budget as the Budget Committee has not seen a budget. Polky stated he was not sure but will make sure the Select Board and Budget Committee gets the budget. The Select Board did not postpone the vote. Select Board Roll call vote was 4-0 in favor and 1 abstention (Bates).

Planning Department.

- CEO/LPI salary. Increased approximately \$3,242. Polky explained they have shifted some of the planning responsibilities to the CEO.
- Conservation Commission. This line item increased. Oelberger said the increase was due to Fort Point Trail. He said the Select Board sent future planning for Fort Point back to the Conservation Commission who formed a separate group under the CC and asked, 'How do we implement a multi-year plan as opposed to the plan with the State?'

Oelberger stated the CC would need to put up 20% of the total costs and the state would pick up the rest of the funding. The committee will look at the safety issue of the bridge first and apply for grant money then apply for RTP grants which require a 20% match for whatever they would propose, and then tap smaller grants for the remainder. If they do not get a grant, they will have to review their plans.

Selectperson Hall noted that with the trail system now in place, it would seem prudent to include some monies each year as a general trail maintenance item. Part of the \$10,000 request was to have something like that in there in addition to what might be part of a (grant) match. Polky thought it was important to request some funding for all the trails, not just Fort Point.

Selectperson Elwell asked if the CC involved Parks and Recreation in the trails. Oelberger stated they had talked in the past but thought the P&R Director was happy to have the CC work on the trails. Elwell asked if Parks & Rec was involved with the CC would they be eligible for different grants? Oelberger stated he was not sure, but they can pursue that. Vail stated Parks and Rec had a series of walks last year to Fort Point, and some people were not excited about going across the gully and decided to do another trail. He said when he gets out on trails, he tries to keep things up but the vast majority of the work is done by the Conservation Commission.

Selectperson Willey asked why there was such an increase? Did they need to show the extra \$10,000 in the budget? Oelberger stated of the \$13,550, \$10,000 of it is improvements related to the Fort Point Trail which would be 20% of the grant money they hope to apply for. Selectperson Willey asked if they were not to get that grant money, would the \$10,000 come back to the town? Oelberger stated they may have to do alternatives and Selectperson Hall said you might find you cannot get a grant, but you can get \$5,000 worth of contributions and

with the \$5,000 and \$10,000 from the town, you could do something with the bridge. Select Board Roll Call vote was 5-0 in favor.

- Parks & Recreation. Vail said usually the budget request includes community trips, but he did not anticipate those happening this summer and fall. He said he moved some money around and is planning 1-2 trips for seniors with the Monhegan Boat Line and maybe an Owls Head Transportation Museum tour; there will be no bus transportation for these trips.

Vail plans to hold summer clinics but they will all be outdoors. Chair Bates asked about the \$2,000 taken from the Lipson account for tennis court maintenance. Vail said they resurfaced the courts and also added pickleball lines on the courts' last fall. There is a maintenance fund for the courts, but if all they do is take from it, soon there will be nothing in it. After talking with Polky, he hoped they could start a reserve fund so in 5-6 years if they have to repaint the courts, they take little or nothing out of that fund.

Selectperson Elwell asked if the dugouts were done. Vail said they were finished, and the dugout roof was done last spring. He said there were a couple of other dugouts that needed to be redone and that the scoreboard was completed. Roll call vote was 5-0, in favor.

- Harbors. Ryan Cline explained there was an increase in the landings reserve because the Tenants Harbor ramp is deteriorating and will need to be replaced in the next 5 years or so. The Department will need to purchase a boat in the next few years, but maintenance needed to be done. The cost of a new boat, motor, and trailer were \$80,000 or more. A used boat would cost \$30,000 to \$50,000. Harbormaster training was added to the budget. Select Board Roll Call vote was 5-0.
- Unclassified. Fireworks are not included in this year's budget. Polky did not think they would be able to hold those due to Covid. Bates said the health insurance increased by \$2,500. Ellis asked if the family health-contingent account would be sufficient. Polky thought the answer to Ellis's question was, 'The town didn't know who they would hire but thinks the insurance coverage would be about the same, if not less.' Polky noted the town had one employee retiring that was on one of the old policies. Roll call vote was 5-0 in favor.

A motion was made by Selectperson Elwell, seconded by Hall to continue the Select Board meeting beyond 9 p.m. Roll call vote was 5-0 in favor.

- Communications: None.

- Warrant: The warrant for the week of February 8, 2021, was reviewed. The total expenses were \$132,918.67 and included a payment of \$8,688.40 to Maine Custom Woodlands for brush chipping, a payment of \$5,958 to MMA for the town, a payment on the snow plowing contract, and other regular expenses.

The warrant and other documents will be signed electronically.

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

Finance Director's Job Duties. Terri-Lynn Baines left employment and Administration has been trying to figure out how to make that work in the interim.

Appeals. CEO Brackett has one appeal going before the Board of Appeals and expecting another appeal in the near future.

Fort Point Trail Property. The wetland delineation maps are in. They have started to work with Gartley and Dorsky on the property survey. There is deed work that needs to be done. It is not clear who owns the property. John Falla has been helping the town some on that issue.

Tilson Infrastructure Proposal. Polky has been in communication with Attorney Matt Bowen regarding the cell tower proposal. He said both the town and Bowen were not ready to continue the discussion on the Tilson proposal. Tilson Infrastructure will be on the February 22nd agenda.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- Fort Point Trail: Selectperson Hall stated the committee met and Lori Gray has joined the committee. The committee met with the abutters and discussed putting the UA trail on hold as there were things they needed to address and look at how they might address the concerns raised. It was a good meeting. They responded positively. Gray was pleased with the way they were going and happy to join the committee to provide input in the discussions.

Gray recognized the difficulty of addressing some of the things around dogs, etc., but expressed a willingness to work with the rest of the group to see what might be done about these issues. In the follow-up meeting which he and Polky missed, they talked about moving ahead with the survey and a little bit about the kind of signage they might have, but a lot of the specific decisions need to wait on the survey. They touched on some of the other issues. They wanted to get more proposals or thoughts on what it might cost to do a bridge as the initial price of the bridge seemed high, and they wanted to get the engineer back to talk with them about what they had in mind. To the degree the committee charged the CC with looking at how to do maintenance on the trail, the CC formed the subgroup to look into that and will be meeting with the engineer.

- Planning Board: Chair Bates reported the Planning Board met on January 26, 2021, at 7 p.m.

- The application to amend the Adric Drive subdivision was accepted as complete and approved.
- The application to replace the existing structure with a new one and repair the pound containment area at 127 River Road (St. George Sea Farm) was accepted as complete; satisfying the relevant ordinances, the application was approved, subject to state and federal approval for the necessary permits.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Limited Use Lease MDOT – Fort Point Trail: Chair Bates said they received a Limited Use Lease from MDOT concerning the parking area and the well in St. George. Selectperson Hall noted in paragraph 9, line 4 the period after Maine DOT should be deleted. Hall's question, "There is no way we would want to do anything that would cause them to revoke this license but if they did, is it reasonable that we would only have 30 days to remove the parking area and the well?"

Chair Bates, "They are talking about a 25-year lease that is renewable for at least 10 more years. It seems unlikely there is going to be a sudden change of mind but on the other hand, if there were to be one, 30 days is not much time." Polky thought they had to put some type of clause in the lease. Polky, "The parking lot is not a big issue and the spring is not either. If they want to do something there, they can fill both of them in."

Selectperson Hall noted under number 13, "I think we should say: Attention Town Manager rather than the person. Particularly since a person could change in a few months." Chair Bates noted these changes and Polky thought that made sense.

A motion was made by Selectperson Elwell, seconded by Hall to approve Town Manager Polky signing the Limited Use Lease regarding Fort Point Trail with MDOT. The roll call vote was 5-0 in favor.

- Town Manager Search and Hire Dave Barrett of MMA: Chair Bates explained that the request is to hire Dave Barrett from Maine Municipal Association to help the Select Board in the search for a town manager. Chair Bates received a Purchase of Service Agreement from Barrett and forwarded the PSA to the Select Board. Selectperson Hall asked who would sign the PSA. Chair Bates stated that on behalf of the Select Board, he would.

A motion was made by Selectperson Hall, seconded by Elwell, to approve the Purchase of Service Agreement with David Barrett of the Maine Municipal Association, and Chair Bates will sign the agreement on behalf of the Select Board. The roll call vote was 5-0 in favor.

Chair Bates created a Proposed Timeline for the Select Board involving the search for a Town Manager. Dave Barrett will meet the Select Board via Zoom on February 22, 2021, to review the process and schedule.

- Appointment to Conservation Commission: Chair Bates noted that Ingrid Mroz stepped down from the CC and John Meyer volunteered to serve out the rest of her term (June 2021).

A motion was made by Selectperson Elwell, seconded by Hall to approve the appointment of John Meyer to fill out Ingrid Mroz's term through June 30, 2021. The roll call vote was 5-0 in favor.

- Appointment to the Fort Point ad Hoc Committee: Lori Gray

A motion was made by Selectperson Willey, seconded by Sawyer to appoint Lori Gray as a member of the Fort Point ad Hoc Committee. The roll call vote was 5-0 in favor.

- Town Report Dedication: Chair Bates asked the Select Board members to give a thought about to whom the town report might be dedicated to and they would discuss it at the next meeting.

At 9:24 p.m., on a motion by Selectperson Sawyer, seconded by Hall, it was voted 5-0 to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marguerite R. Wilson
Select Board Recording Secretary