

ST. GEORGE SELECT BOARD & ASSESSORS
St. George Town Office
MEETING MINUTES
May 3, 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, John Falla, and Jeff Boulet.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None.

REGULAR SESSION:

- Adjustments to Agenda. The following adjustment was made:

- American Rescue Plan Funds for Knox County were taken up under Regular Session.

- Minutes: The minutes of April 26, 2021, were corrected as follows:

Page 3, paragraph 2, correct the word to **hire**.

Page 4, paragraph 3, lines 5 & 6, delete the word **years** (x2) and insert **more**, and change to read:
... at least two **more** years if not four.

Page 4, paragraph 4, line six, correct word to panels

Page 4, paragraph 7, lines 2 & 3, change to read: ... Selectperson Hall explained **that up to \$50,000 could be transferred from other departments to** cover an overrun in Solid Waste.

Page 5, paragraph 4, line 2, delete the word **but**

Page 5, paragraph 5, lines 2 & 3, change to read: Selectperson Hall **asked what happens if the public attends. Will they** need to put masks on?

Page 7, under Fort Point Survey, line 6, change to: ...by both parties: The Town of St. George...

Page 8, under J.K. Kalloch Winter Contracts, line 4, change to read: Polky said this **mileage**...

Page 9, paragraph 6, line 1, delete words they plan, change to: **for** two nights...

Page 9, paragraph 7, line 1, delete they and change to read: ...three candidates **that will be** invited to...

Page 10, paragraph 5, line 2, change to: ...the rented one enough?

A motion was made by Selectperson Elwell, seconded by Hall, to approve the April 26, 2021, Select Board minutes, as corrected. The roll call vote was 5-0 in favor.

- American Rescue Plan Funds for Knox County: Chair Bates reported that Congress allocated funds under the American Rescue Plan to every county across the nation based on their population, and Knox County received 7.7 million dollars. On April 17, 2021, Jay Feyler, Town Manager of Union, wrote to all the town managers in Knox County proposing that some of the County funds be passed onto the towns. Bates stated Feyler's argument for this proposal was that the balance of functions between towns and counties in New England was very different from that of most other parts of the country. Feyler has suggested that some of these funds be shared with the towns in Knox County.

Chair Bates gave an example of what this might mean. If half of the Knox County allocated funds were passed onto the towns in proportion to their population, St. George would receive approximately \$250,000. This money would be separate from the funds that Congress allocated to the towns.

Chair Bates noted a recent article in Village Soup called "The Mid-Coast Broadband Coalition" and the MCBC proposed that all 7.7 million dollars go to them. Bates stated that this coalition is a regional public broadband group.

Chair Bates: I think St. George needs to have a position on this issue. First, I suggest we have Tim Polky represent the town in negotiations with the county commissioners on any proposal that comes up about assigning American Rescue Plan County Funds to the town. Second, it would be useful to know more about the Mid-Coast Broadband Coalition, and I have asked Jeff Boulet, of the CDC Broadband Committee, for a brief overview of what he knows about MCBC. This committee includes Jeff Boulet, Jerry Hall, and several others in town and they have submitted a grant application to ConnectME.

Boulet said he spoke with Denise Munger, Vice-Chair of the Rockport Select Board about the Mid-Coast Broadband Coalition. Boulet related that the MCBC is a consortium made up of 12 towns in Knox County. Their situation is similar to that of St. George. There is a pocket of areas in their community that is not served well by existing internet service providers. They feel that Covid, especially, has shone a light on how important the internet is and that some of the ISPs have "fallen down" in filling that role.

The MCBC wants to take this project on themselves and form a coalition where they can become a collectively owned broadband company, and put out RFPs, solicit local internet service providers to build the technology, then lease the lines to other ISPs to run the technology. MCBC's guiding principles are universal access to broadband and competitive access.

Boulet: "Having spent a long time working with ISPs over the past few years, it requires that you are well funded to get them to come to the table and build a project for you; you need to pay them well. One thing is that rural communities and coastal communities are not getting broadband access. I feel like this coalition is attempting to solve that problem, and it could be a good long-term potential project for the region."

Selectperson Hall noted the CDC Connect St. George Committee found if you have a town like St. George that is 85% served by Spectrum Charter then you cannot serve the remaining 15% effectively without tying into the existing system. Hall did not know if other towns were similar or not, "But to think you can come in and replicate the 85% that is already here or take it away from the incumbent, does not make much sense to me. We are talking about the 14 to 18 towns in the county, but 7.7 million dollars is not enough to do what they are talking about doing. To set this separate company up as a broadband utility that will replace Spectrum, I would have a lot of questions."

Selectperson Hall agreed with Jay Feyler that the New England government-operated differently than most parts of the country. From Hall's experience living in Georgia, the county government ran everything. He thought a better situation for St. George was Feyler's proposal that a significant portion of those monies be distributed to the municipalities.

Boulet thought what inspired the coalition on this project was the two-mile stretch in Rockport that is municipally owned and served by GWI. Fletcher Kittridge, CEO of GWI is an advocate in working with the broadband coalition. "I think they anticipate the funding to come from the

next round of the stimulus package." Boulet thought ConnectME was expected to see 15 million dollars from the most recent grant they applied for, and ConnectME was expected to see next year, federal money of 129 million dollars for broadband.

Boulet said even with that amount of anticipated money for broadband, he recommended the town not to be left out of the coalition. "If there is some way to do it where we are not spending any money. For us, we are going to be almost 100% served if we get this grant. My concern is the infrastructure build-out that will happen within the next year or so, is already dated infrastructure. It is coaxial cable, and it is not the fastest thing out there. My concern is 10 years down the road when we have more residents who need faster uploads and downloads.

"And if in 10 years there is a Midcoast Broadband Coalition Consortium (MCBC) of towns and we are not part of it, I feel like that might be a problem. We are on a peninsula and no service provider wants to provide service to us because they cannot run fiber through us and then to another community. We are at the end of the road. It is just not a very viable business model for them to run fiber into our community."

Boulet said he asked Munger who would get priority in these communities, and she indicated Camden and Rockland. Selectperson Hall indicated the article stated the MCBC had been in talks with other surrounding towns, but St. George was not listed.

Chair Bates suggested they keep a connection with the Midcoast Broadband Coalition but also have Tim Polky work with other town managers on how some of the 7.7 million dollars could be distributed to individual towns.

Selectpersons Elwell, Hall, and Sawyer agreed with Chair Bates. Selectperson Willey agreed with Boulet's comment that St. George is on a peninsula and because internet providers cannot run fiber through St. George and to another community, it is not in their best interest to serve us.

Chair Bates suggested a vote be taken to authorize the town manager to work with Jay Feyler and other town managers to lead conversations with the County Commissioners and Administrator Hart on how to best deal with the coalition. Selectperson Hall and Chair Bates suggested Jeff Boulet work with MCBC, if he was able. Boulet agreed and said he would ask Munger what the coalition would require of the town to order to be involved, and he would get back to the Select Board.

Selectperson Hall asked Boulet to find out, "What is in it for us? Why should we be interested in joining this? We do not want to slam the door on it but there should be an option that allows the town to better understand what they are doing. Monitor the possibilities and then join if the Select Board concludes it makes sense." Selectperson Hall felt the town should keep its options open because there could be a long-term benefit that the town would not want to miss out on. Chair Bates asked Boulet to make it understood the town was not signing up with any financial commitments but was interested.

Selectperson Hall asked Polky if the county wanted to keep the money, what would they fund? Polky said a lot of things were on the table but he was not sure any of them would be funded. Suggestions were regionalizing EMS and Fire, especially on the northern side of the county; and hiring a county engineer. Chair Bates felt that hiring an engineer, for example, was a recurring

cost and once the money was gone, how would they fund the position? It would lead to an increase in the county taxes to pay for that position.

Selectperson Hall, "The idea of using it to start a recurring cost seems like you do not want to do that. Maybe that makes sense in some situations, but generally, it is more like, let's build out broadband, let's put a new culvert in, or one-time kind of expenses."

A motion was made by Selectperson Elwell, seconded by Sawyer to authorize Town Manager Polky to discuss with Knox County Town Managers and the Knox County Commissioners the 7.7-million-dollar American Rescue Plan Funds and its allocation within Knox County. The roll call vote was 5-0 in favor.

- Communications: None.

- Warrant: The warrant for the week of May 3, 2021, was reviewed. The total expenses were \$666,946.57 and included a payment of \$2,560 to Larry's Portable Welding, a payment of \$1,960 to the Tenants Harbor Postmaster for postage on the 30-day notices due to be mailed out at the end of the week, and other regular expenses.

Elwell explained that there were originally 280, 30-day notices to be mailed out but to date that had decreased to approximately 240 notices.

The warrant and other documents will be signed in person at the town office.

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

- Screen for Compost. He found a compost screen and ordered it. He anticipates the screen to arrive on May 4, 2021.

- Open Top Containers for the Transfer Station. The price for an open-top container is around \$7,000 each plus shipping costs. He has received two prices back but did not hear back from a third company. They will need to decide which ones they want to purchase.

- Paving. Requests have gone out to Hager Enterprises and Performance Paving, Inc. for estimates on the cost for paving Dennison Road.

- 10 Cold Storage Road. Polky stated they now have the items needed to resubmit the 10 Cold Storage Road grant application.

Selectperson Elwell asked if work would be done at Jones Brook as some of the guard rails were taken down. Polky said the culvert would be replaced this summer.

Selectperson Willey asked Polky about a discount on buying two containers. "Did anyone offer a discount if the town purchases two containers?" Polky said he received an email from one of the dealers today and would let the Board know if a discount was offered.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- Conservation Commission: Selectperson Willey reported Ken Oelberger emailed her corrections to Select Board minutes of April 6, 2021, regarding the Conservation Commission

report. Selectperson Willey read the following: "*The Georges River Land Trust* is planning a summit meeting. The summit meeting will be on April 27, 2021, from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., and they have invited Conservation Commissioners/Committees from the towns of Owls Head, Thomaston, Rockland, St. George, and South Thomaston. Selectperson Willey thinks the meeting would be held via Zoom and that the *Georges River Land Trust* will be sending out more information."

- Planning Board: Chair Bates reported the Planning Board met on April 27, 2021, at 7 p.m. via Zoom.

- There was a pre-application discussion about a proposal to demolish and rebuild a structure at 3 Riverview Lane, Otis Point; the Board decided it needed more information about the proposal before making any judgments about it.

OLD BUSINESS:

- Utility Cost Update: Selectperson Hall reported his findings and basic conclusions regarding town utility costs.

In January, February, and March 2021, the system produced close to 20,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity. It produces more in the summer months, so it appears it will produce 80,000 plus kilowatt-hours of electricity a year, but this will need to be confirmed. There has been a reliability problem in the past so a good time to review the output would be at the end of the third year of operation.

Selectperson Hall thinks they will need to look at the bills for all six locations and see whether or not the credits are banked or are expiring. The way electricity is metered at the Transfer Station is confusing because what the transfer station uses in a day doesn't get counted like it would at the other facilities.

Selectperson Hall: You can find it by difference because all the other bills show the share of the generation that is being allocated to them. There is a question of what the allocations are and how it works out. If you take the electricity generated in the first quarter of the year and take the 61% of the electricity generated shown on the town office's electric bill, it doesn't match. I think that is due to the way it gets metered at the transfer station. We should look at this year, look at last year, and look at whether we have banked credits that are expiring. Otherwise, it looks like it is on track. For the 19,375 kilowatt-hours generated, we saved \$280 in the quarter times four which works out to the \$1,100 a year that we were projecting to save. As far as the Route 73 fire station, the usage was up sharply and the kilowatt-hours were high, but it did not amount to a lot of money.

Chair Bates remembered they asked ReVision about getting an extra meter installed at the Transfer Station but that went nowhere. Selectperson Hall thought it was a question of "Who pays for it?"

Polky: They made the statement that the problem was an extra generation of electricity that was being left at the transfer station more than what was being metered. I said let's put a meter on it. My question is, doesn't everything go through the meter at the transfer station like everything else?

Since more kilowatt-hours are anticipated to be generated during the summer months, and so as not to lose the credits, Chair Bates asked if they should consider installing a heat pump to heat the Route 73 fire station or install a heat pump in some areas of the town office because an electric heat pump uses electricity.

Polky noted the town converted the kilowatt credits to money credits early on. He also noted utilities did not only mean electricity but included heat and the extra cost might be in the heat.

Selectperson Hall explained that the Fire Department utility costs were about the same this year as last year. There was about a \$250 difference. He thought they could be saving a lot of electricity using the LEDs and other things, and a solar panel system that was generating more. We were using around 90,000 kilowatt-hours a year. If the system is generating more than 80,000 to 83,000 kilowatt-hours and our usage has fallen below that, we need to see if we can substitute electricity for fuel oil at the town office. Selectperson Hall thought they needed to dig deeper into the facts, and said he was willing to help on this issue.

Chair Bates: I would like to propose that we ask the town office to look at those recommendations and do a more detailed analysis of what the panels generated last year.

A motion was made by Selectperson Willey, seconded by Elwell to approve Selectperson Hall's stated recommendations, which include reviewing utility bills for usage, looking at the amount of output, and the amounts of generated power being banked for credit. The roll call vote was 5-0 in favor.

- Contracts: Town Manager Polky presented the Select Board with six contracts soon to expire.

Roadside Mowing Contract: Jamie Miller currently has this contract which expires June 30, 2021. Miller underbid Steve Jarrett and is still at that price. Selectperson Elwell suggested they continue the contract with Jamie Miller, and Polky felt Miller did a good job mowing. No other comments were made. - A motion was made by Selectperson Elwell, seconded by Sawyer, to continue the Roadside Mowing contract with Jamie Miller. The roll call vote was 5-0, in favor.

Heating Fuel Contract (includes heating fuel, gasoline, and diesel fuel): The current contract is with Maine Coast Petroleum. Polky said their price is right, they are a local company, easy to work with. MCP does not request a service charge fee from the town on General Assistance deliveries. - A motion was made by Selectperson Elwell, seconded by Sawyer, to continue the Heating Fuel contract with Maine Coast Petroleum. The roll call vote was 5-0, in favor.

Propane Contract: There is a propane furnace at the Route 73 Fire Station and the kitchen and the generator at the Tenants Harbor Fire Station uses propane. Currently, the town purchases propane for the generator and kitchen from Dead River and the Route 73 fire station from Fabian. Polky suggested this contract go out to bid. - A motion was made by Selectperson Elwell, seconded by Willey to put the Propane contract out to bid. The roll call vote was 5-0, in favor.

Mowing Contract for the Cemetery: Granite Gardens had been mowing the cemetery but told Polky they were no long mowing lawns. Polky recommended the contract go out to bid. A

motion was made by Selectperson Hall, seconded by Elwell to put the Cemetery Mowing contract out to bid. The roll call vote was 5-0, in favor.

Second-Hand Shop Contract (at the Transfer Station): Alisa Beal has operated the shop for some years, has done a great job with it, and has not increased her price. Selectperson Elwell recommended not putting the contract out to bid as Beal was a local person with a family, willing to help customers, and Polky said she helped manage the bottle room. - A motion was made by Selectperson Hall, seconded by Willey to retain the Second-Hand Shop contract with Alisa Beal. The roll call vote was 5-0, in favor.

Solid Waste Transportation Contract: This contract expires in September 2021. Aaron Grindle currently has the contract and had the lower price at the last contract. Polky said several other companies have expressed interest in bidding on the contract and he recommends the contract go out to bid. - A motion was made by Selectperson Hall, seconded by Sawyer to put the Solid Waste Transportation contract out to bid. The roll call vote was 5-0, in favor.

Commercial Paving & Recycling Contract: This company takes the town's sheetrock, shingles, and glass. Polky said the town has been shipping those items to CP&R who takes the sheetrock to Riverside and Riverside ships them to Hampden. Polky does not think the town should be doing that. He talked with CP&R today and shut off shipping sheetrock to them. Regarding the shingles and the glass, the price is increasing. The town will be paying \$115 for the glass and \$85 for the shingles which are a little higher than what the town has been paying.

Polky said the other issue is the town is not getting the reclaimed material back because CP&R is not making enough of it. Polky told CP&R today, "Even though St. George likes to recycle, and we get credits for doing it, I am not sure we can afford to do this anymore."

Polky noted that sheetrock will have to go into the regular waste and as far as the shingles, most of it is going into the regular demo now. The contractors are not sorting it. The CP&R contract ran out on May 1, 2021. He does not want to make a decision until he meets and discusses this with the Solid Waste & Recycling Committee since the contract is a lot of money. The Select Board will wait to hear back from Town Manager Polky on this issue before taking a vote.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Victualers Licenses: On a motion by Selectperson Elwell, seconded by Sawyer it was voted to approve the following victualers licenses by a roll call vote of 5-0, in favor:

- Ocean House
- Port Clyde General Store
- Tenants Harbor General Store
- Seaside Inn
- The Barn Café and Dockside Seafood (The Dip Net)
- Craginair Inn
- East Wind Inn
- Long Cove Cottages
- School House Bakery
- Village Ice Cream, Inc.
- The Happy Clam
- The Blue Tulip

- Mill Pond House B & B
- The Black Harpoon
- Smalleytown Bakery

- Liquor License Applications: On a motion by Selectperson Elwell, seconded by Hall it was voted to approve the following liquor licenses on a roll call vote of 5-0, in favor:

- The Barn Café
- The Dip Net

- Town Meeting Prep: Chair Bates explained that in recent years, the Select Board handled questions that arose, and looked to the Town Manager, and/or to the available department heads as was appropriate. Chair Bates proposed the Board follow the same approach.

Selectperson Sawyer asked if the Town Report had been published. Chair Bates stated no as the publisher could not be sure it would be ready in time, and it would be an incomplete report as the auditor had not completed his financial report.

Selectperson Hall asked if the Warrant Articles would be sent out on the Constant Contact? Tara Elwell said she would see what she could do but Constant Contact changed their platform, and she has not had time to research how to create a new document but would talk with Ben Vail who was using the new format. Elwell added that three weeks ago, the staff printed off a stack of the Warrant Articles and are available at the town office, have been posted on the website for a month, will be available at the May 10th election, and at the May 11th town meeting.

- American Rescue Plan Funds for St. George: Chair Bates reported that Congress is giving every town across the country money. St. George's allocation is \$256,622.77 and the first payment may come by June 9, 2021. This money needs to be spent by the end of December 2024, and there are various restrictions on these funds can be spent. The funds can be used, for example, on investments in water, sewer, broadband infrastructure. Chair Bates suggested an ad hoc committee be formed to look at the needs of the town. The committee would then make a recommendation to the Select Board and put it to a referendum vote. Chair Bates suggested the ad hoc committee be made up of the following: Tim Polky, Wayne Sawyer, Michael Felton, a School Board member (Alane Kennedy), and Susy Ellis.

Chair Bates did not think a plan needed to be done quickly given they had until the end of December 2024 to use it. He said the funds could be banked and the ad committee could spend more time thinking about how it could be used, or they could aim for a November decision which would require a recommendation to the Select Board by mid-August.

Selectperson Elwell asked if broadband and internet were the biggest need. Selectperson Hall said if the town received the ConnectME grant, it would drastically change how much money was needed to complete the build-out in the town. He thought the grant decisions would be announced sometime after June 2021. Hall thought they should set November as a target to make recommendations about the Rescue Plan funds; but for example, if they were unsuccessful with the 10 Cold Storage Road grant, would that qualify as infrastructure? Some things could impact the timing of the ad hoc committee's decision.

Chair Bates: As to the broadband proposal, if Connect ME comes through, Spectrum has made some commitments and there are members of the community who have indicated they would be forthcoming as well. So, it could be that the build-out of the internet in St. George could be carried out without touching any other funds.

Selectperson Hall: The grant application will be about \$105,000; Spectrum is contributing \$277,000 and the committee is looking for community donations of \$58,000 to \$59,000. The pieces are in place to fund the project if the grant application is successful. If they are not, then theoretically \$105,000 of the \$256,000 might be able to be put to the build-out.

There could be some additional questions on long drops and an unresolved issue that the CDC did not elect to include Hupper Island in the grant. There are 30 plus houses on Hupper Island and the committee did not try to get those included because it seemed that the cost to do that might be too high and complicate the issue.

Chair Bates thought there were many projects around town the funds could be used for, such as reducing the carbon footprint of the town office by replacing all the windows with energy-efficient windows. "Does the town need to do something at Drift Inn Beach to stop the erosion that is taking place there (a climate change issue)? The school has needs. There are innumerable areas." Chair Bates thought the crucial thing was to make sure the money was spent wisely. Selectperson Sawyer agreed. Selectperson Willey thought they should wait until the ad hoc committee was created as they might come up with other ideas the Board had not thought of.

A motion was made by Selectperson Elwell, seconded by Hall, to approve the formation of an ad hoc committee to make recommendations to the Select Board on how the American Rescue Plan Funds could be used to benefit the town of St. George with a target date of voter approval November 2021 but not a specific deadline date. The roll call vote was 5-0, in favor.

- Resumption of In-Person Select Board Meetings: The Select Board discussed holding in-person Board meetings. Chair Bates explained the Board could meet six feet apart in the Firehouse meeting room either with the windows open or running the air filter. The regulations say that if anyone attending is not vaccinated then everyone has to wear a mask, and even if everyone has been vaccinated, people can still wear masks if they want to. The Select Board can use the OWL system so members of the public can attend the meeting remotely. All meeting attendees can either prescreen using a phone app or be screened as they come in the door; standard screening questions would be asked, and temperatures would be taken. Selectperson Elwell asked if they needed to screen people if they are wearing a mask. Polky stated they are still screening at this point.

Polky said a Knox County Mutual Aid meeting was held in the Fire Station meeting room, and the rules were as long as the number of people did not exceed 50% of the capacity of the building and the windows were open; and every person had to be vaccinated, otherwise people had to wear masks. Polky said people coming to the front counter at the town office would still be required to wear a mask.

Chair Bates said it looked as though state law would be changing to allow remote meetings to continue even after the current state of emergency was lifted. The emergency is scheduled to run out May 13 and then 30 days later the Order will expire.

The consensus of the Select Board was to meet in person. All those present will wear a mask, and the OWL will be used for those who want to access the meeting remotely.

- Animal Control Officer (ACO): Polky reported that Ralph Demmons, the current ACO, resigned and said he would finish out the week. On the day of Ralph's resignation, Bill Demmons, called as he heard there was a vacancy and wanted to know if he could re-apply for the position. Polky stated both Ralph and Bill Demmons did excellent jobs, and Polky said he would like to re-hire Bill Demmons as the town Animal Control Officer.

A motion was made by Selectperson Elwell, seconded by Hall to approve Ralph Demmons' resignation, and approve Bill Demmons' appointment as the new Animal Control Officer for the town of St. George. The roll call vote was 5-0, in favor.

There was no further business. At 8:50 p.m., the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marguerite R. Wilson
Select Board Recording Secretary