

ST. GEORGE SELECT BOARD & ASSESSORS

St. George Town Office

MEETING MINUTES

April 11, 2022 – 7 p.m.

The Select Board meeting was called to order at 7 p.m. Members present in person were: Richard Bates, Chair; Randy Elwell, Wayne Sawyer, and Tammy Willey. (Jerry Hall was absent.) Also present in person were: Richard Erb, Irene Ames, and Van Thompson. Present via Zoom: John Falla and Loreen Meyer.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None.

REGULAR SESSION:

- Adjustments to Agenda – The following adjustments were made:

- An Addressing Committee Appointment was added under New Business.
- Invitation to MSU Superintendent Michael Felton to meet with the Select Board and Budget Committee to Review the School Budget.

- Minutes: The minutes of March 28, 2022, were reviewed and corrected.

A motion was made by Selectperson Sawyer, seconded by Willey, to approve the March 28, 2022, minutes, as corrected. The roll call vote was 4-0 in favor.

- Communications: None.

- Warrant: The warrant for the week of March 30, 2022, was reviewed and signed. The total expenses were \$119,871.69 and included a payment of \$10,012.55 to the ICMA Retirement Trust, a payment of \$4,705.20 to MMA for insurance, an interest payment of \$34,906.25 on the bond for 10 Cold Storage Road (done twice a year), and other regular expenses.

Selectperson Willey asked why the Solid Waste Department expenses were lower than usual. Finance Director Ames explained the amount was for one week of expenses but she thought expenses for the following week would be higher.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT - Richard Erb reported the following:

10 Cold Storage Road. When the Select Board last met, there was still some information that needed to be submitted to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) on the 10 CSR project, and Noel Musson was able to get the information needed. The EDA also needed verification that the public notice legal ad had run in the Bangor Daily News, and he just received the Affidavit from the BDN. He planned to submit those items to the EDA tomorrow.

Maine LD 2003. Select Board members received a memo from Maine Municipal Association (MMA) regarding the legislative bill LD 2003. This is "An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions." The bill is regarding affordable housing. He said everything he read and what he had heard from MMA was the bill would pass.

He said there will be some things that do take authority away from the town. For example, if a state agency decides St. George's density is too low and there is an affordable housing project being proposed, as written, it allows for 2.5 times the density that St. George allows. In other words, if you had 2 acres instead of 2 units, it would allow 5 units. It allows the state to overrule certain Board of Appeals' decisions made at the local level. There is quite a lot to this bill but there could be floor amendments to the bill so it may not look like the bill it is now.

Assistant Clerk Hired. Cassandra Mank has been hired for the Assistant Clerk position as Magan Wallace was hired to fill the Planning/Assessing Clerk vacancy previously held by Beth Smith.

Wallston Road Property. Selectperson Willey asked if there had been decisions made about Mr. Field's property. Erb said he'd had communication with Mr. Field who asked if the town would make him an offer on the property. Erb gave him a number, but he had not had a response from Mr. Field. Erb noted that this issue would need to be voted on by the Select Board and voted on at a town meeting.

Trash at the Transfer Station. Selectperson Elwell asked Erb if he could ask a Transfer Station employee to pick the trash out of the trees and pick up the trash along the road, on the lawn, etc. Erb said he would.

Drift Inn Beach. Selectperson Elwell asked Erb if he had received any information on replacing the culvert at Drift Inn Beach. Erb said he submitted an application for design, had not received a response but would inquire about it.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- Conservation Commission: Selectperson Willey reported the Conservation Commission (CC) met on April 7, 2022, at 4 p.m. Amanda Devine, Mid-Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT), was present by Zoom, and discussed with the CC management plans for conserved land in St. George, i.e., how to conserve and maintain the properties and keep those in good condition. The CC and MCHT would like to get input from residents before making any final decisions. The plan is to create a survey as to what residents would like to see or not see on conserved land. For instance, do residents want to have dogs on trails or be open at certain hours? Selectperson Willey thought the CC and MCHT had a plan and would work independently from the town on this issue.

Clark Island Preserve. Selectperson Willey said Devine mentioned that Clark Island Preserve (CIP) was very, very popular. They have had as many as 200 visitors on a good day and in the summer months, the beach is "mobbed." Devine told the CC that the MCHT never dreamed the Clark Island Preserve would be so popular, and that they intend to work on a management plan for the CIP area.

Workshop. The CC discussed invasives and were planning a walk, talk, and identify workshop which was going to be on Clark Island sometime in the summer. More information to come.

Trails. They started cleanup work for all the trails. There had been a lot of blowdowns over the winter so a lot of debris, trees, etc., needed to be cleared. Willey added that the CC was always looking for volunteers to help with this project.

Fort Point Trail. The CC hoped to have a trail designed by the end of April 2022. Willey reported that Ken Oelberger stated the CC had received over \$7,000 in pledges to help with the construction costs.

Climate Change and Sea Level Rise. A one-day class on Sea Level Rise (SLR) was held at the town office. Six residents have had SLR training. Willey said the CC plans to hold a 3-day, more intensive training event in the future, and the CC is looking for four more people to get involved with the SLR committee.

St. George Days. During St. George Days, Hedgerow is planning to hold an art event and 10% of the proceeds from the art show will be donated to the Conservation Commission.

OLD BUSINESS:

- Warrant Articles Regarding Taxes: Town Manager Erb asked MMA to refine the language for the town's warrant article on prepayment and overpayment of taxes. The MMA told Erb that these stand-alone laws did not have anything to do with each other and recommended the town separate these into two articles. Erb said MMA wrote concise language for the two warrant articles:

Art. 3: To see if the Town will vote to authorize the tax collector and treasurer to accept the prepayment of taxes not yet committed. Any overpayment of taxes from one year applied to the next year at the request of the taxpayer will be treated as prepayment of taxes not yet committed.

Art. 4: To see if the town will vote to set the interest rate for overpayment of taxes for the year 2022 at 0% (the rate for delinquent taxes less 4%) in accordance with 36 MRS § 506-A.

Erb said he recommended MMA's wording as well and noted that the town warrant had been drafted, so the Select Board would need to vote on the re-worded articles.

A motion was made by Selectperson Elwell, seconded by Willey to approve the revised wording of Warrant Article 3 and Article 4, as recommended by the Maine Municipal Association and supported by Town Manager Erb. The roll call vote was 4-0 in favor.

- ARPA Funds: Town Manager Erb discussed ARPA funding with the Select Board members. Erb: "I think people were feeling that we would get through this year's budget without dealing with ARPA appropriation but as a reminder, the town has received about one-half of a \$272,000 payment. When we first began hearing about this late last summer, we knew that the federal rules were still being developed and MMA and others encouraged towns to wait until the final rules came out since the rules could change. The federal government has changed the rules, generally for the better.

"They initially had a complicated formula to determine whether the town had suffered any reduced revenues due to Covid-19 and in the first version, no town in Maine came out at with

reduced revenues. The federal government did an about-face and said that if you are a local government that receives less than 10 million dollars in ARPA funding, we will assume that you have revenue loss, and you can now use it for any general government purpose with a fairly small list of items it can't be used for."

Erb said he and Chair Bates have had some discussions on this issue. Erb said last summer there was a suggestion whether a special committee would be appointed. He said the Board could go that route, but he thought the Budget Committee ought to be involved.

Erb: "Where we are right now is that the town can legally accept these funds. We've got half of it. The second half will come to the town without having to do anything else though I can't tell you when. But possibly in the next few months, the town will receive the other half. Ultimately, the town meeting will have to appropriate those funds. We can accept the funds, but we still have to specifically say what purpose they are being appropriated for."

Erb said they have quite a bit of time, but also did not want to drag this on indefinitely. He said the Town meeting had to make a decision by December 31, 2024, on how the funds were to be used and the dollars themselves have to be expended by December 31, 2026. Erb said there was the option of holding a special town meeting or the town wouldn't be far behind if it was voted on at the May 2023 annual town meeting.

Chair Bates read from MMA literature which stated, "Municipalities are strongly encouraged to be patient, strategic and deliberate in planning for the best use of ARPA funds."

Selectperson Sawyer agreed that the Budget Committee should be involved, and Chair Bates suggested they have a public meeting on this, at some point. Chair Bates said he would like the Select Board to review MMA's materials and MMA's recommendations, and he would discuss this with the Budget Committee and invite them to the next Select Board meeting.

Erb also stated that technically, ARPA funds were not to be used for tax relief but in reality, because you could substitute it for general government funds being appropriating, so you could do it.

Erb: "Many of us do not like to see tax rates going up and down. I think that using the funds in a way that has long-term benefits to the town and not a one-time tax relief would be my way of thinking."

Finance Director Ames said that St. George did a pretty good job of saving for future needs which leveled out the tax burden. Erb thought the town's tax rate was pretty stable and said he would like to keep it that way.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Liquor License Renewal: The Select Board reviewed the liquor license renewal for Black Harpoon, LLC. A public hearing was not necessary as no complaints had been received.

A motion was made by Selectperson Sawyer, seconded by Elwell, to approve a liquor license for the Black Harpoon. LLC. The roll call vote was 4-0 in favor. Motion carried.

- Addressing Committee Application: A motion was made by Selectperson Elwell, seconded by Willey, to appoint Michael Smith to the town's Addressing Committee. The roll call vote was 4-0, in favor.

- Signing the Town Warrant: Chair Bates noted that the Town Charter changes were listed individually on the ballot and would be voted on by the citizens of the town at the polls on May 9, 2022. The Select Board signed the Warrant.

- Invite MSU Superintendent Michael Felton to Review the St. George MSU Budget: Chair Bates suggested inviting Michael Felton to attend the April 25, 2022, Select Board meeting to review the upcoming St. George MSU budget. The Budget Committee will also be invited. A consensus of the Select Board was to invite Superintendent Felton to the next Select Board meeting.

There was no further business to come before the Board. At 7:45 p.m., the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marguerite R. Wilson
Select Board Recording Secretary