

# **ST. GEORGE SELECT BOARD & ASSESSORS**

## **St. George Town Office**

### **MEETING MINUTES**

**December 05, 2022 - 7p.m.**

The Select Board meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Richard Bates (Chair), Randy Elwell, Steve Cartwright, Van Thompson, Wayne Sawyer, Richard Erb, Irene Ames, Dr. Cliff Dasco, and Nick Latham.

Loreen Meyer, and Jane Conrad were present via Zoom.

#### **REGULAR SESSION**

##### **Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

##### **Adjustments to the Agenda**

Nick Latham was not present at the beginning of the meeting. The discussion item: Report on Proposed FY23 County budget will be discussed when he arrives.

##### **Conflicts of Interest**

There were no conflicts of interest.

#### **Support for NSF Smart and Connected Communities Grant Proposal**

##### **Dr. Cliff Dasco**

Thanks very much. I appreciate your time. My name is Cliff Dasco. I'm a physician with the Knox Clinic in Rockland, Maine. I have come to ask for a letter of support for a National Science Foundation proposal submitted by Knox Clinic and the Roux Institute in Portland, which is an outgrowth of Northeastern University, set up primarily to do biomedical engineering and to develop careers in biomedical and medical engineering in the state of Maine. The combined EMS services of South Thomaston, Thomaston and St. George are under the direction of Amy Drinkwater. The mechanism for the National Science Foundation is called Smart and Connected Communities. The NSF for years has been trying to leverage connectivity for broadly social determinants,

connectivity that is remote monitoring for health and education, and that is the granting mechanism. To do that, I've been funded in my other role as professor of medicine, under this mechanism for several years. I've developed a suite of sensors that have predictive ability in chronic diseases, specifically for heart failure, that are able to predict when somebody is going to go into a decompensation event and a decompensation event is when people die, to be short about it. Stable heart failure is heart failure. When they decompensate, they go to the hospital or die. If you can predict that by 48 hours or 72 hours, you can treat it at home and the person will not go to the hospital, will not need emergency care and will not die. This is not my invention. This has been established for years. My invention is one way of doing that and it involves a noninvasive sensor that we've developed in connection with a small company in Ohio, that measures the amount of water in the tissue and does it non-invasively through a near infrared spectroscopy. When that water changes, in the right setting, it is a predictor that there is going to be a decompensation event, at which point a paramedic or EMT would go visit the person and do an assessment, administering the appropriate therapy under the direction of that person's physician. There has been a movement, really spearheaded in this Midcoast area, to get the paramedics off the trucks and get them into the community and Amy has been a real leader. Some of you may know Tom Judge, the Life Flight Director. He was really one of the tailwinds of getting the EMTs into the community to do the stuff that they're trained to do more than just pulling people out of car wrecks. So, we've put this proposal together and this is for a pilot project. We'll probably only do one or two patients, but I wanted to put into it some aspects of community education in chronic disease and get more awareness out. The grant mechanism really emphasizes bringing communities together under an education rubric to understand more about chronic illnesses. I've asked for support from Thomastown, South Thomaston and St. George. Amy has already indicated that she's in support, Roux is interested, Knox Clinic, of course, will provide support and the company that makes the fabrication is going to be our commercial partner. In terms of money, this costs you nothing. In the pilot project, there probably will not be much in terms of revenue; there is not enough money to pay anybody but if the pilot project successful, and we get a larger grant, then there are indirect costs that would come back to the town. It's not enough to buy you a new ambulance, but it will pay for coffee at the Christmas party. What I'm going to ask for is a letter which I will write and just ask for signatures.

**Bates**

This sounds terrific.

**Randy Elwell**

Is this going to be part of the community paramedicine program?

**Dr. Cliff Dacso**

Yes. As you know, Amy teaches a course at the vocational high school, and I'm really hoping to be able to get students involved it.

**Cartwright**

You're on staff with the KNOX Clinic?

**Dr. Cliff Dacso**

I'm a board member and a volunteer physician.

**Van Thompson**

Moving past your pilot program, what kind of a cohort are you considering?

**Dr. Cliff Dacso**

That's a great question. This area has a lot of noncommunicable chronic diseases. There are a lot of people, particularly down the peninsulas, who are geographically separated from medical care, and remote monitoring would really be of some use. I don't know the exact size, but we have an older population that has chronic illnesses. This pilot project will be heart failure, but we've done a lot of interesting work with lung disease and chronic obstructive lung disease, where these people will be stable, and then fall off the edge. If you can predict when that's going to happen, then you can intervene at a very early stage and avoid the ER and avoid the hospitalization.

**Randy Elwell**

If it works, it might be a big help for the islands too because it's harder for them to access health care.

**Dr. Cliff Dacso**

Right. For most people that I've cared for over the years with heart failure, I've taught them some ways of monitoring it, and I leave the medicines with them and tell them to call me up and tell me what they have, and I'll tell them to just take their medicine. They don't need to go to the ER or to the hospital but just take their medicine, and often that works. The whole idea is to keep people out of the medical system. There are a number of these things that are under the heading of non-communicable chronic diseases, that would be susceptible to this style of management, but we couldn't do it until we had connectivity.

**Bates**

Could you send a draft of the letter to Rick and then we'll take it from there. If the grant is successful, when do you expect to start?

**Dr. Cliff Dacso**

I'm not going to wait, because it's such a low cost. The device has already been made. The internet exists. Amy is in, Knox and Roux are in and we're just going to start in January, once we get organized, or maybe February. We're not going to wait for the grant.

**Randy Elwell**

It would be nice to have an update at some point.

**Bates**

Sure. Part of the grant has an educational component, as well.

**Dr. Cliff Dacso**

I've been doing a monthly newsletter. Last month it was on acute respiratory disease such as flu, RSV, and COVID. it's another way of reaching people.

**Jane Conrad**

The lawyer present wants to know, since this involves the practice of medicine, whether you have insurance that covers any issues that might arise.

**Dr. Cliff Dacso**

It doesn't involve the practice of medicine. It involves the practice of paramedicine. It's the paramedics who are covered under their license to do this. I'm married to a healthcare lawyer. Believe me, we are covered. We would certainly not be practicing medicine without a license. This would be giving information to people so that they can make their informed judgments, in collaboration with their physicians. Under no circumstances is this intended to take the place of a physician patient relationship, which as a practicing physician, I value very much. This is to provide information to people so that they can make their own informed judgments about what to do.

**Minutes**

A motion was made by Elwell, seconded by Cartwright, to approve the Select Board minutes dated November 28, 2022, as corrected, and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried, and the minutes were approved.

**Warrant****Irene Ames**

The only thing out of the ordinary was the deposit that we made to Kennebec Trail Company for the Conservation Committee.

**Erb**

The contract stated when they order the materials, they get a percentage.

**Bates**

I see there is a new town sign.

**Erb**

The sign was in really bad condition. We splurged and went with a carved sign; it is quite nice.

**Bates**

Good. Thank you. Do we have any questions? We can go ahead and sign it.

**Communications**

There were no communications made to the Board.

## **Town Manager's Report**

### **Erb**

The big news is that the bid packages are out for 10 Cold Storage and are scheduled to be received and opened on February 1st. We will run ads in the newspapers this week. There was already a list of potential contractors that we sent to so I'm happy to report that. It will be a public bid opening at three o'clock on Wednesday February 1. People are welcome to be here when we do it. The plan is to give a notice to proceed two weeks later with an approximate start of March 1 and it should be substantially completed no later than May 25, 2024.

### **Randy Elwell**

How's his confidence on this?

### **Erb**

I don't know. A few delays won't hurt us at all. The economy has cooled off.

### **Randy Elwell**

Prices are coming down. Companies are struggling to find workers to do the jobs.

### **Bates**

So immediately after the February 1st opening, even if there's only one, there's probably going to be some discussions with the respondents and then eventually the Harbor Committee will make a recommendation and the Board will approve it. You said we hope to start in March. That's all going to happen fairly quickly.

### **Erb**

Yes, it is. The other item I want to mention was that I had correspondence with Maine Municipal Association today. They wanted the towns to know that the governor and legislature are negotiating terms of an emergency winter heating relief and housing assistance package. Although MMA has not reviewed the proposed legislation, we've been told that currently on the table is a proposal, appropriating \$380 million for emergency relief with the bulk of the funds, \$365 million, for heating assistance, and the remaining \$15 million for emergency housing assistance. MMA would like to encourage financial support for both the emergency heating and housing assistance. We also had email from the city of Portland, and they are very hopeful that the housing assistance will stay intact because they are particularly hard hit by that. We don't see so much of that. We're not a service center. People do not gravitate here but for communities in South Portland and others, it is important for them.

A motion was made by Elwell, seconded by Thompson, to have Town Manager Erb write a letter to Ann Matlack and Dave Miramant, urging them to support legislation for the \$365 million heating assistance and the \$15 million emergency housing assistance, and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Community Resilience Committee – Bates**

Last week on Tuesday, we learned that through the work of Meg Rasmussen and MCOG, we have a St. George Working Waterfront Vulnerability Study Grant from Maine's Coastal Communities. Meg had written this, and the purpose is to analyze the dual challenges of sea level rise and the recent changes to fishing regulations, and how that will affect St. George and neighboring communities. Meg will be driving that. The grant itself is worth \$22,000 and MCOG will be matching with \$7300, and it is going to be benefiting St. George. That grant we learned about on Tuesday and then, also last week, another successful grant came through. Back on July 25th, Meg came to talk to us about how we could apply to be part of the State's Community Resilience Partnership Program. We joined that program so that we could be eligible for grants to improve the town's resilience. On September 19th, we submitted our application to join the partnership and that was accepted. On the same day, we submitted a grant application and Wednesday, we learned that it was successful. It's a State Community Action grant and the title is Vulnerable Infrastructure and Sites Exploring Options. The idea is a proposal to team up with this company called Sebago Technics, to study the effects of sea level rise on the roads and historic sites in town and what we can do about it. This state grant is for \$49,600. And it's matched by \$117,500, more than double, from Sebago Technics and their partners. So that's exciting. We should start in the new year.

**Cartwright**

Did we show them the cutting-edge prototype?

**Bates**

Hopefully that had some sway with the state committee. It's going to be a prototype. They're going to demonstrate what a whiz bang thing it is, and they'll get more customers, other towns who would benefit from that. Van agreed that he was going to manage this. That's good news on two fronts.

**Review Meeting about Ambulance becoming a Town Service**

**Bates**

What did people think about the meeting?

**Randy Elwell**

I wish there were more people, more nonemergency personnel. I hope the word gets out. I was wondering if we should have another one or two meetings just to make sure we can get more people involved because I think more people need to have this discussion. It's a big step for the members, and there is a lot of history.

**Van Thompson**

It's a big step for the community financially. It will take planning and so forth. The more we can make people aware, the better off we will be.

**Bates**

I think it was very helpful how Rick helped to frame it, discussing the consequences.

**Randy Elwell**

The information was clear.

**Cartwright**

Certainly, nobody came out and said it was a bad idea.

**Randy Elwell**

I don't think people will vote against it because people really like what they've accomplished over the years, between the ambulance service, the fire department and paramedicine. Out of all the towns, St. George has been the forerunner of a lot of things, but I think the public has questions.

**Erb**

We didn't really talk a lot about response times.

**Randy Elwell**

Regionalization has been discussed and there is a committee for it. Places like us are going to have an ambulance station because of response time. Rockland is the hub, but you don't want to wait for the ambulance to come all the way from Rockland to Port Clyde. It's probably going to happen, because of the way things are going, but it will take a long time. I thought it was a good meeting. I think people are receptive to it. I just think we should have a couple of more information meetings.

**Bates**

There was an article in the Pennbay Pilot that came out on Friday. It seemed like it was searching for a controversy that really didn't materialize. Jane, do you have any comments about the meeting on Thursday? What was your reaction?

**Jane Conrad**

I thought that it was really well done and provided a lot of history for people. The one thing that occurred to me later was to clarify the status of the Fire Department since the Association is both fire and ambulance. I wondered but didn't ask if the Fire Department was coming along and then Rick explained to me in the last few days that really the Fire Department is already part of the town. It might be useful for other people who wonder about that. I agree with Randy that the goal is for everybody to understand why this is important before the vote so it is important to get as much information as we can out to people. I do think everybody wants to continue to have the wonderful service we have now. Surely most people are going to support it, but we want them to come on board and not start raising concerns at the 11th hour.

**Erb**

I asked Tim today if we could have the audit, and he says as soon as it's complete. It is going to be really important to be extremely transparent about things.

**Bates**

I assume that we will have a legal contract between the Association and the town that will list out the assets that are being transferred, which we think are principally the ambulance itself, and the fly car. To do this properly, we need to have a legal agreement so that everyone knows what's been committed in this arrangement. I don't think there are a lot of funds, but funds that maybe could be put aside by the Association for a new ambulance. I don't think there's a lot, but what is there should be transferred. I think certain voters know what they're voting on; I think we need to have it all lined up so that they know these assets exist, and a valuation put on the assets as well.

**Van Thompson**

In the meeting, we might also state just the nuts and bolts of the transfer, so people understand what's involved.

**Erb**

I think that might be helpful.

**Cartwright**

Does it make sense to have a letter from Amy, perhaps co-signed by Rick with the support of the Select Board and sent out to every resident or taxpayer in town? It could be just a one-page letter with some good solid information, as well as an invitation to provide recommendations or contact us if there are any questions.

**Randy Elwell**

Also listing the dates of any future meetings.

**Bates**

There will be a public hearing and it must be scheduled with a significant amount of time before mail in ballots are due, so a letter that goes out before the public hearing could list out the dates and so forth.

**Issues with Expanding Parking at Marshall Point Lighthouse****Bates**

Next on the agenda is the issue of expanding the parking lot at the Marshall Point Lighthouse. During the meeting last week, we discussed the issues and Steve brought up the idea of whether we really want that many more people. I must admit that I'm in that same camp. At the meeting, there was this presumption that more parking spaces was the solution, and the only question really was who's going to pay for it. I think we sort of put the cart before the horse, in a way, because we really ought to think a bit more about the traffic limitations for Marshall Point Rd., and Nat admitted it's difficult to have two cars pass each other on much of the road. I think we have to review the impact of all of these cars on the neighborhood and the pedestrians. I spoke to Anne Cox on the Planning Board and also to Terry Bracket. Usually for properties in the Shoreland Zone, the applicant submits a pre-application where they present to the Planning Board a sketch of what they're proposing to do, and the Planning Board can look at the criteria they have for judging the new application. There's a whole list of things that the Planning Board goes through. It reviews the effects on the feasibility of such a project. It serves a purpose to sensitize the applicant to some of the things that the Planning Board would eventually have to consider. For example, Mike Mullins who was thinking of developing the quarry, submitted a pre-application and the Planning Board looked at it and came up with some ideas, and then he went away. He hasn't reported back to the Planning Board since then. There are other people that have done this. It helps sensitize the applicant to affordability and all the other issues that come from it.

**Randy Elwell**

I don't think as a town property we should let more cars in there.



**Bates**

The advantage of having the Planning Board think about it is that they can weigh in with their judgment on this. I'd like to suggest that we recommend the lighthouse subcommittee submit a pre-application with a drawing of what they're planning to do and be ready to explain how the requirements will be met.

**Van Thompson**

In the Shoreland Zone, there's a much larger list.

**Erb**

Don't they have to do that anyway?

**Bates**

They will have to do that anyways, but rather than get ahead of ourselves and start to discuss how the town is going to pay for it, let's decide whether it's something that really makes sense. We're custodians of that property. My thought on this is we should not get ahead of ourselves and talk about money until we've decided it is the right thing to do.

**Erb**

The issue is that this changes the property.

**Bates**

It significantly changes the property from 15 parking slots to 37.

**Cartwright**

They mentioned tour buses also. I can't see that happening.

**Bates**

I can remember times when things have come up, such as when Linda Bean was proposing her museum and the question of where people would park and how many people would access it and the impact on the neighborhood? This is a fairly standard process for significant development.

**Cartwright**

Does the Planning Board have jurisdiction over town property?

**Bates**

Yes, for example, the school developments.

**Randy Elwell**

For 10 Cold Storge Rd., we had to clear the Planning Board. It doesn't matter who you are.

**Cartwright**

I see the logic of your suggestion, but personally I feel we shouldn't permit this. It is not what we want to see happen there.

**Bates**

The Planning Board has a lot more experience on these sorts of developments. I'm in your camp but I'd rather have them weigh in on this.

**Cartwright**

What if the Planning Board thinks it's okay?

**Van Thompson**

We would still have to approve it.

**Irene Ames**

We can refuse to pay for it.

**Bates**

Correct. There are many issues. I'm thinking of the Wyeth Reading Room, where the Planning Board required a traffic study and there was quite a lot of effort that went into that. I think there might be cause to do the same thing on Marshall Point Rd. I think Rick mentioned this is the narrowest town road.

**Erb**

It is unusual. When you see a road that narrow, it's usually a driveway.

**Cartwright**

It was a very early development.

**Van Thompson**

Mosquito Head Road is similar. I'm just harking back to the traffic concerns relative to Wyeth and everything that was discussed in terms of traffic on the road, buses, etc.

**Bates**

In hindsight, it never really materialized.

**Cartwright**

The cheapest solution of all would be to put a sign at the parking lot stating the parking lot is full, and to please come back later. I think the experience of being at Marshall Point, such a beautiful place, would really be changed if there were forty or fifty people there, rather than several.

**Randy Elwell**

There already is.

**Cartwright**

At certain times, yes.

**Randy Elwell**

My feeling is they can add as many parking spots as they want, but that road is still going to be a problem so it's not going to help.

**Bates**

This is not exactly the same, but if you park at the Portland Airport, there are signs stating there is no space available on level three, and no space on level four. There are sensors counting the cars that go in and go out and there's no reason why we couldn't have sensors on the road right by the parking lot. That could be telemetered for a few thousand dollars back to a sign beyond the pillars on Marshall Point Road. If there was no parking spot, the sign would show that no parking is available.

**Randy Elwell**

Similar to the parades in Thomaston and Rockland, the Lighthouse Committee could use "No Parking" signs along the side of the road advising that you will be towed and then enforce it. I think the pre-application is very important.

**Bates**

Jane, did you want to say something?

**Jane Conrad**

The traffic issue is my big concern. I was wondering since this is a town road, whether the town has any separate obligation other than an applicant to consider traffic issues, given that it's not right on the property. I know that was an issue with the Linda Bean property and in her case, she was so eager to do it that she undertook the expense of the traffic study. I think you're proceeding correctly in having this looked at. I was just curious whether that burden is always on the applicant in a case like this, where you're discussing a significant stretch of a town road, before you even reach the property and extra parking?

**Bates**

It is a lighthouse responsibility, because we are not in a position to control parking for the homes that precede the lighthouse. Some of them could be going to homes on that stretch of road and we can't advise people not to access those houses. What's at issue are the cars that proceed to the end of the road. That would be my argument for why it is an applicant expense and not a town expense.

**Jane Conrad**

I was thinking more about buses. I'm not as worried about cars, as I am about the idea of buses on a road where, as you pointed out, it's really challenging for two larger vehicles to pass each other.

**Erb**

I would think we have the authority to pass an ordinance that disallows buses.

**Loreen Myer**

There is a sign at the beginning of the road closer to the Black Harpoon, where it says no RVs are allowed, and yet more than once I have seen them up there, and they can't figure out what to do. I've also seen people park those RVs in that little stretch of road between the upper parking lot and the lower parking lot and go on with

their business. One time I stopped at the office at the sales desk at the museum to point out that there were people trying to leave that couldn't because of two RVs and a pickup truck. One guy got in my face, stating there was no place else for him to park and that he'd be done shortly. They had completely sealed off anybody who was in that upper parking lot from getting out and they were not pleasant about it, and it is posted down by the Black Harpoon that no RVs are allowed.

**Randy Elwell**

That's where the Committee should be taking some responsibility.

**Bates**

We could pass an ordinance that makes it clear and install sign at the entrance to Marshall Point Rd., making it clear that it's not for RVs and it is not for buses. We could think about that.

**Cartwright**

Across the country, limiting parking works in many places. It's a reasonable idea. Many historical sites and beaches have limited parking and I think for the most part, those things are respected. Not just people with RVs but for the most part, people will abide by the rules, especially if the signage is clear.

**Randy Elwell**

The Lighthouse Committee needs to take responsibility to make the rules known and enforce them.

**Bates**

Can I have a sense if it's okay to have Nat Lyon file a pre-application? Okay. Thank you.

## **Report on Proposed FY23 County Budget**

**Nick Latham**

I imagine some of you have seen the reports in the Village Soup, that the proposed budget is going up 13%. That's a significant increase. As long as I've been on, I don't think it's ever gone up more than 5-6%. There are some significant increases in things like utilities and gas, but the major increases are due to personnel increases and those were negotiated between the county administration and the unions. The Budget Committee doesn't have a lot of influence on those outcomes. The most significant increases are in corrections, and the jail. They're ten people short but the budget is based on being fully staffed. The other increases include a significant increase in the medical expenses, and again, that's negotiated. The health care premiums have gone up significantly. When we meet next time, we have a formal vote on the budget. As I think most of you know, the Budget Committee only votes to approve a final number so while we go through and review all of the individual departments and have a straw vote for each of those departments, giving an indication of where we are at, we have to vote on one final number. We can agree or disagree on a specific thing within the sheriff's department or within the emergency management, etc., and that all gets thrown into the wash with the final vote. I think that it's going to go up significantly. There are some of us that would like to see some restraints in the spending increases. The administration in the Finance Department have put in for a new position for a county HR administrator. They make a case that in the long run that will save money in terms of not having to contract out various HR services, being able to manage various aspects across all departments. My own personal feeling is it should not happen this

year. The process is that someone will propose a budget of \$13 million, and if we're \$100,000 off, and I would think at best it might be, we will not approve the \$13 million. Then someone will put forward a motion to approve a budget of \$12.9 and if we approve, then then it goes to the commissioners. If the commissioners override, then it comes back to the Budget Committee, and requires two thirds vote to override the commissioners. That has happened twice in the past six years that I've been here. In the overall scheme of things, the difference has been in the area of \$60,000 to \$100,000. Just as an aside, I think I mentioned to Rick, that there was a proposal for \$9,000 to support the Fire Department and that was approved. I don't see that being affected. I couldn't say if it is going to go one way or another, however if we agree to carve out a \$60,000 savings over one position, that's up to Andy Hart, and everyone in the county to sort out where that's going to fall. I don't think they will cut that, but I can't guarantee it.

**Erb**

Basically, it is the administration's job to take any cuts from the proposed budget, and then allocate them.

**Nick Latham**

Yes, to figure out where they want to take it from.

**Bates**

The \$9,000 is for insurance and that would allow other Fire Departments in the county to use the building down here.

**Nick Latham**

Right. The understanding is that this would be an ongoing annual expense, and everyone understands that. I think it was approved because there were a number of other organizations that came to the county for approval: As far as the Knox Lincoln Cooperative Extension and the Knox Lincoln Soil and Water District, the county has been supporting them for 40-50 years, as far as I understand. The Midcoast Council of Government was not always funded. It's changed yet again, and it keeps morphing into a different organization. The assumption is that we voted last year to approve it so that even though there were certain municipalities that were using it, the majority of the of the Budget Committee and commissioners felt that it should be available to all municipalities. They seem better organized this year so that's been approved but restorative justice is another one of these smaller requests that's been approved for \$25,000. There were a couple of others that came to us. The Community Action Partners, Penquis, were not approved. I think we see that the county's job is to provide basic government services of safety and security services that aren't provided by the municipalities.

**Bates**

I have a question. Pages five and six discuss the cap that that exists on the budget related to the property growth factor and I couldn't help noticing that for the last couple of years, the money that has gone to Corrections has been hard up against the cap. For the last two or three years, it has been like that. This tells me something is not quite right. When Corrections is so close to hitting that limit, I'm wondering why.

**Nick Latham**

My understanding, and I'm not sure I can answer you with a great deal of precision, is that they have been underfunded. I think the county took over about four or five years ago, maybe six, and their budget was very constricted. They hadn't put any capital improvements into the facilities there at all for twenty years or more.

When I went to visit once, they advised, "Well, we have problems with the security systems and the locks on the doors". As I was in the control room, it all went down. They've got to be there, and they have to manually do that. For 20 - 30 years, they haven't put in any significant capital improvements, so we've had to do that, installing a completely new HVAC system. Now there's paving to do. I'm still trying to get used to the fact that in the public sector, capital expenditure expenses are expensed, not capitalized.

**Bates**

I think there are state imposed limits on what they can do, and it seems like for every budget, they've had to hit the absolute limit. These seem to be expenses that are capital improvements. What we're seeing every year, for the last few years, is the consequence of the previous underfunding and that's why it's coming up against the cap.

**Nick Latham**

I think we're getting pretty caught up on all the capital. It may be a few more years, but we've approved significant capital improvements and for some of them fortunately, we're able to apply ARPA funds.

**Bates**

You have used up all of the ARPA funds?

**Nick Latham**

I think there are some in reserve because they don't expire until 2025. There are some set aside. The other issue with the jail, and the sheriff's department, I think to a lesser degree, is the staffing. They are mandated to have over 52 positions in the jail, and currently they have filled 40 of them filled but we have to budget for them. This is a real problem, as you probably know. It's corrections, and it's the sheriff's office. The temporary employee, who filled in between Tim Carroll and Patrick Pokey, advised that they have two pay levels for positions that they hire. Those are \$17 an hour and \$21 an hour. He said for \$17 an hour these people can work at Walmart, and they don't have to deal with all of the stuff they have to deal with there. Counties and municipalities are poaching from each other. We lost the sheriff to Rockland. That's an issue. They're requiring in some cases, hiring bonuses. That's going to be an ongoing issue and it's not just limited to Knox County or to Maine. It's a national problem. I think we're going to see them bumping up against that cap for the prison on a regular basis.

**Randy Elwell**

Thank you for your work.

**Nick Latham**

We're called upon to do this for a month and a half a year. We're not having to deal with all of the details. I feel that they have very competent people there. This year, like everywhere else, everything has gone up.

**Bates**

I have a question for you. In town, in our personnel policy, it's been the practice to give staff raises equal to a cost-of-living increase, and then if there's merit involved, on top of that merit will be cost of living. I was looking through the raises that many of the staff are getting, and I see a few exceptions like the sheriff. I read in the paper about how he's been bumped up quite significantly in his pay. Most of the raises seem in the order of about 7%. Is the logic that you use, and Andy Hart use, basing it on a cost-of-living increase?

**Nick Latham**

Yes, it is cola plus merit increases, and also step increases. Those comprise the majority of the increases.

**Erb**

Was this a union negotiation?

**Nick Latham**

Yes.

**Erb**

I suspect some of that might have been to keep non-union people comparable to union people.

**Nick Latham**

Yes. And that was part of the reason that some of the ARPA funds were used as retention bonuses. They were at risk of losing significant numbers.

**Erb**

We're hurt this year because the valuation went up faster in St. George than almost every other community. What might be a 13% increase, looks like it's 20%.

**Nick Latham**

Doesn't St. George have the highest per capita valuation?

**Van Thompson**

I'm sure it does. I've never calculated it.

**Nick Latham**

I think it does. It always looks like Camden.

**Bates**

Camden is up overall 1.8 billion, because there's more people in Camden. Likewise, Rockport is \$1.2 billion but again, there are more people in Rockport than in St. George but you're right. The per capita is what gets you. Nick, thank you very much.

## **Executive Session**

Present: Richard Bates, Wayne Sawyer, Randall Elwell, Steve Cartwright and Van Thompson

Motion: To go into executive session pursuant to Title 1 M.R.S.A. § 405(6)(A) – Personnel Matters.

Prop: Elwell

Sec: Cartwright

Vote: 5-0

Time: 8:11 pm

Returned to Regular Session at 8:28 pm

A motion was made by Sawyer, seconded by Elwell, to adjourn the Select Board meeting, and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:29p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tammy Taylor

Recording Secretary

Town of St. George