

ST. GEORGE SELECT BOARD & ASSESSORS

St. George Town Office

MEETING MINUTES

December 19, 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, and Irene Ames.

Loreen Meyer was present via Zoom.

REGULAR SESSION

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Adjustments to the Agenda

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

Conflicts of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest.

Minutes

A motion was made by Cartwright, seconded by Elwell, to approve the Select Board Minutes dated December 5, 2022, as corrected, and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried, and the minutes were approved.

A motion was made by Cartwright, seconded by Elwell, to approve the Select Board Ambulance Public Hearing Minutes dated December 1, 2022, as corrected, and by a 4-0 vote (Sawyer abstained due to absence), the motion carried, and the minutes were approved.

Communications

There were several thank-you cards sent to the Select Board including one from Pauline Dennison.

Warrant**Irene Ames**

I did not see anything out of the ordinary this time.

Bates

I asked Tara about Ron Beaulieu. Is the \$4500 payment received an acknowledgement that he is going to prepare the financial statements.

Irene Ames

Yes, he is going to prepare them for the Town Office; that payment is a retainer for that.

Rick Erb

Perhaps not surprisingly, he is waiting for something from CPA Fred Brewer.

Irene Ames

There are some audited numbers he needs from the school before he prepares the financial statements.

Erb

It is the time of the year when insurance renewals come up so you will see our general insurance is on the warrant. I received an email regarding the workers compensation bill.

Bates

What does the \$13,744 for the MMA insurance encompass?

Erb

They take our property insurance and our liability insurance. I would have to check to see what else it includes.

Town Manager's Report**Erb**

Sure. I will start off by making sure everyone knows the schedule for the holiday coming up. The Town Office will be closed at noon on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and then Monday is the celebrated holiday for Christmas. The transfer station will be open for the full day on Friday but closed for the day on

Saturday. On Monday it would be closed anyway, so we'll treat it like we do any other Monday. The schedule has been posted and hopefully people have seen it.

A few other things. We are looking into the potential for heat pumps in the building here. There is money from Efficiency Maine specifically targeted to small municipalities. I have a couple of contractors scheduled. I could not tell for sure from the description how much the funding is. My guess is at least half would be paid through this program. We have talked about using ARPA money as well. I have the feeling we could use both but that will be determined. It took a little while to find people who could come and look at it, but I have heard from three companies, so we're making some progress on that.

The county budget has been passed I believe, basically as proposed.

We signed a contract with Gartley and Dorsky for the Drift Inn Road Examination. That will move ahead.

We talked about the legislature's funding for heating and homelessness. That is LD3 and it will go to the public hearing on Wednesday. There's a lot of infighting in the legislature about it. It's back on track. MMA is likely to take the position neither for nor against the issue (inaudible) allowing people to qualify up to \$200,000 for joint filers. The proposal is \$200,000 for those filing jointly \$150,000 for head of household and \$100,000 for individuals. The concern is that we are getting well beyond the middle class, which I think was the intention, to make sure the middle class is not left out. In Maine, I believe that \$200,000 puts you in the 90th percentile. There definitely are concerns from the municipalities, if only that there are better ways that funds could be used. We'll see what happens on that.

We put out requests for proposals from auditors with a due date this past Friday. The bad news is we did not receive any responses. I have had responses from a couple that said they can't do it, but I don't think that counts. I spoke to Fred Brewer earlier in the week and asked him if he's going to put a proposal in and he said that they plan to and that they're working on it. I've been in touch with the school about this and our plan is to recontact everyone and say we did not receive a response and ask if they have any interest, instead of a formal RFP. I simplified the RFP process to begin with to make it easier for them. We'll see what happens. Fred may still be interested in doing it.

Sawyer

Is he the only one in the state that does it?

Irene Ames

They're all shorthanded.

Erb

They're dropping clients instead of adding them. Ron Smith is the only other firm that indicated any interest at all. He was one that wrote and said he can't do any staffing. It is a statewide problem. There are many school districts that have already told the state they will not be able to file their audit on time.

You may have seen or heard that we did have a small fire at the transfer station. The good news is that there was no damage to the equipment in the area, including the hopper where everyone throws their trash. We weren't down for any longer than it took to get the fire out and cleaned. There wasn't any damage.

Cartwright

Did someone throw their ashes in there?

Erb

Well, that was my question. It is very common for people to throw out woodstove ashes that they think are extinguished but I don't think that was the case. The attendants were using a cutting torch. It was totally closed. I don't really think a spark could have gotten in.

Elwell

I told Ben you don't know what people have thrown in there either.

Erb

The only thing that I wish we had done differently if they were going to use the torch and if there was a possibility of fire in the area, is to know the hopper was as full as it was. That was the only thing that might have burned.

Elwell

It's not the first time. It's been on fire before.

Erb

No one was hurt, there was no downtime and no insurance claim.

Sawyer

Thank you for putting the extra dirt around the entrance to Walston Road on the north side anyway. I didn't see any on the south side.

Erb

We had some places where there was some erosion with the heavy rains.

Committee Reports

Chair Bates - Planning Board 7:00pm December 13 Meeting

- The application to expand the pier and install 2 piles at 61 Haskell Point Road was accepted as complete. Satisfying the standards of Section 15.C in the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, the application was approved.
- Asked to consider changing the type of the resource protection zone in the Jones Brook subdivision, the Board accepted the recommendation of the Conservation Commission to leave it unchanged; even if it were to be changed, the requirements in Section 13.E of the Shoreland Zoning ordinance would not change the subdivision development options.
- The Board reviewed the timeline necessary to bring the Land Use ordinance to a public vote in May 2023.

Old Business Action Item

Approve Recommendation for Town Attorney

Erb

Richard joined Jane Conrad, Michael Jordan and myself to review the proposals we received from the legal counsel. To refresh your memory, we received proposals from Bernstein Shur, Preti Flaherty, Eaton Peabody, Jensen Baird and William Kelly. We had an initial meeting, where we decided to narrow it to two and we met with Bill Kelly and Preti Flaherty and we had a really good conversation with both of them. We were very impressed. There was a strong consensus from all four of us that any of them would do a fine job for St. George and by a unanimous recommendation, we went with William Kelly. They are a smaller firm, but one we're familiar with and have worked for St. George before. When we were discussing their attributes, we felt as if Bill Kelly's collaboration skills would probably serve us better than the large firms in many ways. He can cover all of the issues on his own and he is familiar with the town and more local.

Cartwright

Where is he based?

Erb

His offices are in Belfast, but he also maintains office space in Camden. He is much closer than the Portland firms or Augusta firms that we were talking to. It was a really good interview. Fifty percent of

his businesses is municipal governments, doing returns for Camden, North Port, Warren, and a few others. We were unanimous on the recommendation, and I'm hoping we can act on it tonight. The RFP that we put out, called for a three-year engagement. The quote for their hourly rate was \$195 an hour for Bill's own work and \$85 an hour for the paralegals. That was tied I believe for the lowest amount, although honestly that was not really the criteria. Would you agree, Richard? There was very little discussion about the fee. We were interested, but that was not the driving force.

A motion was made by Elwell, seconded by Sawyer, to hire William Kelly as Town Attorney, and by a unanimous vote, the motion was approved.

Erb

To put his fees in perspective, we are paying \$280 right now. At the other company that we thought we should interview, the lead attorney we would be working with was a woman who was working for Bill Kelly when the school withdrew. She was the one who advised Bill and the others on the school committee about the withdrawal.

Bates

Rick was asking the questions and Michael and Jane were there and I felt really good about this. St. George, as you know, has some smart people here. I think we're really fortunate to have these retired attorneys who volunteer for these positions on the Planning Board and on the Appeals Board who bring some heft, so they know what to ask. It's good.

New Business

Recreation Committee Agreement with St. George Youth Partnership

Bates

Moving on to new business. There was an issue that came up. Ben spoke to Rick about combining the Parks and Recreation Committees working with the youth and students and Scout Council. Rick, will you explain what is going on here.

Erb

Ben came to me and asked about us signing a letter indicating interest in going forward in a partnership that would help to fully utilize the scouting program and property. Both the building on Snow Point Road and the other property behind the Transfer Station, but mostly I felt like we were talking about the building. The scouts had been on decline for some time. The Boy Scouts are not really active at all to the best of my knowledge and the Girl Scouts are putting mostly younger girls into the program. Ben indicated that there is a group referred to as the St. George Youth Partnership that does involve the scouting group, but it also involves Blueberry Cove, Trekkers and our rec department. They are

interested in exploring uses for the building, as well as generating interest and possibly funding, although there is no request or commitment from the town. Since we have been involved, \$10,000 has been appropriated. You might remember during budget season, there was a problem with the boiler that needed to be addressed. I have not heard anything more since then, but we do have the money. I advised Ben before we get any further into this, it makes sense for the Select Board to know this group is meeting and that we're involved in discussions. I just wanted you to know that. I've never been in the building and Ben is not very familiar with it either.

Erb

Steve, are you involved with Blueberry Cove?

Cartwright

I'm on the Board. I hadn't heard anything about that, but we have not had a meeting in a while. I've been out to the building and explored it.

Erb

When they say Blueberry Cove, does that mean 4-H?

Cartwright

Blueberry Cove is a 4-H Camp under the University of Maine Extension. The Board owns the Blueberry Cove property and it's leased to the University. For many decades, it was a private camp. Its sister camp is Tanglewood. They are both 4-H camps and learning centers. Blueberry Cove is becoming year-round with after school programs.

Elwell

Are there ten or eleven kids?

Cartwright

It's a small group but they get some outdoor time. I know there are plans for a year-round science building with heat pumps that is fully insulated, a year-round resource for local students.

Erb

I know they're talking about outdoor awareness programs, ropes courses, etc. Ben is going to sign a letter indicating they are interested in participating. I don't think we need a motion. I just want people to be aware.

Bates

It seems like a good idea to have outlets for the youth in the community with the Trekkers involved, not only for St. George, but people from the wider community as well. The \$10,000 that we assigned to repair the building and eventually take care of the boilers sure helps.

Sawyer

We don't need a vote, but do we need a resolution that we support Ben and what he's doing?

Erb

Sure, we could vote to authorize Ben to sign a letter of interest in working with the groups that I named towards better use of the property. It's not required though.

Bates

The sentiment of the board I think is that we can go ahead and sign the letter.

Producing 2022 Annual Town Report without the Audit

Bates

Okay. The last thing on the regular agenda is the question that's come up about the annual report. It turns out legally we are allowed to omit the audit.

Elwell

I think you should go without the audit. When the audit does come out, we can print it and have people pick it up.

Bates

That's my sense. Many people might like to have it at the town meeting to look through various things. Should we have Rick and Tara put it all together, press ahead and get it out on time regardless of when the audit will be ready?

Cartwright

I know it's somewhat costly to print the Town Report. It can be accessed online but some people aren't online and need a hardcopy. I was wondering if we are printing too many of them because it always seems like we have stacks of them left over. Maybe we don't save any money by printing less.

Irene Ames

We had leftovers from the 2000 copies that were printed last time. The year before we ran out.

Sawyer

Maybe we should wait for a couple of normal years to go by and see if we are publishing too many.

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: Thompson

Vote: 5-0

Time: 7:35 pm

Returned to Regular Session at 7:52 pm

Motion: Increase the Town Manager's salary by \$8,050 for the financial year beginning July 1st, 2023

Prop: Thompson

Sec: Elwell

Vote: 5-0

Time: 7:57 pm

Motion: To adjourn.

Prop: Elwell

Sec: Thompson

Vote: 5-0

Time: 7:58 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Tammy Taylor

Recording Secretary

Town of St. George