

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

**St. George Town Office**

### **MEETING MINUTES**

**February 6, 2023 - 7p.m.**

The Select Board meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Richard Bates (Chair), Steve Cartwright, Van Thompson, Richard Erb, Irene Ames, Susy Ellis, Scott Vaitones, David Percival, Chris Williamson, Virginia Vaitones, Anne Cox, Michael Jordan, Alaine Kennedy, Richard Moskowitz, Ben Vail, Wendy Carr, Ryan Cline, Terry Bracket, Tim Polky, John Falla and Amy Drinkwater.

Present via Zoom were Loreen Meyer, Jane Conrad, Jerry Hall, Lynna Henderson, Peta vanVuuren, Robert Olivieri, Ken Oelberger, Diane Oelberger, Rob Kelley and Judy Smith.

### **REGULAR SESSION**

#### **Quorum**

A quorum was present.

#### **Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

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

##### **Bates**

Let's take a few things out of order. I suggest we start with Anne and Michael's discussion of the Land Use Ordinance. After that, we'll move to the three financial items that we have on the agenda, which are the Budget Committee Budgetary Concerns, Part 1 of the FY 24 Town budget Review, and the Status of Tax Acquired Properties. After that, we'll talk about the status of the plans to create the ambulance department.

## **Land Use Ordinance Presentation**

Anne and Michael, tell us about the revised Land Use Ordinance, combining the existing Land Use Ordinances, but making it clearer, more understandable, more readable, and using common vocabulary, generally presenting a more user-friendly ordinance. Give us an outline of that and also tell us about the plans to get from where we are now to May 8th, when we hope it will go before the voters.

### **Chair Cox**

Thank you. I thought I'd discuss the history of how we got to this point of the proposed Land Use Ordinance. Right now, in St. George, we have eight different ordinances that deal with land use issues and as Richard mentioned, some of them have contradictory definitions. As the Planning Board worked with them, we became aware that we needed to deal with the inconsistencies. That's what really prompted us to start looking at combining them into a single land use ordinance that would be easier for people to use. We started working with Bill Napier of the Midcoast Economic Development Group, but we had a lull because of the pandemic and that slowed us down. Michael and I decided we would start up again, as representatives of the Planning Board, along with Jane Conrad from the Appeals Board and Terry Brackett, our Code Enforcement Officer. The first thing we did was spin off the Appeals Ordinance because appeals were covered in each of these ordinances that we have and the Board of Appeals also had some other issues to work on, so we dealt with that last year. The town voted and approved that. Then Michael and I started working away at merging all our ordinances, and I can't say enough about the time Michael has put into this. He has done a phenomenal job and has expertise and a way with language that has synthesized things and I think he's become fairly adept at formatting.

### **Jordan**

I had no experience with land use either.

### **Chair Cox**

The Planning Board had various workshops on the different sections. Throughout these last couple of years, we've been having these workshops. We sent what we had done to our town attorney, who took quite a bit of time, but finally worked through it and had some changes; we went back and forth on those. We've sent the section dealing with the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance to the DEP because they have to approve any changes we put in there. One caveat in merging all our ordinances, is that we've left it blank under the subdivision ordinance section. That's a little complicated. Along with this, we will keep our existing subdivision ordinance and then start working on how to incorporate that into one ordinance which was more than we could handle right now. Our intention is to fine tune this draft even more, seeking input from the Select Board and we have also scheduled a public workshop for tomorrow night to review the draft, if anybody wants to attend. We're open to any comments as the Planning Board continues to review it. We're still waiting to hear from the DEP and will incorporate what they have to say. Our intention is to have a proposed Public Land Use Ordinance ready for a public hearing by the second half of March.

### **Jordan**

In time to finalize the text so that it can be on file and after the public hearing, go on the ballot. It must be final when the question goes on the ballot.

**Chair Cox**

You should all have received a memo. Most of our work has been putting together our disparate ordinances into one so that we have common definitions. We are suggesting a few substantive changes. That was in the memo Michael put together and he can answer any questions.

**Cartwright**

Congratulations on all this work. Would you briefly highlight what the substantial changes are?

**Jordan**

I can do that. There are just a handful and they're not major. For example, we're not trying to tackle questions about affordable housing, minimum lot size, or issues that go along with that. Those are issues that we'll have to deal with, but we wanted to steer clear of controversial issues, until the technical aspects of this settle down. Here are a few things we are planning to do. One is to streamline and reduce the number of projects for which permits are required. We currently require any maintenance or repair that costs \$10,000 or more to require a permit. It wouldn't surprise me if most people don't know about that, or bother to get permits for small maintenance and repair work, such as retiling the kitchen, replacing a roof, etc. There's no good purpose to be served by that and those sorts of things can be done without permits.

**Cartwright**

That will be a popular change.

**Jordan**

We're trying to get some positive things in there. For the site plan review, which is a more involved process, we're proposing to exempt certain alterations and improvements. If the project doesn't involve moving interior walls, revising the electrical or plumbing facilities, or things like that and it costs less than \$50,000, it still needs a permit, but would be exempt from site plan review. What prompted that was several years ago, the school wanted to move a small wall from one side to another to make some space and it required an electrical permit. The Planning Board spent half an hour on a minor issue Terry could have handled, so something like that costing less than \$50,000 is going to go to the Code Enforcement Officer. If he thinks there is a problem, he can send it to the Planning Board. We currently regulate mobile home parks only in the Shoreland Zone and we propose to regulate them everywhere. This deals with things like density issues. We don't have mobile home parks so this is more proactive. Density and sewage disposal are good things to do for the future. Except for the Shoreland Zone, we don't have a general restriction on mineral extraction, such as gravel pits, picking up soil, etc. and so we're proposing to extend it townwide because a lot of the issues that are dealt with in the Shoreland Zoning regulation, have to do with water flow, and are important for the Shoreland Zone, but are also important elsewhere. Agriculture is generally permitted everywhere without a permit. By agriculture, I don't mean hobby farms or subsistence farms, but for-profit commercial enterprises. We're proposing to require permits, not to be a farmer, but to build a building. Any other commercial enterprise that wants to construct a building has to obtain a permit, and we're proposing to subject agriculture to that requirement also. We do not want to allow agricultural uses in Commercial Fishery Districts or in the Shoreland Zone. Commercial Fisheries are a scarce resource for an important part of the economic and cultural life of this town. We don't permit new residential uses, commercial uses or industrial uses but for some reason allow it for agricultural uses. That was brought to our attention. We want to save that land for the fishing industry.

**Bates**

Does anyone have a question for Anne or Michael, or you could attend tomorrow night's meeting.

**Susan Ellis**

Is there a place we can read this?

**Jordan**

Yes, it's on the town website. If you go to the homepage, you'll see the announcement and there is a link to get to it. In that announcement, there is a summary of the substantive issues.

**Bates**

We have a lot of people tonight on Zoom as well, if anyone has any comments or questions for Michael or Anne regarding this Land Use Ordinance.

**Bob Olivieri**

I think it's a great idea. The more you can simplify stuff, the better. Thank-you for doing that.

**Chair Cox**

We are hoping to make the Table of Contents very clear and easy for people to understand and find what they are looking for.

**Bates**

Thank you very much for meeting with us tonight, and to reiterate, thank-you for all the work you've done so far.

**Budget Committee Budgetary Concerns**

I'd like to talk about the Budget Committees' budgetary concerns sent to us on January 7<sup>th</sup>; we did discuss them briefly at the Select Board meeting on January 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Susan Ellis**

I could summarize them. We had just four things that we wanted to highlight this year. One is the mill rate, particularly as we add a department to the town budget, and the County budget goes up a fair chunk. We want to be as steady as we can be with the mill rate. Another thing is workforce housing. Rick has already made strides towards managing the mill rate situation. We're concerned about workforce housing, so that we'll have people to teach in the school and drive the fire truck. At one point, we had money for a study with the CDC on housing. Do you know if that's going forward?

**Bates**

The gentleman who can answer that question is Rob Kelley.

**Rob Kelley**

I can speak about that. That money was allocated for 2020. Obviously, things went sideways that year, and there was \$5,000 allocated; we didn't ask for it again until we were certain we were going to be able to do a study. In the meantime, a group of communities here in the Midcoast, created a Midcoast

Housing Trust and one of the gentlemen who has been involved with that, Rod Wasserstrom, has a career in housing and volunteered to do a housing study for all the towns that are part of this housing trust. It is available. I can get a reference to it. We talked about it a little bit when we held our housing meeting last fall, but the data we would have gathered is in that report and is publicly available. I don't know the best way to get that to everybody but I can get the reference to the Select Board for distribution to others.

**Susan Ellis**

Is your Housing Committee going to move forward with that data?

**Rob Kelley**

We are. In fact, there's a number of different initiatives going on right now. First in 2022, we created a housing repair program, which is addressing the existing stock, because many issues are around heating, accessibility or safety. The second thing we have been doing is look at much longer-term goals. At the public meeting, and then in the following Select Board meeting, which I believe was in October, we discussed the possibility of a large parcel of land on Kinney Woods Road. We discussed whether or not that would be a potential buildable location. We have a surveyor who has worked with Habitat for Humanity, and we've had one missed opportunity so far to do a walk of the land because there was too much snow. We're hoping to do that again in the coming weeks. He would then give us a ballpark of how much is buildable based on what he's seeing and also the actual cost for a survey. My Board prefers to share that cost with the town, but we may be able to get it fully funded. The Genesis Fund, some of you may know that organization, funds housing development here in Maine, and they have a new startup grant. If this is only a couple of thousand dollars, we may be able to get that covered. That's where we are right now. We keep our eye on commercially available land, but we don't have a budget currently for land acquisition. The one we've been focusing on is what's happening in the town. I can speak to this in much greater depth, but I don't want to take this beyond your original question. There are a lot of other activities going on at the moment.

**Susan Ellis**

Some of our concern there is being met by the CDC.

**Bates**

We have this housing state ordinance, LD 2003, to allow more dwellings to be put on an existing building lot and allow accessory dwelling units. We have Bob Olivary here who spoke to us about this a couple of months ago. There are a lot of changes, and we don't know how they're going to impact our town. I'm hoping that we're moving in the right direction.

**Susan Ellis**

Thank you very much, Rob.

**Rob Kelley**

You're welcome. I'm more than happy at a subsequent meeting, when we're not deep in the budget, to come back and talk a little bit more about housing and what other initiatives are going on, I think partnering with Rick, we could update the committee and town members.

**Susan Ellis**

Excellent. Our third concern was about climate change. We have our savings for purchasing the panels and we would like to see those savings continue, even once the panels are purchased, because there'll be more things that will cost money for the town. It would be good to have a little money in the bank. The last concern is about school costs. There's really nothing we can do in our budget, that's going to be largely communication. Meeting the superintendent, maybe quarterly, or some kind of formal liaison between the town and the school board might be good thing. Those are the four concerns we had this year and really, they're all being addressed in one form or another.

**Bates**

Thank you. I particularly like the idea of communication with the school, having some regular meetings with the school superintendent.

**Review of FY Town Budget – part 1**

**Bates**

Starting with General Assistance, are there any questions about the proposal, the continued assignment of \$2,500 to General Assistance, understanding the constraints that we have?

**Erb**

The only thing I would say is that there are certainly many municipalities in Maine that do have a substantial General Assistance Program. Oftentimes, it is because people are moving into their area, and they have housing available. They have stepped up to accept residents into their community and there really is an opportunity for that to happen here. A lot of it goes back to our housing but there certainly are municipalities that have a significant budget issue with General Assistance. We don't happen to. We have other organizations in our town that shoulder the load. Irene is our General Assistance Administrator. There is very little activity here.

**Bates**

Any other questions or comments on that? Let's move on to Social Community Services. I'm going to suggest that we split this into two parts. First of all, let's talk about what's in the proposal and that'll probably raise some issues. Then let's talk about what's not in the proposal. I did look through some of the letters that we received from the organizations, and I have some supplemental information. For example, the library, as in the past, has asked for \$50,000. That's been the same amount since 2018 and it represents about 25% of their budget. We've had them meet with us to discuss what they have done recently. I feel fortunate to have the library we have in this town. That is the largest amount in the budget, at \$50,000. Another thing I noticed is that Neighbor to Neighbor has come in at \$3,000, which is pretty consistent.

**Susan Ellis**

Is that getting added to this? It shows a blank.

**Erb**

It should show that there is a \$3,000 request recommended this year. Last year that they took a year off because of Covid issues, as I recall.

**Bates**

They provided 241 rides; it's a great service. You may have noticed that New Hope Midcoast is asking for a little bit more, \$1,254, which is a 20% increase over last year. They served 16 residents in St. George, and I think it's an invaluable service, even though it increased by a couple of hundred dollars. The Rockland District Nursing request has gone up by \$1,000 for a total of \$4,000. That's a valuable service for the town, providing non-acute in-home nursing and community health services for predominately elderly and medically vulnerable residents. Lifeflight continues to ask for \$.25 a head. The number of \$649 for Lifeflight looks arbitrary, but in fact is very precise. Those were some of the notes I took on these applicants. Do we have any comments or questions about things that are already written into the budget?

**Susan Ellis**

Penquis CAP is going up 200%. What was their reasoning? I didn't come in and look at the letter.

**Bates**

They billed us at 3% of the value of services. They tell us in the letter that for Headstart, they've been looking after two children, and that's a value of \$29,715. They've also been helping with COVID-19 rental relief and that was valued at \$28,680 for 27 households. I think the increase is principally from that COVID-19 rental relief. Because they received a lot of federal aid, they're asking us for 3% of the service provided. They have also been giving energy assistance as well, valued at \$9,426.

**Erb**

We might want to talk about Waldo Community Action at the same time. It is a similar situation; we pay for 2.5% of the services they provide.

**Bates**

The \$1,296 requested is a fraction of \$34,636 services provided. Are there other questions about the budget. If there's nothing else, let's move to those requests that arrived after the budget was printed. John, on behalf of The Historical Society, put in a request for money to repair headstones, proposing a multiyear program with the first year of \$10,000. It's a multiyear expenditure of tens of thousands of dollars for the Historical Society which would then take care of gravestones in the Seaside Cemetery. I say upfront I am not in favor of this because as I look at MRSA Title 13, Section 1101, I do not see that we as a town are responsible. We are responsible for ensuring the grass is cut and trimmed. We're responsible for ensuring flat grave markers are free of grass and debris. We're responsible for keeping the burial place free of falling trees, and branches. Not to say that we shouldn't be providing some money to make grave sites better, but I think we need a serious plan that looks at all the stones and that prioritizes veterans. I do not see that this is the year to start this sort of program or something that we have to do now. Next year, there'll be a few more broken perhaps and a few more verdigris and other things on these stones. While I want to be very respectful of these gravestones, this is not something the town, with all the other pressures that we have from the ambulance and the county and so on, should do this year.

**Falla**

I put my request in and you have expressed your opinion.

**Bates**

What does the Board feel about this?

**Van Thompson**

I hadn't thought about until just now, but I have not heard of that as a general approach. This is new to me that this sort of thing is even done.

**Falla**

The Historical Society has been raising funds, hoping to do it ourselves but the response has not been as strong as we hoped it would be. We have raised probably \$2000-\$2500 a year for the last two or three years, and that is being spent on the cleaning of the stones. We have quite a good volunteer group that is doing cleaning. We're going to be doing cleaning on the first Saturday of the month for May, June, July, August, and September. We have been told that it is about \$800-\$1,000 a day for a group to come in and do the work, the epoxy and everything else to repair the stones, fix the bases and put them back up. We figure at the very least, they could repair about five stones a day. I believe there are about 2600.

**Bates**

There are a lot of stones and that is why I'm concerned.

**Falla**

There are 200-300 at least that are in need of repair. We're looking to start the project and see what we can get done this year. If we don't use the whole \$10,000, we will be carrying that forward and using it next year and doing as much as we can to get the Seaside Cemetery, which is owned by the town, back into a respectable condition.

**Bates**

Like I said, according to state law, our responsibilities in Title 13, Section 1101 are to keep the grass cut, keep it free of debris, falling trees, and things like that. This is something, which not to be disrespectful, is not our obligation as a town. However, it's a great project and I think it's something which the Historical Society could take the lead on, and I presume the families that are involved will be approached on this.

**Jane Conrad**

Before the town assumed responsibility for the cemetery, was there a fund for maintaining gravestones in perpetuity when people purchased a grave? Was there an account for this? That would be typical in a cemetery association.

**Bates**

My understanding is, and two gentlemen here know this from years ago, the perpetual care requirement is to take care of the grass cutting, and items like that. It's not to take care of stones. That's why this issue has arisen.

**Falla**

The perpetual care accounts are \$200-\$500 at the highest for perpetual care of a grave site. Back when that money was accepted, interest rates were a lot higher and the costs were a lot lower, so it covered it.



**Jerry Hall**

I think in the guidelines that we drew up as part of the Cemetery Committee, we made it pretty clear that stones are the responsibility of the people who own the lots or the people who purchase the right to bury someone there. The care of the lawn itself is the responsibility of the Cemetery Association, but for the stones, there's not the same obligation. It's a good thing to try to pick away at it because for some of these, the family is gone, and you'd like to be able to pick away at some of the worst of them and put them in proper repair.

**Susan Ellis**

I want to point out that our mowing costs for the cemeteries has almost doubled in the last few years. This just doesn't seem like the year. This is a great aspirational goal. They add character to our town and hopefully are important to the families and maybe some of the families can make a dent but just the mowing is so expensive at this point, that to add additional costs to the cemetery in a year where we're already worried about the mill rate seems imprudent.

**Bates**

Any other comments? Another item that is not on the list is the late note we had from Tim about the Youth and Scouting Council. Tim, you can explain. There's been a series of mishaps there.

**Tim Polky**

The St. George Scouting Council was started basically to be a booster club responsible for the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scout. We always said from the beginning. Right now, we have a bunch of Girl Scouts, but we don't have any Boy Scout troops. We do have some support awareness. We are trying to bring in the Rec Department. We're trying to bring in the Trekkers through Greg Cole, the school and the Wiley Corner Church. The Girl Scouts asked for money for a furnace last year with the idea that we were going to fix it. Before we could get it fixed, it malfunctioned on us and filled the building with soot so we couldn't use the building. In the process of getting that fixed, the insurance company paid for most of it. We also know that we have to replace the roof. We are in a situation where we don't have enough money to do everything. We need to get a roof on it. We need to get back in there. We are just asking for some help with that. We think that we can get the heat back online with the funds we received from last year's town meeting but the roof is going to be an issue.

**Susan Ellis**

What is the dollar request?

**Tim Polky**

The roof is about \$20,000 but we would take whatever we can get.

**Bates**

My concern about the Youth and Scouting Council building is the uncertainty that exists now with this new project and all the other buildings the partnership brings together with Blueberry Cove, the school, the Trekkers and Wiley Corner Church. There are other buildings, and the Blueberry Cove site has some beautifully heated buildings. As I understand it, your organization is trying to get a 501C3 status and once you do that, you'll be eligible for grants. I'm concerned in terms of priorities and many of the aspirations you have with the Youth Partnership, such the archery or the ropes courses, may be done without a building. I suggest the partnership can get started and do a lot of the things that it wants to do

without a building, at least initially. If necessary, they can use the Blueberry Cove building. A year from now, when the situation is clearer, when the partnership has come together and you're looking to use all the facilities, that will be a good time to come to the town and advise what grants you have received, provide a description for the use of the building, and put in a request to the town for money. I'm just concerned that this is a tough year to be doing this. I would say by all means go ahead and spend the money that has already been appropriated and use that to get a tarp over the roof and check the roof as best you can. With the uncertainty about the organization, I don't see that you need a building for the next couple of years. Am I simplifying this too much?

**Tim Polky**

I think you are simplifying this a little bit too much because there is a building there and if something is not done with it, there's not going to be a building. It's going to take more than that \$20,000 to clean it up. I agree that there's some uncertainty as to the partnership but if the partnership fails, who's going to be responsible for cleaning that up?

**Bates**

Well, I really hope the partnership succeeds. You have an organization that does not have a nonprofit status now.

**Tim Polky**

The thing is, we always did.

**Bates**

I understand it lapsed because of the failure to file their 990 in 2009. That's pretty major. With the uncertainty about what is required, I suggest that the partnership needs to consider using the money that has already been approved by the town and use that to keep the building as whole as possible. Maybe it doesn't need heat if it's not being used in the winter. The money that was appropriated in last year's Town Report was not appropriated to anything specific. It was understood it was going to be used for the boiler, but you can use it for the roof. You can have the roof patched, such that when you apply for grants and have your new status, there will be many other funding sources available.

**Erb**

Would you think about addressing the roof problem before the furnace?

**Tim Polky**

I think that would be a priority.

**Susan Ellis**

Is it leaking at this point?

**Tim Polky**

It is and we had a local contractor patch it for us to get us by for a year.

**Speaker One**

If you were starting from scratch and looking for a place to house your program, would you build a building or would you use existing spaces?

**Tim Polky**

When we built the building originally, it was a different situation. We had more kids, a bigger program and a lot of adults working with us. At the time that we built it, the answer was yes. If you asked me that same question right now, I would probably say no. My problem is that we do have the building and have to do something with it.

**Susan Ellis**

But the money for the heater is there, and could be used for roof repair, to keep the building solid, until more money can be raised to fix the heating. Would that be accurate?

**Tim Polky**

That could be done. Yes.

**Cartwright**

I think it's important to do everything we can for the kids in our town. A couple of things that came to mind is the school buildings really belong to us. Hopefully, they could be available to you. The library has spaces that can be used by anybody. I've been on the Board of Blueberry Cove for many years. I can't speak for the Board, but I would certainly support you coming over there and using a really nice place that would be quite appropriate for scouts or others. Your idea might go beyond just scouts to other youth.

**Tim Polky**

The popularity of Boy Scouts is not there anymore.

**Cartwright**

It's on the wane but I think the need for recreation and being outdoors is stronger than ever.

**Tim Polky**

I think that we need to put more time into our kids no matter how it is done.

**Cartwright**

If you wanted to come to one of our board meetings and talk with us, I invite you to do that.

**Kennedy**

The school has an outdoor leadership program for its middle level students now. I don't know if you know that. They use Blueberry Cove for that program. MTFT cooperates with that as well, because they have an outdoor leadership program there as well. There are a lot of opportunities, and the CDC also has the Tom Armitage Community Room that's available to organizations to use.

**Bates**

Tim, we expect to see you next year. At that point, you will have your status, and you will perhaps have some types of grants already submitted.

**Tim Polky**

You will probably see someone from the partnership here next year.

**Bates**

Those are the two that I know of. Rick, do we have others that we want to talk about?

**Erb**

The rest of these came in late. Herring Gut Coastal Science Center has requested \$3,000. They're looking for support for their organization that provides summer programming either free or at a nominal cost as a Sustainable Aquaponics Vegetable Program that contributes to the food pantry. They participated in the St. George parade and serve as a community connection and education partner with Colby College. It is a year-round program at low or no cost for residents and collaborates with St. George MSU. This is a new request.

**Speaker Two**

Can you repeat explicitly what the request is for? Is it for scholarships for kids?

**Erb**

No. It is a request for support for their organization, which provides these programs for kids. I wasn't sure how you wanted to handle these tonight, I can send you the written material by email. If you think this is something you want to carry over to a future meeting. With some of these new ones, I don't like to catch people off guard but some of these came in sort of late.

**Van Thompson**

I would prefer that.

**Bates**

Okay, so we'll discuss that at a later point.

**Susan Ellis**

Rick, can you send those to us, as well as to the Select Board?

**Erb**

Absolutely. I did receive information from the CDC, but I don't know if there's a reason.

**Bates**

When Rob and Elaine came in a couple of months back, you told us to expect them to ask for more, and that's the reason for the \$12,000, a \$2,000 increase from last year. When you spoke to the board, I think there was a feeling that the services, particularly the pantry in the last couple of years, are really invaluable to the town. It's in the budget as \$12,000. I think the CDC has the strong support of the Budget Committee and Select Board.

**Rob**

I'm always happy to come in and go into greater detail. Much appreciated.

**Bates**

I think we've covered the items for Social Community Services, things that are on the list and things that were not on the list.

**Susan Ellis**

How about Maine Coast Heritage Trust?

**Erb**

That's an interesting one. They did not put in a request last year or this year. That was sort of a spontaneous decision to provide funds for them last year.

**Bates**

I personally would love it if the town would support that. I feel like Maine Coast Heritage Trust is a great partner. In the past, they put some of the early money up for the Fort Point permits and Clark Island. They should have sent us a request. Anything else on this tonight?

**Susan Ellis**

Are we going to discuss this again on the 27th?

**Bates**

Yes. Next on the list was the Planning Department. Terry, do you want to talk about the budget?

**Brackett**

Rick put that together.

**Erb**

We certainly talked about it. The biggest change is we are paying a fee for software now for the iWorQ program and Terry could probably tell you something about that. It has been a challenge to respond quickly to requests for information; this is going to make a big difference. We looked at its use in other municipalities, Belfast in particular. We were very impressed with how it serves its purpose. Terry, anything you want to say about iWorQ?

**Brackett**

I did some research on these programs and it was the one that we wanted to go with, versus the other ones that are out there. Just about everyone that has it couldn't say enough about it. We've put it into use now. Magan puts all the materials into it. It's an all-inclusive program and it tracks everything in the permits. You can keep track of contractors, open inspections, and violations. It is a tremendous program.

**Bates**

When you gave me a demonstration, I was really impressed by it. The public will see the appropriate level of this information in time so it will be a value to the community.

**Brackett**

I'm hoping that you all will see a quarterly report on all the permits that have been issued. The material is stored in the cloud, which I'm not sure I'm in favor of. If we should ever leave that program, the material comes back to us. We have made a tremendous advancement in storing this electronically.

**Bates**

Ken, do you want to talk about the requests that you've made from the Conservation Commission?

**Ken Oelberger**

Yes. It was similar to last year's request, and we reduced it by about \$2,000 because we have available funds for some of the trail maintenance work. We felt we could use that money that already exists. We had money left over from the Meadowbrook project and we had money raised by Hedgerow this summer, that was dedicated to trails. We were able to cut back a little bit this year. We didn't feel we needed as much in that area.

**Susan Ellis**

Is that all trail maintenance?

**Ken Oelberger**

No, the total budget includes the Maine Association of Conservation Commission dues, and includes money for the education series, money for various communications including a Zoom account and a Vimeo account, brochures that we've put out for various topics like the invasives, and then we have a project to do something with the invasives this year on a piece of town property, for people to see how they can replace invasives with native plants. The other part is for improvements for the trails and future acquisitions for conservation. We want to have some upfront money if we need to apply for grants. For many grants you apply for, you need to do a survey, you need to do an assessment of the property before you can even apply for a grant, and we want to have the capability to proceed if something shows up.

**Erb**

Ken, I believe there is land that the commission is interested in already, correct?

**Ken Oelberger**

You're right, there is a piece of property. We have been working with Georges River Land Trust. A landowner approached the land trust about acquiring the property and it would be similar to the way we had the Meadowbrook property with Maine Coast Heritage Trust, where we work through the land trust, and then the land trust would transfer the property after it's purchased by the town but would hold the conservation easement on it.

**Erb**

I guess I'm saying that it's not pie in the sky. In case something comes along, there's some work being done.

**Ken Oelberger**

There is a piece, but we don't like to publish exactly what piece of property might be available at this point.

**Erb**

I'd never do that.

**Bates**

Thank you, Ken. Questions about the Planning Board budget?

**Susan Ellis**

What is the \$500 capital equipment account in the capital fund for?

**Erb**

I believe that's when we were looking at a map case. That has not happened yet. We're still in the budget year; I suppose it could happen.

**Susan Ellis**

Does this need to be here?

**Erb**

I do not have a specific piece of equipment in mind so perhaps not.

**Bates**

We're going to strike this \$500 for the moment. If there is nothing else, let's go on to Parks and Recreation Department. The Children's recreation number should not be \$4,400 but \$9,350.

**Erb**

That was just an error on our part.

**Bates**

The main thing is both that number and the Community Rec number last year were an aberration and in fact, the numbers that you have there now are more consistent with previous years. \$2,600 is sufficient for the latter.

**Ben Vail**

Last year's was large, because there was a specific project that we completed, which was the reclaimed paving of the parking lot.

**Bates**

One question I had was how can you spend \$5,000 on goalposts?

**Ben Vail**

First of all, they're exorbitantly priced. You can spend anywhere from \$2,000 to \$12,000 on a goalpost. Secondly, they're very heavy, so there's a large amount of shipping cost involved. The reason why it's in there as a single goal is because the goal nearest the tennis courts gets moved twice a year because of baseball. In the course of that and from weathering, it's become rickety. It doesn't have its own wheels. We put wheels under it, but all that involves shifting, and as someone who hangs the nets every year, I don't want to get to the point where it's unsafe. I don't think it is yet but I think it's prudent to buy a goal that has wheels on it so we can move it. The other one is rock solid, because it never moves except for when I lift it up and it starts to sink. I have to lift it up, but it doesn't have to go anywhere. Except for the couple years where we didn't have a school team, and I didn't have to worry about the big ball field every year, it has to move twice so I think it would be a wise move to replace it with a portable one.

**Bates**

I shouldn't have been facetious. It's money well spent.

**Ben Vail**

I spoke to a company who seems really solid, and they urged me to order right after the budget is official so we can have it for soccer season. It takes time to get here. It's a big outlay but it's a safety issue.

**Bates**

Other questions on the Parks and Rec budget? Thanks Ben. The next one is Harbors.

**Erb**

There's not a lot of change in this budget. There's a fuel line item \$150.

**Ryan Cline**

We had been getting it through the boatyard, but it's been expensive because of the fuel, so now we're going through the town. The training cost has gone up and will probably go up more.

**Erb**

As debt payments are made, the amount of interest that we pay goes down every year so there's a little bit of built in savings every year on that, and that's what you see there as principal goes down. Otherwise, there is very little change here.

**Bates**

What's happening with getting a new boat. Are you still on the lookout?

**Ryan Cline**

The Coast Guard retires boats and I'm hoping eventually they get rid of one I'm looking for.

**Bates**

There's a reserve account for the boat, and that for the moment is on standby.

**Susan Ellis**

There is \$52K I think in there, and is that anywhere near the prices you're seeing?

**Ryan Cline**

No, but if I can get something from the Coast Guard, the cost will be minimal. That's why I'm looking to purchase it there; you can get more for your buck.

**Cartwright**

How do you find out about the Coast Guard boats?

**Ryan Cline**

There is a GSA government website that you have to register with.

**Cartwright**

What would you like to have?

**Ryan Cline**

I'm looking at what the Coast Guard has for the 25 little boat that they rip around in.



**Erb**

I don't know how it is with boats, Ryan, but I can remember with state surplus property, some towns always seem to have a better idea of what is available. They knew the right people or in some cases, they were located closer to Augusta, and they would make the trip to see what was there. If you're not well informed, others will get ahead of you. Let's put it that way.

**Bates**

I know you've been saving the town money building these floats. That's great. They are good quality floats. Thank you, Ryan. Anything else to talk about for the Harbor budget? Next is Animal Control, a controversial one, possibly. Do we have any comments on this?

**Erb**

One thing I found is that current Animal Control Officer does not turn in mileage. He takes his own vehicle where he needs to go. That was part of the justification for giving him an increase in pay. I still have something in the budget for mileage, but he didn't use it. Otherwise, things are about the same. It's a thankless position as you can imagine. I'm glad we have someone. Some towns have really struggled to fill that position. You don't make anybody happy when you're in that position. I think he's doing a reasonably good job and I'd like to keep him.

**Bates**

The last one that we were going to talk about tonight is the Unclassified. The Family Health Contingent is always an uncertain number. Do you want to talk about that Rick?

**Erb**

Only that we make our best estimates of how much utilization there will be. It comes and it goes and then of course, we must factor in what the premium increase is for all health insurance, which was around 5%. Unfortunately, they operate on a calendar year so we're always trying to guess what the other six months will look like. But these are our best estimates.

**Bates**

Any questions about the Unclassified? I think we've gone through the first half of the budget. Next meeting, we'll go through the other departments, talk about projected revenues, and we'll also talk about the reserve accounts.

**Susan Ellis**

And we'll come back to Social Community Services.

**Bates**

There's two issues, Herring Gut and Maine Coast Heritage Trust.

**Tax Acquired Properties**

**Bates**

I'm not sure if the Budget Committee wants to stay for the last financial issue, which is the question of tax acquired properties. We put it off last time. I think I'm going to suggest that we put it off this time also, because the person who asked about it, Randy, is not here. Rick has a summary sheet that we can

pass out to everybody, which gives you status, and something to look at, so that we can talk about it in more depth next time. There's one thing that I should point out. You'll see one of the cases is Donald Schwab's property on 452 Glenmere Rd. He has attempted various payment plans to deal with the back taxes and has decided his best option is to have the property sold.

**Erb**

We technically own it at this point. What I want to bring it up tonight is whether I have the Board's blessing to work with him and his real estate agent. Obviously, the Town would have to be paid in full as part of the closing. My understanding and feelings are that we are interested in receiving everything that is owed to the Town, including taxes, interest and fees. We're not interested in seizing property and selling it and keeping all of the proceeds. We're trying to get what is owed in taxes. I just want to be clear with everyone. This is a little unusual. I haven't personally handled it this way, but I don't see that the town is at risk. If our intention is to receive everything that is owed to the Town, this may be the most expeditious way to do that.

**Bates**

It seems the pragmatic approach because the man has attempted to make payment plans but something always goes wrong, and he's finally decided that the way he wants to make his payment plan is to sell it and get the money.

**Susan Ellis**

Will the Town sell it or is he going to sell it?

**Bates**

As Rick said, it belongs to the town. Are we okay with going ahead with this?

**Erb**

You'll see it listed and it would be public record.

**Jane Conrad**

I have a question. The town doesn't technically own that property now. We have liens that are the equivalent of the value, right? Is that what you're saying?

**Erb**

No, I'm saying that the liens have matured, and they have reached the point of automatic foreclosure. There isn't anything more for the town to do.

**Jane Conrad**

But it hasn't actually happened yet.

**Erb**

We haven't seized the property, if that's what you're saying. Technically, the property owner belongs to the town at this point. I'd be happy to review that with you.

**Jane Conrad**

The way the law works, does it automatically become the property of the town? Isn't there some kind of procedure that has to happen?

**Erb**

My understanding is no.

**Irene Ames**

The procedure has already happened. We own it and are paying for insurance on the building.

**Bates**

For further clarification, we could do this offline Jane. Is that alright?

**Jane Conrad**

Yes.

## **Town Ambulance Department**

**Bates**

The next item is about the plan to create the Town Ambulance Department. The role tonight is for the Select Board to approve the three warrant articles that will come before the special town meeting on February 23rd. There are three warrant articles. The first one is to approve the appointment of a moderator. That's fairly standard boilerplate. The second one is to see if the town will vote to approve to appropriate \$87,500 from the fund balance to support the ambulance service in fiscal year 2023. The third article reads, "Shall the town of St. George voter vote to authorize the Select Board or Town Manager to enter an asset transfer agreement with the Maine Nonprofit Corporation of St. George Volunteer Firemen's Association; for the town to accept the donation and transfer of equipment, inventory, ambulance, state licenses and other related personal property assets to effectuate the permanent transfer to the town of the first responder and EMS services, as presently provided by this St. George Volunteer Firemen's Association." That's article number three. There will be a note associated with that article number three, which says: "A working draft of the asset transfer agreement, with disclosures schedule is on file in the clerk's office for inspection during regular office hours. Draft may require limited modifications regarding its final form but the structure of the terms of the proposed agreement are described in significant detail. Please note that the town will not be taking ownership or responsibility for the burned building used for training located on 274 Seal Harbor Road and the St. George Volunteer Fireman's Association shall continue to solely own and be responsible for the burned building."

**Susan Ellis**

When you say the clerk's office, what clerk is that?

**Erb**

Typically, that would be the Town Clerk and various deputies.

**Bates**

If the Select Board votes tonight to approve these, the warrants will then be part of the legal notices that need to be filed and appear in the newspapers and posted around town to make this special Town Meeting on the 23rd of February, official. Those are the three warrants/articles. Is there a need for any discussion around this?

**Erb**

I would just add that I've been working with Amy, Tim, John, and the town attorney on the transfer agreement. We have a draft now. There were numerous suggestions back and forth. We've addressed almost all of them at this point, but they just received the new copy yesterday, and so we're close. I have a copy here. The copy that we were working with them on was red lined, so they could see where the most recent changes are. This one is not red lined. It would be best if we can have this fully resolved before the public hearing and the special town meeting, but it could be that the vote is simply to authorize the Select Board, then we can sign the agreement. But hopefully it'll all be done before then. I don't know if any of the members of the Ambulance and Fire Department have any comments but we're trying to get this done as quickly as we can.

**Tim Polky**

I think that we just have to have another couple of meetings maybe and I'm convinced that it will work out.

**Bates**

Well, thank you. I know it is difficult to get all of these details nailed down. For all these years, it has been one blended arrangement and it's difficult to separate the parts.

**Tim Polky**

Absolutely. I think that's the biggest task we have right now is to put on paper what the difference is.

**Bates**

I believe that we all want the best outcome, and we are going to get that.

**Tim Polky**

I believe so. I think that the transfer of the ambulance service to the town ownership isn't going to make any difference in the service. It is the same people; it's going to work the same. Most people aren't even going to know what happened.

**Erb**

They already think it's part of the town. The other thing we had talked about doing at the special town meeting, is passing the ordinance that creates an ambulance department. A more careful reading of the town's own charter indicated that really needs to be done by referendum ballot. In order to be as careful as possible, we're going to go with that approach. Under state law, you could pass it at an open town meeting, but our charter is pretty prescriptive.

**Susan Ellis**

Would that be in May?

**Erb**

Yes.

**Bates**

That's the key issue. It needs to be on paper. It's not sufficient, like we do for the town meeting, a show of hands and a few slips of paper.

**Erb**

That's where we are on that. It would have been nice if we could get it all done now, but we can't so we'll do it this way.

**Van Thompson**

Most immediately are we dealing with the monies to continue the service?

**Bates**

Yes. The money to continue the service through the end of June.

**Van Thompson**

Is that what we need to decide tonight?

**Bates**

What we are deciding tonight is the wording for the warrant. On the 23rd of February, we hold the meeting. So that's Article Two, and Article Three is to have the voters authorize the Select Board and the Town Manager to sign their copy of the agreement, when it's final.

A motion was made by Cartwright, seconded by Thompson to approve the warrant document for the transfer of the Maine Nonprofit Corporation of St. George Volunteer Firemen's Association to the Town of St. George, as read and as presented in tonight's Select Board Meeting, and by a 3-0 vote, the motion carried.

**Bates**

I will sign it as well as Steve and Van, and then maybe Randy can stop by before Thursday. John. Tim, and Amy, thank you for coming tonight.

**Minutes**

A motion was made by Cartwright, seconded by Thompson, to approve the Select Board Minutes dated January 23, 2023, as corrected, and by a 3-0 vote, the motion carried, and the minutes were approved.

**Communications**

**Cartwright**

I'm sorry that two of us aren't here. I received a call today from a guy named Scott Dalrymple, who with his wife Margaret, own two cottages on Marshall Point Road; Stoney Crest and Hate to Quit are the

names of the cottages. He is the great grandson of Charles Skinner who was a Lightkeeper at Marshall Point. His father was Jean Dalrymple, who a lot of people knew around here. He and his wife Margaret live in Brunswick, and they spend summers on Marshall Point Road. He is not in favor of an expanded parking lot for Marshall Point. He said there are basically one or two days a year when, he used the word "nutty", when it gets nutty down there. He mentioned traffic is an issue on Open Light House Day and maybe one other day and he's there all summer. He was concerned about widening the road down there. He doesn't think that is necessary. He certainly hopes that tour buses are not ever routed down there, although he thinks school buses are fine as bringing kids there is a good learning experience. He just wanted us to know what he thought, and he was very polite. He said if we have any questions, he would be happy to talk with us.

**Bates**

Thank you. The second communication we have is a letter from the South Thompson Select Board. They copied us on a letter they sent to Representative Ann Matlack to support Sherrif Polky's proposal that we talked about a couple of weeks ago, to dedicate sections of Route 131 to the two deputies who were killed in the line of duty in 1959. South Thomaston endorsed that, and we also added our support for that.

**Warrant**

**Bates**

Next are the warrant articles. One is for the 23rd of January, one is for today, and one is for 10 Cold Storage Rd. also. Does anyone have any questions about the one for the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January?

**Van Thompson**

I reviewed them and didn't see anything that I thought was out of the ordinary on any of them.

**Bates**

That was sort of my sense. We can sign that one. Are there any comments about the warrant articles for the last two weeks?

**Bates**

We're using a lot of salt.

**Erb**

It's been more of an icy winter than a snowy winter.

**Bates**

If everyone is okay, we'll go ahead and sign that one and then the third one was the 10 Cold Storage Rd. which I think is basically to pay for Greg Johnson. Greg was the fellow who was dealing with the engineering design. Thank you, Irene.

## **Town Manager Report**

### **Erb**

I will talk about the bid opening, the ambulance transfer agreement and the budget. It has been busy. As for the bid opening, we're doing fine. I'll be giving Randy's report as a liaison. We did have the bid opening last Wednesday and received two bids. They came in quite late that day, but they came in on time. They were ahead of schedule. The two bidders are CPM Constructors out of Freeport and Reed and Reed Construction out of Woolwich. Our amount that we have to work with between town and federal money is \$6,352,978. We were looking for something less than that. Both bids were under that amount. CPM Constructors base bid was \$4,785,497. Reed and Reed was \$5,957,205. Both were under the amount that we had to work with. There are various options in the bids. Undoubtedly, the price will be different than that but we're confident that we'll be able to carry out the project with what we have to work with. I was speaking with Noel Mussen today. Tomorrow, they will begin bid tabulations and review of the requirements to make sure the bidders met the requirements in what they submitted. They're planning on having a meeting with the Harbor Committee. There were a couple of days that were suggested. One was February 15th. The other which I will try to dissuade them from is February 23rd because that will be the special town meeting, but we'll see what we can do. The plan will be that there'll be a recommendation to you on February 27th to vote to accept a bid. We're staying in contact with the EDA. They gave us various sheets that have to be filled out post bid opening and right now we're feeling good about the number that came in. It's curious, because there is a fairly widespread between the bids so that always makes you wonder. We could see areas where there were differences, so we'll be curious as to what those were, but they're two well respected companies. Anyone that bid had to be able to get a performance bond, which is no easy task, but we were happy with having two bids and happy to have both of them apparently under budget. That's where we are.

### **Cartwright**

When would we consider awarding a bid?

### **Erb**

It could be on February 27th.

### **Bates**

When Noel and Greg go through the numbers, they may decide that there may be something that will invalidate one of the bids. Hopefully there is nothing too drastic, but we could go back and get clarification.

### **Erb**

Yes, one thing that's kind of interesting is that there was an option to build concrete floats and that was dramatically higher. I don't know if any of you are familiar with them. The only thing I knew about was the concrete canoes. The price was dramatically higher for those so we may think about the number of concrete floats, how many we would have, if any at all. I will leave that to the engineers and the committee. If anyone is interested, we did photocopy numerous copies of the bids, and they're in my office. Before we leave tonight, if anyone would like a copy, I'm happy to give one to you.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Budget Committee**

#### **Van Thompson**

There was the Budget Committee meeting.

### **Conservation Committee**

#### **Cartwright**

I'll just mention that I attended the talk on the invasive brown tail moths and woolly adelgid, not your favorite visitors. Apparently, they're already here on the peninsula. The discussion was about various things we can do. The best thing you can do is snap the stick off if you see the nest and burn it. More information was provided, and I obtained some printed information for Van, because he was interested in it. There was a nice turnout.

#### **Bates**

It was a joint meeting with South Thomaston.

#### **Ken Oelberger**

Yes. I was going to add to that. We had a great turnout; we had over thirty people on Zoom that night, and another dozen in the Town Office, and will surely be putting the presentations on the town website for people to refer to.

#### **Van Thompson**

I was particularly interested in that. Thank you.

#### **Ken Oelberger**

I'm sure there's a bunch of people that missed it and would like to know what they should do. We had about forty register and a little over thirty actually came in on Zoom that night. It was the biggest turnout we've ever had on Zoom. Steve missed the meeting this week, but the other key thing is we did get the bridge drawings submitted for Fort Point with the professional engineer stamp on it and we had that approved by the state.

#### **Bates**

Diane, do you want to you want to say something?

#### **Diane Oelberger**

I have two questions. First, the deal with a scout house, perhaps they could look for some grants, or they could do a fundraising campaign or something like that.

#### **Bates**

The problem with the Scouting and Youth Council is that through an oversight, they lost their 501C3 status. They didn't seem to realize that. They did hire somebody to start making grant applications. As soon as the person found out that, in fact, they were not a nonprofit organization, they were advised they were not going to get grants in their present situation. They are refiling as a youth partnership but that



hasn't come through yet. I think once that does come through, they will be in a better position to get grants that will help defray the costs that they have on that building.

**Diane Oelberger**

Thank you. One more quick question. The gentleman whose house has the tax issue, where will he go?

**Erb**

His daughter lives in the area. He has also spoken about a son. I have not spoken to him since he made this decision but it's something he was weighing for quite a while.

**Jane Conrad**

Sure. I'll bet it was. Thank you. Thanks for your hard work, guys.

**Planning Board 7:00pm January 24 Meeting - Bates**

- The application to replace the 131' pier superstructure at 222 Harts Neck Road Road was voted complete and, with "permit-by-rule" approval by the DEP, was approved by the board.

**Adjourn**

A motion was made by Thompson, seconded by Cartwright, to adjourn the Select Board meeting, and by a 3-0 roll call vote, the motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:45p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tammy Taylor  
Recording Secretary  
Town of St. George