

ST. GEORGE SELECT BOARD & ASSESSORS

St. George Town Office

MEETING MINUTES

February 27, 2023 - 7p.m.

The Select Board meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Steve Cartwright, Van Thompson (Elevated to Chair), Wayne Sawyer, Randy Elwell, Richard Erb, Irene Ames, Susy Ellis, David Percival, Amy Drinkwater, Ryan Cline, Dan Morris and Tim Polky.

Present via Zoom were Richard Bates, John Falla, Loreen Meyer, Jane Conrad, Jerry Hall,

REGULAR SESSION

Quorum

A quorum was present. Thompson was appointed as temporary Chair for the meeting as Bates joined the meeting late due to technical issues.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Adjustments to the Agenda

Review of FY24 Town Budget – part 2 was moved to the beginning of the agenda to accommodate the various visiting committees.

Bates requested an additional agenda item - Tax Rate Projections

Review of FY24 Town Budget – part 2

Van Thompson

Rick, shall we start with the town office, and any questions people have relative to that.

Jerry Hall

I have a question. The amount appropriated for fiscal year 23 doesn't match the budgeted number on the expense statements that were circulated. Can you explain the difference? The budget spreadsheet says that we appropriated \$762,670 in fiscal year 23 but the quarterly expense statement says that the budget for fiscal 23 was \$660,969, a roughly \$100,000 difference. Where does that come from?

Irene Ames

I will look into that and get back to you. I'll have to look at the numbers.

Jerry Hall

Okay. The other department, where that is also the case, is the Select Board and Assessors. One says \$85,000 and the other says \$75,000.

Erb

I wonder if the difference has anything to do with carry forwards. We'll get an answer on that. As far as proposed budget, I'll answer any questions anyone has.

Susan Ellis

Are we doing this by department or are we doing an overview?

Van Thompson

We started by doing it by department, but we can do an overview if that's pertinent to a given department. We're starting with the Town Office. I saw we had a certain amount budgeted for software. Together with the Assessor's and the Planning Board, it adds up to \$25,000. Is that appropriate? Is there any repeat in there?

Erb

The biggest piece of it for the Town Office is the Trio software; then there are various specialized software's in the other departments. The biggest piece of it is Trio. I don't believe that they're redundant, but I'll double check.

Van Thompson

Anything else for the Town Office?

Jerry Hall

The employee benefits go from \$123,954 expended to \$227,000 appropriated in fiscal year 23 and you've budgeted \$228,000 but the quarterly expense statement shows the budgeted employee benefits in that department was \$136,000 not \$227,000. Oh, I see what it is now. The employee benefits line is the same as the salary line. There's a mistake on that line I'd say. The employee benefits in the quarterly expense statement show \$136,000 for the year and change versus the \$227,776 which is in fact the amount budgeted or appropriated for the salaries. That's probably why the total is off.

Van Thompson

I appreciate you noticing that, and we'll have to make the adjustments. Anything else of concern in the Town Office?

Jerry Hall

The key here is that the budget is basically flat this year, and once the corrections are made, our presumption should be that it will be still flat with a revised set of numbers.

Van Thompson

I believe you're correct.

Bates

The issue Jerry is the audit which has increased. We're going to have Ron Beaulieu do some prep work, which will hopefully reduce the burden on the auditor. That's why there's an increase in the Town Office line.

Jerry Hall

The appropriated number for fiscal year 23 shown on the budget spreadsheet for fiscal 24 isn't correct. There's a mistake and so that that needs to be fixed.

Van Thompson

Shall we move on to the Select Board and Assessors?

Erb

The biggest change there is we simply had not appropriated enough for the Assessors' agent.

Van Thompson

Is this an estimate?

Erb

It is. I spoke with the agent.

Jerry Hall

The quarterly expense statements show an abatement expense budget of \$10,000 in fiscal 23 and on the budget worksheet it doesn't show that. I believe the correct budget for fiscal 23 was \$85,000, so the \$83,845 shown is actually a decrease from what was appropriated for fiscal 23.

Van Thompson

Are you saying that the proposed is less than what was previously appropriated?

Jerry Hall

Yes.

Van Thompson

By how much?

Jerry Hall

By about \$1800.

Erb

Jerry, are you talking about the abatement expense line? Are you saying that there should be an appropriation showing for FY23, but not one for FY24?

Susan Ellis

Don't we deal with abatements differently now?

Erb

I think we should.

Susan Ellis

They keep changing it around, so it's hard to keep up.

Van Thompson

So that needs to be clarified?

Erb

Yes.

Susan Ellis

Do we want an abatement line, or do we not want an abatement line?

Erb

I've never seen one any other place that I've worked, so it threw me off when I found that budgeted for.

Susan Ellis

So, we just fund abatements from the overlays?

Erb

Correct.

Van Thompson

If there is nothing else for the Select Board and Assessors, we'll move on to the Public Safety and Fire Department.

Erb

One thing you'll remember from last year, the vehicle acquisition reserve was reduced. The reason was, we believed that would be on a one-time basis while we paid for the new roof, and so you'll see it restored back to where it was before. Another thing, I think you're probably all aware of this, but where we have taken the dispatch fee entirely from the Fire Department budget, with the change in the ambulance structure, half of it will come from fire departments and half will come from the ambulance.

Van Thompson

Anything else? Okay, let's move on to Public Safety and the Ambulance Department.

Erb

For this department, we had to build the budget. We were able to take what had been put together by the Association for a budget and meld it with a typical town setup of the budget. The largest piece of the budget is staffing cost. I have reviewed some of that with Amy. I believe that we must pay what we are paying in order to be competitive. The way we staff is: one paramedic at all times, two EMTs during daytime hours and one EMT during overnight hours. That's what it comes up to. I know there have been some questions about putting money aside in reserve for an ambulance replacement. The answer to that is not in this budget, at least not at this time. This is a this is a tough year for us and while I'd like to be putting money aside, it might have to wait a year.

Susan Ellis

Are there any assets that are coming to us from the Ambulance Association, like a reserve account?

Erb

Others could probably speak to that better than I, but I believe the problem is that those funds have been used in order to keep the ambulance going, which is how they kept going as long as they did.

Van Thompson

Is there anything else relative to the ambulance service budget?

Susan Ellis

What are we anticipating for a timeline for the ambulance replacement?

Amy Drinkwater

Our ambulance should be replaced in the next couple of years. We replace it every ten years and our current one is a 2015.

Erb

What is the cost of an ambulance now?

Amy Drinkwater

About \$220,000.

Van Thompson

That might be something that the ARPA funds might well be used for.

Erb

The town certainly has the ability to borrow, as another option. As anyone can see, running an emergency service like this is extremely expensive. I don't see alternatives, though. There is a level of service that people expect and there's a price for wages. It is an issue for every community. I don't see us reducing the amount of staffing. I don't see us being able to pay any less than we are and that's the biggest piece of the budget.

Susan Ellis

What is the difference between what you are recommending and the proposed budget for benefits?

Erb

I think we're probably going to want to adjust this although it won't change the cost any. I believe that the price that you see here includes some family coverage. That really should be budgeted elsewhere, although it won't change the overall cost of the budget. We try to make an educated guess based on the staff that we have now. Who is going to take family coverage and who is not going to take family coverage. Amy, refresh my memory. As it stands right now, is there one person that takes family coverage?

Amy Drinkwater

Yes, there is one person that takes family coverage.

Erb

I ended up putting in for two persons. That's sort of a reasonable compromise. It's still quite a jump in benefits. Does anybody else have a concern or something they'd like to bring up relative to the ambulance service? Let's move on to Public Works.

Susan Ellis

Is there a specific plan for equipment purchases? What's needed?

Erb

There are not a lot of big needs right now. The next large need would be replacement of the pickup truck that Stevie uses. You can see the maintenance costs for that have increased within the past year, especially. We've had to replace all four tires, brakes and some other work but it looks to be in pretty good shape now. I think we're going to continue to fight that battle.

Susan Ellis

Shouldn't we be starting a reserve account for that as well?

Erb

I tend to think we probably will come up with needs of \$2,500 in a typical year, so I would hate to drain that completely.

Van Thompson

Let's move on to Public Works- Solid Waste. One thing I wanted to point out on the tipping fee, I have \$166,000 based on what I was seeing two months ago on our average tonnage. What I'm finding is that it's probably a little bit higher than that. When I looked at Jerry's calculation, his analysis showed a fair amount less. The piece that's missing from that is we have a rate increase coming up on October 1st, so the first quarter will be at our current rate. It's going to go from \$63 to \$76 a ton on October 1st. It's still a pretty good price, as the Select Board will remember but that's a twenty percent increase that we're going to have to absorb. Twenty percent for three quarters of the year works out to a fifteen percent increase on an annual basis, so if you take Jerry's figure of \$149,000 and increase that by fifteen percent, that equals \$172,000, which is almost exactly what I came up with when I used my revised tonnages. Jerry, you had not factored in any kind of rate increase, correct?

Jerry Hall

I was projecting where we're going to wind up for this year. Based on that I would agree with \$172,000.

Erb

I think that's going to be a more accurate figure. You've mentioned it has been a long-time problem. Year after year, we were under budgeting for salt. I can see how it happens.

Susan Ellis

Do we want to change this to \$172,000 or leave it at \$170,000?

Erb

I would recommend \$172,000.

Susan Ellis

Do they feel like the transportation portion is where it needs to be?

Erb

I'm pretty sure I budgeted for an increase on that.

Susan Ellis

You did.

Erb

The problem we've had with transportation costs as you can imagine is fuel and the contract that we have with Aaron Grindle has an escalator based on the price of diesel. I didn't think it was a good time to put it back out for bid, although at some point I think we probably should.

Jerry Hall

The estimate for this year is \$133,000. It looks like we're going to come in substantially over budget for this year. It's based on what fuel prices are expected to be next year compared to this year and part of this year was pretty high, so maybe it will come down a little.

Susan Ellis

Is this a number that you would leave unchanged?

Erb

I think I would. It may be wishful thinking. Prices have dropped over the last four or five months.

Van Thompson

We'll adjust that one number and move on to Social and Community Services.

Erb

Since our last meeting, I did receive a letter from Maine Coast Heritage Trust, thanking the Town for previous support, and noting that they gave us \$1,000 in past few years. They'd be grateful for our consideration in continuing that generosity in 2023. It didn't specifically ask for \$1000 but that certainly was what they were doing.

Van Thompson

Are there any thoughts from the Board?

Cartwright

I think we should do it. They've done a whole lot for the Town.

Falla

I'm just looking for clarification. I saw that the Community and Social Services was on the agenda for tonight and at the last meeting, there was discussion about the Historical Society's request. Has that been taken care of or is that going to be discussed again tonight?

Bates

The issue with the Historical Society was the request for money for preparing the gravestones. I don't think that situation has changed. I think the considerations that we had at our last meeting three weeks ago apply. The only reason we have this on the agenda is for other issues.

Falla

So that's not being discussed.

Bates

I don't believe there's any reason to discuss that tonight.

Falla

Was it denied by the Board?

Bates

Absolutely John.

Falla

I saw it on the agenda and wanted to clarify what the status was.

Van Thompson

We're down to the Maine Coast Heritage Trust.

Susan Ellis

We did some work on this and sent an email to you with proposed amounts, particularly for the ones we were discussing.

Bates

May I suggest the numbers that the Budget Committee had suggested, which was \$500 for Maine Coast Heritage Trust. Given the difficult year that we have, it is probably more appropriate than \$1,000. As much as I wish it could be more, I agree with the Budget Committee on that. I also noticed in your numbers for the Budget Committee, you suggested that Spectrum Generation should receive \$3,000 and not the \$3,300 that they had requested. The \$3,000 amount would get my support.

Susan Ellis

Did the rest of you see the email that we sent to the Select Board? I can run the numbers down:

Social and Community Services requests:

AIO - \$3,000 as requested
Coastal Children's Museum - no request, no donation
Coastal Opportunities - \$100 as requested
Knox County Health Clinic - \$2,000 as requested
Lifeflight - \$649 as requested
Maine Coast Heritage Trust - \$500 with a letter requiring a formal request in the future
Maine Public - \$200 as requested
Neighbor to Neighbor - \$3,000 as requested
New Hope \$1,254 as requested
Penquis - \$2,146 as requested
Rockland District Nurses - \$4,000 as requested
Spectrum Generation - \$3,000 matching last year, not the \$3,300 requested (sixteen people affected)
St. George Youth and Scout - \$0
Trekkers - \$2,500 as requested
Waldo County CAP - \$1,296 as requested (Neighbor to Neighbor will talk with them and confirm nine people affected)
Veterans Graves - \$4,230 as requested
Cemetery - \$6,500 as requested
Jackson Memorial - \$50,000 as requested
Shellfish Management - \$3,000 as requested
CDC - \$12,000 as requested
Herring Gut - \$1,500, not the \$3,000 requested

Cartwright

The \$500 for Maine Coast Heritage Trust shows we are acknowledging them.

Susan Ellis

Right, and hopefully we'll be able to do more in the future. They have done a lot for our town, and we want to keep a placeholder.

Cartwright

I see so many local people going to Clark Island.

Bates

I will make a suggestion for all of Community and Social Services. It seems over the years that the organizations applying are not being so thorough in their applications as they used to be. I think we have it in our policy that when submitting a request, they submit their budget and give us a statement of their assets. Suzy mentioned in her letter to the Select Board last week that we need to revisit that and make sure that all of these organizations know that we expect to see revenue and asset statements along with their requests, so that we can do a fair evaluation. Also, none of this last-minute application. They do need to get them in on time. We need to consider them in a timely way rather than at the last minute.

Jerry Hall

It might be a good idea when we send them checks to include a letter, reminding them of the rules of engagement.

Van Thompson

Is there anything else in this area? Let's talk about revenues.

Bates

Rick, you've done some checking on the issue of state revenue sharing. Please discuss that.

Erb

Certainly. Typically, the State sends out an estimate for state revenue sharing. There is a Revenue Forecasting Committee that meets and there's a certain percentage which is to be shared with the municipalities and they will give us a number. We had one last year. It was a fairly high number at the time. Many of us in municipalities were skeptical that it would be as high as they had forecasted, and it turned out to be all that and more. This year, I hadn't received any notice from the State, so I contacted Maine Municipal Association, and they told me there is one, but they had not published it. I'm not sure why. I had made up my own estimate of \$220,000. It turns out that the estimate that comes from the State was \$224,000. I'm fairly comfortable with that. I think that any prediction of state revenues is going to depend on whether you believe we're in recession and will stay in recession. It still will be a reduction. You've probably seen the \$260,000 range for this year, which was a nice surprise. I feel fairly confident in the \$220,000 figure. Jerry, do you have any thoughts on that?

Jerry Hall

No. The calculation shows we're up 21.5% year to date, and if that trend continues then this is what the number will be. There's a question of the timing of the payments and if they will be the same as last year. Will the trend thus far continue? I don't have any feel for that at all.

Susan Ellis

Rick, is the interest in cost item on property taxes?

Erb

Yes, it is. Sometimes that's a good sign. If you don't have a lot of interest in cost, that means people are paying on time.

Randy Elwell

Does the \$140,746 include the tax freeze?

Erb

No. That's a really good question. I don't know how to even factor that in.

Susan Ellis

Isn't the state supposed to make us whole?

Erb

Yes.

Irene Ames

They are supposed to.

Susan Ellis

It's not complete yet, is it? Isn't it coming back up in this session?

Irene Ames

They are talking about changing it.

Erb

From what I've been able to gather, I think this first year is going to go through just as proposed. In subsequent years, I'll be surprised if it does.

Susan Ellis

And Solid Waste went down significantly. What was the thinking there?

Erb

The fact is that Solid Waste revenues have dropped significantly and much of it has to do with pricing. Some of it is the amount that we've delivered to market, but mostly its pricing.

Jerry Hall

The planning fees look a little low. We're close to \$28,000 year to date, with five months to go.

Erb

I knew that when I put the number there. Part of me is skeptical that the boom we have seen will be sustained into the next fiscal year.

Jerry Hall

With the interest rates what they are, housing starts are slowing.

Susan Ellis

It seems prudent.

Jerry Hall

There's a question of whether your Solid Waste number proposed is too high.

Erb

It could be. It's a commodity and very tough to predict. We have another meeting to go. I'd be happy to look at it again and possibly reconsider it.

Susan Ellis

Is the ambulance revenue from billing?

Erb

Yes.

Jerry Hall

The run rate on the boat excise tax and the mooring fees are down. Why is that? Is it a timing difference? It's hard to believe those will be down.

Erb

I wondered that too. It seems like that would be very stable year to year. I assume that most of that is very heavily loaded towards the spring.

Jerry Hall

The comparison I do looks at the calendarization. On a year-to-date basis, we're down 39% on excise tax and down 8.8% on mooring permits. People may be delaying payments because it's been a tough year. It makes sense that it should be pretty constant year to year.

Ryan Cline

Most people are not paying their mooring fees until May or June. I bet they're not half done now.

Erb

Does any of the boat excise tax have anything to deal with whether boats are documented? Do they pay tax?

Jerry Hall

Yes.

Erb

I wondered if there was any change in the status of the boats.

Susan Ellis

I believe they're supposed to pay excise tax. They just don't have to come in for their state registration.

Van Thompson

Anything further on Revenue? We have Reserve Accounts next on the agenda.

Susan Ellis

I want to talk about the water holes. There is \$4,000 there.

Irene Ames

What the water hole reserve is for is not for the water holes themselves. It's for plumbing so that the fire trucks can "pump from the water hole". Somebody else might be able to say for sure, but I think for a lot of them the hardware would come at the same time so they're all going to need to be redone at the same time.

Randy Elwell

When they get clogged, we have to have someone unplug them and when they're broken, we replace them. Dave Miller just put one in on Route 73. The money is there to buy the pipe and install it.

Susan Ellis

Do you think this still needs to be funded?

Randy Elwell

Yes.

Irene Ames

We're always going need it.

Susan Ellis

And then the revaluation, what's our target there? What are we anticipating revaluations on?

Bates

Susie, I don't know if you saw that there were some bids in for reevaluating Rockland recently, and one of the companies KRT came in at \$250,000 and another company, Appraise and Company, came in at \$310,000. It's interesting those numbers are so much less than we paid for our last appraisal a while ago. I find it hard to understand the numbers. Whatever happens, we're going to be below what we need. I think given the way that the numbers are going on appraisals, we are going to need to start an appraisal in the next year. That is a problem. We don't have enough in the reserves.

Randy Elwell

I think Rockport dropped theirs because of cost. It came in higher than anticipated.

Susan Ellis

Did they get quotes and then not do it?

Randy Elwell

Yes, it was a lot of money.

Susan Ellis

So, we'll keep adding to that. That's fine. Ramps and Floats. Do we have enough money in there?

Irene Ames

The storm damage really depleted that.

Susan Ellis

We added \$2,500 this year, plus another \$2,500. Is that right?

Irene Ames

I think the storm damage used about \$8,000.

Ryan Cline

That is the estimated cost, depending on what you fix.

Susan Ellis

So where are we with ramps and floats?

Irene Ames

We are hurting.

Ryan Cline

But after this year, the floats are going to be up to date.

Susan Ellis

Is there enough money here for you to function?

Ryan Cline

Yes.

Susan Ellis

That's what I wanted to know.

Ryan Cline

It's just that the reserves are going to be really low, because I've done the floats down here and that's pretty much wiped it out. There should be enough money in there to do the ones in Port Clyde.

Erb

There are disaster relief funds that will be coming to us which ought to replenish whatever we've had to spend on that last storm. I don't know how much it will be but it's going to be a significant amount.

Susan Ellis

And then there is this Harbor Planning Reserve. Do we still need that? Could we use it for floats? Do we still need to have a Harbor Planning Reserve account?

Erb

I don't have that sheet in front of me. How much does it say?

Susan Ellis

\$2,071.08.

Erb

It sounds like that was leftover.

Susan Ellis

We could put it in the reevaluation reserve. If we don't need it, let's close that account and put it someplace we need it.

Erb

We probably would need a town meeting to do that which we could do.

Jerry Hall

For Energy Efficiency, I think we'll need \$80,000 by the first of April.

Susan Ellis

We have \$10,000 coming in, and then do we have another \$10,000 coming in?

Bates

No, we have \$10,000 coming in on July 1st, so when we get to April 24th, we will be about \$8,500 short. I think that's something we will be able to find in other accounts in order that we can purchase the panels at that stage.

Jerry Hall

In what other accounts would you find that?

Erb

I don't have that information at hand, but I thought that was for the next budget, not the one that we're working on now. Is that correct?

Jerry Hall

The end of this year, on March 31, 2023, will be the end of year five. And so, the end of year six will be March 31, 2024. That means that electricity will be free for the last three months of fiscal 24, so you might be able to pay for that shortfall out of utilities or you may want to boost it up a little bit. Three months' worth of electricity is worth about \$4,000, maybe \$5,000.

Bates

In looking at the company combined Town office and other budgets, I think I agree with you. That's where the money can be found.

Erb

I will report back on that next meeting.

Van Thompson

Anything else on reserve accounts? Any other general comments on the budget at this point? We have some recalculations to do.

Susan Ellis

I have one more. Insurance reserves.

Jerry Hall

What is that?

Van Thompson

It's been carried for a while.

Irene Ames

It's required by the State, and I think it's grossly underfunded. It's one of those things that we're never really going to use. They require us to have the money in there so that if our insurance company decides to go out of business, we have enough money to be self-insured. We would just go out and find another insurance company.

Cartwright

Will you check into that Rick and see what the legality of this is?

Erb

Yes, I will. I've not run into that before.

Irene Ames

That was something that came up in my payroll law class. I want to review that.

Susan Ellis

If we didn't need to have that, we could also add it to the town meeting to rearrange accounts.

Erb

Irene, is this the reserve for when people leave, and go on Cobra?

Irene Ames

That insurance is for the sick leave reserve. If you had a 100% turnover in staff, there would be enough money to pay out everybody.

Van Thompson

Irene, will you look into that?

Irene Ames

Yes, as far as insurance reserves.

Van Thompson

Good. Anything else on this? We will wait for updates. Let's get back into the regular session.

Approve Awarding Contract for 10 Cold Storage Road Project

Dan Morris

Basically, a while back we had to apply for an EDA grant from the Feds. The Harbor Committee, as you may know, has been involved in improving the current (inaudible) in Port Clyde for quite some time. Dave Schmanska, when he was the Harbor Master, wrote the letter to the to the family in 2014. Some of us have been at this for nine years, which is very difficult to grasp. Within the last couple of years, we've applied for two federal grants. The last one we applied for was for EDA, and they granted us \$4.8 million, so we were successful in that application. We sent the project out to bid. We received two bids back. One from CPM Corp. and one from Reed and Reed. CPM's bid was just short of \$4.8 million. Reed & Reed's bid was \$5.9 million. Our consultant, Noel Mussen, and his engineering people, as well as the people at EDA, have blessed the bid as being accurate, within the specifications. EDA virtually controls how their money is spent. While it's a second step in the process, it also serves to verify what the town is doing independently of the town, so we feel good about that. Even though it takes a little longer, the EDA process has so far verified everything that we thought we knew about the bids. Correct me if I'm wrong Rick. I think we're waiting on a date right now for a startup meeting, which is something mandated by EDA, in which the contract of the town and EDA get together and discuss any final issues they may have. Our consultant has had conversations with CPM about how the construction will be conducted. We've identified who will represent the town to make sure that the construction is done per the specifications. We've identified the person within CPM who will be there on a daily basis during the construction. We've made a lot of progress in the last month or so.

Erb

Those are the kickoff meetings.

Dan Morris

Yes, we're expecting that to happen around the end of March and CPM has indicated that they are ready to go with virtually no delay in the start of construction. Their idea about this project is to be virtually done with it by the end of the year. In terms of construction schedules, which we were really concerned about as a Harbor Committee, given the amount of work that's out there and the schedules of these various companies, it couldn't have been better news. Within the last month or two, we've been given reason to be fairly optimistic about this and although we've been here before, it looks like we're a lot

further down the road now than we've ever been. Fingers crossed; we're hoping that 2023 results in quite a lot of change.

Erb

We have \$6.3 million to work with. The bid came in substantially less than that. We are optimistic about the amounts. There was a decision to be made on what to do with the floats. There is a fairly substantial add on if we were to go with concrete floats and after quite a bit of discussion, the Committee concluded that we would go with traditional wooden floats that could be removed in wintertime, and to not go with the concrete floats which would add \$700,000 to the cost. The Committee did vote to recommend that the Select Board accept the bid from CPM, the base bid, not with any of the add-ons. CPM is eager to get started and has the ability to do it. They'll be working in summertime. That is something that is going to be a challenge for all of us.

Cartwright

The traffic pattern will be interesting.

Dan Morris

We've had conversations about that and understand that the town needs to do outreach, especially with the businesses down there, and work with CPM on scheduling different work at different times in the day. It's going to be quite a challenge. Originally, we were thinking about three seasons of construction, fall, winter and spring, and not doing anything during the summer, but given the history of this project, if we have a company ready to go, I'm ready to go.

A motion was made by Elwell, seconded by Bates, to contract with CPM, based on the Harbor Committee's recommendation, and by a unanimous roll call vote, the motion carried.

Cartwright

Rick, what happens with the funds above the amount of the bid? Are those at our discretion?

Erb

Basically, they are.

Cartwright

Can you use them for something else?

Erb

You would have to reappropriate them. You can use them on the project. The way EDA works, they're going to pay 80% up to their maximum amount. If it works out to be less than that, EDA keeps their money, which would mean we would have excess funds. Some have thought that if we get to the end of

the project, and there's funding available and we still have the debt of \$150,000 left in the loan that we took out to purchase the land, we could pay it off early.

Irene Ames

We've been paying on it for eight years and there's two payments left of \$75,000 each.

Randy Elwell

One thought is to wait until the project is almost done because something might come up.

Irene Ames

We should wait until the last bill is paid, and then see where we stand.

Bates

I'd like to thank the Harbor Committee on behalf of the Board for all for all their efforts on this project, and in particular Danny, for all the work over these last nine years. I think they have done a terrific job on this project, and we're here because of all that hard work they put into this.

Dan Morris

We've all worked very hard, so we are looking forward to finishing.

Van Thompson

I'm sure we'll have some discussions about what we do with the businesses over the summer down there.

Randy Elwell

There was a big discussion with the Harbor Committee tonight to have a plan to keep the public up to date and work with the people down there because there are going to be trucks and equipment.

Dan Morris

This project opened up a whole different set of issues that the Harbor Committee finds itself discussing. We're not experts on parking and logistics. How to get an 18-Wheeler through there in the summertime is anybody's guess. There are a lot of issues ahead. The Harbormaster and the Harbor Committee may have to grapple with these things. We're trying to get across to people that we know there are going to be inconveniences. We will do our best to make sure there's not a hardship. Thank you all.

Tax Rate Projections

Erb

The County tax is already set for the year; that is not going to change. A few changes we made tonight are the municipal appropriations. I've had some conversations with Mike about the school budget.

They're going to begin budget workshops this Wednesday, and the following two Wednesdays. They have some issues related to revenues being reduced based on some of the demographics of the school. We have an idea where we are at on revenues. The problem we face is that for all three parts of the tax bill, there are double digit percentage increases this year. It's a tough year. A question I have is whether this is going to be acceptable to the Select Board and Budget Committees or the voters and is it something that we should be addressing now. There are not a lot of easy choices here. There are things that could be cut or reduced, although we might not want to, and they might not necessarily be good decisions in the long run. I think before our next meeting, it's worth thinking about whether this is going to be acceptable. I did send a copy of this to Richard today, so I know he has it. Any thoughts people have?

Susan Ellis

I don't know where we can cut much more.

Randy Elwell

Well, it's a tough year but I think a lot of people are going to understand. We are facing the upcoming state reevaluation and the ambulance costs are going up. We're being straightforward about the reasons for it. I don't like to see it, we're all taxpayers. We're no different than any other town. Other towns are going through the same thing.

Erb

There's no doubt that on the municipal side, almost all of the increase comes from absorbing the ambulance, but we need to have an ambulance service.

Randy Elwell

When we did the survey, that's the kind of service that the people wanted, and we gave them what they wanted. COVID was the biggest thing hurting us because we couldn't fundraise, and we couldn't get out of that hole when COVID issues decreased.

Erb

I don't think there are many alternatives regarding regionalizing service. There are not many other good choices out there and from what I hear people don't want those. A lot of it has to do with our geography.

Randy Elwell

Port Clyde to Penbay is a forty-five-minute ride.

Erb

I'm grateful for the \$129,000 in revenue that comes from billing. We're a pretty small town and not going to be able to achieve much more.

Randy Elwell

We draw more in the summer because we have more population, but it will drop off come Winter.

Erb

We're paying to have the service available is really what it's all about.

Susan Ellis

It doesn't come close to breaking even.

Cartwright

Are there ambulance services in other communities that break even?

Erb

No.

Randy Elwell

One of the biggest problems with services like ours is retaining paramedics. Some of the paramedics we have full time could go somewhere else and make more money.

Erb

If you're in the right location, and able to do a lot of transports between hospitals and nursing homes, you can make money on that.

Randy Elwell

Waldoboro and Belfast do that, but that's a whole different set of issues.

Erb

That's not an option for us. Richard and I had a conversation about that. The problem with that is we have one ambulance and if you tie it up on a transport, it is unavailable for an emergency.

Randy Elwell

I have this feeling the state is going to drop their share for the tax freeze for seniors over sixty-five and it's going to hurt us because we will have to pick up the slack.

Erb

There is a bill that has a good chance, and it would change this entirely. It eliminates the cap aspect of it, and increases the homestead exemption, particularly for people over the age of sixty-five.

Bates

On March 13th, we'll go through the budget numbers, and finalize it. I hope we'll all be in a position to sign off on the different departments. Then the Budget Committee will come up with their proposals.

Randy Elwell

When was Mike Felton coming in to speak to us?

Bates

Mike was going to speak to us about what's going on when we meet on the 27th of March.

Randy Elwell

They're going to start their budget workshops next week.

Bates

They are starting this week and will continue for the next three weeks. Mike and Cassie encourage all of us to join in their meetings, either in person or via Zoom. I believe I sent the Select Board the Zoom contact information for those meetings.

Appointment of Carl Danielson as an Alternate Member of the Harbor Committee

A motion was made by Cartwright, seconded by Elwell, to appoint Carl Danielson as an alternate member of the Harbor Committee, and by a unanimous roll call vote, the motion carried.

Liquor License for the Craginair Inn

A motion was made by Elwell, seconded by Thompson, to approve the liquor license for the Craginair Inn, and by a unanimous roll call vote, the motion carried.

Minutes

A motion was made by Bates, seconded by Cartwright to approve the February 6, 2023 Select Board Meeting Minutes, and by a 4-0 roll call vote (Sawyer abstained), the motion carried.

Bates

I don't believe we need to vote on the Special Town Meeting Minutes from February 23, 2023. We acknowledge that they will be published along with the regular minutes.

Erb

I think you're correct. I've never seen a board vote to accept town meeting minutes.

Warrant

Bates

There was one new item on the warrant, Mission Square Payments, which is the new name for the ICMA retirement plan that we used to pay into. I think Irene can confirm that the company has changed names. ICMA is now Mission Square.

Irene Ames

Yes. They were still accepting checks made out in the old name but in December they returned the check. It had to be made out to Mission Square. That's why you'll see two checks to Mission Square on the warrant. They both went through; one of them was for December and one was for January.

Town Manager's Report

Erb

We rescheduled the Special Town Meeting, and hope for better weather next time. There are school budget workshops on each of the next three Wednesdays. I'm planning to attend either in person or via Zoom. Otherwise, there is not a whole lot to report. You'll see on the warrant there was a payment to Kalloch for some construction work, rearranging the riprap down at Drift Inn to try to block wave action that was sending material into the culvert. As I mentioned, we are waiting to hear back on some of the FEMA reimbursement for the December 23rd storm. It won't be a lot of money.

Committee Reports

February 14, 2023 Planning Board Meeting - Bates

The application to replace the 119' pier at Seavey Island (recently destroyed by a storm) was voted complete and, with "permit-by-rule" approval by the DEP, was approved by the board.

Status of Tax Acquired Property

Erb

Town Manager Erb handed out a list of Tax Acquired Properties as of 01/25/23. Possible actions for the fifteen properties were discussed and Erb will provide determinations in an upcoming Select Board meeting.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Sawyer, seconded by Cartwright, to adjourn the Select Board meeting, and by a unanimous roll call vote, the motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:00p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tammy Taylor
Recording Secretary
Town of St. George