

ST. GEORGE SELECT BOARD & ASSESSORS
St. George Town Office
MEETING MINUTES
May 1, 2023

The Select Board meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. Present were Richard Bates (Chair), Steve Cartwright, Thompson, Wayne Sawyer, Randy Elwell, Richard Erb, Irene Ames, Jeff Schroeder, Lawrence Olivieri, Bob Baines, Keith Miller, Jim Balano, {Illegible}, Gerry Cushman, Alaina Zyhowski, Sally Crusan, Steve Miller, Jane Conrad, Richard Philbrook, Brian Tarbox, {Illegible}, S.L. Thomas, Wendy Carr, Bob Olivieri, Dan Staples, David Taylor, Afton Vigue, Sierra Brock, Brandon Bezio, George Hart, Mark Miller, Gail Miller, Toni Small, Scott Lord, and David Hupper.

Via Zoom: Present were Loreen Meyer, Joanna Caldenwood, Adele Welch, Crystal Canney and Sandra Roak.

REGULAR SESSION

Quorum

A quorum was present.

Public Comment

Bates

The first thing on the agenda, as always, is public comments. And for those of you who haven't been to our meetings before, or not very frequently, I'd like to read our policy manual about a few key intents of public comments. It's a tradition that citizens can address the town at Select Board meetings, but it's important to note, it's an opportunity for the citizens to be heard, but not necessarily for the Select Board to resolve the issues or take immediate action. You may view it as a way of letting off steam, but don't expect a lot of reaction over here, necessarily. With that, let's get started. Does anyone have any public comment?

Bob Olivieri

I just want to remind everybody, the National Association of REALTORS is going to descend on Washington next week, and the big topic is housing affordability. This is number one on the agenda. If you have any connections to your Congresswoman, Chellie Pingree, then I would definitely contact her.

I do have her contact for the real estate industry. She is a realtor out of Brunswick, but she's, our representative. I would encourage you to use the resources that they obviously have, as you go forward in your housing affordability study.

Bates

Hearing no other public comments, we'll move on to the regular agenda.

Regular Agenda

Adjustments to the Agenda

The following agenda items were added to the agenda:

Old Business Action Items

Honoring the two Sheriff's Deputies who were killed in 1959

New Business Action Items

Approve Tax Abatement for 219 Otis Point Rd.

Approve Property Tax Exemption for a post-WW1 Veteran

Set Certified Ratio for the Purposes of Property Tax Exemptions, etc.

New Business Discussion Items

Two Notices of Layout and Taking of Parcels of Land in St. George by the State DOT

The order was adjusted to have Afton Vigue from the Maine Aquaculture Assoc. Presentation as the first item of the regular agenda.

Presentation by Afton Vigue from the Maine Aquaculture Association

Bates

Afton Vigue, is here to educate the Select Board about aquaculture, help us understand the opportunities and the challenges here in St. George, and what the Board can do to help make that flourish. We all know the challenges that the fishing industry is facing. It's vital for the future economic prosperity of the health of St. George, that we don't smother aquaculture because, like I said, it's vital for our future. People in St. George have been making their livelihoods here for over two-hundred years using the water, and we want that to continue. So let me tell you about Afton. She is from Martinsville. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in Ecology and Environmental Sciences, from the University of Maine, and she also has a Master of Science degree in Natural Resource Economics. She joined the Maine Aquaculture Association in 2019. Her title is Outreach and Development Specialist. The Board will probably have some questions, clarifications, etc. I hope we'll have time to have some of the public's questions answered. I want to stress we're not here to have a scientific debate tonight but to learn about

aquaculture. We want to hear from groups and make sure that the Board at this stage in the discussion understands aquaculture.

Afton Vigue

I have packets for the Select Board this evening. Thank you for inviting me to come in. I'm the Outreach and Development Specialist for the Maine Aquaculture Association. I grew up in Tenants Harbor, Maine for 16 years of my life; my dad is sitting right next to me. Our coastal economy and our working waterfront is very important to me, and it's the forefront of everything that I do. So, with that, I just want to jump into it. Just to give a little background, the Maine Aquaculture Association, is a nonprofit trade association, founded in 1978, one of the oldest state trade associations for aquaculture in the country. We are a membership organization. We represent and advocate for aquatic farmers in Maine, both on land and in the ocean. We do represent finfish, shellfish and sea vegetable growers. So that is a little bit about what I do and who I work for. My job is outreach and development. My job is to educate the public on aquaculture, to do outreach activities, to communicate our mission and to answer questions.

I want to point you to the handout that I provided because it breaks down a lot of key points and gives information about what aquaculture is in Maine, including the different types of leases, and the different types of regulatory structures that we have in place. Aquaculture is very highly regulated in Maine and in the U.S., for that matter. We're also a leader in aquaculture. I want to point that out. Aquaculture in the U.S. is growing at about 1% per year. In Maine, it's growing at about 2% per year on average. So, while we are still To compared to world standards, we have a very dynamic sector and a lot of diversity. We're growing around twenty-five different species in Maine, which is more than most of the states in the country. In Maine we have shellfish, primarily oysters and mussels, but then we have some growers who are experimenting with scallop farming, sea scallops, as well as urchins and some hard clams and even razor clams, which is very exciting, kind of new and experimental. Oysters are the bulk of what we farm in terms of shellfish. We also have facilities that raise Atlantic salmon; we have the nation's first commercial large scale eel farm in Waldoboro that just broke ground with unagi. They actually work directly with wild fishermen to raise black eels to maturity in Waldoboro which is very exciting. They are bringing jobs to coastal communities in places where the cost of living is getting so high that people who grew up in these towns can't afford to live here anymore. This is really important to me personally because I see it as a huge opportunity for our coasts. We have Atlantic salmon, eels, and are soon to have yellowtail kingfish in Jonesport on land and on a land base recirculating facility. We also have a cultivation of shellfish, hard clams, sea urchins and kelp. We have a lot of kelp farms around this area, in particular. It is a diversification strategy for lobstermen, primarily, because they can farm kelp in the winter when they're not fishing. It's a seasonal crop, a winter crop that works really well with fishing. That's kind of an overview of the operations we have in Maine. We have three different types of aquaculture leases in Maine. They're all revocable anytime, for cause or violation of the contract, just to put that out there. We have the LPA, which is the smallest. It is an experimental small-scale license that is renewed annually and requires a municipal official or Harbormaster to sign off on it to make sure it's in a good location and is not going to interfere with any existing activities or users. Each person can

have up to four in their name, and they can be no greater than 400 square feet in size for a total of 1600 acres, so they are very small and have to be renewed every year. They're really designed to help you get started in aquaculture, test out new species, figure out what you want to grow and see if it works or not. The idea is to graduate to either an experimental lease or a standard lease at that point. Experimental leases are renewed every year; they're not renewable beyond three years, and they cannot be any larger than four acres in size. Then the standard lease may be renewed for up to 20 years. This is the longest standing lease that the state of Maine provides. It can be up to 100 acres in size; each person may hold up to 10 of them for no more than 1000 acres in aggregate, but it's really important to note that if you were to apply and have more than 500 acres total in aggregate, you would need to file a site rotation and fallowing plan with the state. You would never be able to actually have 1000 acres in production at any given time. Maine's largest lease is 80 acres; it's a mussel farm. Currently, less than 1% of state water in Maine is occupied by aquaculture leases. It's about 1,626 acres total, out of 3.5 million acres of state waters, so that's a drop in the bucket. Frankly, we currently have 162 active experimental and standard leases held by roughly 100 individuals in state waters, a vast majority of which are family owned and operated. Maine currently has about 700 LPAs, those are the small-scale ones of no greater than 400 square feet in size. Roughly 200 individuals are operating on those 700 LPA. That's about 6.4 acres right there, supporting 200 people. That's pretty amazing. The thing about aquaculture is that you're using water to grow food and using three-dimensional space in a lot of cases, and so it's very efficient, resource efficient, and space efficient.

The exciting thing is we have people who are moving to Maine to start aquaculture farms. We also have Maine residents and commercial fishermen who are getting into aquaculture. In fact, the training program that we run every year, is called Aquaculture in Shared Waters. We had over 100 students register for the class this year, over half of which were commercial fishermen, including commercial fishermen from Alaska and California who came to Maine just to start farms, because they see it as an opportunity, and they see it as their future. I just want to put that out there. This is a really key diversification strategy for the coast of Maine.

Moving on to some of the other information in the packet and there's a lot here. I'm not going to go through it all. I want to include basics about what aquaculture in Maine is, and the criteria that the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) uses to issue these leases. There are several opportunities and avenues for municipalities to engage with aquaculture in the state of Maine. Those are all outlined on the third page. I also want to point your attention to the last couple of pages of the document which includes a letter from the DMR from less than a year ago, outlining ways that municipalities can engage with aquaculture and addressing the ordinance/moratorium that several towns have been considering for the past couple of years. It's a detailed letter, but essentially, it outlines four key ways that towns can engage with aquaculture. There's a pre-application meeting where these applicants must submit a draft lease application. They need to help hold a pre-application meeting with the department in the municipality to get feedback on the plan. Then there's a scoping session. After the staff reviews the application and finds that it is complete, applicants must hold a scoping session which is open to the public, and other

stakeholders, including the municipality, prior to submitting a final application. There is a Harbor Master questionnaire from the municipal Harbormaster. If there is one (inaudible) official. Finally, towns may apply to become interveners in a lease application and have elevated legal status through that avenue. It's a very public process. There are multiple opportunities for public comment and debate at several hearings. It's not something that just happens overnight. Actually, a lot of farmers are waiting three or four years to get a lease and that's terrifying for them because the waiting period is so long, and their businesses are suffering because of it. The animals are growing on the farm. They need to expand. They need to amend their care and the changes are taking forever, and this is a problem because it's very onerous. It's not easy to get a lease in Maine and it shouldn't be. It should be sufficiently onerous, but it also needs to move in an efficient way. I just wanted to provide information on the way the towns engage, and the letter from DMR, which essentially outlines and states the fact that state law preempts municipal law. This is really important. Citing some of the statutes: "Municipalities have limited jurisdiction in the intertidal zone, if they have a shellfish ordinance, and may be authorized to issue municipal aquaculture permits, but it does not limit in any way the commissioner's authority to issue leases and licenses in the coastal waters of the state." They really encourage municipalities to reach out to the DMR with questions about the moratorium ordinance, where the town's jurisdiction lies, to clarify that, and they're making an effort, I think, in that manner, to reach out to towns, but the towns really need to reach out to them, and let them know what they're thinking about, what they're considering and have their questions addressed. I provided contact information on the last page for Amanda Ellis. She's the new Program Director for DMR and she'll be able to answer any questions.

Elwell

What do you see as the biggest challenge for people wanting to get into aquaculture or even ones that are already doing it?

Afton Vigue

It's a good question. One year ago, we organized listening sessions. We invited all the farmers in the state of Maine to come and talk to us and share their biggest challenges and what they're facing with their businesses. By and large, the main problem they cited was the waiting period for leases, annual amendments and expansions. There are several different types of decisions that a department has to make and essentially, due to constrained resources, limited staffing, and COVID, that really set them back. That was cited as the main obstacle for the farms, having to wait a ridiculously long time to get a business going, and then once you get animals in the water, they have to grow; you can't harvest them right away. It takes two to three years to really start that up, so it's very daunting for a young person, or for anyone who's trying to start a new business, having to go through that process. I know someone who's been waiting over four years for a lease. There are other challenges, but I'd say that is the biggest one, I know the department is working on staffing up and building the capacity to handle the applications that are coming through and catching up on a backlog from two years ago.

Bates

I understand that the DMR, at least with issuing licenses, is actually now fully staffed. Is that correct?

Afton Vigue

I believe so. They have filled most of the vacancies. They had several people leave and a couple of people were promoted as well. It takes time to work through the backlog because as I said the backlog has been there for a couple of years. I think when we checked last year, there were about forty decisions pending, now there are eighty-four.

Thompson

I think at the legislative level, they are looking to expand based on what is going on now, not to what was required previously.

Bates

Yes, given two percent growth.

Thompson

It should be a real basis for action, I would say.

Afton Vigue

Every time there's a budget amendment, or an adjustment happening at the state level, where DMR is asking for more resources to staff up, we are always there to testify in support of that. To my knowledge, that is primarily the mechanism for obtaining the resources they need through the state legislature, and we've been doing that year after year to try to help them out. It's also adjusting the salaries, making sure that people who are doing this work are getting paid competitively. I think that has been a challenge because the starting salary for a Hearings Officer is in the low \$40,000s and that's not a competitive salary for a stressful job, one which you're getting screamed at. Frankly, I think the job is a very tough one. A lot of the people who end up in those positions aren't prepared for it. Maybe they're young, or maybe they're coming out of the sciences and want to do dive work on site and don't realize what they're getting into when they show up to public hearings, in some cases, because it isn't fun.

Bates

One thing that we can do as a town is to write to our state representative and senators telling them we've heard about this huge backlog in getting licenses and that it is a bottleneck in the growth of aquaculture in the state which can be fixed.

Cartwright

Thank you for that presentation. That was quite interesting. I've been around for so long. I remember Ed Mires who had aquaculture license number one, on the Damariscotta River, for mussels. I've been

friends with oyster farmers for years. In your opinion, what is motivating the moratorium movement? Is it Belfast? Is it the big corporate stuff?

Afton Vigue

I think everyone who is getting behind that movement has a different motivation. You'd have to ask each person. There are several people involved. The group that's pushing it has been doing this for five years, so this is not connected to the recent controversy. This goes back to 2018. This whole thing started in McCoy Bay around the Brunswick area, and it's really turned into a full-scale statewide campaign to solve aquaculture.

Cartwright

Is it possibly some nimbyism?

Afton Vigue

I don't know who is paying for this organization. They have not disclosed their funding sources; they refuse to do so. It's a mystery to me as to where all this money is coming from to push moratoria.

Cartwright

It is not, as far as you can tell, coming from commercial fishermen, is it?

Afton Vigue

I don't know of any commercial fishermen who have supported this cause financially.

Bates

I have a question for you. I understand Frenchman Bay has been a very successful site for aquaculture and the shellfish committee there seems to have done a good job in balancing the various needs. I'm wondering what lessons St. George can take from what has been happening there.

Afton Vigue

I would talk to the shellfish committee there. I would talk to Joe and the harvesters working out at that bay. One of the best things that the town can do is talk directly with harvesters of aquaculture and get their perspective and not listen to paid campaigners who have an agenda.

Bates

From your perspective, looking across all these aquaculture efforts up and down the coast, is that a fair representative of a successful effort?

Afton Vigue

I'm not really that familiar with how shellfish committees operate, and which ones do what type of work? It's really new to me, so I can't really comment on the shellfish committee work related to

aquaculture because most of the farms that we work with are in subtidal waters. It's becoming increasingly difficult to farm in the intertidal zone because of private landowners restricting access, and that's also affecting clammers and seaweed harvesters and anyone who works in the intertidal zone will tell you how difficult it is now. The handshake agreements that they used to have with property owners have disappeared because of new people coming in who don't understand the social norms of working in the intertidal and the fact that we all share the intertidal space. It's public property. It's become very difficult, so a lot of people have been avoiding citing any aquaculture farms in the intertidal just because of conflicts with riparian landowners frankly.

Loreen Meyer

Sorry to interrupt, but your audio cut out once again.

Bates

I can't do anything about that. I'm sorry. I will try and speak up. Does anyone else in the public have questions to ask questions to Afton or to the Select Board about this topic?

Keith Miller

I probably have been at this just as long as most of these other guys around St. George, and the difficulty of dealing with the state mainly is the lack of people that stay on the job long enough to get it done. When trying to obtain licenses, I would get one person going and then that person would quit and go to another job. When COVID hit, it was extremely bad because everybody went home, and the Augusta office was not staffed, and would not answer the phone. I know what she's dealing with. I've dealt with that for six years now. We are trying to obtain a standard permit to keep going because if I stop now, I'm done. I have to obtain the standard one. We've basically stayed away from the shore property, because if we stay 1000 feet away from the shore property, we don't come under the jurisdiction of the landowners. We kelp farmers are way offshore; we're not close. We're in the middle of the bay.

Bates

Do you have an experimental license?

Keith Miller

I have three experimental licenses, and we just obtained a fourth one, my partners and I. One of my partners has four LPAs and my brother has an experimental license also. The Bay grows kelp extremely well. It's a very good spot for it.

Bates

What is your experience with delays, Keith?

Keith Miller

It's mind boggling after a while. Hopefully they've got a crew there now that will see it through. I understand they've got three divers now to do the dive work on the sites. That was about a month ago. Four years ago, they had a person they let go of because of money. They need more workers.

Speaker?

I live in St. George and I'm on the Shellfish Committee. We would like to talk to Afton at one of our meetings. We had a meeting the other day about growth. One of our fears is the guy who started Wildcat and was also talking about starting muscles at Long Cove. That would have wiped out everything if he took over the whole cove because there wouldn't be any feed for the clams. We don't have problems with small companies, but we do with the big commercial operations. As far as kelp goes, we don't care about that.

Speaker?

Who is the owner of Wildcat?

Keith Miller

The owner died and it is up for sale.

Afton Vigue

We would be happy to speak at a meeting any time.

Toni Small

Does the sale of that site, the way it has been built, structured and approved as an aquaculture entity, require it stay that way, or could that be repurposed?

Cartwright

I can answer that. I checked with the Planning Board, and it absolutely has to be for marine use. It doesn't have to be for aquaculture, but it has to be marine related.

Toni Small

It would be nice to know it was an entity to serve marine interests and the working waterfront. Who buys that? Obviously, a lot of money has been sunk into that site already. That's the kind of money none of us sitting in the room necessarily have, so it then becomes a question of scale. I don't want to use the word protect for fear of going down that road, but how do we constructively figure out a way to make sure this grows a healthy industry for the community that needs a working waterfront.

Bates

I'm sure the widow of that property would love to talk to somebody to make them an offer.

Steve Miller

My name is Steve Miller. We've had several opportunities. It's been quite a while now. Most people in town are familiar with the mussel farm. It was a mussel farm at one time. When that enterprise ceased, having a very expensive location down there, they put different entities and a lot of money into that. There have been two or three tries to get an alternate business in there and they've all failed. I'm not familiar with the state requirements, and most of the town codes but I don't think there have been any changes. That commercial waterfront is pretty strict, and the guidelines are pretty narrow, so whoever purchases that is basically going to have to run the same type of entity that's already there.

Sebastian Bell

Just to identify myself, I'm Sebastian Bell with the Maine Aquaculture Association. I also happen to sit on the board that reviews the working waterfront codicils for the State Working Waterfront Preservation Fund and that piece of property does have a working waterfront covenant on its deed. It received money from the state to preserve it as a piece of working waterfront, so anybody who acquires that piece of property would have to comply with that codicil on the deed and I think that's probably a good thing. It's a unique piece of property in the state and should be preserved as a piece of the working waterfront. If there is a lease which is associated with that property in the subtidal, anyone who acquires the assets of that company would have to comply with the conditions that are in that lease contract, and because of the lease transfer, go back to square one and go through a public process whereby people could talk and give input to whoever was taking over that lease. You go right back to square one and go through the whole leasing process all over again. It's a two-part piece. One is the land base, but the second is in the lease of the water area. If you transfer a lease, you must start all over again with public input to that process, so there would be input from anybody in the community about whether or not that lease should or shouldn't be used for that purpose.

Bates

Thank you for that clarification. That's quite an obligation you took on that property.

Jane Conrad

I just want to clarify whether you're talking about the Eastern Mussel Farm property or the Wildcat property, because Steve mentioned the mussel farm, which has the codicil. Which are you talking about?

Sebastian Bell

It is Wildcat that has the codicil as far as I know. The others I'm not sure of.

David Taylor

I am Dave Taylor. I represent the (inaudible) shellfish community.

Bates

Dave, I understand that you had a meeting at four o'clock this afternoon. I know that Dave is looking for peace between the clam and the general aquaculture community. Tell us please what happened.

David Taylor

We had an open discussion, and everybody gave their concerns. We will meet again on the 15th and will have a few more meetings and I hope the Town will listen, because we have four aquaculture people and four wild harvesters. We have two people that have concerns and I think we can come up with a consensus that will work for everybody.

Bates

That sounds like a really good plan. Thank you, Dave. Afton, thank you for talking to us. I think we spent half an hour on this, and I believe that the Select Board will want to learn more about this issue. Thank you for the questions we had tonight. You can tell this is not a one off; there will be more. You're all welcome to stay for a lot of very exciting things that we're going to be talking about later.

Minutes

A motion was made by Elwell, seconded by Cartwright, to approve the April 24, 2023 Select Board Meeting Minutes, as corrected, and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried.

A motion was made by Elwell, seconded by Cartwright, to approve the minutes for the April 24, 2023 Public Hearing for the Liquor License Renewal for Dockside Seafood dba The Barn Cafe, as corrected, and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Communications**Bates**

Irene received some really good news. In the mail today, she learned Bud Coulson's estate, left \$100,000 to the college scholarship fund set up by Tom, so it has increased the value of the Coastal Scholarship Fund to over \$240,000. I think the Board should write a letter to the representative of Mr. Coulson's estate, on behalf of the Board, thanking them for this incredibly generous gift to the St. George youth.

Warrant

Irene Ames

The only thing that is out of the ordinary is the Holiday Inn. They had a hold on the account for \$295.95 for two of the items. Apparently when no towels were missing, and there was no damage, they only charged \$149.95, so basically, I'm disclosing that the expense was overstated.

Town Manager's Report

Erb

Like most of the towns of Maine, we have some road issues today from the overnight, heavy rains and our biggest one is on Kenney Woods Road, which is temporarily closed right now. There is a brook that goes under Kenny Woods Road, which is temporarily closed right now. It was already giving us problems. We had it scheduled for Tim Calix's crew to work on, but unfortunately, we didn't make it through. Tomorrow he will be filling it in roughly with gravel and is going to come back probably the week after, but it will be passable after tomorrow, and he will do the real job after that. We'll increase the size of the culverts and I think we should be okay at that point. So that's what's going on right now. Did you want to take the letter from Anne Matlack later in the agenda?

Bates

I was going to put it on the agenda, but you can include it.

Erb

I have other things to discuss but they're on the agenda.

Committee Reports

Bates

Planning Board 7:00pm April 25 Meeting

- Applications to install a 6'x6' pile supported pier, a seasonal 3.5'x50' gangway and 12'x24' wood float, and also stabilize 68' of shoreline at 261 Otis Point Road were presented; an onsite visit was set for 5:30pm May 15.
- An application to combine two lots (9 and 10 on map 232) in the Long Cove Woods Subdivision was accepted as complete. As the proposal was not in conflict with section 1.A-T of the Subdivision Ordinance, it was approved.

Elwell

The Harbor Committee has a public hearing on May 11th and a premeeting on the 10th.

Erb

Hopefully it will be a brief meeting the evening before. That will be open to the public as well but it's not the public information meeting.

Thompson

The Community Resiliency Committee course has the Community Action Grant on visualizing solutions and so forth. Our concern is to try to get that going and this was the critical week. On Saturday they were able to do an aerial survey on Drift Inn Road and then went up to Rackliff Island area to continue. Yesterday, they put on foul weather gear and did the bathymetric in Turkey Cove. They're hoping to fly if the winds die down tomorrow. I think they did some more bathymetric up at Cline Road and Seal Harbor Road junction. We have yet to pin down whether it's going to be Thursday afternoon or Friday afternoon, when there will be what Meg is calling a sneak preview. They're going to take one of the sites and show some of what the visualization is like in their work, with the idea that this gives you a look at what they are going to develop in depth for the eight other sites. They've invited the governor and she accepted immediately.

Bates

Do we know when it's going to be?

Thompson

No. I was writing today to Terry Bennett of Sebago. I had two questions. The first question is could we pin down Friday afternoon, making allowances for time for that sneak preview? I will push him first thing in the morning or this evening to see if we can try and pin it down.

Bates

I know there are a lot of people that would like to know.

Thompson

We have to try and get it out in all the ways that we possibly can, but the question remains whether it will be here, or more likely at the school, and I'm going to speak to Mike Felton. The auditorium would be the best venue because we would have the projector there that will work well, and a bigger screen than what we've got here.

Elwell

It will handle all the people that are going to be there hopefully. Have you mentioned that to the science teacher up at the junior high, because she was working with the kids on sea rise.

Thompson

No. We should coordinate on that. Will you send me her email?

Elwell

I will and I'll mention it to her tomorrow.

Honoring the two Sheriff's Deputies who were killed in 1959

Bates

The designation of a section of Route 131 to honor the two Sheriff's Deputies that lost their lives in the call of duty, was discussed on January 9, 2023, when we met and voted to support Sheriff Polky's proposal. Ann Matlack passed the notice to Rick today. The State Transportation Committee noted that the route from Port Clyde up to Montville has been designated by the state as the Georges River Scenic Byway. This was done by the Georges River Land Trust a while ago, but the committee told her that it is unknown territory to add another designation to one already designated stretch of road and that she should advise this Select Board about the confusion and consternation. I don't know how you will feel about this. They said the committee is requesting an updated letter of support indicating the Select Board is still supportive of placing signs on Route 131 in addition to the designation of the stretch of road as a scenic byway. Ann did check with the land trust, and they have no opinion on this half mile dual designation.

A motion was made by Elwell, seconded by Sawyer, to send a letter of support to Sheriff Polky, designating the specified section of Route 131 in honor of the Sheriff's Deputies that were killed in 1959, on behalf of the Select Board, and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Appoint Greg Soutie as an Alternate Member on the Budget Committee

Greg Soutie volunteered to be an Alternate Member of the Budget Committee. I think it is great and want to encourage him. The board representatives on all of the committees and commissions and all the alternate appointments expire on June 30, as well as some of the full ones. It's something for the Select Board Representatives to do in the coming month.

Cartwright

Are we only putting Greg on until June?

Thompson

Yes.

Bates

The feeling is he's enthusiastic. Let's do everything to encourage him.

A motion was made by Cartwright, seconded by Sawyer, to approve the appointment of Greg Soutie as an alternate member of the Budget Committee, and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Sign Quitclaim Deed for map 102, lot 011

The owner came in and paid his balance due, and so we all need to sign the quitclaim deed.

Approve Tax Abatement for 219 Otis Point Rd.

One of the items that I added is the abatement of municipal property taxes for this property on Otis Point Rd. that burnt down. It was assessed at \$497,400, and now, it has been reassessed at \$380,840 because it burnt down, so we have to approve this and we've been assured by our assessor's agent, this is the right thing to do.

A motion was made by Elwell, seconded by Cartwright, to approve the tax abatement for 219 Otis Point Rd., and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Approve Property Tax Exemption for a post-WW1 Veteran

Donna Webster, who is a veteran during the 1980s, applied for a property tax exemption for veterans of the armed forces. We had one like this a couple of weeks ago; it is the same type of thing.

A motion was made by Elwell, seconded by Cartwright, to approve the property tax exemption for post-WW1 veteran, Donna Webster, and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Set Certified Ratio for the Purposes of Property Tax Exemptions, etc.**Bates**

The last thing I added is setting the certified ratio which is associated with the adjusted and just values of property. Every year the Maine Revenue Service looks at the values of our property sales, and they compare them to the assessed values that we assigned to these properties when the town last had a revaluation. It turns out, if you look at the prices that they were sold at, and the prices that they were assessed at, and take the averages of that, you end up with a number, which they call the development parcel ratio. It's a measure of how accurately the assessed value is compared with what it actually sold

for. Now, the state told us recently that according to their calculations, this ratio has fallen to 79%. What they're saying is that the town's assessed value of a house is 79% of the price it will sell at, or you could invert it and say that if your house is worth \$100,000, the state is determining that on average, you would be able to sell it for one divided by 79% which is \$126,000. Houses are selling at above their assessed value. It is all averages and there are no promises. Now, we're not obliged to accept this 79%. The state gives us a little bit of flexibility; we can go plus or minus 10% on that number. It turns out, we could be down to 71% or we could be up to 87%. What do we do? Well, this is how I think of it. The ratio is going to be relevant when people look at their tax bill because if our ratio was 100%, to keep it simple, they know for the homestead exemption, for example, which is \$25,000, they expect to see on their tax bill the assessed value of the home minus \$25,000 and pay taxes on that amount. The problem is, we can't get to 100%, the highest we can get to is 87%. So already, there's going to be some confusion when the tax bills go out.

Elwell

What should we do?

Bates

I think the best thing to do is to make it 87%, because that will allow people who have the homestead exemption, like the lady we just signed the veteran's exemption for, to get the most bang for their buck.

Erb

Then the state makes up the rest.

Cartwright

If it is currently 79% and we can add or subtract 10%, why can't we make it 89%?

Bates

It's 10% of 79.

A motion was made by Elwell, seconded by Thompson, to set the certified ratio at 87% for the purposes of property tax exemptions, and by a unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Two Notices of Layout and Taking of Parcels of Land in St. George by the State DOT

I have a form letter from the state, and I copied the first page of the description. The DOT has determined that public exigency requires the altering, widening changing of the grade, and changing of the drainage and layout on portions of Route 73.

Elwell

Is this for the Jones Brook culvert?

Thompson

No. This is so they own it.

Erb

It is for the work on Route 73.

Bates

As I looked at the maps, it seemed very minor. This is mainly for informational purposes. We can't really do anything; the state is allowed to do this.

Ellwell

I know when we talked to the DOT a few years ago about the new stretch from Port Clyde to the church, they're not sure where the lines are because the roads have been altered over the years from fixing it.

Preparations for Town Meeting

The last thing we have on the agenda is a discussion about preparations for the town meeting next Tuesday. Rick has arranged for David Lamming to be there if the public votes for him as the moderator. It is at the school at 7:00p.m. I think Wayne and I need to be at the front because we voted for the budget, but at the same time, the plan would be that whoever gets elected should also be there as well, and they'll be sworn in at the beginning of the meeting. I asked Tara to see about making some name tags. Those are the things I've been thinking about. We should check through some of the decisions we made back in February and March with the budget just to remind ourselves of what the issues are, because there may be questions. Do we have any other thoughts about the town meeting?

Sawyer

It's easier for those who are most involved in the situation to answer, if a question comes up.

Bates

That is right. I expect Amy Drinkwater will be there if there are ambulance questions.

Cartwright

It might increase turnout.

Thompson

The budget increase and the ambulance changes should draw a few people.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Thompson, seconded by Sawyer, to adjourn the Select Board meeting, and by a unanimous roll call vote, the motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:15p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammy Taylor
Recording Secretary
Town of St. George, Maine