

ST. GEORGE SELECT BOARD & ASSESSORS
St. George Town Office
MEETING MINUTES
May 22, 2023

The Select Board meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Steve Cartwright, Rick Erb, Wendy Carr, Jane Conrad, Irene Ames, and Ken Oelberger.

Via Zoom: Present were Loreen Meyer and Adele Welch.

REGULAR SESSION

Quorum

A quorum was present.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Adjustments to the Agenda

No adjustments were made.

Conflict of Interest

Conrad

At the Executive Session we will discuss options regarding the Old Woods Subdivision.

Carr

I may have a conflict regarding the Old Woods Subdivision issues discussed in the Executive Session, as I am the Chair of the Tenants Harbor Water District, and we abut that land. I've had lots of discussions with the Old Woods Farm Group, and the water district may or may not be part of the purchase of that land.

Conrad

We welcome your comments.

Erb

That might pertain more to voting.

Conrad

We do not expect to make a decision tonight. We are just going to discuss it.

Minutes

Conrad moved to approve the May 15, 2023 Select Board Meeting Minutes, as amended, seconded by Carr, and by a 3-0 vote, the motion carried.

Communications

There were no communications received.

Warrant

Conrad moved to authorize the warrant expenditures, seconded by Cartwright, and by a 3-0 vote, the motion carried.

Town Manager Report

Erb

Randy asked about the culvert project on Route 73 and I was able to find out from the Maine DOT, that they expect the large culvert to be delivered by July 10th. It is possible they will start excavating the day before but basically, in the second week of July they will do that project.

Cartwright

Will it block the road?

Erb

Temporarily for sure. On Friday of this week, the governor will be attending two meetings here. The first will be at the school to hear about the CTE project. The second will be right here at the Town

Office. It is the presentation on the sea level rise project with Sebago Techniks. Terry Bennett, who was here for the presentation at the school, will be doing a similar presentation but probably less formal. It will be more of a discussion instead of a presentation. Meg Rasmussen from the Midcoast Council of Government will be here as well. I will be welcoming people at roughly 1:00p.m. on Friday at the school and 2:00p.m. at the Town Office.

Cartwright

She seems to come down often to the Rockland and Camden area.

Erb

It's been mostly Democrats recently out of that senate district at least, so it's friendly territory for her. That's about it. All are invited to meet us here at 2:00p.m. Friday. We may be delayed a few minutes.

Cartwright

Are you going to let the public know?

Erb

No. I don't think that we're looking for that size group and some of that is by the request of the governor's office, due to protection and everything else. They're happy if it's a small group.

Oelberger

Is anybody from the Resilience Committee coming?

Erb

Yes.

Erb

The shellfish group wants to meet with us again as does the aquaculture group. There had been a standing request from the shellfish people as well. We've already heard from aquaculture once. We could meet with both on the same night, or we could meet with one at the first meeting in June and one at the second meeting in June. I don't really know precisely what they want to discuss, but we will find out.

Cartwright

Is this from the aquaculture presentation we just heard?

Erb

All I know is that they've asked to meet, so I will give you more information on that. Steve, you asked about investment of town funds, so I asked Irene if she could say a little bit about what we're doing.

Irene Ames

I wasn't here for your initial question. Essentially, the checking accounts are receiving a 4% interest. I don't know what CD rates are right now. We haven't looked into it because we've got the one CD locked down. It was a great rate at the time but might not be right now. We'll probably just put that back into the checking accounts eventually. I'm not sure we could beat that interest rate.

Cartwright

It is a huge balance to have in checking and I wondered if there was a way to make more money with it.

Irene Ames

It's certainly a valid question. The amount of money we have in the checking account is going to be higher in September and October, and then again in March and April because of the timing of the property tax payments. They come in during September and March, so you'll see the checking account balance is higher then.

Erb

Our interest revenue is way ahead of projections. I projected \$12,000 for the year and we've received \$36,000 three quarters of the year through, so we'll probably receive four times as much.

Irene Ames

The checking accounts are receiving a 4% interest. It is the volume of money that it boils down to.

Erb

There was a little bit of competition between banks. We were contacted by another one.

Irene Ames

We had another bank approach us and offer us 4% which is .25% more than what we were getting. I don't like the bank, and the time and the hassle that it would take to change banks just wasn't worth it. I emailed the bank manager and advised them we received this introductory offer, just to let them know in case other municipalities get the same offer, and that we were not interested. We're happy with the service we get now.

Erb

Going back to the governor's visit, one of the issues we discussed was a flat screen for the presentation. As you can see, the current one does not have a very sharp picture. The plan I have right now is to purchase a large screen TV, which can easily be plugged into a laptop. They're affordable now. We will talk about this at another meeting, but I really do want to see us do something to fix up the downstairs with a more permanent setup for distance meetings. I think it's a good investment to go ahead and buy one. It's what we used where I worked before, and it worked very well. We hoped that Hannah Pingree would be joining us on Friday, but she has a conflict. She's certainly a friend to the Midcoast area, so

I'm sure we'll see her some other time. The only other thing I had was the Maine Municipal Association Risk Management group's annual tour of our facilities. They gave us recommendations on a couple of minor things that could easily be taken care of. They expressed some concern about the old school building, simply because it needs maintenance, so I'll be meeting John Falla in the next few days. It was regarding things like peeling paint, nothing terribly serious or structural. I know a little bit about the history of it, but I don't know what the plan was for that building. It was moved here so that it could be preserved.

Irene Ames

It was always located here. It was a one room schoolhouse and then it was used for the town office.

Erb

I will get more information on that. We may have to do something to address it.

Committee Reports

Conservation Committee

Oelberger

Since the last report, they have made significant progress at Fort Point. The stringers are on the abutments. I took a picture of that tonight. As far as the follow-on work is concerned, we sent in that MOU and we're just waiting to hear from the State on the extension.

Cartwright

It's a go obviously, right?

Oelberger

Yes. I don't see any reason why it shouldn't be. They were pretty enthusiastic about it and had funding for it.

Cartwright

It will be a wonderful trail and so accessible. What's the granite that we see down at the spring for?

Oelberger

That was for the abutments on the bridge.

Conrad

When do you expect that will be finished?

Oelberger

We were planning for the whole project to be completed at the end of August initially. With the added work to go around the state property, we may have to adjust that slightly. We didn't expect the bridge to be done until the end of June and it looks like they are well ahead of that.

Erb

How are they doing finding workers?

Ken Oelberger

They have two great workers. The two guys that are working there worked on the Appalachian Trail last year and John hired them this year. The people from the Appalachian Trail group were pretty upset that they didn't get those two guys back.

Old Business

Select Board Liaisons to Committees, Vacancies and Appointments

Conrad

We spoke last week about which Select Board members would be serving liaison roles to different committees, and we need to finalize that as soon as possible so that the liaisons can talk to the board chairs and make sure that each board or committee has a full complement of members, and everybody is sworn in and can start July 1st. For some boards, vacancies are not issues but for others, like the Comprehensive Plan Committee, we're basically starting from scratch. Van is going to continue on the Budget Committee and the Resilience Committee. I'll do the Comprehensive Plan and Board of Appeals. If everybody does two, we should have them covered. Steve, you're doing the Conservation Commission. Do you want to do another one?

Cartwright

I don't, but if you're okay with this, I'd like to get involved with the potential Kinney Woods affordable housing project. I'm excited about that.

Conrad

I noticed that we didn't have that on the list. That's an ad hoc committee, I think.

Cartwright

I don't know how formalized it is, but I could be a connection to the board.

Erb

Is it specific to that project, or is it for affordable housing in general?

Conrad

Well, in the short term, that project is the only one. I don't know whether it has a broader mandate. I think it's an ad hoc committee, just like the Resilience Committee is ad hoc. Some of these might end up being permanent standing committees. The only standing committees are the Planning Board, the Budget Committee, Solid Waste, Conservation, Comprehensive Planning, Cemetery and Coastal Waters/Harbor. The others are ad hoc. There may be requirements in the law about standing committees meeting so often. I sent Van an email, asking him to look at this list, now that ambulance and fire are truly town departments, and advise whether we should have a committee for that with a liaison. It is just something to think about for the future.

Erb

That's similar to what we had when I worked in county government in New York, where a board member would liaison to public safety in that case. We could think about it.

Conrad

In the past, because Richard was an EMT and driving the ambulance, he was always at those meetings.

Cartwright

Randy's is on the Fire Department Committee.

Conrad

Right. So that is something to think about.

Carr

I can take the Planning and Cemetery committees.

Conrad

And I can also do the Solid Waste and Recycling committees as well.

Carr

Traditionally, I think that has been Rick.

Erb

Only recently. Before it was Tammy Willey.

Conrad

Rick, it would be great if you're willing to be the one that reports to us about those.

Erb

It would be a convenient thing for me with the morning meeting.

Conrad

Then I think Randy will remain on the Harbor Committee and the Shellfish Committee. He was on those before. If each of us would contact the board chairs and ask them whether they have vacancies or names to submit to the Select Board for us to consider and appoint people, so that whether it's June 5th or June 26th, everybody is appointed and can start when the fiscal year begins. I'm not sure how that'll work with the Comprehensive Plan Committee that hasn't met in five years. It might not all be done by July 1st but that will be the goal.

Town Meeting Feedback

One of the annual meeting checklist items that we didn't talk about last time was whether people have feedback about the town meeting and suggestions for the future. The only feedback I would suggest is for the town to contact newly elected Select Board members and let them know they're supposed to come the next day to the town meeting and what's expected, so they know that's where they're going to be sworn in. I think people have figured it out, but it would be nice to have that formalized. Any comments about the town meeting?

Cartwright

It went off without a rift.

Erb

I think it's becoming increasingly common. In fact, I was looking at another town's website and noticed that they had their town meeting video on the website, so I watched for a few minutes. There was more discussion, I would say, but not tremendously more.

Conrad

I think it's a tribute to our leadership, because I think the public is well informed ahead of time.

Cartwright

When I was on the Waldoboro Select Board, I enjoyed it when one group brought coffee and doughnuts. It was really nice, and it became a social event and I think we could do that. Something very simple, but instead of just filing out, people could chat with each other.

Erb

For two years, we met at the school, but for quite a few years before that, it was at the Town Office.

Conrad

I assumed we would meet there because with the ambulance vote, we expected a lot of people, but there really wasn't that many.

Irene Ames

Last year there was more turn out.

Erb

I guess that would be a year-by-year decision.

Oelberger

I think there were not any controversial issues to deal with because everything with the ambulance had been dealt with ahead of time.

Erb

There had already been votes on it.

Freedom of Information Legal Training

Conrad

Do we have this training every year?

Erb

I didn't notice if it was annual or not. I think it may be for every newly elected official.

Conrad

We need to watch our training and turn in our certificates of completion. I did it before as a Board of Appeals member a number of years ago,

Erb

It's on the MMA website if it's the one I'm thinking of.

Conrad

There was a link in last week's agenda.

Port Clyde Landing Project

Conrad

Rick, why don't you tell us about the developments with parking and traffic issues.

Erb

Sure. It was discussed at this board meeting but also at the Harbor Committee. Andy Barstow has leased out parking spaces in years past and the suggestion was made that it would be well worth our time to talk to him. We're losing twelve or more spaces on the paved lot and we spoke about different ways that we might be able to mitigate that loss, including shuttling people from some distance away. It was a fairly productive meeting, and he has spaces available.

Conrad

Is it near what has been the kayak place?

Erb

Exactly. There was a row there and also an area across the pavement that he's interested in leasing. He already had rates for this. It's \$1,500 for those per space for the season, Memorial Day to Indigenous Americans day. Those are in the high rent district.

Conrad

Do we know how many spots there are?

Erb

He wasn't all that certain, but I would say there's more than a dozen.

Conrad

I feel like that is by far the cheapest thing we could do. That's a way better deal than having to shuttle people or have them walk along Route 131, which is really not a great idea.

Erb

Right. Andy Barstow also has parking spaces on Glenmere Rd., which is walking distance to the waterfront. There is a sidewalk almost the whole way. There would be some walking along the side of the road on Glenmere Rd., but it's a fairly short distance. From the fire station or Drift Inn, there are no sidewalks. I would never recommend that we encourage pedestrians along there and it will be expensive and complicated to run our own shuttle service. There is no question about it. If we are looking to replace the parking while the project is underway, I think this is the way to go.

Conrad

How much were the cheaper spots in that lot?

Erb

\$150 a month. If we want to consider this, we could do a combination. I have a few thoughts on it though. I think that the issue will be how we regulate parking. We're going to prohibit or discourage day long parking. We want to avoid having people who are working on the island, living on the island, or working on the waterfront, tying up the spaces all day long. We certainly don't want people parking overnight there. It will take some effort to keep a handle on this.

Carr

Is the kayak shop closed?

Erb

Yes. Their lease ran out.

Carr

Is she not renewing?

Erb

That's what I was told. I'm getting some feedback already. I think there are people that aren't favorable to the town providing parking for private businesses. There are things to think about. The Harbor Committee was intrigued by the idea and their plan right now I think is meeting on Thursday night. They're wondering where their authority ends, and where the Select Board's begins? We might want to talk about that a little bit. They've been integral to the project, so I'd like to see them continue to be consulted.

Conrad

As a statutory matter, parking and traffic control are the responsibility of the Select Board.

Erb

(Inaudible) has ordinances.

Carr

They can make recommendations to us.

Conrad

Yes. They've been working on this, but I think as it comes to a decision time, which we're really close to, we need to let people know before it's really busy down there.

Carr

As a practical matter, if I want to go to the General Store or the Dip Net, and those spaces are available, is there going to be someone there directing me, because that next row of parking is for day trippers for the boat lines to Monhegan Island?

Erb

My understanding from speaking to Andy Barstow and others is he keeps a very close eye on that parking for his own interest.

Conrad

I think he used to put signs up.

Cartwright

We could have a two-hour limit.

Conrad

Right. Then it would be clearly marked and his crew that pays attention to parking could make sure that people going out on the boat line are hopefully not parking in those spots.

Irene Ames

If we are renting the spaces, it is going to be our responsibility to police it. How are we going to do that? Why are we paying for parking for private businesses? We've also got to calculate the interest we will be paying on the money that we're spending on this.

Conrad

The reason I think it's worth doing is that the stretch of the road that's going to be the most treacherous during the construction belongs to the town and it's a public safety issue. If we can make sure that only people who are involved in construction or who live beyond the barn entrance go down there, and no one else, it's safer than having cars and big trucks in the area.

Irene Ames

The big trucks have to go down there.

Conrad

Right, I'm just worried about public safety.

Irene Ames

The spots that are going away were being used by Monhegan Island employees.

Conrad

Do we know that? I've parked there plenty of times.

Carr

There could be a Chappaquiddick incident when you park there.

Conrad

We've all done it. What do other people think?

Carr

I think it's fine. I think it's a drop in the bucket in terms of parking. It's never going to solve all the parking issues down there. I think it's okay to spend the money but there does need to be somebody down there yelling at people and I don't know who that would be.

Erb

It's certainly possible we could hire security.

Ames

We would need to look at the cost of that as well.

Carr

Right. I think we're mindful of the cost of all this.

Cartwright

I'm not sure if we really need a security person. I think there are people that will abide more or less on a two-hour limit. Right now, people park all day in those spaces.

Carr

I just wouldn't want the boat lines to have us pay for it and then quickly fill the spaces with their day trippers. It would be helpful for them but would defeat our purpose.

Conrad

If it's true that a number of spaces in Port Clyde have been used by people that worked for the boat line or are working out on the islands, those are the people that could be parking in that lot in Glenmere. Either they're his employees or they can pay him for a spot.

Cartwright

In fairness to anyone who works on Hupper Island, we don't have signs saying you can't do that.

Conrad

When we're communicating with the public, we could let workers know if Barstow is willing to lease some spots from Glenmere to people. Let's say you're having a big construction project on Teal Island. The owner or developer could pay Barstow for some spots for however long the project is going on, and not use up the spots for the general public to use. Another consideration as to why I think it's reasonable for us to pay for these spaces for this summer is that I believe the town assured the business owners that we were going to try and help them keep their businesses alive when the construction was going on.

Carr

I know that the Harbor Committee has talked to some of the business owners but some of the business owners haven't communicated at all. I think they are aware of it, but they don't seem to be engaged in the issue.

Conrad

Linda Bean has plenty of spots for her business.

Carr

I've gone down there in the height of summer, couldn't find a space and left. The problem is when you're meeting people down there, your cell phone doesn't work, and you can't communicate to them that you are leaving. It is frustrating down there. I don't think anything the Select Board does will ever solve that problem because there's just not enough room down there.

Erb

The project will add parking. I can't give you a number. (Inaudible)

Carr

I saw that. Yes. I'm surprised that the boat line is willing to do this, but I think we should entertain it.

Erb

What was interesting was he had pricing already made up. He's happy to sell it to the towns.

Conrad

Is there a consensus, among the three of us who are here now, that it's worthwhile finding out exactly how many spots there are so that we can vote at the next meeting?

Carr

Sure, and I would like some kind of recommendation, if possible, from the Harbor Committee because they've really studied this. We're coming in at the last minute. I'm really interested in what they think.

Erb

The plan is to meet Thursday night. I talked to Dan Morris and advised there is support for the concept.

Conrad

And ask Andy Barstow if he would let us spread the word about the parking in the Glenmere lot to island workers, including the number of spaces available and the rate per day.

Cartwright

I know some Hupper Island seasonal residents park by the Black Harpoon and then walk from there, which is not far. I understand not encouraging walking on 131 for safety but I like the idea of auxiliary parking where people could drop their passengers off in downtown Port Clyde and have just one person walk. A sign at Drift Inn Beach, might help and it's cheap. I do like the idea of supporting local businesses by making it easier.

Carr

I think if we're looking at it from a public safety point of view, that satisfies some of our issues.

Conrad

And liability for the town. That's my worry. I'm hoping we can limit the number of people who are driving past that mess. That was good progress.

Carr

Would the money come out of the budget?

Erb

Yes.

Irene Ames

It is money we're paying interest on.

Town Manager's Administrative Appointments

Erb

They should all be familiar names.

Conrad

Do all of these people receive some remuneration for serving in this capacity?

Erb

I don't believe Tim Polky does for Emergency Management Director.

Irene Ames

He doesn't for his role as Emergency Management Director, but he does as Fire Chief.

A motion was made by Cartwright, seconded by Carr to approve the entire list of submitted St. George Administrative Appointments for the term 7/1/2023 to 6/30/2024, and by a 3-0 vote, the motion carried.

MDOT Agreement for Snow & Ice Control on Rt. 131

Erb

We have had a multi-year agreement with the Maine Department of Transportation to do the winter maintenance on Route 131 and they pay us for that. I understand that we also do it on Route 73 but there's no such agreement, so we don't receive anything for that. It's roughly \$80,000 a year. I looked it over myself and had a fair amount of feedback from Tim Polky. We both think this is a very good deal for the town. It's about ten miles of road for that \$80,000, and Jim Kalloch's trucks would be traveling that road anyway. This is a "win win" situation. The State Department of Transportation doesn't have to be concerned with it. It just makes for a more orderly snow removal plan if the same trucks are doing both the town roads and the state highway as well. The agreement with the Maine Department of Transportation is for winter season 2023 through 2030, so it is a long-term agreement, but it's what we've done before. It does have an escalator clause and last year, when the price of fuel went up, even though they didn't have to, MDOT actually paid us a supplemental amount for fuel.

Cartwright

Is it not worth making an issue of the Route 73 issue?

Erb

I'm interested in why they offered this for Route 131 but not for Route 73. I don't know the answer to that.

Cartwright

It doesn't sound like any reason not to approve this.

Erb

No and I don't think we can hold this up. That is not going to get us anywhere.

Cartwright moved to approve the long-term agreement with the Maine DOT for snow and ice removal on Route 131, was seconded by Conrad, and by a 3-0 vote, the motion carried.

Sign a Supplemental Tax Warrant for land removed from the Tree Growth Program

Erb

Tim and Ann Hoppe have a parcel of land that had been classified as Tree Growth and decided to do something different. Removing their land from tree growth results in a penalty that must be paid and that's what the supplemental tax warrant is for. It's \$3,524 and does require your signatures as assessors from St. George.

Conrad

Will they be paying that amount going forward?

Erb

That catches them up.

Irene Ames

I think the way it works is they must reimburse the state because the state paid the town that money because it was in Tree Growth, so the fee reimburses the state, and then going forward they just pay the tax rate as if it was not in Tree Growth.

Conrad

Is there any reason not to do this?

Erb

No. We really have to and should want to.

Conrad moved to approve the supplemental tax warrant for Tim and Ann Hoppe, changing the characterization of their property to remove it from the Tree Growth program, was seconded by Carr, and by a 3-0 vote, the motion carried.

Executive Session

Discuss the acquisition of real estate in executive session as allowed under Title 1 Section 405, 6c of the Maine Revised Statutes:

Conrad moved that the Select Board go into executive session pursuant to Maine's Freedom of Access Law Section 405 Subdivision 4 and Subdivision 6C and E for the purpose of discussing issues regarding Lot 11 of Old Woods Farms Subdivision, including the possible purchase of that lot and issues relating to use restrictions and litigation, was seconded by Cartwright, and by a 3-0 vote, the motion carried.

The Board voted to end the Executive Session and the public meeting was re-opened for the purpose of adjourning.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Cartwright, seconded by Carr, to adjourn the Select Board meeting, and by a unanimous roll call vote, the motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammy Taylor
Recording Secretary
Town of St. George, Maine