

ST. GEORGE SELECT BOARD & ASSESSORS
St. George Town Office
MEETING MINUTES
October 30, 2023

The Select Board meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Steve Cartwright, Rick Erb, Wendy Carr, Randy Elwell, Irene Ames, Susan Ellis and Scott Vaitones.

Via Zoom: Present were Betsy Welch, Jane Conrad, Van Thompson, Carol Arness and Sandra Roak.

Quorum

A quorum was present.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Adjustments to the Agenda

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

Conflict of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest.

Minutes

A motion was made by Elwell, seconded by Carr, to approve the October 16, 2023 Select Board Meeting Minutes as amended, and by a 4-1 vote, the motion carried (Conrad abstained).

Warrant**Ames**

We have two warrants. I did have to adjust the invoices selected for payment, because there were two payments that were made that were part of the Ten Cold Storage Road project. We have the general fund warrant and the Ten Cold Storage Road warrant. The totals were the same as what you had signed.

Thompson

That's the key part.

Conrad

Does it make sense in the one where you had voided sections to change the totals on that?

Ames

Essentially for the ones that are voided, you would subtract those out from the total and that voided amount is on a separate warrant. On the invoices selected for payment, those have been subtracted from that amount.

Conrad

I just wondered whether for record keeping it made sense for the warrant to have the actual total with the deletions.

Ames

I can certainly cross out the final total and put in the adjusted amount in the file.

Thompson

Okay, anything else on the warrant?

Cartwright

One of them said RENO. What did that refer to?

Ames

Essentially CSR is Ten Cold Storage Road and RENO is renovation. We only have so many spaces we can use. The software won't let us put in what we want.

Thompson

Any more discussion on that? If not, why don't you pass them around for signatures? Irene, thank you.

Town Manager Report

Erb

I don't know if you received this as individuals, but MMA sent a flyer about the Elected Officials Workshop. That's going to be on November 28th if anyone is interested in attending. You may have already been to these before. Anyway, I will send it around by email just in case anyone would like to sign up for it.

Also, we have the meeting Thursday with Sebago Technics on sea level rise. I have it on the schedule for 11:30am but I noticed Meg Rasmussen sent something around today that said noon.

Thompson

The intent was to reserve the room as of 11:30am with a presentation to begin at noon.

Erb

If you have not been in touch to say that you'll be attending, please let me know.

Thompson

Rick, along those lines, were we able to make any arrangements to video it?

Erb

I didn't know we were going to. You want it videotaped?

Thompson

I sent that in an email to you. Check with Bill Batty to see what he may have available.

Erb

Okay, so would that involve procuring a camera?

Thompson

Yes, but I think there are some around.

Cartwright

Meg may have told you Rick, but I plan to attend.

Erb

Very good. I think I do have you on the list.

There are a couple of other things. I did send a letter to Greg Howland regarding the parking situation. I'll let you know how that progresses.

Also, I was talking to the Budget Committee about the emergency medical services funding from the state that was approved this year and we're starting to get the information on how you apply for that. There is \$31 million set aside, specifically for rural ambulances that are struggling financially. I'm certain that we qualify for the rural part. It's not really clear to me yet on how they define struggling. We're digging into that and I'm hoping we will get something out of it.

One thing I wanted to mention to you. You've seen that work is progressing at Monhegan Boat Line following the fire. They're going to have to go through a site review. What we have told Andy at this point is to go ahead and take care of the roof and secure the building, and then before advancing further, they'll need to go through the site review process. What it will be like I'm not certain. The building is roughly three years old, but he still needs to get permits. Expect to see that, but if you see work going on now, he was not able to put his application together that quickly and interestingly, one of the problems is the information he needs from the Fire Marshal's office. They only keep records for two years I was told, which really surprised me. Two years is pretty much unheard of.

Carr

I have questions separate from that. Where's all the demolition waste going? It potentially is hazardous waste because of plastics that burn, and I just wondered if it's going in our trash hopper?

Erb

I don't believe so. The volume would be so much that we'd know.

Thompson

Good question.

Erb

I'll see if I can find out specifically who's taking care of it.

Cartwright

It's remarkable how much of the old terminal from the building they were able to save.

Erb

That's all I have on my list. I've got other items to come up later.

Committee Reports

Planning Board - Carr

The last meeting was on October 24th. A repair to a boat house was approved. Originally in the previous meeting, the application was denied. But the architect came back and found a loophole. If you put the boathouse on concrete piers versus a foundation, you can save it at its present location. So, the application was accepted as complete. There are going to be concrete piers, and they are keeping the existing footprint.

Thompson

Is it in the floodplain?

Carr

Yes. The DEP is trying to get rid of all boat houses because of sea rise, and the impact in terms of the water coming into contact with it. Apparently, this is a loophole, so they had to approve it. We also talked about the Atwood's Quarry site. There are going to be four cottages for rent. There is going to be a site visit. There is also going to be a gangway system where timbers are brought in, and from that same location a timber truck is going to back up onto the pier and take it away. The site visit is about the pier and dock gangway system. Back to the cottages, we talked about how many septic systems are going to be used, how many bedrooms are going to be in the cottages. That subdivision application is going forward.

Thompson

Clarify for me Wendy. I thought those were quoted as seasonal cottages.

Carr

They are.

Conrad

Who's the owner of that property?

Carr

McClain, I think. I don't know who he is but apparently, he owns that whole tract of land off the dirt road on the other side of the quarry.

Board of Appeals – Conrad

Conrad

They have not met.

The Budget Committee – Thompson

Thompson

We met today and just reviewed things with Irene in terms of where we are at with expenses and revenues. I think we'll be getting a letter from the Budget Committee with any concerns looking forward, by January at the latest. I expect it by the end of November, so somewhere in that timeframe, we'll have that to consider.

Conrad

Van, I have a question about timing. If the Comprehensive Plan Committee is going to seek funding for that process for the next budget cycle, when would we need to have a proposal to the budget committee for that?

Thompson

As soon as you could. Rick is going to be putting things together in January or February. Rick, what would you say?

Erb

You have that right. I haven't put out notices yet for people as to when to turn in budgets, but I can make certain that you receive one Jane. For planning purposes, I would say it will be the first week in January.

Resiliency Committee - Thompson

Thompson

We will be meeting the week after the presentation by Sebago Technics. The meeting was delayed, allowing for review of that proposal, and then the impact.

Comprehensive Planning Committee - Conrad

Conrad

We're meeting next week.

Conservation Commission - Cartwright

Cartwright

There is no update since what we heard at the last meeting from Ken. The Conservation Commission is meeting this Thursday at 4:00pm here.

Affordable Housing Committee – Cartwright

Thompson

Is there any more talk along those lines, relative to Kinney Woods Rd?

Cartwright

I could just say a couple of things about that. The CDC has gotten out a report from Mike Sabatini and his Landmark Corporation in Rockport, on a proposal that would be seven acres for housing units on a parcel of eighteen acres and there's a design for it. Rob Kelley said he'd like to run that by the Planning Board before making a presentation to our board here and make sure it would be potentially doable. I think that we will see a proposal from them fairly soon, maybe at the next meeting or meeting after that. The theme would be cluster housing, and this is for affordable housing because we have plenty of the other kinds around here. There would be some open space and a potential for hiking or walking trails. This is really just using a small percentage of the total Kinney Woods property that the town owns.

Cartwright

That's my update for today.

Shellfish Committee- Elwell

Elwell

They haven't met. They will meet in two weeks, I think.

Solid Waste and recycling - Erb

Erb

They have not met.

Cemetery Committee – Carr

Carr

They have not met.

Port Clyde Landing Project

Erb

There are a couple of things. One is that the Harbor Committee is almost wrapped up on report to the Select Board and their recommendations, I think they really just need to review what they've already decided at this point and put finishing touches on it and make certain that everyone is in agreement on the presentation, so it could very well be at your next meeting that it would be ready. We might want to

talk in a few minutes about the number of agenda items. We have a fairly light agenda tonight, but I can see things are piling up for the next couple of meetings afterwards, and that would be one of them.

The other thing that has happened, and I think we may have talked about this a little bit at the previous meeting, where we expected to find ledge on the site, it was deeper than that by about thirty feet. So that has slowed down the project. We are right now anticipating that instead of early June, it will be roughly a month after that, although that is still to be determined because when they return to driving steel, we'll have to see what they hit next at this point. All of this is somewhat speculative right now. There will be a cost involved for additional steel and the cost for installing it. We are talking with CPM contractors about the amount for that. Hopefully, we'll come to an agreement on that fairly soon. On the positive side, we were working from a position of financial strength. Our surplus, not including these next changes, was between \$1.4 and \$1.5 million. We're going to need some of that, but I still feel certain that we're within budget. We're not too far off schedule. I'll be talking with the EDA in the next couple of days about the proposed changes, but I don't believe that they will be concerned. One of the things that we heard when we were first notifying them of our starting date was that there were many funded projects that were much further behind. I'm not terribly concerned about a month, but I'll let you know if the EDA has any concerns about that. That's about it right now. I think you'll be pleased with the work that the Harbor Committee has done. They worked hard, had a lot of meetings and did a nice piece of work on that. I am looking forward to having you look at that.

Carr

Could we use the shorter steel, or did that have to go back to the manufacturer? Could we use it, resell it or is there a cost associated with ordering something that doesn't work?

Erb

What we've learned is that there are limited uses for it because of the specific type of steel that it is. There is an offer by the steel contractor but it's not much. As far as keeping it, storing it and hoping for a use someday, I think it could be a really long wait at this point.

Thompson

Wendy, that's a good question. The one thing that's a little bit heartening is it's what's called grade four, which is the high end of the types of steels that are generally used, and most communities don't even use that grade. That's one of the reasons we don't necessarily have many people stepping forward to use it. We have good stuff, but it's so good, others don't want it.

Acquisition of Property at Old Woods Rd.

Thompson

We've seen some things go back and forth and we have a semi complete audit. We just received some other items later today. I think for most of this we could have a general discussion. I don't think we need an executive session at this point. Any thoughts along those lines?

Erb

It was late today, but we didn't receive the full appraisal report from the owner of Lot 11. I haven't had much chance to go through it myself, but it reflects the same numbers that he had put out before.

Carr

I just wanted to say that kind of appraisal data is a little bit of junk science. I've worked in that area before. They make the number fit. There's a number and a weighted percentage. I looked through all his equations, and I thought he wanted to come to that number. I realized the appraiser kept saying the crossings were permitted or allowed, I forget what language he used. Is that true?

Erb

Well, I was looking for that as well and I did not see a very specific response to that. My understanding is that it will be challenging.

Carr

Across the wetlands.

Erb

I don't think anyone says it's impossible, but it has definitely impacted the value.

Thompson

I saw two places where the appraiser was referring to the data supplied by Malcolm, and it makes you wonder.

Conrad

I didn't see any mention in the first half of what we got earlier today about the Planning Board condition of putting this under conservation easement. There was no mention of that at all in there. I don't know if that came in with the second half that came in at 5:30pm.

Thompson

I think there was something about it when they talked about the deed itself, and that there were no limitations in the way the deed was placed. Again, I'd have to review it.

Conrad

But again, that's contrary to the town's position.

Thompson

And findings of fact.

Conrad

Right.

Erb

The property owner has made it very clear that he is relying entirely on what the recorded plan and the Registry of Deeds says.

Cartwright

I also got the impression that there was no movement there; he hadn't budged at all.

Erb

He has not. I requested that he provide us with a new counter proposal and his response was that he would ask the Select Board to provide, I believe he called it the highest and best final offer.

Carr

But did he understand that there are other funding sources, and we're going to have to go to our voters.

Erb

He does understand that, and I think he probably is asking for what the Board is willing to do, understanding we can't do it in a vacuum. It is going to require other approvals.

Carr

Does he understand that there might be contributions from homeowner associations, the water district, etc.

Erb

I have not discussed that with him.

Conrad

We have decided in the past to lump all those other potential sources into one category, even though there are variables, particularly the grant funding. It's hard to know what you'd come up with there. The other things might be fixed. Van, do you think we should discuss that number in an executive session at the next meeting and see what our position is?

Thompson

That's my thought. I think we need a little while to digest and determine what might be a further approach. I'd like to look over the appraisal because I didn't get it in time to review the last portion that came in.

Carr

He has not budged off his number; it's the same number that he has been sticking to.

Cartwright

There is nothing new. I didn't really learn anything from the appraisal at all.

Thompson

I think, as Wendy mentioned, some of the appraisal is a little fuzzy, but it won't necessarily change his position.

Conrad

One thing we did learn is that it appears that the appraiser is either unaware or omitting the condition that it be put under a conservation easement. That is significant, assuming that's true. Like you, I didn't get a chance to read the second half of the report and just looked for the number.

Carr

That appraisal, like all of them, states it's limited to what information the client has given, and he said that in many different ways. If Malcolm hasn't told the appraiser that, he's not going to put it in there.

Erb

I think that's probably the way it went. The other thing I did learn today from speaking with the landowner is he is aware of the penalty for moving away from tree growth and has factored that into the price.

Cartwright

That was in there.

Thompson

Any thoughts? What do we think about an executive session now or should we delay it?

Elwell

I think we should delay it.

Carr

I don't think we're going anywhere so we can delay it.

Cartwright

I don't think people are going to be bidding on his property anytime soon.

Thompson

I'm just thinking in terms of homeowners and that sort of thing. Then, we shall delay it. I think there's a uniform opinion relative to that. That's good.

Cartwright

It also lets the public know that we're going to have a session on it so it's not a surprise.

Budget Committee Quarterly Financial Review**Susan Ellis**

The Budget Committee met. Van was part of that meeting and of course, Irene and Rick. We need alternates for our committee so, if you know somebody that's interested in affecting the budget at St. George, we'd like to hear their name. We went over the budget versus actuals. Utilities are running high in all the departments. We have to pay for the internet now. We had one account previously that was free, so utilities may go over a little bit. We're going to see what happens once we purchase the solar panels, which happens in March. There are several accounts with balances left such as maps, resurfacing the roads and a couple of others. That's all good news. The ambulance is a new department. It's number 18. We're still learning and there will probably be a little bit of expense there as we continue to learn but the budgeting will get better and better as we go forward. Generally, we are in very good shape. We were doing little nitpicky things just to make sure we had a good grip. We had our new member there, Greg Soutiea from the Craignair. And then we're all remembering Pete Lubbs, who was on the Budget Committee for a number of years and has just recently died. We want them to remember his service to the Town of St. George. Are there any questions for us?

Scott Vaitones

Just very quickly, there were a number of questions that we raised prior to tonight's meeting, and submitted to Irene, and those were all answered very satisfactorily. They will be reflected in the Budget Committee Minutes. Both the questions and the answers.

Gartley & Dorsky Engineering Evaluation of Drift Inn Beach**Erb**

We received a small grant through Maine Emergency Management to evaluate and do preliminary designs to improve drainage at Drift Inn Road. Bill Lane from Gartley & Dorsky has been working on the project and I emailed his plan to you. Bill will be available to meet with us. I told him I thought we

would talk about it first. We received enough funding to do this study. The idea would be that it would put us in a position to apply for actual construction funds. There's more discussion that needs to take place. Basically, what he's showing there is a reorientation of the culvert so that it does not take the direct hit from storms. The big problem down there, and some of you have seen, is the amount of seaweed and debris that ends up on the road and in the culvert. It creates a lot of problems when we get a backup from that culvert. Besides changing the direction of the culvert somewhat, you see that there are some large stones that will be put in front of it to break the force of the waves and the road itself will be raised, I believe, by at least two feet. It's one of our big problem areas in the town. That's why we ended up applying for the grant. Bill has been great to work with. I know he would be willing to come back. We can talk a little bit about other items coming up on the agendas. I'm wondering about the meeting after next for this. I don't know if the landowners are here this time of year. I don't really know them, but the abutters obviously would have a real interest in what we're planning here, so I'd like to invite them if they are available. If people have questions, I can try to answer them, or I will relay them to Bill.

Thompson

In terms of projections relative to sea level rise, what did Gartley & Dorsky plug into looking to the future?

Erb

I'll have to ask.

Thompson

I have to say a two-foot increase is questionable if you're talking twenty years. I'd like to know what they built in, and I'm intrigued to see how it dovetails because this is one of the areas that's going to be part of Sebago Technics presentation in terms of what they anticipate happening there over various time periods. I think that will influence things and perhaps two meetings down the road we can get into some of that.

Conrad

That's another argument in favor of taping the presentation. Then he could watch it and see what Sebago is recommending about that location.

Carr

This is where the tide comes up, and there is a little pond on the other side. It has a lot of tannins, and it really stinks. There are potential sewage issues there.

Carr

I think the homeowners that own those little cottages are only here in the summer.

Thompson

Number two, looking at the plans to increase the height of the road, I noticed the dotted lines on either side. Is that the easement for the road?

Erb

Yes, it is.

Thompson

It looks like there could be actual parking put there that would be off the road but within the easement.

Erb

I was pleasantly surprised that we had enough room to work within there.

Thompson

I think that's something we need to again, enter into our discussions.

Elwell

I don't think we have to encourage parking there.

Cartwright

Since we built a big parking lot nearby.

Thompson

If it can be accommodated without being dangerous by keeping people outside "the fog line", then maybe it wouldn't be so bad because they're already parking there. The problem is they extend into the road. A proper width, given the easement we have, might be one possible solution. Things for discussion in the future.

Tax Acquired Properties

Erb

I'm sorry, I wish I had emailed them. The number has not changed. There are ten parcels here.

Thompson

Have any monies come in?

Ames

When I started working here, there were eleven. I have tax acquired three and there are now ten, so in the last two years, this essentially decreased the number by one.

Erb

But it's down by four from its highest.

Thompson

That is pretty good progress.

Erb

Honestly, some of the ones that we were able to take off the list were extremely satisfying.

Carr

Is account 1931 the cemetery area?

Ames

Yes.

Carr

Has there been any progress in straightening that out?

Ames

I think we need clarification from the state. If we keep part of it, expenses for surveying will probably have to come out of our pocket.

Erb

To refresh everyone's memory, the change in state law requires we need to refund to the former owner any surplus above the tax that is owed, and it makes it a little complicated when you want to keep a piece of the property. That one is probably the most confusing one of the bunch. The others are fairly straightforward.

Ames

For the third and fourth one on the list, the account owner is dead. There is no estate. We are required to notify the previous owner, so what are we supposed to do?

Elwell

I thought he had a nephew.

Ames

He has five kids.

Conrad

Bill Kelly mentioned, when we had our workshop, that he thought the state was going to be working on regulations for how to handle the state cases where there were heirs missing in action. That might be one where we have to wait for state guidance. That's definitely complicated.

Erb

For the rest, there was one where we understand that the property owner also has issues with the state and federal government on taxes. One thing that Bill Kelly did tell me, somewhat to my surprise, was the town's lien will take priority over either the state or federal government. That does not happen very often.

Carr

I don't remember that from law school.

Conrad

I think it's because it's real property tax. Real property tax goes first.

Ames

There is also the issue with the forestry plan for the tree claim being outdated by about twelve years. That's got to be straightened out as well.

Erb

You have another one there, parcel number 2673. The owner is pretty much missing an action.

Elwell

He is probably in prison.

Ames

No, he's not. We haven't had an address for him since he got out.

Erb

But I recall from speaking with Bill Kelly about these things, there is a procedure. Things don't have to grind to a halt simply because you can't locate the person. It's the kind of thing I assume where ads in the paper need to be placed and things like that have to be implemented, but it can be done.

Cartwright

When Maine Coast Heritage Trust acquired High Island and made it public, there were numerous people they couldn't find. There's a way you can attempt to reach them.

Erb

We have some real questions on the first one, account number 1931. We may have some on 332 and 333. Most of the rest of these are more easily solved. Let's put it that way.

Cartwright

They are little parcels.

Erb

Yes, they are there. If you'd like for your next meeting, I can come back with a plan for each of those. We can start with those.

Thompson

Good idea. Please do.

Erb

That's all I had to report on.

Adjournment

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

Respectfully submitted,

Tammy Taylor
Recording Secretary
Town of St. George, Maine