

ST. GEORGE SELECT BOARD & ASSESSORS

St. George Town Office

MEETING MINUTES

April 6, 2020 – 7 p.m.

The Select Board meeting was called to order at 7 p.m. via a Zoom conference call. Members present were: Richard Bates, Chair; Randy Elwell, Jerry Hall, Wayne Sawyer, and Tammy Willey. Also, present through Zoom were: Terri-Lynn Baines, Tim Polky, Tara Elwell, David Percival, Susan Ellis, Elizabeth May, John Falla, Suzanne Hall, and Robert and Margo Kelley.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None.

REGULAR SESSION:

- Adjustments to Agenda:

- Appointment of an Interim Harbor Master was added to the agenda under New Business
- Spirit of America Award was added under New Business as a discussion item

- Minutes: The minutes of March 9, 2020, were amended as follows:

Page 3, under 10 CSR Update, line 3, change to read: **The Harbor Master and Harbor Committee met** with the **EDA** Administrator who suggested the **Town** apply for

Page 3, under Cost Estimates for Rebuilding Fort Point Trail, line 3 change to read: ...the town's contribution from **\$17,500 to \$30,000**.

Page 4, paragraph 4, 2nd sentence, delete period after the word process.

Page 10, paragraph 1, line 3, correct the firm's name to **Camoin 310**

Page 10, paragraph 4, line 5, correct name to **Rob Kelley**

Page 12, under Social & Community Services, the motion, line 2, correct amount to **\$232,424.00**

A motion was made by Selectperson Willey, seconded by Elwell, to approve the March 9, 2020 minutes, as amended. The vote was 5-0. Motion carried.

The minutes of March 23, 2020, were amended as follows:

Page 1, under Town Manager's Report, line 3, change to read: ...ask where **you** have been.

Page 3, 4th paragraph, correct to: **A** selectperson asked...

Page 3, 7th paragraph, line 3, correct word to **nitrite** gloves

A motion was made by Selectperson Hall, seconded by Elwell, to approve the March 23, 2020 minutes, as amended. The vote was 5-0. Motion carried.

- Communications:

- A letter from Bruce Flaherty about the Spirit of America Award. Mr. Flaherty is a representative of the Augusta Chapter of the Maine Spirit of America Foundation.
- Town Manager Polky received a communication that April is "Sexual Assault Awareness Month." Chair Bates said the information is a reminder that there are resources in Midcoast Maine to help with sexual assault issues and it is incumbent to let people, as well as, the Ambulance Association, the CDC, churches, etc., know that the Midcoast has these services.

- Warrant: Ms. Baines presented two warrants for review. The first warrant was from the general fund for the week of April 6, 2020. The total expenses were \$99,999.72 and includes two weeks of payroll, a health insurance payment, a new telephone system, and other regular expenses. The second warrant was for the week of April 6, 2020, and the total expense was \$58,976 for payment to the Musson Group.

Chair Bates asked Mr. Polky to explain why the town office had a new telephone system installed. Mr. Polky said the town office had a problem with the phone system shortly after a prolonged power outage a few months ago. After the telephone system was fixed, Polky said the **repairman** told him and the staff that they might not be able to repair it again and could not promise that the telephone system would be up and running after another power outage. Mr. Polky and the staff felt the town office needed to have a telephone system, so they made the decision to upgrade the unit. Chair Bates believed it was prudent to have a system that worked, especially during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency.

Chair Bates asked about the payment to the Musson Group and if Noel had submitted the paperwork which he was asked to send. Mr. Polky said Noel did, he (Polky) had the paperwork in his office and was holding on to it until they received the grant from the Department of Economic Administration.

Members of the Select Board will sign the warrants by emailing signed papers to the town office or bringing signed papers to the office and leaving them in the outside mailbox.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT - Tim Polky reported the following: They are trying to reduce the staff and reduce the contact hours with the public. As of the week of April 6, the town office will be open four days a week and will be closed on Fridays and there will only be two people in the front office at a time. The Transfer Station will be closed on Thursdays and there will only be two attendants on duty each day, as they are trying to reduce their public contact. Mr. Polky said one of the problems occurring at the Transfer Station was that people were using it as an area to congregate and you could not get people separated.

Matt McCollom left his job as Harbor Master which left the town in a slight bind, but Mr. Polky talked with David Schmanska about filling in as interim Harbor Master. Schmanska agreed to and said he would be willing to take on the 10 Cold Storage Road issue to keep that process going.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- Conservation Commission (CC): Selectperson Willey reported that the CC met on Thursday, April 2, 2020. They held the meeting via Zoom. They discussed future plans, but they would not be having any events during the pandemic. Willey said everything was on hold except for the possible repair of the bridge at Fort Point Trail. Selectperson Willey said 30 minutes into the meeting, they were Zoom bombed by several unknown people as well as improper photographs being posted. The CC group ended the meeting and Selectperson Willey promptly notified Chair Bates regarding what had occurred.

Chair Bates said that Tara Elwell and Terri-Lynn Baines looked into this issue and believe they have taken the necessary precautions to prevent something like this from happening again during Zoom calls.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Appointment of an Interim Harbor Master: Mr. Polky talked with former Harbor Master David Schmanska about filling in as interim Harbor Master for the town. Mr. Schmanska has had over 20 years of experience serving as Harbor Master for the town of St. George, and Selectperson Willey thought he was totally qualified to do the job.

On a motion by Selectperson Elwell, seconded by Hall, it was voted 5-0 to appoint David Schmanska as the interim Harbor Master for St. George.

- Discussion of the Town's Role During COVID-19 Pandemic: Chair Bates said he thought the town's most important role was to support Governor Mills in her Executive Orders to maintain the health and safety of the state.

Chair Bates said, "The values of this community, the strengths, and the multiple networks of care that we have in this community before the pandemic, we should call upon all of these to continue and to be as solid and true after we get through all of this. Because the values that we talk of here and those that we are rightly very proud of, they're not fair-weather values, they are values that really count right now. Therefore, I think our job is, in the town, to urge everyone in the many different networks that we travel in town to treat our friends and neighbors like they truly are our friends and neighbors and treat them with kindness and respect."

Selectperson Elwell thinks the only thing we can do as a town is to reiterate what the governor and the CDC says and have awareness. He does not believe there is much the Select Board can do outside of answering questions, getting information out to people, and being nice to the people coming here, and let them know to quarantine.

Selectperson Sawyer thinks there is enough information out there already and people know about it. He does not think the Select Board needs to add to the pile. He said he knows they have been encouraged to do that, but he does not think they need to.

Chair Bates remembered that Selectperson Sawyer said, as a minister, he forwards all sorts of material to his congregation and Chair Bates assumes that other ministers and rectors are doing the same and feels the information is getting out.

Selectperson Sawyer agreed with Chair Bates but said the only concern he has is some people in the community do not have televisions or email, and he does not know if they need to make a concerted effort to reach out to them. He feels that most everybody has the information they need to know. Selectperson Elwell agreed.

Selectperson Willey agreed and thought the informational postcard mailed out by the Center for Disease Control and the White House listed recommendations that everybody should be doing. She believed that anyone who does not have email, or a computer probably received that postcard in the mail.

Selectperson Sawyer appreciates that people are making their homemade masks. Chair Bates thinks it makes sense for people to wear masks during this time, but he said it is a choice.

Selectperson Hall agreed with the other points made. He said there is a lot of information going out and they need to reinforce that information. He feels there should not be inconsistencies between the Town and what the Governor is recommending. Selectperson Hall noted his family is looking into the use of masks and feels the point of using a mask is to keep "your germs off other people" and about "me protecting the people around me should I get it and be asymptomatic."

Town Manager Polky also agreed with what was said. He thinks the bigger issue is the conflicting information that is out there, trying to stay on top of that, and get the conflicting information straightened out. He feels consistent information is important. Polky thinks that even though some people in the community may not have a television or the internet, he thinks most people know something is going on and that most people are taking the coronavirus seriously.

Margo Kelley said the most important thing people can do is to make sure there is consistent communication across all channels otherwise people will get mixed messages. She asked if the communications from the Wednesday morning CDC group can be posted on the town's website.

Chair Bates suggested that Kelley send the communications to the town office for review since the CDC group is not a town committee. Chair Bates said it is important that what appears on the town website is clearly from the town, and that it is appropriate and represents what the town is thinking. He said there may be times when these are not always the same.

Margo Kelley added that Wayne Sawyer and Amy Drinkwater were involved in crafting the documents and understood 100% that there had to be town level buy-in, so she would send everything in on Tuesday.

Rob Kelley said the CDC was maintaining a community information hub at the Community Development Corporation's COVID-19 website that included a lot of the business and personal financial data around paycheck protection and unemployment. He said he was monitoring and updating the hub daily to make sure it was current to what was available.

Selectperson Sawyer suggested the town have a link to the CDC's website. Rob Kelley said the town was welcome to link to the COVID-19 website as the information was essentially based on the State of Maine or Federal resources rather than third party anecdotal resources. Chair Bates thought it made sense for the town to link the CDC's interior page on COVID-19 to the town's "Useful Links, Website of Interest" page.

- Schedule for Future Meetings: Chair Bates said he had written a new Select Board meeting schedule which included several special agenda items and would send it to the Select Board on Tuesday for review and feedback. He said Terri-Lynn Baines and Town Manager Polky would be working to develop a first cut interim budget for the year (starting in July based on the current budget) and the Select Board would discuss that at the May 4th meeting.

Chair Bates said he had talked with Town Manager Polky about holding the town meeting in August, which may or may not be possible.

- Interim Budget: The Select Board discussed several ideas and suggestions as they begin to move forward and work on an interim budget for the town.

Selectperson Hall, "The world is being turned upside down in several different areas, and it is hard to know where the needs may be greatest in our town." He thought it may be necessary to push money towards some of the problems, so we should implement an immediate reduction of any unnecessary spending."

He suggested building up types of reserves that could be allocated in ways the Select Board thought would be beneficial to the town, i.e., through community groups like the CDC, through the school, through churches and other community organizations.

Selectperson Hall, "I am not sure how to do it but I feel it is likely that some type of additional support may be appropriate and there are questions about how monies can be reallocated because there are limits on what you can transfer from here to there. So, there is 'how much of this can you do? How would you do it?'"

Selectperson Hall said he had been thinking about this problem more conceptually than in specifics. He said, "I think a month from now, two months from now, we'll be a lot smarter about what the needs are and where we could best help. A lot of this is just brand new with not charted paths forward for us. So from a concept point of view, I think the more we have in reserve, the more flexibility we can find, the better we may be able to serve needs that we don't understand that well, yet."

Chair Bates thought the Governor's order of March 18, Section D-2 gave the Select Board quite a lot of scope to what they could approve in the town meetings. For instance, it gave the Select Board the ability to write a warrant to make some significant changes if they felt that was appropriate.

Selectperson Elwell asked for Tim and Terri-Lynn's thoughts on this issue.

Town Manager Polky, "I agree. We have to look at what we are doing and where can cut back or avoid spending. The other thing to remember is that there is some Federal help out there. We have already registered for Disaster Relief funds. I am not sure exactly what we are entitled to or what we can qualify for, but we are working on that every day. It is going to take some time to work it out but, I like the idea."

Susan Ellis asked, "Do we know how the Ambulance Association is doing?"

Town Manager Polky said one of the problems the ambulance was running into was it had not been going anywhere. He said, "No one wants to go to the hospital." He explained because there had been less transporting to the hospital, the ambulance had lost revenue which would ordinarily come from billing the patient's insurance company or Medicare. Polky said, "There again the ambulance is a nonprofit corporation which can take advantage of some of the Federal programs. I know that Amy Drinkwater was doing the applications today to try to get some help from that side. That is going to be an issue that we are going to have to address before we get into a town meeting."

Selectperson Hall remarked that the proposed cancellation of St. George Days which was a big fundraiser for the ambulance, would add to the needs of the ambulance. Polky said absolutely.

Selectperson Sawyer, "I was thinking about what we could get by without for another year. I am wondering about some of the road paving. Is that something that we could delay for another year or by putting it off, does it make it a lot worse and a lot more expensive to pick it up again?"

Town Manager Polky, "These are some of the areas that we have to look at and you have to weigh the pros and cons. There is good and bad. If you think that paving is one of those areas that we may be able to postpone for a year. I think we have to make sure if we do that, that people need to understand that it is postponing it. It is not canceling it."

Selectperson Hall, "The other thing is the contribution to equipment reserves. You don't like to mess with those but if the ambulance is suffering a large shortfall and you can cover that by transferring money from a planned contribution to an equipment reserve, then those are the choices we should be considering."

Town Manager Polky, "Yes. These items have all been on the table that Terri-Lynn and I have been talking about. We just need to come up with where we are going."

Selectperson Elwell, "I agree with Jerry. As we all know, we have to tighten our belts but how we do that, I don't know. That is why I asked Tim or Terri-Lynn because they deal with it every day. They know what they can get by without. I trust them to take us in the right direction."

Selectperson Hall, "The topic for tonight was that we were going to discuss concepts to provide thoughts regarding direction to Tim and Terri-Lynn with the goal that they would come back by the end of the month with a proposed budget based on these concepts." He felt it would take a meeting or two to work through some of the trade-offs and come to conclusions.

Chair Bates said, "If we can spend it locally, that is to the benefit of everyone in the community. I hope that could be one of the efforts. If it is spending money out of state, I feel we should make sure we take care of our own first. Another principle and it counters with what Jerry says, but the town has always had excellent financial discipline in putting money aside for so many things whether it is re-valuation of the properties whether it is fire trucks, all these things. It is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the way the town has run that we have these funds.

I'm loath to mess with that discipline we had. I know these are special times; it is a difficult balance.

"Another point is the County came out with their budget. They settled it in December and that went up for St. George by \$94,000. The budget that the Select Board and Budget Committee agreed to a couple of weeks ago also increased our expenditures by about \$92,000. So, in simple terms that represents an increase of \$186,000 to our expenditures. I think in looking at a budget this summer, I would be hard-pressed to say that we want to increase the mil rate. So, we are going to have to think very deeply about this problem."

Selectperson Hall asked what the school was going to do because that would have a significant impact on the mil rate. Selectperson Elwell thought the school was trying to work theirs down to a flat budget, yet some things would have to increase but not that high.

Selectperson Willey, "I sort of agree with everybody, but I think we have to wait and see what the Federal government is going to do. How that is going to kick in and what we might receive from that? Tim, have we saved any money anywhere because of so many things being shut down and not being used? Are we saving any money at the moment?"

Town Manager Polky, "Not that much. We are still doing maintenance; we are still doing stuff like that, so the shutdown has not affected the spending that much."

Selectperson Willey, "So the Federal government is a really big question mark at this point in what we are going to receive from them." Town Manager Polky said yes. He also explained that the town was buying supplies they never had to before and now had to buy more hand sanitizer, nitrile gloves, toilet paper, etc.

Ellis asked what the latest date was before taxes could be committed. Town Manager Polky said taxes had to be committed before the tax bills were sent out and noted one other problem. He said Assessor Gingras had not been down to do his pick-up work which was usually done around the first of April. Gingras told Polky that he could not get a motel room and was finding that a lot of people did not want him in their house. Polky explained, "We are going to have to wait until he can do some of that. We can't make any kind of commitment until after the town meeting."

Chair Bates said the town had a reserve of two months, so in principle, the town could postpone the first tax bill from the end of September to the end of October.

Ellis asked when the first payment to the school would be due. Baines said the town paid the school monthly and Chair Bates noted the school also had a reserve fund.

Selectperson Hall, "There is a question of how many people might be late with their tax payments, so if you delay it a month, and a lot of people are late, it could chew into the cushion pretty badly." Chair Bates, "I think that many people who have mortgages, the taxes are taken out by the mortgage company and the town would get the payments."

Baines, "A lot of people have their insurance, mortgage and their tax payment in one and the bank sends the town the money when it is due."

Percival, "I know now that the school is not using the buses as much as they normally would. They are saving on fuel there, I think. Is that about right, Randy?"

Selectperson Elwell, "We are only running what we need to deliver the breakfasts and lunches. Starting next week, the buses will go in for their state inspection but outside of that, we are not running them."

Chair Bates suggested that Terri-Lynn and Tim could get together with Cassie Kilbride and Mike Felton via Zoom or another conferencing method to discuss how the school was dealing with their budget.

- Spirit of America Award: The Select Board discussed the communication received from Bruce Flaherty about the Maine Spirit of America Award. Chair Bates said for the past few years, the town report dedicatee was given the award. He said they had previously discussed who the town report would be dedicated to and suggested that could be the person they chose to represent the Spirit of America in the town. The Select Board agreed with Chair Bates's suggestion.

There was no further business to discuss.

At 8:16 p.m., on a motion by Selectperson Sawyer, seconded by Elwell, it was voted to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marguerite R. Wilson
Select Board Recording Secretary