

MINUTES

**SELECT BOARD/ASSESSORS' MEETING
TUESDAY, AUGUST 16, 2022
WILLIAM L. PULLEN MUNICIPAL BUILDING MEETING ROOM
ONLINE NON-INTERACTIVE ON TOWN HALL STREAMS
6:30 p.m.**

Select Board present: Jim Justice, Adam Fuller, Martha Johnston-Nash, Wayne Kirkpatrick, and Bill Packard

Others present: Jay Feyler (Town Manager), John Mountainland, Linda Waltz-Mountainland, Erik Amundsen, Greg Grotton, Lawrence Nash, Gail Hawes, John Gibbons, Steve Migliorini, and others

- 1. Call Select Board Meeting to Order:** at 6:38 p.m. by Adam Fuller.
- 2. Pledge of Allegiance**
- 3. Public Comment:**

Lawrence Nash of 212 Shepard Hill Road spoke. He said, re: TCC, Camden's tannery property has been discussed for over 20 years, and it looks the same today much like Rockport Elementary School and Thomaston Green. TCC is a great group; let's move forward.

Linda Waltz-Mountainland read from an email she received, wanting to know about Steel Pro coming to Union. Will they be paying their fair share of taxes, and will it ease the tax burden for others? She then asked about rumored Steel Pro plans to build a recreational facility, and whether this would change TCC ideas.

Adam said Martha, Wayne, and he went down to Steel Pro in Rockland, and Jay spoke. Steel Pro is moving to Union into the BM Clark property, which will be a big tax boost. There is a possibility that in the future they could apply for a TIF which could change the amount of money that we're going to get, but at this time there are no special tax incentives offered by the town other than working with them any way we can. They pulled the demolition permit yesterday.

Jay said Steel Pro is going to work with us on recreation. Part of their agreement is yearly payments, and if they wish they may pay out additional to help build a recreational field for their employees and for the citizens. Adam said we worked with the Pullen Fund and they worked with the Pullen Fund to move them into that lot, because the Pullen Fund purchased the adjacent land. The Pullen Fund has the mission to look at putting in sports fields there which could be a good neighbor for them.

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Right now, the news is they are coming to Union, putting in a brand new facility where the Clark building is, and they're coming largely because Union is on an upswing: we were the right spot, it's a good deal for them as a growing company, employee-owned, and a good deal for Union as it helps our tax base a lot and brings in 55 to 60 jobs.

Martha noted the town accepted the land from the Pullen Fund, so at this point it is the town outlining what it becomes with Steel Pro. Adam noted, preemptively, zero taxpayer dollars are being talked about for sports fields.

Gail Hawes had a question on item 7, TCC. Adam will allow public comment then.

Adam said Steel Pro is a big deal. The town needs to recognize Jay as he did a lot of work to talk Steel Pro into coming to town. He helped with a lot of state regulations, did a lot of site visits, spent a lot of time back and forth with the Steel Pro employees and management. Adam has no doubt that a large reason they chose to come to Union was the work that Jay did with them. All taxpayers owe him. It's a good get, a lasting legacy, and as a taxpayer he just wants to say thank you, Jay – he put in a lot of work, didn't give anything away, but showed them what Union can do. We are lucky to have Steel Pro and lucky to have Jay put in that work. He noted Jay gave a speech at the announcement, a very good speech Wayne added.

4. Approve Minutes of Tuesday, August 2, 2022:

Motion by: Jim Justice
2nd by: Martha Johnston-Nash
4-0-1 abstention (Packard)

5. Approve Treasurer's Warrants dated Tuesday, August 16, 2022:

Motion by: Martha Johnston-Nash
2nd by: Wayne Kirkpatrick
5-0

6. Welcome new Select Board member:

Adam welcomed Bill Packard and thanked everyone who ran and voted.

7. Discussion and vote on Raise and Appropriation amount for the TCC:

The board had a worksheet in front of them put together by Jay, shared with the room. Jay said the board has to raise at least the \$285,500 but probably wants to raise more to avoid coming back to the taxpayers.

Discussion included: staff at 20 hours plus FICA; heating system (bottom tubes) roughly estimated at \$30,000 to \$40,000; gutters, leaks, and flashing; leach field; and janitorial.

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Jay said it could be six months before the fire system is done. He also brought up the septic inspection, noting the septic should make it through the year with the small number of people using it. The heating system is a risk we've been running for 30 years. Contingencies and buffers were discussed.

Steve Migliorini asked for clarification of the roof replacement number. Jay said it's to repair all the holes in the roof, and he added a \$2,000 quote for flashing to their quote. Steve noted there are currently two unusable rooms due to the roof leak, one in the brick building and one in the yellow building.

John Mountainland asked if the TCC could use town insurance and town Wi-Fi. Jay said no. MMA will not insure that building, and he has not heard back from Allen Agency.

Adam reminded the whole point of this is to eventually offset costs with revenue. He feels good that the committee spent the better part of a year putting the numbers together, and every issue has been looked at with the TMA actively in the building. We are less in the dark than we've ever been. Jay did a good job working down the Tier 1 list.

In answer to Bill, Jay said the money will be set up as an enterprise fund.

Erik Amundsen asked about TMA fundraising for the TCC. Jay said it's the town's building. TMA can raise money – he thinks part of their bylaws is to raise money for the TCC – then they can donate that money, and the board can accept it. The town would contract with contractors as building owner. He will check with legal.

Gail Hawes asked if the TMA is going to continue. Adam said the board's intent is to have TMA continue to manage the building until we have the long-term business proposal put together and start to put out the bid package (per the MCOG workshop). Martha said the board voted to have TMA continue until the end of October.

Gail suggested continuing publicity and community outreach. She asked what the real TCC tax impact is, expressing concern about rumors going around that the CFTCC intentionally misrepresented numbers at the public hearing. She clarified she has never lied or hidden anything that has come out of these meetings.

The upshot was that Jim (Murphy, Assessors' Agent) will take whatever number the board gives him tonight and have the mil rate at the next meeting. Jay said tax impact cannot be determined until the board decides what it's going to raise and appropriate.

Adam did not feel anything was misrepresented; everything was done to the best of everyone's ability; and reminded that for the first nine months the committee was working, we didn't even have access to the building.

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Jay clarified if you raise a dollar, it affects everyone's taxes; so there's no doubt that \$350,000 is going to raise your taxes but so is the school, the town budget, etc. As Wayne put it, we all know there's going to be a tax impact if you spend money.

Bill suggested once we do the commitment it would be nice to say the SAD 40 assessment is up \$X, the county is up \$X, and municipal spending is up \$X; otherwise, perception will be the tax increase is because of the TCC.

Adam noted as of now we've spent zilch.

Martha asked if she could vote. Jay said technically the proper procedure would be for her to declare publicly she is president of the TMA, and the board would make a decision on whether she has a conflict or not. Wayne thinks now that everything is through the town it's not an issue. Adam agreed since not one penny is going through the TMA. Board consensus was Martha can vote.

Motion to appropriate \$350,000 for the TCC by: Wayne Kirkpatrick
2nd by: Jim Justice
5-0

8. Town Manager's Report:

Jay said Clarry Hill Road is open. There's still a bit of side work so there may be flaggers out. It's been a three- or four-year project. It took 14 months to get the Army Corps of Engineers permit. They did a pretty good job; we delayed them some due to compaction tests we did. The dryness didn't help as all the material was bone dry, powder, so they had to add water to everything they put down to get 95% compaction rate.

Ayer Park is done. There are only a couple minor things our engineer wanted them to do. We paid for it tonight. We will send in the reimbursement from the state as well as the culvert bill once we get it.

A little project near Jim (Justice) starts on Monday, digging up that section.

As Adam stated Steel Pro got their permit for a teardown. Gartley & Dorsky set pins today. In answer to Wayne, Jay said he thinks they will sell the steel from the building. They must do testing on the inside such as what paint is in there for disposal. He expects it will start in the next couple weeks, with a sign to come. Wayne said it will bring a lot of business to the town.

Jay said we are fully staffed upstairs. Tabitha Ripley started last Monday. She's going to be really good. She replaces Sharon who left to work at the hospital for more money. Due to everybody getting state training, there will be a couple days of office closure.

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Jay gave the board information on the new housing bill. It was done by his colleagues, some managers and a lot of code officers, with suggestions they're going to make to the legislature. The way it's written and interpreted right now is that most home rule on buildings is thrown out the window – you can build houses next to houses next to houses.

It's not a good bill which goes along with LD290, for which a ton of people have gotten applications. LD290 holds your taxes if you have a homestead for 10 years and are over 65. It's great for the elderly, but we're all going to end up paying for it somehow. They'll be out of money in a year which means instead of 100% reimbursement they'll probably do the typical "we're going to give you 80, we're going to give you 50."

Jay noted it's a lot of work in the office to get this done, researched, and certified. We have an assessor one day a week.

In answer to Martha, Jay said getting taxes reimbursed by the state is yet another bill that he advises against. It is basically a reverse mortgage.

Adam shared the frustration he is hearing from young families about the local real estate market. Jay said a lot of seniors are struggling to pay taxes. There should have been an income level with LD290.

9. Other Business:

Martha inquired about paving for the tennis courts. Jay said Vermont Tennis Courts has done all this for years, but now they only do southern Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. Another company never returned a call. Yet another said no new clients. We weren't going to resurface the courts; we were going to fill cracks. Rec and athletic directors are all having the same issue. We will try to get 25 courts needing to be done this year and see if they can all be done in one fell swoop. Stay tuned.

Martha asked about our road bond. Jay said once we get the bill from the culvert, that bond will be done other than the paperwork.

Jim brought up a resident concerned about water running through property she had improved with fill. Jay said it's way outside our ROW, just nature, and suggested riprap. Adam said whoever did the fill work could probably address it.

10. Committee Reports:

a. Broadband

John Gibbons said LCI/Tidewater is on track to submit a grant application in October to the Maine Connectivity Authority.

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If successful, this would mean a substantial expansion of their network to provide fiber to almost all the addresses in Union. They meet with LCI on Thursday to go over details.

From citizen feedback, the committee has identified a need to be in a better position to provide information on what's out there now, what the alternatives are especially for upgrading service until fiber is available. Method of follow-up will be a webpage on the town website. They will meet soon to compile ideas. Adam said John is being modest re: his website ideas.

~~b. Aging in Place in Union~~

c. Green Space

Jay said they meet tomorrow. Date for the survey is end of October.

d. TMA report

Erik asked if the TMA can do grant writing for the TCC building. Jay said it depends on the grant; most want the town to sign off. All grants come before the board to accept. Jay said the only caveat is watch the fine print.

We have the fire door.

Bill said it would be helpful if the TMA can gather information (anonymity fine) so we know how many/what types of people are interested once we can rent the TCC and whether rooms, stage, function, etc. Erik said it runs the gamut: artists, office space, plays, the Strand wanting the stage for auditions.

11. Select Board Reports:

Adam again thanked Jay re: Steel Pro.

Jay reminded board members to submit bullet points for the TCC business proposal to go out to bid.

Bill would not be surprised to see other businesses come to town following Steel Pro. Adam hears people choose Union because of the community. Jay said Steel Pro give us some leverage with the state DOT.

Welcome to new board member Bill Packard.

12. Future Agenda Requests: None.

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13. Adjourn:

Motion by: Adam Fuller
2nd by: Wayne Kirkpatrick
5-0

Meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Abaldo
Secretary