

MINUTES

**SELECTMEN’S/ASSESSORS’ MEETING
TUESDAY, AUGUST 3, 2021
WILLIAM I. PULLEN MUNICIPAL BUILDING MEETING ROOM
6:30 p.m.**

Selectmen present: Bill Lombardi, Josh White, Adam Fuller, and Martha Johnston-Nash

Others present: Jay Feyler (Town Manager), Jim Murphy (Assessors’ Agent), Leann Sebrey, Patrick Sebrey, Aleah Sebrey, Erik Amundsen, Karin Rector, Rick Rector, Bruce Cobb, Mary Bumiller, Lanson Dean, Lynn H. Allen, Maureen Rubano, Greg Grotton, John Gibbons, Brian Huntley, Heather Jackson, Clairlynn Rountree, Adam R. Mauro, Kathleen R. Thornton, Bruce Reinemann, Wendy Reinemann, Karina Shorten, Alan Boyer, Matt Blazek, Elinor Weissman, Mary Miller, and Christine Simmonds (Village Soup)

1. Call Selectmen’s Meeting to Order: at 6:30 p.m. by Adam Fuller.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Public Comment:

Josh stated he has been harshly trolled via email but glad to have been defended by townspeople and fellow board members.

Leanne Sebrey asked the board to keep in mind the value of public land.

4. Approve Minutes of Tuesday, July 20, 2021:

Motion by: Bill Lombardi

2nd by: Josh White

Motion amended to approve with statement that the Future of the TCC Committee recommended TCC lease be voided by: Bill Lombardi

2nd by: Josh White

4-0

5. Approve Treasurer’s Warrant dated August 3, 2021:

Motion by: Josh White

2nd by: Martha Johnston-Nash

4-0

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Bill asked about specifics of the scholarship awards. Jay said see Pullen Committee Minutes once they are approved. Adam and Bill agreed maybe this could be done differently, with a letter from the Scholarship Committee after their vote for example.

6. Approve abatement of taxes as Assessors per attached from Assessors' Agent:

Assessors' Agent Jim Murphy said this is regarding an entity that went out of business; the amount is \$90.

Motion by: Martha Johnston-Nash

2nd by: Bill Lombardi

4-0

7. Re-appointment of Thomas Pitzi and John Shepard (alternate) to the Tri-County Solid Waste Board:

Motion by: Martha Johnston-Nash

2nd by: Josh White

4-0

8. Discussion on ARP Funding Grant from Knox County:

Jay said we have until August 31, 2021 to come up with a funding request.

Thoughts included broadband, Clarry Hill culvert, food pantry, and water issues (subsidizing lines, for example). Federal vs. county funding was discussed.

John Gibbons offered to help write an application for broadband.

The board will come up with a wish list for the next meeting.

9. Presentation by Coggins Hill Citizens Group:

Kathleen Thornton, official representative of the newly and rapidly formed Coggins Hill Preservation Association, read aloud a written statement. In it she noted CHPA is a nonprofit; quoted from Union's 2017 Comprehensive Plan; and stated the group's goal of preserving blueberry fields and public access. She said the taxpayers of CHPA, all but one from Union, are offering approximately \$50,000 for the property whereas the town acquired it for \$1,200. She added CHPA intends to pay property taxes even though they are a nonprofit.

Discussion included ROW and other access issues. Jay clarified tax maps are not legal documents; they are a best-guess estimate, and folks should go by deed and survey.

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A number of residents gave eloquent, impassioned statements about the property in question.

Adam thanked Kathleen and pronounced so much citizen contribution fantastic. He said the reason he drives home the importance of public access is that any time the town seizes land, people around it always want it to be just trees or green space; it is important to view the land as something everyone in town can use and enjoy.

Jay explained that, if the Select Board wishes, they can go into Executive Session with CHPA which would be private. The board would then come out and do a formal vote in public. He summarized negotiations can be in private, while voting must be public, adding it is the realtor's legal obligation to keep offers private and confidential. He added there can be no notes/minutes and no votes in Executive Session.

10. Discussion on offers for Coggins Hill Property (multiple offers):

Jay said there are three offers. He reminded this is a quit-claim deed, meaning the Town of Union is selling its right to the property. Though doubtful, the previous owner could come back within five years with some legal quirk.

Adam read aloud the three offers:

- 1) Wendy and Bruce Reinemann of Guini Ridge Farm offered \$50,000 and sent a letter which Adam read aloud. The letter described increasing the value of the farmland, them expanding to blueberries, and allowing local informal access.
- 2) Scott Bisset and Josh White (abstaining from vote) offered \$75,000.
- 3) Coggins Hill Preservation Association offered \$49,375 signed by Heather Jackson with two conditions: they achieve nonprofit status by August 10, and they will sign as a nonprofit by August 31. Payments in lieu of taxes will be written into their bylaws.

A vehement yet civil discourse ensued. Several residents raised questions about Josh White being both a Select Board member and a co-bidder. In the end the room was satisfied regarding Josh's personal integrity; the integrity of the Select Board; and the professionalism of the board, town manager, and staff. In addition, a consensus eventually emerged among the three bidders who ostensibly share a concern for the agricultural legacy of the land as well as ongoing public access in some form. More residents spoke in heartfelt terms about the property. The board agreed all three offers were good ones.

Bill agreed with Erik Amundsen that there should be more rather than less information provided, i.e., on agendas instead of "tax acquired property" the map, lot, and address.

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Motion to withdraw this listing from the market by: Martha Johnston Nash
2nd by: Adam Fuller
3-0-1 abstention (White)

Martha wanted to continue the discussion until next meeting, with Jim back, as Josh won't be in the vote. Bill was not ready to vote. Adam asked if everyone would be ok extending the discussion to August 17; attendees responded in the affirmative.

Motion to table discussion of these offers until next meeting by: Bill Lombardi
2nd by: Martha Johnston Nash
3-0-1 abstention (White)

11. Town Manager's Report:

Our summer intern will report on his GIS project at the next meeting.

Next week Jay and our intern will attend the MTCMA (Maine Town and City Managers Association) Institute at Sugarloaf. Jay is the incoming MTCMA President; he currently serves as Vice President in charge of Professional Development.

The contractor has been working on Sidelinger Road. There has been a bit of a delay on Coggins Hill Road due to ongoing issues with one of the landowners.

12. Other Business:

Jay said the board was authorized to sign a Supplemental Participation Agreement from 2013, which specified a percentage for MaineSTART which matches MainePERS (retirement plans). He added it was budgeted right, but the contract was not right.

Motion to approve as written: Bill Lombardi
2nd by: Adam Fuller
4-0

Regarding remote meetings, Jay said (based on City of Portland and MMA) there can be a limited emergency proclamation: state a reason for it, and we can allow our committee members to meet remotely. He had to include a timeframe, so he put 90 days.

Motion by: Bill Lombardi
2nd by: Josh White
4-0

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13. Committee Reports:

a. Broadband

John Gibbons provided a written status report. Things are proceeding with both LCI & Coalition. He expects news by the end of this month.

Adam added they met with the feasibility study representative this week.

b. Aging in Place in Union

Bill said he understands Waldo Community Action Partners will drive Union seniors to doctor appointments for \$.75 cents a mile. There are some hoops to jump through such as calling 48 hours in advance. The committee will investigate once it gets rolling again.

c. Future of the Thompson Community Center

Martha said there have been no meetings since the last Select Board meeting; there will be one tomorrow night.

She added they have been talking to three of five entities. Jay said set parameters, and you can have preferred vendors. He added wheels are turning regarding the lease.

14. Selectmen's Report:

Bill reiterated agendas need to be more robust.

Adam noted the last two tax acquired properties drummed up a lot of emotion, so maybe look at that.

Josh was glad to see Bill Packard back doing grading training. Sidelinger Ridge needs to be graded. Jay said it has been under construction, and the contract states grading before paving.

Martha was happy to receive the ACO (Animal Control Officer) report, also pleased to hear from Matt (Public Works) and Jesse (Emergency Services). She received a letter from Carolyn Strickland on how well Family Day went. She strongly hopes Family Day will integrate with Founders Day in future and invites them to do so.

Adam thanked Josh for keeping his decorum, and Jay for stepping back once it got political and letting the board handle it.

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15. Future Agenda Items: None.

16. Adjourn:

Motion by: Bill Lombardi

2nd by: Adam Fuller

4-0

Meeting adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Abaldo
Secretary