

# **Board of Selectmen Sidelines**

## **December 23, 2020**

### **Submitted by John Shepard, Chair**

I'd like to offer my first contribution to our Select Board Sidelines. As the new board chairman this term, I've learned to listen first then speak and act only after reflection on the issues we may be handling. This is easy for me, as we currently have select board members who are very engaged, intelligent, earnest and articulate, and they are quite willing and able to expound at length about whatever subject is up for discussion. This often makes for longer meetings, but we have lively discourse and everyone's ideas add to the solution. As Adam Fuller has noted, we are five individuals elected to serve our town in our own unique way and this is grass roots democracy. Sometimes it gets noisy, but it's my job to moderate this and I'm still learning...

The hero of this scenario is our board secretary, Sandy Patrick, who manages to transcribe our enthusiastic but often confusing conversations into coherent minutes. I know this is challenging but she consistently makes sense of what we say and presents our meeting notes in a comprehensible way. Hats off to Sandy and Thank you!

I commend our new board members, Martha Johnston-Nash, and Bill Lombardi for adding so much fresh thinking and energy to our board. They both "hit the ground running" and were quite ready to take on all of the challenges we've faced since their election. They are both terrific assets to our select board and I know everyone is aware of the positive changes they've encouraged.

I have served on the board with Adam Fuller and Josh White for nearly two years and I'm ever more impressed with their thoughtful, intelligent thinking and dialog. They both contribute an incredible amount of well-reasoned ideas, reflections, suggestions, and historical perspectives from their lifetimes in Union. I think of them both as the solid foundation of our select board.

One final shout-out to our Courier-Gazette/Village Soup reporter, Christine Simmonds. She has covered our meetings and town happenings diligently and fairly and always maintains an open, cheerful demeanor we all appreciate.

As we all know, we have had issues this year. From Covid-19 to Zoom, sidewalks to political divisiveness, we all confront an array of challenges which are also opportunities. With any unexpected problem or disagreement, we can choose to "double down" and maintain a defensive posture, or we can choose to collaborate and find the best way forward together towards a solution. I think it's fair to say that this select board is striving towards solutions. It's rarely easy, but it's always better. Towards this end, it's been encouraging and refreshing to have much more public interest and input in our select board activities recently. This is a critically important aspect of any democracy, and I'm hopeful this trend will continue from now on.

As I like to remember, Union was named for the "uncommon harmony and union of the people in the community". I believe that founding spirit lives with us still.

In the select board and in our community, we are a local microcosm of the global macrocosm, so to speak, and if we can make things work well for ourselves here, then I believe it proves we can make things work well everywhere.

### **Submitted by Martha Johnston–Nash**

At this end of this strange year, I want to wish you all well. We've been through a lot, and probably have more to go before getting close to normal. My suggestion is to take this time for some R&R, and resolve to look forward to 2021 with a positive attitude. And a reminder, we selectmen are here to represent you - so if you have any questions or ideas, don't hesitate to let us know. Happy Holidays!

### **Submitted by Bill Lombardi**

We had a very full Select Board meeting Tuesday, December 15<sup>th</sup>. Here are some of the highlights:

**Depot Street Sidewalk** – Although appreciative of the civic minded volunteers who wanted to revive the sidewalk, the Board decided to deny the request. Due to the poor condition of the remaining portions of the sidewalk it was decided that a volunteer crew would not be equipped to bring the sidewalk to a functional level. Additionally, given the recent Town vote, it is time to move on.

**Thompson Community Center** - A lively discussion was had regarding the need to set up a Town committee to address possibilities of the future of the building. No decision was reached. The issue was tabled for discussion at our next meeting.

**Solar Moratorium** - It was decided that a moratorium on solar projects is not needed. A vote was taken to rescind the prior vote to initiate a moratorium. Jerry Brooks, chair of the Planning Board, indicated that a Solar Ordinance would be completed and would need to be voted on at the next Town meeting.

**Aging in Place** - Our new Resource Guide is available at the Town Office. If you are on our mailing list one will be sent to you. Call the Town Office go get on the mailing list. We will have a “Take Out” St. Patty’s day luncheon for seniors on March 18<sup>th</sup>. More info soon.

**Food Ordinance Committee** - This group met for the first time last week. You will be hearing more from this committee in the future as they solicit input and work on the possibility of developing rules to encourage small local producers.

### **Submitted by Adam Fuller**

The holidays are here, and the new year is fast approaching. By the time the select board meets again we will be in 2021. Like all aspects in life this is a great time to reflect on the past year and what a doozy it has been between Covid-19, elections, and our own sidewalk vote there has been a new level of both civic engagement in town and a shared responsibility to look out for our neighbors and fellow families. 2020 has certainly had ups and many downs but I am grateful that so far, our little town has not had to endure some of the hardships of loss that we see in some southern Maine towns and even worse in the nation's cities. I know we are not out of the woods

yet, but I hope that with vaccines beginning to make an appearance there is light at the end of this dark tunnel and I know we can come out the other side. I look forward to the many backyard BBQ's and get togethers that we are all so overdue for.

The new year is always a time for self-reflection and I hope we all take the chance to take a look in the mirror and find something we can work on within ourselves, rather it is losing the holiday, being better about procrastination, or begrudging to finally make a point to clean the gutters. I also hope that more of us take the spur of passion from the past election and look at how we can get involved in town. We have some excellent committees that could use more participation from Parks and Rec, Broadband, Food Ordinance, Aging in Place, Planning, and Budget. Even more than that exists for folks who have the time to help out. Let's not forget the Library, Historical Society, and Chamber of Commerce. I often tell my friends that it is not enough to just point out the problem sometimes, we need to help figure out a way to fix it.

So, I invite everyone to come on down, share your thoughts, give us a call, drop an email, or pop in on zoom. Big issues and small. And let us work together to keep the plows running, the grass getting cut, the ambulance and fire supported, and maybe along the way we can fix some things together. Happy Holidays.

**The Select Board wishes all a Healthy, Happy and Prosperous New Year!**