

MINUTES

**SELECT BOARD/ASSESSORS' MEETING
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 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), Catherine Meyer, Erik Amundsen, John Gibbons, Alan Hinsey (LCI)

- 1. Call Select Board Meeting to Order:** at 6:30 p.m. by Adam Fuller.
- 2. Pledge of Allegiance**
- 3. Public Comment:**

Erik Amundsen said Union is growing in population and suggested creating a paid Parks and Rec Commissioner, maybe part time. Re: budget meetings, he would like to go back to the separate meetings where the budget committee meets after the select board and discusses things, for more dialogue and a bit more clarity as to what's going on in the budget. These would not preclude the joint meeting.

Adam received a comment from Catherine Meyer re: tennis court resurfacing. Jay reached out to Vermont Tennis Courts who initially said they didn't go this far north anymore. He got a different estimate from New Hampshire on just patching, not resurfacing, which won't last more than a few years and is expensive. He noticed Lincolnville got a price from Vermont Tennis Courts and reached out to them again but no word yet.

Catherine asked about applying to the Pullen Fund once we get a price. She thinks the courts have to be rebuilt. Adam recommended waiting until Jay gets an estimate, putting it on the agenda, and see if we want to apply to the Pullen Fund.

Bill said there may be opportunities with conservation, the state, etc. and we definitely need to put it on agenda. Adam suggested looking at the basketball courts as well, which Bill didn't think were as critical.

In answer to Catherine, Jay said the Pullen deadline is end January/first of February.

Martha read aloud an email from Carolyn Stripling of Burkett Road, with a complaint about the three neon tree trunk wraps on the Common.

Select Board Meeting Minutes – December 6, 2022

Discussion followed about the tree wraps: some loved them, some hated them, and comments heard at the event also expressed both sides. Martha will speak with Chamber of Commerce members about it.

Consensus was the tree lighting was a tremendous event with great attendance.

Bill added the Chamber has done an outstanding job handling the Common tree lighting for as long as he's lived here. He thinks the tree wraps are a Chamber issue; if they have any kind of problem then it would come to the board. Adam concurred.

4. Approve Minutes of Tuesday, November 15, 2022:

Motion by: Jim Justice

2nd by: Bill Packard

5-0

5. Approve Treasurer's Warrants dated Tuesday, December 6, 2022:

Motion by: Bill Packard

2nd by: Wayne Kirkpatrick

5-0

6. Town Manager's Report:

Jay said re: TCC, Landmark is working on a proposal for the full-blown engineering study. They decided to break out the work order for the outside brick wall, as they can start immediately like next week for only \$2,000 or \$3,000 to see if that wall moved at all. This makes a big difference on going forward w/RFPs so the wisest way to start off. He thinks they have the initial info so will go from that.

In answer to Adam, Jay said they would do it now and again in spring to watch it. They have some data on the cracking.

Bill said since Landmark was involved in the previous study, it's important this study is a comparison: the wall has or has not moved, how much change there has or has not been.

Jay said one company that Landmark used has retired so they have to find someone else. He confirmed with Bill the data is all there.

Re: Public Works, Jay said everybody got Matt's monthly report. Part was the calibration class. All the trucks have been calibrated for salt, trying to reduce the amount of sand we use.

Select Board Meeting Minutes – December 6, 2022

Today Jay met with the chip seal provider and is “thisclose” to locking it into the same price as this year. His contact just needs approval from his regional manager. Due to a de-escalation clause, it could be even cheaper.

He praised the Christmas trees on the Common, noting he drove through there on his way home from Boston.

He said since we took over the TCC, from September 1 up until November 30, the town spent \$30,200 on the TCC with an income of \$10,365.77. In all fairness \$15,000 is the insurance. Fuel has been quite significant, almost \$6,000 so far in heating.

He is still working with Thayer on the boiler.

Erik asked if the underpinnings of the gym floor, a Tier 1 item, could be looked at again. Jay said yes, in the new engineering report. It will be a structural engineer and they hired a third party.

Jay said, “PLEASE STOP CALLING THE FIRE MARSHAL.” Only the Town of Union should be talking to the Fire Marshal.

Erik said the log is still on Depot Street. Jay said he notified DOT, it’s their road.

Catherine asked if Landmark is the only company working on the new study, if they are GC or subbing it like the 2018 report. Jay said yes, and they’ll sub the stuff they do not have expertise in. We don’t know if it will be the same companies; for example, Merriam is six months out. We’ll have that proposal from Landmark in a few weeks.

Adam noted Article 2 didn’t specify who we use. It’s up to us as a town. He added in his work there’s basically Landmark, and Gartley and Dorsky. Time frame is going to be an issue. Bill said it’s basically updating the 2018 report. Jay said with a little more detail in the costs.

7. Other Business: None.

8. Committee Reports:

a. Broadband

John said LCI is pretty much finished putting its application together. In all honesty it’s pretty good. They propose to build fiber to almost all addresses with the slowest internet service, DSL and phone lines. They are also building out their network and building over some cable lines with fiber. It’s about as much as we could possibly hope for.

Select Board Meeting Minutes – December 6, 2022

If successful, hopefully within two years, those with slow service will have fiber. Prices spelled out are consistent with the rest of the state. Most of what's left of the town will still have cable service, not as good as fiber but not bad. This is an unusual process with a lot of negotiation between LCI and MCA which has its own objectives including taking advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime federal money to build out across the country. MCA is encouraging all applicants to think expansively.

LCI would like each town (seven) to sign a letter of commitment to demonstrate to MCA that they have support of the town. There are three factors: 1) town contribution to the local share; 2) use town communication facilities (primarily the town website) to promote awareness and keep citizens apprised of status; 3) the broadband committee becomes an ombudsman committee, acting between citizens and LCI, helping things go smoothly and helping manage expectations.

They are working on a detailed data-intensive broadband committee page on the town website.

The application due date slipped from December 8 to the first part of January, but they don't think they have to slip the rest of the schedule, i.e., awards will still take place in January. They asked LCI if they expect MCA to be overcommitted; MCA did not give them a clue.

Adam added thank John for all his work, setting the standard for two years pushing this through.

Adam added it's important to understand two things: 1) this is a bigger package overall than the ConnectME grant we applied for last year and didn't get; 2) this is just the beginning of the process.

He also said the money committed came from ARP funds, not taxpayer money. ARP is very specific on what we can spend it on; for example, we can't decrease taxes or get a new emergency vehicle. LCI is committing dollar for dollar the same amount as the town(s) plus a bunch of engineering.

Wayne also thanked John.

Motion the Select Board approve the Letter of Commitment dated November 2022 re: Reach Me grant, ask the Broadband Committee Chair and the Select Board Chair to sign same, and recommit the ARPA funds to this project up to \$140,000 by: Martha Johnston-Nash

2nd by: Bill Packard

5-0

Select Board Meeting Minutes – December 6, 2022

b. Aging in Place in Union

Jay said they are still struggling to get members.

c. Green Space

Jay has heard nothing. They have the survey. Martha confirmed there's a copy of the survey in the town office, so anyone can go in and look at it.

d. TMA report

Erik recapped the past two weeks, November 21 to December 5: Thrift store \$1323.60, 147 customers. Pickleball \$520, 104 people, opening up Tuesdays 10:00 a.m. to noon. They have three new thrift store volunteers. The thrift store is now open Mondays and every other Saturday.

He said it's frustrating trying to expand. He contacted Drummond & Woodsum to look at a proposal to see what monies can or cannot be spent on that building.

Extensive discussion followed including: needing a compelling argument to go against the town's legal; trying to utilize the building while coming up against occupancy issues; the ramifications of Article 2; and having "bigger fish to fry" as Adam put it with the working group and MCOG.

Martha mentioned other uses of the building such as morning walkers.

Catherine brought up having the gym closet moved. Adam said the board would have to do some homework, as they can't spend money and volunteers are a gray area. Anyone who works on a town property has to meet certain licensing and insurance requirements. TMA is not technically a contractor. They asked for clarification on the fire alarm system, and the answer was no. He concurred with Bill's point about the building not covering its expenses through the winter.

Catherine said this was a catch-22 and the warrant article was a death certificate. Adam agreed but we're locked in.

e. Sestercentennial

Martha said they met November 16. Chair Argy is very well-organized. The theme is *Looking back to look ahead*. They drafted goals for the committee. A press release was sent to and published in local papers.

They will send letters to nonprofits and want to get communications out to everybody who may want to give input in as they develop the program agenda over the next couple years. They are also looking into grant funding.

Select Board Meeting Minutes – December 6, 2022

They could use more people on the committee and subcommittees. She clarified in 2024 Union will be 250 years old.

f. Ambulance Advisory

Jay said Kevin McGinnis is finishing up all his interviews, and they're well on the way. He had no report but went to the last meeting. They will have a report probably in a month or so, and hopefully they'll have a budget. Both Washington reps mentioned a special town meeting in June so they can have good numbers.

9. Select Board Reports:

Alan Hinsey of LCI asked for any broadband questions (none), thanked the town, and said we're here to support you. He also said what a pleasure it is to work with this town. The board thanked him for coming.

Bill suggested putting updated info on the sign out front. It would be nice to see select board meetings, etc. Jim suggested a new sign. Jay said we can only get one side of the current sign open; one side shattered all over a guy changing it one winter. He added people want it changed every day.

Wayne brought up the "little catastrophe" at the four corner intersection, with poles and wires down. He noticed a new pole up yesterday and a larger box and wondered if that meant a light. Jay said they may have put in a smart box for the future, adding we have asked about a stoplight but they didn't think they had the sight distance. He had no word on it. Martha said everyone did a good job. Wayne concurred and mentioned cleanup of oil leaked from a transformer.

Martha said the tree lighting was a great event with a lot of support from chamber members. They got no posters out but had a super crowd and many great participants.

Adam said this was the second year it had blown up like that, hitting three towns over and a big hit with little kids. It seems to be gaining steam and was really well done.

10. Future Agenda Requests: None.

11. Adjourn:

Motion by: Jim

2nd by: Wayne

5-0

Select Board Meeting Minutes – December 6, 2022

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Abaldo
Secretary