

MINUTES

SELECT BOARD MEETING TUESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2021 WILLIAM L. PULLEN MUNICIPAL BUILDING MEETING ROOM 6:30 p.m.

Select Board present: Jim Justice, Adam Fuller, Martha Johnston-Nash, Josh White, and Bill Lombardi

Others present: Jay Feyler (Town Manager), Christine Simmonds (Courier Gazette), Erik Amundsen, and John Gibbons

1. **Call Select Board Meeting to Order:** at 6:30 p.m. by Adam Fuller.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance**
3. **Public Comment:** None.
4. **Approve Minutes of Tuesday, November 16, 2021:**

Motion by: Martha Johnston-Nash
2nd by: Josh White
5-0

5. **Approve Treasurer's Warrants dated December 7, 2021:**

Motion by: Bill Lombardi
2nd by: Martha Johnston-Nash
5-0

Martha and Bill asked about RHR Smith audit numbers. Bill asked Jay to gather information on how much we had to pay them for work pertaining to our treasurer transition, beyond the annual fixed contract price.

Jim asked about an ambulance loaner during repair. Jay said that was when they hit a gas pump; it will be offset by insurance.

Bill asked how much of the \$1.8 million road bond we have spent. Jay said \$115,000 remains.

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6. Confirmation of Sarah Swan as Health Officer:

Motion by: Martha Johnston-Nash

2nd by: Josh White

4-0-1 abstention (Lombardi, as he has not seen her application)

7. Discussion on purchasing property:

The property under discussion is a yet-to-be-determined part of Map 8 Lot 40, behind the old B. M. Clark building, abutting the river across from the fairgrounds, where the race parking is during the fair. It would be approximately 20 to 22 acres.

Realtor Erik Amundsen said the property is coming up for sale, and there has been discussion that it could be a good purchase for the town. He would not take a commission on a sale to the town.

Martha asked if townspeople would vote on this. Jay said if the Pullen Committee and the Select Board have exclusive authority, it does not go to town vote.

In answer to Adam, Jay said the intended use would be recreational – track, sports fields, etc. Erik noted it still has approval for an airstrip.

Discussion included the need for a survey, potential cost of tracks and ball fields, potential buried waste, potential walking trails along the river and their cost, and how many families currently drive to The Pitch or MRC for youth recreation.

Josh's opinion was we are not going to get another chance like this.

Adam liked the public access on the Saint George but not sure he's ready for the price tag. He also noted the rec committee is hugely into youth sports.

Jay reminded the Pullen fund is for scholarships and one-time projects, but another part can go into a big project. One objective is a large sports area. It would be a long-term goal. Losing the tax revenue every year is not a lot to taxpayers.

Josh added if we buy it and don't like it, we can always sell it, anticipating Adam's reply that the town is not in the real estate business.

Jay asked if the board wants to move further; then they could come back, measure, pull the DEP report from past testing, get all that information then meet with the Pullen Committee with the time frame estimated at a couple months.

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Motion to encourage Town Manager Jay and realtor Erik Amundsen to lay out this property and bring additional facts so we can have a real conversation by: Bill Lombardi
2nd by: Jim Justice

5-0

8. Town Manager's Report:

Jay finally heard back from the Army Corps of Engineers regarding the Ayer Park boat ramp; it will go out to bid in January. The plan is to build that and the Clarry Hill culvert at the same time.

Mitigation grant paperwork has been submitted. Jay said Midcoast Economic Development helped; he had previously complained how little they did for small towns.

Public Works has plowed once and sanded multiple times. We are concerned about getting parts, so hopefully we don't break anything.

The Knox County Budget meeting will be held December 16 at 6:00 p.m. at the Knox County Budget Commissioner's office.

9. Other Business: None.

10. Committee Reports:

a. Broadband

John Gibbons said they have a tentative commitment from LCI for a grant application for approximately 250 unserved in town. If that happens, that will be a substantial expansion of their network. The bottom line is things are moving in the right direction w/LCI.

In the wake of unsuccessful Knox County Commissioner meetings, coupled with certain developments at the state level (the state has a new organization kind of like ConnectME to monitor substantial federal funds coming in), the Coalition is launching a fairly substantial lobbying effort. They are increasingly focused on the core four builds to the exclusion of everything else. Once that build is in place, they will consider other towns but that will be somewhere down the street.

If we preserve our relationship with the Coalition, we will be expected to participate in the lobbying and would need to consult with the Select Board.

Adam added in terms of the Coalition, there is no fiber yet. A lot of discussion is about the next step after the fiber, with not a lot about getting the fiber up which is a huge hurdle. Amongst their email chains it's "when that happens" especially with federal broadband money not a done deal.

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John added if we can get the aforementioned grant with LCI, we would be in a very good situation.

Jay said they would need to come to the board in June if going with LCI.

b. Aging in Place in Union

Bill said they had a meeting yesterday and covered a few things.

One item is a project the library is working on with the fourth grade at Union School in which children interview seniors, a Genalpha project. Aging in Place in Union supports intergenerational work. This also fights isolation, links to the younger generation, and links to the community.

Aging in Place is asking that they be included in the storytelling process. There are three grants we can apply for. There may be booklets, pictures, storytellers, photos, a couple of authors, and portraitist Robert Shetterly involved.

In answer to Adam, Bill said it would likely happen in the fall at the library and school. There may be transportation factors involved. We will know mid-month about one grant, and the larger one in January. They may do a story walk. Debra Lay is writing the grant.

c. Future of the Thompson Community Center

Martha said the committee met online the night after the last Select Board meeting. They reviewed the meeting of TCCA board. Lori had four members there explaining financials in general terms. They agreed to a joint committee, on which are Paul Raudonat, Lorain Francis, and Erik Amundsen from CFTCC.

They talked about a way forward, but questions remain about the joint committee's purpose. Rebekah was tasked with setting up a meeting with the Select Board on the regular January 4 agenda. Martha noted Paul has been very good at taking the lead on this, trying to work with Lori and TCCA. She also noted there has been a problem getting financial details.

Discussion included heating/fuel bills, communication with tenants, TCC assets, intent of Select Board to keep TCC operational and functional including childcare, and why TCC as a 501c3 may or may not have the requisite financials.

Motion that if TCCA board does not disclose to CFTCC all expenses, income, and current assets by end of business on December 20, 2021 then the town shall begin legal proceedings to terminate the lease by: Bill Lombardi
2nd by: Jim Justice

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Conversation ensued about not pushing away progress made, hating to see the moneymaker thrift store close up, at what point is the cost of what we're inheriting greater than the cost of lost revenue and legal fees, why is TCC not sharing financials, and past problems.

Jay advised to let the three CFTCC people do their best to get the info: Paul, Erik, and Lorain.

Bill withdrew his motion, requesting that the trio from CFTCC follow up and let the board know at the December 21 meeting whether or not they have financial information from the TCCA.

Jim said Greg has financials three or four years old.

d. Green Space Committee

Josh said they met December 15, each member with assignments to reach out to different organizations such as Georges River Land Trust. Maine Farmland Trust was not a good fit, but both other conservancies were excited to work with us.

Next meeting will include coming up with individual ideas of what conserving space will actually look like, noting Adam's ideas in past minutes on community input.

11. Select Board Reports:

Bill brought up commitment to communication and asked for input regarding Select Board Sidelines.

Jay said personal opinions need to stay out of Sidelines as each Select Board member speaks for the board.

Adam thinks the elderly population benefits from it the most.

Martha said lots of people still don't know about it.

Erik Amundsen asked if it could be published in the paper.

Jay said if it's an opinion it's political, you've got to allow other people to comment. It's a hard line for everybody. He is doing a FOIA training, and that always comes up, where the line is.

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Martha spoke about the Common tree lighting — thank you to town crew, highway department who set up wiring and tree posts, tremendous help; also helped close off roads (Jay said Matt volunteered). It went tremendously, wonderful crowd, nice to have it back after last year. Thank you to everyone.

Adam was going to bring that up: really impressive, being there with a little kid, the turnout was unreal. Shocked at how big the crowd was. Santa Claus, elves, all top notch. Just a really good showing. In line with his daughter to talk to Santa, he noted the couple behind them said, “This is the most New England thing I’ve ever seen!”

Adam also thanked Jay for the town getting on top of icy bus routes.

12. Future Agenda Items: None.

13. Adjourn:

Motion by: Bill Lombardi
2nd by: Jim Justice
5-0

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Abaldo
Secretary