

MINUTES

SELECT BOARD MEETING TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2022 ONLINE VIA ZOOM 6:30 p.m.

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

Others present: Jay Feyler (Town Manager), Christine Simmonds (Courier Gazette), Abraham Knight, John Gibbons, Joel Wentworth, Sr., Erik Amundsen, Greg Grotton, Steven Migliorini, and Gail Hawes

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, January 18, 2022:** Tabled.
5. **Approve Treasurer's Warrants dated February 1, 2022:**

Motion by: Bill Lombardi

2nd by: Josh White

5-0

6. **Award Ayer Park Bid:**

The low bidder was Farley, Inc. at \$53,600. Jay noted they have done many boat ramps. The work is replacing concrete planks which are already there, under Landmark design and DEP design. The bid includes gravel, new pavement, labor, everything.

Motion to approve Farley, Inc.'s \$53,600 bid by: Josh White

2nd by: Jim Justice

5-0

7. **Award Clarry Hill Culvert Bid:**

The low bidder was L.G. Whitcomb Landscaping at \$335,018. Jay said they are out of Morrill, and Landmark has worked with them in the past. In answer to Martha, Jay said we are working on grants which may bring some additional funds.

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Motion to approve L.G. Whitcomb Landscaping's \$335,018 bid by: Jim Justice
2nd by: Bill Lombardi
5-0

8. Vote to adopt new IRS mileage rates:

Jay said the IRS mileage rate now is 58.5 cents. We have not changed our rate, which is still down to approximately 44 cents as we kind of forgot about it. We have normally kept it up to the IRS rate.

Motion to increase mileage rate to 58.5 cents by: Martha Johnston-Nash
2nd by: Bill Lombardi
5-0

9. Discussion and vote on Broadband partnership:

There was extensive discussion on what a vote ostensibly aligning with LCI would mean vis a vis the Coalition, what if any financial expectation might or might not be assumed, and Broadband Committee members John Gibbons and Adam Fuller's differing stances. They agreed Jay is in the best position to be the negotiator with LCI, and the committee gave him a prioritized list of items and information. Jay added ConnectME grants are a joint application.

Motion to task the Broadband Committee to explore with LCI an agreement leading to a buildout of its fiber network to cover the entire town by: Martha Johnston-Nash
2nd by: Josh White
5-0

10. Discussion and vote on the Thompson Memorial Association request of release of funds -- \$13,500:

Martha said the budget is front loaded by necessity due to heating oil, etc. Erik Amundsen gave an update: lots of interest, meetings with MRC and SAD 40 Adult Ed, furnace and roof checks, goal of getting Fire Marshal approval in order to hold events. Bill would like TMA reports on the town website.

Motion to approve the TMA request of \$13,500 by: Bill Lombardi
2nd by: Josh White
4-0-1 abstention (Johnston-Nash)

11. Appointment of additional members to the Future of the TCC:

Applications were received from Steven Migliorini and Gail Hawes. Martha pointed out there are just two positions left.

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Motion to approve Gail Hawes as a member of CFTCC by: Bill Lombardi
2nd by: Josh White
5-0

Motion to approve Steven Migliorini as a member of CFTCC by: Bill Lombardi
2nd by: Josh White
5-0

12. Discussion on changing to referendum voting in 2023:

Jay said looking at numbers, when you do a referendum you get three to eight times the voter turnout you get at a town meeting. A lot of towns are going this way. You get more elderly people and families. There are some disadvantages, such as giving up the history. He suggested putting it out to vote to see if people would like to go to that format.

Martha said Union is a pretty traditional town, and we get a lot of discussion at Town Meeting.

Jay said you would still have Public Hearings, so you would still get that back-and-forth discussion.

Josh said a big part of town meeting is the social aspect. He thinks referendum is the way to go, because you get a much more diverse poll at the end of the vote, and say 600 to 800 voters rather than 100 people in the basement.

Adam agrees referendum voting would lead to a broader cross-section and more people participating. He loves the spectacle that is the town meeting, usually involving “mudslinging, anger, and a lot of really bad logic.” Big decisions are usually made by those who show up, but that’s the reality. He is not ready to give that up quite yet. With town meeting, you have to be there and you have to listen to the other side; with referendum, you don’t have to listen to anybody.

Jim thinks we are not ready for referendum voting yet. He is against Saturday town meetings as he works Saturdays.

Bill said how to get all the people informed is the right way to approach things. He thinks we ought to put it up for a vote in June.

Motion to table by: Martha Johnston-Nash

Motion to put referendum voting on the agenda for the June town meeting by: Bill Lombardi
2nd by: Josh White
2-3 (Fuller, Johnston-Nash, Justice)
Motion did not pass.

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13. Approve Town Meeting and Election Dates and Times:

The proposed date is Tuesday, June 21, 2022.

Motion to approve Tuesday, June 21, 2022 by: Jim Justice
2nd by: Josh White
4-0-1 abstention (Johnston-Nash)

14. Town Manager's Report:

Jay said Public Works did a fantastic job in the big snow storm.

He has not yet heard back from their attorney on the property closing. He has some good things to share on that property, hopefully at the next meeting, regarding grants that will improve it at no cost to the town.

He expects strong resistance from our two partner towns regarding the approved ambulance budget.

15. Other Business: None.

16. Committee Reports:

- a. Broadband – As above.
- b. Aging in Place in Union – None.
- c. Future of the Thompson Community Center

Discussion centered on further honing the direction of this committee.

Martha said they took the four options they were given and divided people into areas they wanted to work on. TMA has helped in getting lots of information, numbers, etc. There have been new developments in terms of interest.

Greg Grotton said they held elections. He is Vice Chair. Of the four current areas, working on Siemens-type are Ariana, Erik, Gail, and Martha (Martha said no); working on selling are John, Mike, and Martha; working on teardown are Abraham and himself; working on senior housing are Rebekah and himself.

Josh offered to work with the teardown group, not as a committee member but sharing ideas, as he thinks the brick building has 90% what the town says it wants; if we tear down the yellow part maybe we could add more there; and we need a plan of what it looks like at the end.

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Gail Hawes said the goal has shifted with TCC pulling out. New options are coming forward. What she saw from the meeting last night was need for a clear directive from the board, so that going forward there is leeway to flesh out not just what has been discussed up to this point but to examine what's out there with all the details on it. She is willing to help with collecting and collating that data. She suggested google docs or other for maximum transparency.

Adam said our biggest enemy is time frame. He likes the idea of the different parts of the committee presenting to each other.

Greg said if people approach with interest, contact CFTCC.

Abraham Knight said if the town takes on the building, the town needs to come up with approximately \$355,000 (roof, furnace, septic, support under the gym). He does not think TMA running the building fits under the Siemens option.

Adam said it's going to be up to the voters.

Gail and Bill suggested TMA as a viable option going forward.

Greg encouraged each select person to write down things they want to see. They need the board to say what they want the committee to do.

Martha said the next meeting is February 14 at 6:00 p.m. via zoom.

- d. Green Space – None.
- e. TMA – None.

17. Select Board Reports:

Josh asked Jay about going down to the Pullen building or via zoom for the next meeting. Adam said according to preferences.

Martha asked when we can return to in-person meetings. Adam said he is no fan of zoom and hopefully before June.

Adam thanked the Public Works crew.

18. Future Agenda Items: None.

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19. Adjourn:

Motion by: Bill Lombardi

2nd by: Josh White

5-0

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Abaldo
Secretary