

MINUTES

SELECTMEN'S/ASSESSORS' MEETING

TUESDAY, JULY 20, 2021

WILLIAM L. PULLEN MUNICIPAL BUILDING MEETING ROOM

6:30 p.m.

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

Others present: Jay Feyler (Town Manager), Greg Grotton, John Gibbons, Matt Elwell (Public Works Director), Patrick Sebrey, Leanne Sebrey, Clairlynn Rountree, Kathleen Thornton, Christine Simmonds (Village Soup), Richard Morgan, John Gibbons, and Karina Shorten

1. **Call Selectmen's Meeting to Order:** at 6:30 p.m. by Adam Fuller.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance**
3. **Public Comment:**

Richard Morgan requested signage (Children Playing) and a speed limit change (from 30 to 25 mph) by Morgan's Mill, a local swimming hole previously brought before the board by neighbors. He presented photos including East Union aerials which he is giving to the town.

His concern is speeding on Payson Road, with children congregating on the bridge. He has purchased and posted unofficial Children Playing signs.

Jay pointed out that Children Playing signs are no longer listed in the MUTCD (federal regulations for signs), as data showed they did no good and contributed to a false sense of security in families.

Adam said the state is just as likely to raise the speed limit as to lower it; though if they come in summer, they may see loads of kids. He would like to look into the cost of official Children Playing signs.

It was noted that the number of kids at the swimming hole is down since the peak of graduation night. Richard is having a sign made: "Swimming Closes at Sunset."

Several residents had questions and concerns regarding the Coggins Hill tax acquired property.

Kathleen Thornton asked if there is a normal process for letting townspeople know when tax acquired properties go up for sale. She asked why the Stone Road property was not

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mentioned in the minutes as going up for sale. She described walking on the Coggins Hill property since 1992, noting many people enjoy the view. She knows entities who may be interested in the property, such as Georges River Land Trust with Maine Conservancy.

Adam said the town just took control of the Coggins Hill property this year. The town does not typically hold properties. The goal is to get the property back on the tax roll, usually by selling it via bid or listing with a realtor. With the current market the board agreed a neutral realtor was the best option. The town has thus far retained the Stone Road property, as it was a dump/sludge site.

He added that people could read the town report and look at back taxes going back three years or so; if those owners don't do anything, their properties will be acquired by the town. There is no process for seizing or posting notices.

Bill said he hadn't known how many people are using the Coggins Hill property; the emails he has recently received opened his eyes. He thinks the board should reconsider.

Karina Shorten said if the board reconsiders, there are people willing to put energy and legwork into other options. Many more in the extended area will help. It is not just Union residents who enjoy the property.

Adam said we are talking about a lot of trespassing. Martha said if the owner allowed it, that's one thing.

Clairlynn Rountree described her experience of the property, noting it is not posted. She asked if the board could re-vote and specify that the property be sold for agricultural use only. She also favors holding off in case of interest from Georges River Land Trust or other organizations.

Martha stated she believes there is nowhere in town where we say you cannot build a house. Zoning is voted on.

Josh suggested the town might make blueberry income from the property. Jay said there is no money in blueberries anymore.

Leanne Sebrey spoke about her experience of the Coggins Hill property. She brought up wildlife as well as land and landscape changes that building house(s) would entail.

Further discussion included the property currently listed for \$185,000 and back taxes of approximately \$3,000. Similarities between this and Browns Lane were mentioned.

Jay summarized with four items: 1) The realtor has determined the property ROW is the power line. 2) As John Gibbons said, we do have a contract, so if we pull it we will spend money. 3) Be careful of land trusts; as they will tell you, there is no guarantee they won't

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sell the property. 4) There is a group of passionate people from one part of town, and we have to consider the whole town.

Consensus was the board would like to see something more tangible from these concerned citizens: a formal group, some fundraising, a committee, perhaps get a coalition, make a deposit, make an offer.

4. Approve Minutes of Tuesday, July 6, 2021:

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

5. Approve Treasurer's Warrant dated July 20, 2021:

Motion by: Jim Justice
2nd by: Josh White
1-4

Board members noted glitches in the warrant. Jay said if it is not approved, we will pay interest on several accounts.

Motion to approve the amounts on the warrant and get a corrected warrant by week's end by: Martha Johnston-Nash
2nd by: Bill Lombardi
5-0

Approve July 20, 2021 Bond:

Motion to approve, moving \$9,111 Landmark item to the Road Bond by: Bill Lombardi
2nd by: Josh White
5-0

6. Vote for Maine Municipal Candidates:

Vice President, 1-year term:
Elaine Aloes, Select Board Chair, Town of Solon

Executive Committee Members, 3-year term:
David Cyr, Town Manager, Town of Frenchville
Melissa Doane, Town Manager, Town of Bradley
Justin Poirier, Town Manager/Administrator, Town of Chebeague Island

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Motion to approve the four candidates for the four positions by: Bill Lombardi
2nd by: Jim Justice
5-0

7. Discussion and vote on the lease of Loader for Public Works:

Public Works Director Matt Elwell described the Loader. It has a special high lift package which has to be built in the factory. Arrival should be September at the earliest but likely here by sand and salt time. It comes with standard forks and a bucket; attachments can be added later. Matt noted the efficiency of having the engine in the back. He added that everyone on the crew tried out a demo model.

Jay said we planned for this for several years and have money in reserves.

Motion by: Jim Justice
2nd by: Josh White
5-0

8. Approve the request for funding from the I. C. Thurston Fund to Come Spring Food Pantry:

Motion to approve \$5,000 from the I.C. Thurston Fund by: Martha Johnston-Nash
2nd by: Jim Justice
4-0-1 abstention (Lombardi)

9. Discussion on Town Owned Properties:

Jay presented the board with a packet detailing town owned properties.

Locations, features such as gravel pits, and prior board ideas were discussed.

10. Approve the updated Union Fire-Rescue Billing Policy:

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

11. Appointment of Ali Crocco to the Tri-County Solid Waste Board:

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

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12. Approve the Remote Participation Policy:

Motion by: Bill Lombardi

2nd by: Jim Justice

5-0

13. Vote to close on September 14, 2021 from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. for training:

Motion by: Jim Justice

2nd by: Martha Johnston-Nash

5-0

14. Other Business: None.

15. Town Manager's Report:

Jay emailed the board about the MMA Convention. Board members should get in touch with him if they want to go.

16. Committee Reports:

a. Broadband

John Gibbons sent the board a comprehensive report. The board thanked him and said it was well written.

b. Aging in Place in Union

Bill said they are suspending meetings for the summer, as some are not comfortable meeting in person.

He also informed the board of the committee's opinion that, regarding TCC, some type of residential facility in town for people who are downsizing would be most appropriate.

c. Future of the Thompson Community Center

Martha said they had a meeting July 7. The gentleman from Penquis was there and answered questions.

They have narrowed it down to three presenters: Penquis (housing); Mike Mullins (offer to purchase/make space); and Siemens (town own, they renovate and help with financing).

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In answer to Adam, Jay said there has been no official response from Lori regarding the letter from the town attorney. Jay will attend the next TCC meeting, at Rebekah's invitation, and he will report.

Discussion involved the role of the committee, deterioration of the building, termination or renegotiation of the lease, current tenants, the next 12 months, and past experience.

Martha said the committee recommends that the TCC lease be voided.

It was agreed that Jay and Rebekah will meet with the TCC Board of Directors.

17. Selectmen's Report:

Regarding the idea of trespassing on Coggins Hill, Josh articulated "the Maine Way" as bring in, bring out, in general people have no problem. Adam agreed.

Martha said Irene Hawes found a cemetery on Clarry Hill, given to the town in the 1700s. It was originally given as half an acre then eventually another half an acre.

18. Future Agenda Items: None.

19. Adjourn:

Motion by: Bill Lombardi
2nd by: Josh White
5-0

Meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Abaldo
Secretary