

# MINUTES

## SELECTMEN'S/ASSESSORS' MEETING TUESDAY, MARCH 2, 2021 ONLINE INTERACTIVE 6:30 p.m.

**Selectmen Present:** John Shepard (Chair), Adam Fuller, Josh White, Martha Johnston-Nash, and Bill Lombardi

**Others Present:** Jay Feyler, Gail Hawes, Christine Simmonds, Erik Amundsen, Catherine Meyer, Abraham Knight, John Gibbons, Greg Grotton, and Jim Justice

**1. Call Selectmen's Meeting to order:** 6:30 p.m.

**2. Executive Session 1 M.R.S.A. 405 (6) (A):**

Motion by Selectman Fuller seconded by Selectman Johnston-Nash to move to Executive Session. Vote by roll call. Selectmen in favor: White, Shepard, Fuller, Lombardi, and Johnston-Nash. All approved.

Motion by Selectman Fuller seconded by Selectman Johnston-Nash to retire from Executive Session. Vote by roll call. Selectmen in favor: Fuller, Shepard, White, Lombardi, and Johnston-Nash. All approved.

**3. Action from Executive Session:**

Motion by Selectman Johnston-Nash seconded by Selectman Fuller to allow the Town Manager to overdraft the Treasurer's account due to pending retirement. Vote by roll call. Selectmen in favor: Fuller, White, Shepard, Lombardi, and Johnston-Nash. All approved.

**4. Public Comment:** No Public Comment

**5. Approve minutes of Tuesday, February 16, 2021:**

Motion by Selectman Johnston-Nash seconded by Selectman White to approve the minutes. Vote by roll call. Selectmen in favor: White, Shepard, Fuller, Lombardi, and Johnston-Nash. All approved.

**6. Approve Treasurer's Warrant dated Tuesday, March 2, 2021:**

Motion by Selectman Fuller seconded by Selectman White to approve the warrant with the amended numbers from the DOT invoice from the previous number of \$84,559.89. to \$84,144.13. Vote by roll call. Selectmen in favor: Lombardi, Johnston-Nash, Fuller, White, and Shepard. All approved.

**7. First review of storm policy:**

Motion by Selectman Fuller seconded by Selectman White to approve the storm policy exactly as presented. Vote by roll call. Selectmen in favor: White, Johnston-Nash, Fuller, Shepard, and Lombardi. All approved.

**8. Discussion of Town Meeting process to meet COVID guidelines:**

Motion by Selectman Fuller seconded by Selectman White to put all items possible on a secret ballot and to hold an open town meeting the following Saturday for items that cannot legally be put on a secret ballot. Vote by roll call. Selectmen in favor: Fuller, White, Johnston-Nash, Lombardi, and Shepard. All approved.

**9. COVID-19 updates:** No COVID-19 updates

**10. Other Business:**

John Shepard announced the new appointment for a TCC committee member. The vote was conducted by the BOS via rank choice voting. The new TCC Board member is Abraham Knight.

**11. Town Manager's Report:** No Town Manager's Report

**12. Committee Reports:**

**a. Broadband:**

The initial survey, sent out on Jan 20 (thanks to Holly and Chris), drew 95 responses by mid-February. It was sent out again under a "last call" banner on Feb 17 and has now drawn a total of 133 responses. Almost 50 percent of responders currently have cable (Spectrum), 30 percent have DSL, and less than 10 percent have wireless (Redzone and cellular.) Results continue to indicate widespread dissatisfaction with current service from all providers, primarily over reliability, speed, and cost. They plan to compile the results and wind down this survey after responses to the "last call" announcement tail off (soon.) They are planning a second survey, aimed specifically at the business community, within a few weeks.

They plan to meet with LCI/Tidewater's Alan Hinsey (Director of Marketing) and Randal Manning (VP) on March 9, to discuss the possibility of teaming with LCI in an arrangement that would result in a buildout of LCI's Union fiber network to provide fiber access to all addresses in the town. This is one of two major alternatives that they are investigating for providing high-speed Internet access to the entire town at an affordable price. It will require supplementing LCI's capital via grants, a Town bond issue, or some other mechanism.

They expect to be discussing topics that include:

What other towns LCI has teamed with for similar purposes.

What a teaming arrangement might look like.

Near-term plans for further fiber expansion in Union.

Cost and related issues.

The next meeting of the coalition is scheduled for March 10. The core of the coalition is Rockport and Camden, with six other towns considering joining. The coalition is pursuing the development of a municipally owned fiber network covering all the participating towns, possibly in the form of a nonprofit utility. Their model is the Down East Broadband Utility (DBU) developed initially by Calais and Baileyville, with other towns in the vicinity joining in. It is likely that the towns would develop and own the network, but would operate it as an open network, over which two or more providers could offer competing services under a lease arrangement, with the lease payments used by the towns to pay off the up-front cost of building the network. The first DBU provider (Pioneer) has discussed a subscription price of \$60/mo. with access speeds of 100 megabits per second, with about \$20/mo. going back to the utility in lease payments. The coalition's next step is an engineering study to design and cost the network. If Union participates, the town will need to be prepared to carry their share of the study cost. They are probably two months away from a recommendation to the Selectmen on which way to go.

The principal near-term objective is a definitive set of alternatives for providing high-speed Internet access across the entire Town, with rough costs and the pros and cons for each, as the basis for recommendations to the Board of Selectmen on what option(s) we should pursue. The alternatives will be variants on the two principal options above; team with LCI on an LCI build-out or pursue a municipally owned network with a selected provider or multiple competitive providers, with the up-front costs funded by a mechanism like a bond issue, to be paid back out of internet user fees.

**b. Food Ordinance:**

Josh stated that the group worked on a template ordinance. Lizzy has put together a rough draft, which is currently in the process of being fine-tuned. A

Representative from Maine was present to discuss farm to consumer practices.

Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 10 at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom.

**c. Aging in Place in Union:**

Bill reminded that Thursday, March 4 is the sign-up deadline for the St. Patty's Day luncheon on March 18. He also stated that the group is looking for more volunteers to join the committee.

**13. Selectmen's Report:** No Selectmen's Report

**14. Future Agenda Items:** No Future Agenda Items

**15. Adjourn:**

Motion by Selectman White seconded by Selectman Fuller to adjourn. Vote by roll call. Selectmen in favor: Lombardi, White, Fuller, Shepard, and Johnston-Nash. All approved.

Meeting adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandy Patrick  
Secretary