

# MINUTES

**SELECT BOARD/ASSESSORS' MEETING  
TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 2023  
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), Jesse Thompson (EMS Chief), John Mountainland, Linda Mountainland, Heather Jackson, and others

**1. Call Select Board Meeting to Order:** at 6:30 p.m.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

**3. Public Comment:** None.

**4. Approve Minutes of Tuesday, February 21, 2023:**

Motion by: Bill Packard

2<sup>nd</sup> by: Wayne Kirkpatrick

5-0

**5. Approve Treasurer's Warrants dated Tuesday, March 7, 2023:**

Motion by: Bill Packard

2<sup>nd</sup> by: Wayne Kirkpatrick

5-0

TCC vandalism was discussed. The number of keys out was also discussed.

Motion to ask the chair to draft a letter to the sheriff simply stating the fact that we are disappointed that we have not had any information since this call by: Bill Packard  
2<sup>nd</sup> with the caveat that we get a copy of the initial report by: Martha Johnston-Nash

Chair Adam said he'd be happy to draft the letter. He would probably send it by email to make sure no one has an issue with it, then can ask Jay to forward it, print it out, and mail it. He would add a request that we get something in writing or email, not just verbal.

Heather Jackson suggested not using the word "disappointed" and simply asking for information. All concurred.

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Above motion passed.

5-0

### 6. Presentation by the Ambulance Advisory Committee:

Jesse Thompson introduced Kevin McGinnis, Friends of EMS for Maine, who did an ICSD (Informed Community Self-Determination) through a grant Jesse put in for, to present what he presented to the other two towns and the Ambulance Advisory Board – findings as well as what the Ambulance Advisory Board recommends for our budget. Adam thanked Mr. McGinnis.

Kevin said Jesse applied for the grant due to last year's budget concerns and commitment to making this ambulance service the best it can be. Union is one of two towns in the state that got it (along with Old Town). ICSD has been so successful that the legislature has committed \$200,000 to doing it statewide.

He explained the process and the goal of educating about what good EMS looks like thus enabling the best expenditure of funds. He noted generally when a person calls 911, they have no idea what they will get.

Ambulance Advisory Board/ICSD Project Steering Group members are: Ken Keiran, Tracy Weed, and Heather Jackson of Union; Jeff Grinnell, Libby Casas, and Jesse Casas of Washington; Patrick Costigan and Scott Esancy of Appleton; and Union Town Manager Jay Feyler.

General findings were the service is sound, well-respected in all three towns, and has made good investments in hiring practices and equipment. Some internal recommendations will be made to Jesse. Call volume has increased fairly dramatically, now up to a level of two calls a day where it was half that 10 years ago.

He said Union is doing well in response times, and in Appleton and Washington, too, noting that a rural service on average less than 20 minutes response times for calls is considered very good. A lot of improvement has been made in "shoot time" – ambulance service notified of emergency/out the door to the time that they're en route to the call. Union has gone from three or four minutes down to one minute, about as good as it gets.

Issues that came out of their findings included: budget development and communication with the towns last year; accelerated cost increases for equipment, staff, and EMS in general statewide and nationwide; availability and reliability about level of care the service can provide, which is somewhat fragile vis a vis paramedic level of care. Another issue that came up was having a second ambulance.

Options to address those issues that the steering group came up with included making the Ambulance Advisory Board permanent. It will continue.

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In terms of accelerated cost and level of care, they came up with three potential options. 1) Keep the budget flat, i.e., just what inflation dictates, @ 11%. 2) Cover inflation but address getting a paramedic level provider to all calls, which would be 11% inflation plus another 16% for one full-time paramedic position. 3) Two paramedic positions would get us closer to where we want to be, with an increase of 11% plus 32%.

After much deliberation, they unanimously decided on #2, cover inflation and establish one full-time paramedic position. The second ambulance was not deemed as important. They opted to focus on staffing needs this year and look at that next year.

He showed data with cost differences 2012 to 2022 from services he's managed, noting everything has doubled. An ambulance now costs nearly \$400,000. Jesse has said United Ambulance is offering paramedics \$35/hour. He discussed the shortfall in Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements. The Maine EMS Blue Ribbon Commission established there is not an ambulance service in the state of Maine that can make ends meet on what they get from Medicare, Medicaid, and other insurances.

He discussed the history of EMS and level of care, from “bag and drag” or “call and haul” to a rolling emergency room, and from volunteers to full time staff. He said it's important to know most paramedics today work two or three jobs just to make ends meet, probably a full-time job and side or per diem jobs. Whoever pays them full time with health insurance and retirement owns that paramedic or EMT. The highest level of maturity for a service is primarily full-time people with per diem people to fill in.

To cover one paramedic 24/7, 52 weeks a year, it takes essentially 4.2 full time people or the equivalent in per diems. Today Union has, in the guise of per diems, 1.87 full time equivalents so a couple short of being able to provide paramedic coverage 24 hours – per diem entirely, so in the middle of that progression.

Response times were reduced due to Jesse staffing up with per diems and paying them an attractive wage, meaning they would come to the base and be here 24/7. That cut the two or three minutes off the shoot time because they responded from the base, not from their homes. He further discussed staffing levels.

He mentioned a 1993 Maine EMS survey in which respondents across the state indicated they'd expect a paramedic fully equipped with a monitor, drugs, IVs, etc. if they called 911 for a heart attack – not the case. In Union over the last four years, somewhere between 40% and 50% of the calls had a paramedic. You only really need a paramedic for probably 20% of the calls. The problem is in rural areas we don't have oodles of paramedics sitting around waiting to go on calls, so to be sure there'll be a paramedic presence on those 20% of calls they had better go on 100%.

He and Jesse then went over the “Three Options Budget Summary” including breakdown per town, per person, on screen.

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Wayne noted going by cost per person, \$94.34/person would only cost \$12 more a person to do two people. Jesse said in Washington they've already put the number for the one full timer in their budgets; it's going to be a tiptoe thing because of last year. Wayne agreed and asked about a second rig: should we talk about it now for two years down the road? Jesse hasn't broached the subject yet. Wayne said as a firefighter he hears those calls go out; there are days with two and three calls a day stacked on top of each other, and we have to send it out of town, so it's definitely something that should be thought about sooner rather than later. Jesse said he keeps those records.

Jay confirmed the advisory committee will meet at least quarterly, noting it's important to take the advice of the committee. It was set up as there was always a little animosity about the Town of Union setting up a budget without a ton of input from the other municipalities. He's seen this committee go from factions to people coming together – exactly how a committee should work. They can work on that second ambulance as they progress in the next year or two.

Bill commended the committee and especially Jesse. Adam thanked the committee and Kevin McGinnis and confirmed option 2 was unanimous. Jesse said the advisory board wants to do a joint informational meeting for all three towns here in Union, preferably at the school where there's an ADA-compliant auditorium, preferably early May, with Mr. McGinnis giving his presentation. The citizens can come together – “This is our ambulance” – and be informed about it.

Adam appreciated the explanation of how rural ambulance services with less population are more expensive per call, something that at first seems counterintuitive. You're paying for the service to be ready, and with the calls you recoup some of that cost. The spreadsheets made this easier to understand. He found our response times impressive.

Martha confirmed the formula is per person, not per taxpayer.

Motion to accept option 2, inflation plus one full-time paramedic, for the Town of Union  
by: Wayne Kirkpatrick  
2<sup>nd</sup> by: Jim Justice  
5-0

In answer to Bill, Jesse said the full-time paramedic would be someone other than him. He has a couple already working for him who are interested. Select board members again thanked Jesse, Kevin, and the advisory board, followed by applause.

### **7. Nomination to the Knox County Budget Committee:**

Motion to recommend John Mountainland to the Knox County Budget Committee by:  
Martha Johnston-Nash  
2<sup>nd</sup> by: Bill Packard  
5-0

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### 8. Discussion on Sign Proposal:

Upgrading the sign outside the town office was again reviewed.

Bill thought the town should have some money in it and not treat it like a gift. Total price (renovate existing sign) is \$12,600. To change it over to LEDs (light it) would be \$300 which he will fund, noting it would be similar to Wiscasset. He will do a fundraiser if he gets a receipt from the town that's deductible.

Adam brought up two past votes on a new sign that failed, albeit the last one was @ \$30,000. He played devil's advocate: doesn't think signs are the way business is conducted anymore.

Martha saw no reason not to put it before the voters if we have someone willing to help fundraise. Jim was still willing. Martha would like to see it under \$10,000 on the ballot.

Motion to raise and appropriate \$4,000 for the sign by: Bill Packard  
2<sup>nd</sup> by: Jim Justice

Jay recommended it as a separate warrant article as before, though it should go under building maintenance. Wayne suggested approaching the fire department as it's their sign. It was noted fundraising has not yet begun.

Above motion passed.  
5-0

### 9. Town Manager's Report:

Jay said Monday, March 13 is the informational meeting.

Common benches are scheduled for delivery today or tomorrow. He'll come up with a plan with Public Works before spring.

He finally got a FEMA letter re: the October 21 storm. The money was just approved, \$5,000 when we have \$6,000 or \$7,000 worth of staff time in it. Small amounts like that should not have to be this elaborate. It's all because of New Orleans, another story.

### 10. Other Business:

Jay had three certificates of appointment that didn't get signed (all approved).

Town meeting and election dates have to be officially approved.

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Motion to accept 2023 town meeting and election dates, deadlines, and terms as presented by: Bill Packard

2<sup>nd</sup> by: Jim Justice

5-0

### 11. Committee Reports:

a. Broadband

John Gibbons said there's been a slight delay. Results are expected in the next week or two. They're at a sensitive stage. He is moderately optimistic: they have \$60 million in grant requests and \$20 million allocated. In the meantime, there is a lot of planning for the next round of grant programs to be funded by the federal government.

b. Aging in Place in Union – None.

c. Green Space

Heather Jackson said Jay came to their last meeting and discussed how to get public input. They are working on questions for the lawyer. Adam quoted Jay on Survey Monkey: depending on how many users, it costs \$486 to @ \$1,000. Adam thought there were more times they could use Survey Monkey, noting the Broadband Committee used it very productively during covid.

d. Sestercentennial

Martha said they have not met since the last report. Next meeting is March 29.

e. Ambulance Advisory – Above.

### 12. Select Board Reports:

Bill would like Jersey barriers on Carroll Road sooner rather than later. Adam asked if the section we were working on was a deed shift. Jay said it's on our June warrant to accept the property, which has been surveyed.

Wayne asked about hiring somebody to put the lights in the fire station. Jay said he did but he hasn't signed the contract yet. He has ordered the lock(s) for the door. Gus has ordered programmable cards. The apron will be a decision around budget time.

Martha said she won't be here Monday (family medical). She wanted to clarify mostly for Wayne that the meeting at TCC was Monday night, January 30. Before everyone left, all the keys had been turned in to her. Next day she was there all day, cleaning up at the chamber office. The heat was on all day. It had to have been Tuesday night.

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Wayne believed the meeting was not supposed to have happened there, because the place was to have been closed down for zero meetings. Martha said the chamber still had full use of the office; the meeting was held with members of the chamber, and it was before the end of January. Wayne thought they voted not to have any more meetings because of what the Fire Marshal said and asked for clarification.

Adam said Martha is correct: they were not to vacate the building until after January. The issue was TMA's insurance had lapsed, so they could not be in the building due to insurance. The workaround was Martha is head of the chamber of commerce; they had all the members join the chamber so they could go inside and have a meeting. Martha said the TMA joined the chamber, in the parking lot according to your minutes Adam said. They debated further.

Adam said the issue he heard about from people is that it was pretty clear the TMA was not to be in the building: you don't have insurance, you can't go in the building. He doesn't think Martha broke any rules but found a workaround. However, he heard from angry chamber members about it not being a scheduled meeting; they did not get a notice.

Adam said it looked shady because Martha is an elected official. The body that bans people from going into the building is this body. It does not look good when the body that makes the rules is trying to bend them.

More discussion followed. Adam cited the contract with the TMA which said they need insurance to use the building. Martha said that was the lease, not the contract. She said it was not a chamber meeting; people were in there as members of the TMA which was a member of the chamber and allowed to use the office for its meeting.

Jay had two things. They asked to have an annual meeting there and we said no. The concern was, as he sent Martha in an email, he thought it was unethical because of insurance purposes. TMA didn't have insurance. There were people there who were not members of the TMA or the chamber who weren't covered under anything, which was the reason they told Paul they could not have an annual meeting there.

Martha reiterated the heat was still on when she was there Tuesday. The keys had been turned in from TMA members to Martha with two exceptions and turned in to Tabby the next day.

She asked Jay if, with elections coming up, any change had been made to how the town handles election signs. Jay said no.

Motion to rescind the town's authority under Title 21A that allows the town to manage this because the signs have nothing to do with that section, they're all under the authority of the state, by: Martha Johnston Nash

Jay said we are agents of the state, so it still falls under the town. Discussion followed.

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Adam clarified Martha's motion would be to rescind from the opt-in section. She said two sections will allow the towns to do things; there was only one that was approved and actually it was the wrong number on the warrant at the time.

Jay didn't think you rescind an ordinance due to a difference of opinion with office staff guided by the secretary of state's office, who sends those forms to us every single year.

The definition of "campaign sign" was discussed. Jay said the attorney said, "That was a campaign, follow the law." He raised the question: why you would not want to know who put out the signs and who's paying for the signs for some campaign?

Martha said it was clear those were individual signs. She thought the town office would have followed up on the information she shared previously. An argument ensued about whether or not they met and decided to put up signs.

Motion to ask the town office to follow up on the sign laws by: Martha Johnston Nash

Adam noted he looked at the information Martha sent and did not have the same view of it that she did. She said she got information from the state saying campaign financing reports have nothing to do with the signs. Adam doesn't see the form under discussion as campaign finance; it's a couple of pages – who are you, fill it out. Martha said the state requirement is to have that information on the signs.

Bill said it would be worthwhile, prior to people taking out nomination papers, to get out information on the process and put it on the town website.

Jay said they notified the mining group that it's illegal to put signs on poles. When somebody comes in with a petition, we have prepared a document for them assuming they're going to go out and campaign. We do not give advice on the law. We give them what we get from the secretary of state's office.

Adam thought what Martha was referring to only applied to municipal referendums. Towns can opt in by vote; as Martha said, we could put it on the warrant and have the town opt out of it. When the state passed it, it was based on clarity in elections; they want accountability. He hasn't yet found a town that pulled out of it. The town office went by the guidance given by the secretary of state's office. Unless the board as a majority wants to pass a motion to go against or rescind that, it's just an opinion.

Martha thought there had been miscommunication.

Jay said DOT rules are different than other rules. We are agents of the state. We can take any sign down that we want, anything that's blocking views, etc. Martha reiterated that her issue was filling out those campaign finance forms. Debate continued.

Jim moved the question. Martha said there was no question.



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Martha brought up Exiro, the energy company who was here, and thought we were a bit remiss in not engaging them directly and answering their question. She read aloud a draft of a letter she wrote to Exiro and asked the board to consider sending it to them. After discussion, consensus was the letter was well-written and appropriately moderate in tone but wait for now.

Adam mentioned comments from citizens and his concern about drama.

Bill urged caution for board members not to take a stand one way or another. The planning board will have to deal with it.

Wayne said the Exiro rep spelled it out: she's an entrepreneur. She owns mining companies. The goal is for stocks to go up then probably sell the company, while the actual mining will take 15 to 20 years.

Adam noted he was criticized for not being animated enough at the meeting. It seemed clear to him they did not expect an open meeting, which surprised him. He will respond to emails as soon as he can.

Jim said election papers are available upstairs.

Jay had a request from the DOT asking for our support re: their request for an EMR for the St. George bridge here in Union, which is discretionary spending from congressmen. He plans on doing one for the road in March next year, once we get it designed. Adam clarified Maine DOT wants to send this to Senator Collins with our endorsement, and it refers to the bridge below four corners.

Motion to add our name to accept the above, add our name to it, and send it by: Wayne Kirkpatrick  
2<sup>nd</sup> by: Bill Packard  
5-0

### 13. Future Agenda Requests:

Adam mentioned our animal ordinances/dog barking. Jay said read the rest of your emails before it goes on the agenda. Adam wanted to discuss tasking the office to look into stiffening some of the ordinances. Jay said you would probably need an ordinance review committee.

Bill mentioned discussing the mechanics of the existing referendum re: the TCC and the working group with MCOG, particularly when we might have a special town meeting. He said we need another vote on the engineering report and whether to spend the money.

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In answer to Martha, Jay said the money sits in an enterprise account. He thinks a vote on RFQs would supercede the other vote. He does not expect the engineering report until the end of summer. Bill suggested putting it on the agenda after April 13, after the RFQs come in.

### 14. Adjourn:

Motion by: Martha Johnston Nash  
2<sup>nd</sup> by: Wayne Kirkpatrick  
5-0

Meeting adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Abaldo  
Secretary