

Select Board Sidelines

September 15, 2021

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in the Sidelines are the individual thoughts of the Select Board member.

Submitted by Bill Lombardi

Let's start with some updates on topics that were in the last Sidelines.

Coggins Hill Property: The Town was generously offered a donation to pay for maintenance in the form of Bush Hogging the area of this property that has not been maintained for blueberry production. This offer was put in abeyance as a meeting is scheduled with Wyman's, who now maintains the blueberry field, to ascertain their intention regarding this area. Additionally, it was stated that bush hogging may not be feasible in this section of the property. Further discussion, perhaps after a development of a development deed restriction and in concert with the Coggins Hill Association that made an offer for the purchase of this land, a maintenance plan can be developed.

Committee for the Future of the Thompson Community Center (CFTCC): (submitted by Martha Johnston-Nash):

There was much discussion about the lease with the TCCA and what would happen if and when the TCCA evacuated the building. With the recommendation of the CFTCC in mind, the Select Board voted to take a three-prong approach at this time, as follows:

1. Ask the CFTCC to come up with a plan for interim management of the TCC for up to 12 months
2. Arrange for a meeting for the Select Board with the town attorney to get some questions resolved .
3. Have our Town Manager and Rebekah Smith (Chair of the CFTCC) meet with the TCCA Board before next Select Board meeting in a further attempt for a cooperative effort.

A request has been made to the CFTCC, to meet for the purpose of formulating a plan to have ready, should it be needed.

Ayer Park / Seven Tree Boat Ramp: The Select Board voted to accept the State of Maine, Bureau of Parks and Lands, Boating Facilities Fund, Project Agreement at the August 17th meeting. The construction of the ramp may be delayed until next fall if a requested extension of permits is not obtained from State agencies. Additionally, there is a meeting of the Pullen Committee scheduled for Wednesday, September 15 at 6:30 via Zoom to request funding of the Town's financial obligation to complete the ramp.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grants: (What follows is info from the last Sidelines with an update on the financial requests. Please note that these are requests and probably will be revised/edited or declined by the County.)

Knox County will be receiving \$7.7 million in funds from this Act. The County will use at least some of the funds for its own needs, and may consider grants to Knox County municipalities or non-profit organizations who have a request that meets ARPA requirements. The requirements of this Act are very limited and specific. In that vein the Town has submitted requests for funds for:

Premium Pay - \$13,000 – Premium pay of \$500 to all essential employees that worked during the pandemic.

Broadband - \$32,000 for Broadband studies and last mile connections.

Ambulance - \$275,000 for a second ambulance.

Food Pantry - \$15,000

Now onto New Business:

Tax Rate with Assessors Agent: With significant input from our Assessor, the Select Board set the 2021-2022 tax rate at 18.1. This is a very small increase from the 2020-2021 rate of 18. Please note that the previous year's rate was 18.3. My conclusion, this is an excellent result, keeping taxes under control with minimal fluctuations.

Local Food Ordinance: The last we heard of this ordinance, the Select Board and the Town Attorney has issue with language in the original proposal. A revised ordinance with simplified language and the elimination of some objectional wording was submitted. The Select Board decided not to move this version forward for a Town vote.

Speeding: The Select Board has received a number of emails from citizens concerned about speeding. There have been multiple requests from different sections of town for enforcement. Requests have been made for more signage. The thought is that signs do not have a significant impact on getting people to slow down but they certainly can't hurt. Particularly effective for short period is the moveable electronic sign that shows the speed of the vehicle as it approaches. I am certain that we will be having more discussion of the speeding issue.