



Town of South Thomaston, Maine
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Selectboard:
John Spear
Jeff Northgraves
Sue Snow

Selectboard Minutes
Date: February 6, 2024, 6:00 PM at the Municipal Building
Items Are Often Taken Out of Order to Accommodate Schedules

Rev 0

Note: A listing as present does not denote attendance for the entire meeting.

South Thomaston Selectboard Present: John Spear, Sue Snow, via zoom: John Spear
Others Present: Terri-Lynn Baines, Pennie Alley, Sam Murfitt, Linda Palmer, Hannah Moholland, Walter Reitz, Tom Sherrell
Via zoom: Susan Hardt, Barbara Reitz

I. Call to Order

Northgraves called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Northgraves led the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Adjustments to Agenda

DEP site visit

Land Survey

Update on Hiring Practice

DMR Application

Grants in General

IV. Review and Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes (January 16th and 31st 2024)

Spear moved and Northgraves seconded a motion to approve the minutes of January 16, 2024.

Motion passed 2-1

Spear moved and Snow seconded a motion to approve the minutes of January 31, 2024.

Motion passed 3-0.

V. Old Business

a. Update on Building Use Form

There was a discussion on whether a for profit group would be charged a fee. MMA has recommended a fee be charged, but the fee could be minimal. A \$10 fee per hour was proposed. Community Center Director Alley suggested \$5 an hour or a flat fee of \$10. The Selectboard agreed to a \$10 per use flat fee.

There was a question about C. 4. Prohibited uses. Caucuses are not prohibited. "This prohibition shall not include a caucus of a political party officially recognized by the State of Maine or a candidate forum or debates or similar informational event. "

Spear moved and Snow seconded a motion to approve the Building Use Form with those changes.

The Selectboard and Community Center Director discussed insurance requirements.

Motion passed 3-0.

b. Review Budget and Town Meeting Timelines and Agendas

The Selectboard reviewed the draft agendas of Feb 12th and 13th for meetings with the Department Heads.

The Selectboard reviewed the draft agendas of April 9th, 10th, 11th, and 15th for meetings with the Budget Committee.

The Annual Town meeting will begin June 11th at 8:00 am. A moderator will be elected. The Moderator can appoint a Deputy Moderator to handle the duties that day. The Town Meeting will reconvene June 18th at the Ash Point School.

Annual Town reports need to be available one week before the Town meeting.

There will need to be a public hearing at least 7 days before the Town meeting for the Town residents to be able to hear/ review the Ordinance amendment(s) that will be an article on the Town Warrant.

Baines will prepare a rough draft warrant for review at the March 12th Selectboard meeting.

The Selectboard will continue with the practice of placing a draft Town Meeting Warrant in the Annual Town report.

c. Update on Ambulance Billing Collection Agreement

At the previous SB meeting the question was raised if after getting notice that their ambulance payment debt is now in collection, the client fills out a hardship form and it is accepted by the Town Administrator, will FFR, the collection agency, still require a fee be paid to them. Baines reached out to the Town's representative at FFR and was told, an account can be pulled from collection. If no money is collected, no fee is paid.

VI. New Business

a. Discussion on Tax Acquired Properties

Spear moved and snow seconded a motion to issue a quit claim deed to Samuel Murfitt for the property located at 131 Ledge Road, Map 11 Lot 012-007 to convey it back to Mr. Murfitt the former owner, with the condition he is the only owner of record.

Motion passed 3-0.

Northgraves explained the new State statute concerning tax acquired property. In the past if money was made when a property was sold the money went into the town coffers. The new statute, effective June 30, 2023, says any extra money goes to the former owners. Northgraves explained the extra costs the Town will incur. Maine Municipal has offered guidance on their website to Towns if they should find themselves facing selling a tax acquired property. The Town can also reach out to MMA legal if questions arise.

Insurance coverage was briefly discussed.

Typically, in the past the Selectboard has issued a letter to the former owners of the property stating the Town now owns the property and giving the previous owner the opportunity to pay the amount that would have been their taxes and cost and have the property deeded back to them with a quit claim deed. The letter is sent certified mail, regular mail and hand delivered. This is the first step the Selectboard will take.

Spear moved and Snow seconded a motion to authorize the Town Administrator to send out a letter similar to last year, with the amount due being what would have been due for the first year. The letter will be sent certified, regular mail and hand delivered. Giving 45 days to pay.

Motion passed 3-0.

There was a discussion on paying one year of taxes and costs that were due or pay the full amount that would have been due. The Selectboard decided to require payment of what would have been the taxes and costs associated with the first year of past due taxes. If this amount is paid the Selectboard will issue a quit claim deed.

b. Discussion on Estimate for Trim Work and Painting at the Little Red School House

The shingling of the Little Red School house is completed. Bev St. Clair has a quote from Steve Caron to paint the trim and also add a coat of red to the shingles. St. Clair recommends hiring him and would like approval tonight so she can let him know as soon as possible in order to get the Little Red School House on his schedule. His quote includes a coat of red stain, even though the shingles were dipped. This will extend the life of the shingles. The quote for the trim only is \$7,850. The quote for red shingles is \$4,500 for a total of \$12,350.

Spear thanked Bev St. Clair for the effort she has put into this.

Spear moved and Snow seconded a motion to, provide we can get the proper insurance and paper work, engage Steve Caron to prep and paint the trim and a second coat of stain on the shingles in the amount of \$12,350.

Motion passed 3-0.

c. Execute 3-Year Agreement with Pope Memorial Humane Society

Spear moved and Snow seconded a motion to execute the new 3 year agreement with Pope Memorial Humane Society.

There was public comment on the Shelter. A resident expressed concern that Pope is a kill shelter.

Motion passed 3-0.

d. Discussion on Snowplow Contract

This item is on the agenda at the request of the Road Commissioner.

If the snow plow contract is going out for proposals, there needs to be a way to somehow tie in the work at the stump dump. Kalloch keeps his backhoe at the sand and salt shed year round to push cans down, and push up the brush. The Road Commissioner is requesting this work be added to a proposal.

Before the RFP is written there are questions to consider. Does the Town want to still allow the contractor to buy the sand and salt or go back to the Town purchasing the sand and salt? Does the contractor have the capacity to fix equipment quickly, have enough equipment and enough manpower?

There aren't that many contractors that do this work. The Town's current Snow Plow contract is with J.K. Kalloch. Kalloch is interested in continuing to work for the Town.

There was a brief discussion on requiring a Performance Bond.

e. Discussion on Property Tax Stabilization Program Shortfall

The Selectboard discussed the shortfall that the Stabilization Program has caused. The program only lasted for one year. The expectation was the State would repay the Town for the amount of the stabilized real estate taxes. The State does not have the funds to reimburse the Towns. Across the state, Towns received 56% of the amount of the stabilized tax amounts. This may cause a deficit in the Town budget. The State is working on a fix for the next budget or an emergency supplemental. A bill has been submitted to have the reimbursement come out of current funds. There is a hearing in Augusta on February 13th. The Selectboard will send a letter in support of the bill.

Tax payers that had their real estate taxes stabilized last year and saw no increase in their tax bill, will see an increase in their upcoming tax bill. The increase they didn't pay last year, plus the increase of this year.

Spear moved and Snow seconded motion to support MMA's request for a letter in support of LD 646. The Town Administrator is authorized to sign the letter.

Motion passed 3-0.

f. Road Commissioner Concerns About Road Across from 302 Island Road

302 Island Road is between George Hardt's and the rip rap banking. The two latest storms tossed huge granite rocks onto the road. Jim Kalloch moved the granite blocks out of the roadway.

The Road Commission feels there is a real possibility of losing a section of this road. He reached out to Andrew Hedrich at Gartley & Dorsky to see if he had thoughts on what we could do.

Road Commissioner Spear is requesting money in the Town Road budget to engage Gartley & Dorsky to do an engineering survey. To apply for grants the Town will need to know the cost of the work that would need to be done.

Combined the damage done during the January 10th and 13th storms reached the FEMA threshold, but each storm separately did not.

Both lanes are now open on the Spruce Head Bridge after storm repairs. Rip rap has been replaced. The guard rail needs to be put back in place.

g. DMR Application

Suz and Ralph Hamil had a float destroyed in the January storms. The float is used in their oyster business. They have verbal permission from DMR to replace the float, but in a different configuration. Area is the same volume. DMR has requested they fill out a new application and that application needs to be signed by an elected Town Official.

Northgraves moved and Snow seconded a motion to authorize the chair to sign the application pending approval from the GRSF committee.

Motion passed 3-0.

h. DEP Site Visit

Spear would like to call and talk with Vera Maheu, the person conducting the site visit, about burning the ashes. He requested the whole idea of burning be placed on the next agenda.

The Selectboard also discussed placing brush in the hopper and testing the ash after burning.

i. Update on Hiring Practice

The Selectboard discussed the email from Town Attorney Collins regarding the Selectboards hiring authority. The Selectboard meets with candidates proposed for hire before they are actually hired. This is meant to be a “meet and greet” for both the Selectboard and town residents. The Selectboard doesn’t see this as part of the interview process. Northgraves will reach out to Collins for clarification .

j. Survey Town Property

Beal Surveying did a preliminary survey on the Smith property. Spear, Sondra Wallace and Catherine Lerne met with Nate Beal to discuss surveying the Smith and Cline properties. Beal is interested in the project and he could do in the spring or fall. The estimated cost of the survey is \$12,000.

Sondra Wallace and Catherine Lerne are looking into ways to raise money for the survey.

k. Grants in General

The current policy is the Selectboard needs to grant permission to department heads to apply for grants. In order to make it clearer who is applying for which grants the Selectboard would like department heads to make a list of grants they routinely apply for. The Selectboard will talk with the department heads during the budget process.

l. Discuss Personnel Issue (Possible Executive Session Pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A §405(6)(C))

Spear moved and Snow seconded a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter Pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A §405(6)(C)

Motion passed 3-0.

The Selectboard entered executive session at 7:56 pm.

The Selectboard exited executive session at 8:03 pm.

Spear moved and Snow seconded a motion to accept the resignation/retirement of Terri Baines as Town Administrator effect June 30, 2024.

Motion passed 3-0.

Spear moved and Snow seconded a motion to hire Hannah Moholland as Town Administrator effect close of business on June 30, 2024 at an annual salary of \$52,000. Also to increase her hourly wage from now to July 1st to \$22.50 and to authorize her to work up to 50 extra hours during that time period.

Motion passed 3-0.

VII. Donations

Spear moved and Snow seconded a motion to accept the \$100 donation to the Ambulance Service from Barbara Grossman.

Motion passed 3-0.

VIII. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

IX. Warrants Review and Approval

The Selectboard reviewed and approved the warrants.

X. Review Items for Next Agenda

Burning at the Stump Dump.

XI. Schedule Future Meetings

February 12th and 13th. 3:30 pm, Budget meetings with Department Heads.

March 12th and 18th 6:00 pm, Regular Selectboard meetings.

April 9th, 10th and 11th and 15th. 4:00 pm, Budget meetings with the Budget Committee.

XII. Public Comment for Items not on the Agenda

There was a unfavorable comment about the public comment part of the Selectboard meeting being moved to the end of the agenda. There was a brief discussion on the reasons.

XIII. Adjourn

Without objection the Selectboard adjourned at 8:09 pm.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81669522914?pwd=SUNKNDV5SmREeVozQ1NWUVpzLzRMZz09>

Meeting ID: 816 6952 2914

Passcode: 050188

Approved by the Selectboard March 12, 2024