

**Kingston, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting of April 1, 2024
Draft MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by the Vice Chairman.

PRESENT: Chair Electra Alessio; Vice Chair Glenn Coppelman, Charles Hart, Lauren Szwed, Peter Bakie, Select Board Members

MOTION: by Selectman Hart, to adjourn public session and enter non-public session at 6:01 PM, per RSA 91-A:3, II, (a) and (b) to discuss personnel.

SECOND: by Selectman Coppelman

All in favor via roll call vote

The Board returned to public session at 6:35 PM.

APPOINTMENTS

Muriel Ingalls re: Kingston Lake Association sign application

Ms. Ingalls introduced herself as president of the Kingston Lake Association, and explained that she had submitted a permit application for a sign. The Building Inspector had denied the permit as it was not allowed in that zone, and because it is on Town property, deferred the decision to the Board.

The Board reviewed the application, Chair Alessio noting that it was to be the same dimensions as the Recreation Commission's sign, and would be at the lake entrance on Main Street. Ms. Ingalls said that the sign would do more than promote the activities of the Lake Association, for example, they can inform people of bacteria alerts, loon nesting, and when they are doing sampling in the lake. She said she felt it would be a community service. She said that when Stephen Clark passed away, the family requested that in lieu of flowers, donations could be given to the KLA, and this money is what they would like to use to put up the sign.

Selectman Bakie said he supports the sign, but also wants to know how such signs will be regulated, when the board is asked again to permit a sign on Town property.

Selectwoman Szwed said this begs the question of whether there should be a standard for what will appear on Town property. Chair Alessio said she thinks that formatting a type of town sign would be too much control. She said that as long as a sign is for town activities or information, and not political statements or anything of that nature, that is fine. It was also pointed out that the sign still needs to conform to the town's size and other regulations for signs.

MOTION: by Selectman Hart, to approved the Lake Association sign as proposed provided it meets town sign regulations, and to authorize the Building Inspector to issue a permit for it.

SECOND: Selectman Coppelman

All in favor

Tammy Bakie re: window installation for Town Clerk's office

Town Clerk Tammy Bakie asked the Board to reconsider their decision about putting off installation of a third window for the Clerk's office until there are architectural plans for the building as a whole. She said at times there is a line in the hallway, and she may have four employees but only two service windows. She said the third window put into the top of the hall door during COVID is not good or convenient.

There was a discussion about where Ms. Bakie would like the window to go; she distributed a drawing that showed her preferred placement, and also a compromise that would not require moving a wall.

Selectman Bakie said this would make sense if the Town Clerk's office is not planned to be moved; Ms. Bakie said that there is no such plan, that the vault is in her present area. Selectman Hart asked if the work is to be done by the Department of Public Works; Director Coombs was present and said that he was holding off to see how things will be done, but that the plan for the window has been in place for a while.

Selectwoman Szwed asked what this will do to the plan to go through an engineer for all internal work, and if it will impact electrical work, for instance. She said this is going back to doing work piecemeal, and making exceptions.

Chair Alessio said she still supports getting an architectural rendering of what is to be done with the overall building, but said she did not think this change to the Clerk's office is enough to make a difference. She said she supports the renovation because the overall work will take years.

Director Coombs said his only concern is if the bathrooms need to be changed, or something else needs to be radically different, in which this would be good money after bad. He said he has seen a lot of things changed that have to be redone later.

Discussion continued on how long it will take to get plans for the building in place, how often there are people waiting in the hall, and the two different scenarios for adding a window.

Ms. Bakie suggested that the second option, to cut a hole in the wall in the hallway, would not affect electricity or cause walls to be knocked down.

MOTION: by Selectman Hart, to allow a third window to be put in at the discretion of the Town Clerk and DPW Director

SECOND: by Selectman Bakie

Mr. Coombs said his concern is how it will be paid for and when. Selectman Coppelman said he is conflicted because the Board is changing direction once again on what it is asking the DPW Director to do. Status of the architectural plan was briefly discussed; one architect is coming next week and the other has been hard to reach.

In favor: Alessio, Bakie, Hart; Opposed: Coppelman, Szwed; Motion passes

7:00 PM: PUBLIC HEARING: for the purpose of considering an application to renew the Discretionary Preservation Easement on a barn at 108 Exeter Road, Tax Map R37 Lot 2. This easement was granted pursuant to RSA 79-D and must be renewed every 10 years.

Selectman Coppelman recused himself from this discussion, as it is for his property.

Ernie Landry and Bob Bean of the Heritage Commission came forward. Mr. Landry read from RSA 79-D so that all present would understand, saying it is basically talks about "public interest" in a historic barn:

RSA 79-D:1 It is hereby declared to be in the public interest to encourage the preservation of historic agricultural structures which are potentially subject to decay or demolition, thus maintaining the historic rural character of the state's landscape, sustaining agricultural traditions, and providing an attractive scenic environment for work and recreation of the state's citizens and visitors. It is further declared to be in the public interest to prevent the loss of historic agricultural structures due to property taxation at values incompatible with their preservation. The means for encouraging preservation of historic agricultural structures authorized by this chapter is the acquisition of discretionary preservation easements by town or city governments to assure preservation of such structures which provide a demonstrated public benefit.

Mr. Landry said it is also in the interest of Kingston, as the Envision Kingston project found that residents were very interested in preserving the Town's rural character, and this is one way of doing that. Preserving working farms is also in the town's Master Plan.

He said that there are three criteria outlined in the RSA, and to be eligible for an easement, the barn needs to meet at least one of them. These include scenic enjoyment of the structure by the general public from a public way, or having historical importance on a local, regional, state or national level. The third is if it contributes to the historic or cultural integrity of a property that is already on the national register of historic places.

Mr. Landry said that basically, this application meets the criteria of having scenic enjoyment from a public way, and also is historically important on the local level, so for that reason the Heritage Commission believes it's appropriate to grant a discretionary preservation easement to this applicant. He said that the Select Board has the discretion to offer the tax abatement varying from 25% to 75% of the full assessed value. To aid the Board in this determination, he said that he and Mr. Bean together with the Select Board Administrative Assistant had been asked to develop a standardized process so that the criteria are consistent from one application to the next. He went through the flow chart which takes the process from intake of application, a site visit, a public hearing and finally to a decision. He said part of the process was for Heritage to take a look at the barn and the application, and make a recommendation. He said their evaluation sheet is in front of the Board, and their recommendation was to grant the easement at 75%.

Selectman Bakie asked if the owner moves there is anything to mandate that the new owner is to keep the property as it is, or if they can just decide to take down the barn. Mr. Landry said that the easement goes with the property, so they would be required to maintain the barn. He said that periodic reviews of the barns would be a good idea, as there are provisions in the RSA that provide for termination of the easement and repayment of some of the tax benefits received if the barn has been demolished.

The renewal period is every 10 years; this barn is a renewal. Discussion continued on various aspects of the easements and how they can be evaluated and maintained. Mr. Landry said that they are thinking for the future that some sort of maintenance plan should be required or else a specific assessment of the barn's condition should be made

at the time of the original easement. It was noted that the town keeps a list of all barns that have preservation easements.

The Chair opened the hearing to public comment; there were none. She then closed the hearing at 7:15 PM.

MOTION: by Selectman Hart, to approve the renewal of the preservation easement on the barn at 108 Exeter Road, and grant the recommended abatement of 75% assessed value.

SECOND: by Selectwoman Szwed.

All in favor

Public Comment 1: None heard

Committees and Boards:

Chair Alessio commented that this is a new item to be placed on the agenda of the first meeting of each month. This is an additional opportunity for Committee and Board Chairs to address the Board in a public setting.

Heritage Commission

Mr. Landry said that the Heritage Commission had met jointly with the Historic District Commission for the quadrennial review of the town's Certified Local Government status and 10-year plan. He explained that this is administered by the state Historic Resources department, and two people from that division attended the meeting. He said a town can be named a Certified Local Government by having a strong historic preservation program; Kingston is one of 29 in the state. This gives the town a lot of extra support and access to projects and grants only available to CLGs. He said Kingston has benefited from two grants, one for the Master Plan and the other to have the Plains Cemetery placed on the national historic register.

Mr. Landry said he would like to come back and do a presentation on this program if the Board is interested. It was agreed that he would come back in one month.

It was also agreed that committees may come in one at a time to brief the Board on what they do, and to raise awareness and participation.

COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORTS

Selectman Coppelman said he was at the meeting Mr. Landry spoke of and the visitors from Historic Resources were extremely complimentary of the work of Kingston's boards and how well they work together. He said sometimes from the inside it is easy to get focused on things that aren't going so well, but outside agencies coming in see the good.

Chair Alessio said her neighbor had heard the conversation at the last meeting on the topic of auctions of surplus equipment, and that employees were allowed to bid on a recent auction of kitchen equipment that had been at the Recreation Center. She said she had gotten the background about this equipment, which had been purchased with the goal of holding senior lunches at the Recreation building, and learned also about the practice of allowing employees to bid on equipment and have their bid be the reserve amount. She said she thinks this is a matter that really needs a policy, to make sure that

information on surplus items is opened to all departments, for example, or even on the website to let the public know.

Selectwoman Szwed said she will be working on this policy. Mr. Coombs said that this equipment is back up on the auction site.

Selectman Bakie said there are two vacancies on the Planning Board, if any residents are interested. Chair Alessio said that anyone interested should let her or Lynne Merrill or Susan Ayer know.

Selectman Hart said that the Seabrook drill will take place on Wednesday, and if this one goes well, they do not have to have another for two years. He also said the Budget Committee met and elected their officers; Stacy Dion will be Chair and John Pramberg Vice Chair; Annemarie Roth is Secretary. Ms. Dion is updating the bylaws.

Selectman Bakie said he had talked with the Police Chief and opened a line of communication as his liaison. He also sat down with Building Inspector Pedro Avila. He said Mr. Avila is dealing with incomplete applications and some disgruntled applicants, but he is doing a great job. A complete application is needed in order for a permit to be approved in a timely manner.

OLD BUSINESS

Status update: Sound system components and billing

Ms. Ayer said that the technicians from Audio Visual Experience met with Adam Faulconer and they were able to at least pinpoint where the problem is with the broadcasting of sound to the cable channel. Chair Alessio said that everything is working except for the broadcast sound, and that was localized to one component. Ms. Ayer continued that she had called the company that makes the component and had a surprisingly good conversation, considering the town has no maintenance agreement with the company. She said the next step is that they need a more direct look into what is happening, so Adam will be calling them when he can do a test broadcast so they can see what is going on.

Grant match letter - Main Street Bridge

This letter has been revised to reflect that the matching funds will come from the Bridge grant rather than the Infrastructure fund, so a public hearing is not needed. This is ready to send.

Lease agreement, state land: letter to be sent requesting renewal

Ms. Ayer explained that this letter was already signed, but before sending, some board members had expressed they would like to look at the original lease, which was provided. All agreed this letter may be sent as-is.

Granite marker for Joe Thompson memorial tree

Selectman Coppelman gave the background on this memorial which was started with the previous board. They approved the purchase and planting of a tree for Joe Thompson, a long-time volunteer and electrical inspector who passed in 2018. He said the plan had been for a marker to be added, which he has sourced, and the cost will be \$298 including shipping.

MOTION: by Selectman Hart, to approve payment for the Joe Thompson marker, from the Patriotic Purposes budget line, in the amount of \$298.

SECOND: by Selectwoman Szwed
All in favor

Sale of town owned land: 47 Newton Junction Road

Selectman Hart said he had gone by the property, and whatever else, it is a good buildable lot and he thinks the Town should sell the property for whatever revenue it can generate.

Ms. Ayer said that it may take some time and there are a lot of things to take into consideration; some information she had shared with the Board and also more information she had discussed with the Town Clerk today; she said this won't be easy as the former owners or heirs need to be notified of the sale 90 days prior so that they can have the opportunity to buy it back. She said in this case it may not be that easy to find all the family and it needs to be done correctly.

It was decided that Ms. Ayer will gather all the information and contact Town Counsel for guidance.

NEW BUSINESS

Article Preamble III: Amendments

Notification from the Planning Board about their decision to reinstate this preamble, and include just the most recent revision date, was reviewed and approved.

Town Planner Consulting Services Agreement

It was noted that the consulting services agreement with Town Planner Glenn Greenwood for 2024 had not yet been approved.

Selectman Coppelman said that given Mr. Greenwood's history and knowledge of the Town, how well he works with others in Planning and other departments, as well as the public, and also the fact that replacing him would mean starting from scratch with someone who has no knowledge of the Town, and probably for more money, he sees no reason not to renew the contract.

MOTION: by Selectman Coppelman, to renew Planner Glenn Greenwood's contract for 2024.

SECOND: by Selectman Hart
All in favor

BOARD BUSINESS

Volunteer Appreciation week April 20-27

Chair Alessio said that she believes a volunteer appreciation picnic should be done in June or September as it was done in the past, and a letter sent out to boards and committees during volunteer appreciation week. Ms. Ayer and Finance Director Paula Mahoney will work together to plan when and where the event will take place.

PUBLIC COMMENT 2: None heard

CORRESPONDENCE, APPLICATIONS, PURCHASE ORDERS

- One solar exemption application was approved.
- One veterans credit application was approved.

- The annual mosquito treatment notice from the contracted company was acknowledged and is posted.

Unanticipated Funds

Two checks were issued on behalf of the Kingston Days committee as donations to the Kingston Museum and to the carriage museum. Chair Alessio questioned these checks from “one pocket to another” and invited Kingston Days Chair Stacy Dion forward to discuss the details. Ms. Dion said that the Kingston Days committee had voted to donate some money to the carriage museum as they had allowed them to use a carriage for their selfie station and there had been some damage. They also wanted to give money to the town’s historical museum for whatever they could use if for, to promote the heritage of the Town. After waiting to have their final numbers, they had the Finance Director cut checks since they do not have their own checking account. She said they thought this money would have to be accepted by the Select Board on behalf of the museum.

There was a discussion of the logistics of how this money is given from one entity to another, and it was also noted that the checks were supposed to both be for \$300 and one is for \$250. It was agreed that the \$250 check will be re-written for the proper amount and both will be accepted as unanticipated funds at the next meeting.

Policy Approvals

The Facilities Maintenance policy and the revision to the Policy Revision policy will be sent out to departments for approval before signing by the Board.

Auction Items

Selectman Bakie revisited the topic of the auctioned kitchen equipment, saying it had been purchased for \$21,000 from Alternative Sales and he felt they should be consulted to see if they may have a buyer. It was agreed that he will follow up, in consultation with Mr. Coombs.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

MOTION: by Selectman Hart, to approve the non-public minutes of March 18 and the public minutes of March 25, as written.

SECOND: by Selectman Coppelman

All in favor

Meeting Adjourned at 8:24 PM

Respectfully submitted:

Susan H. Ayer, Administrative Assistant to the Select Board