

**Kingston, New Hampshire
Select Board
Meeting of November 27, 2023
FINAL MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 am by the Chairman.

PRESENT: Chair Chris Bashaw; Vice Chair Chuck Hart; Glenn Coppelman, Laurie Szwed, Ellie Alessio, Select Board Members

BOARDS AND COMMITTEES Information and Discussion

Kingston Days Committee

Stacy Dion, Chair of the Kingston Days Committee, said that they need volunteers, and that they do not have enough to fill the Steering Committee. Several members are not continuing. Selectwoman Szwed said that at the last meeting, only 9 people showed up, and they were the ones who worked last year. Another meeting will be held on December 7; if more don't sign up, Kingston Days will likely not go forward next year. Ms. Dion reported that total revenue from 2023 was \$47,000, and profit stands at \$26,700 with a few adjustments still to be made.

DEPARTMENTS: Information and Discussion

Fire Department - Chief Graham Pellerin

Chief Pellerin said that all is going smoothly, and calls are up. He said he will be returning the balance of the building fund, about \$100,000, to the Trustees by December 31. He said these funds were from the infrastructure fund and were earmarked for the fire station building only. The funds could be used to pay down the bond.

Department of Public Works, Director Phil Coombs

Director Coombs said that they are starting to put the shoulder gravel on roads paved this summer, and this should be completed in two to three weeks. He also reported that work on the Grace Daly Barn will be starting up, that the clean up phase has taken a lot longer than anticipated but beams are being delivered tomorrow.

Mr. Coombs talked about the Transportation Improvement Fund, which had been planned to be used for engineering for the Main Street bridge project. When the Town obtained a block grant the fund was left in place. He said that it could be utilized in the future for matching funds for a grant, so he suggested that the money could stay there instead of closing the account and having to re-instate it in the future. Chairman Bashaw said that in the future the Town should have a "grant contingency fund", but this could be used in the meantime. Selectwoman Alessio asked if the fund was set up okay to be used in this way. Mr. Coombs said that it was originally set up for work on New Boston Road that was ultimately done by the state, so the money has just been sitting there. It was set up for "transportation improvement" and has some flexibility.

Lastly, Mr. Coombs said he is asking for authorization to pay the final bill for the audio/visual work in the meeting room, even though there are still some microphones on back order. The Board agreed this could be paid.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector Tammy Bakie

Ms. Bakie said that the Presidential primary will be held on January 23. She will be hosting a mock election/ballot clerk training event at the Town Hall on January 9. With regard to taxes, she said her office is fielding a lot of questions and she has prepared some scenarios of actual Kingston properties to help residents to see how the taxes work, and to counteract some Facebook misinformation. She put some examples up on a white board and reviewed one, concluding that the school budget and everything else voted on in March need to be considered, not just the assessments.

Human Services - Marissa Federico, Director

Director Federico said that the "giving tree" is up in the Town Hall lobby, and gifts are due December 11. Holiday food donations are also due December 11, and a new list of food pantry needs will be sent out. Ms. Federico also informed the Board that the new welfare guidelines will be completed next week.

Library - Director Melissa Mannon

Director Mannon distributed the December calendar of events.

She said the strategic plan for the library is almost complete, with the focus on direct services. She said the \$600,000 grant for building the proposed outdoor spaces is pending, and they will know in February if it is to be received. She said she is continuing to work with the NH Municipal Association for additional grants and has sat down with them to discuss how to approach foundations. She said that the library is forming its own foundation; there are 5 board members in place that are writing a mission statement and applying for 501c (3) status.

Ms. Mannon said that Selectwoman Szwed had asked about the transportation options being explored for the town after the age-friendly community survey was done. Ms. Mannon said her focus had been getting people to the library but working with Human Services and Recreation other issues had been identified. She will be putting together a presentation including information on what other small towns are doing.

Ms. Mannon said she is working with the Recreation Director on a holiday lunch, to be at the library but sponsored by Rec, which will be in lieu of the monthly older adults' seminar. All residents will be invited to come; the focus is on seniors, but family and friends are invited as well.

Recreation - Director Paul Butler

Mr. Butler said that they held the tree lighting event on Saturday; it went very well and was attended by about 100 people.

Mr. Butler said he has submitted a draft of a petition article to the Administrative Assistant; it is for construction of a pickleball court/skating rink on the Rec property. He said he has checked with the insurance company about some things that need to be done to prepare.

Mr. Butler then brought up the discussion of Trunk or Treat at the last meeting, which he could not attend. He said they were overwhelmed but in a good way by the number of attendees. He said it was not what he would call dangerous, but there are better ways to handle it in the future, such as having more parking. He said he would like to keep it at the Rec Center; they have been trying to keep every event there. He said that it has some indoor space and bathrooms, and also, some people don't even know the Rec

Center exists. He said he thinks arrangements can be made for parking without being on the streets.

Police Chief Johnson said that he is concerned about the parking on the street and one of his officers almost got hit twice; he said it is doable but needs to be discussed at more length. He said he would like to have a plan in place by spring. Chief Johnson said the Plains is an option; Mr. Butler said that the Plains do not have bathrooms or sufficient electricity. He said that if they can't use the Rec Center, he thought the school would be a better choice, but it would depend on permission from the school and there would not be access to indoors. Mr. Butler said he hoped the events can continue at the Rec as there are a lot of positives to it.

Selectman Coppelman asked if the number of trunks was limited, would it limit the overall attendance. Mr. Butler said he did not think so, that people would attend even if there were only 5 trunks.

Mr. Butler said that the official dedication of the Stepping Stones playground had taken place and Partners Bank was thanked for their \$10,000 donation. He thanked all who helped out with this project.

Finance and Human Resources - Director Paula Mahoney

Ms. Mahoney said she has been working on the budget and is almost done with the default budget, which she hopes to have ready for the budget committee meeting tomorrow night.

Police Department: Chief Joel Johnson

The Chief thanked the contractors - Joe Wilson, Select Demo and Torromeo - that worked on the project to convert the garage into a training room. He said the value of the labor and materials was about \$160,000, but with the help of these contractors and the DPW, only about \$9,000 was spent to get everything done.

Select Board Administrative Assistant - Susan Ayer

Ms. Ayer reminded all departments that the Town Report will be coming out again, and while the deadline is not for 2 more months, any time they can get their pages done she will take them. She also asked that all departments submit any warrant articles they plan to place on the ballot.

Chairman Bashaw cautioned all that there will not be a lot of support for warrant articles with additional costs associated. He said priorities are cost of living adjustments and other important items that funding is needed for. He said anyone can put in a petition article, but they may not all be recommended by the board.

PUBLIC COMMENT 1:

Kathy Walsh, 28 Clark Road, asked for an update on the water filtration systems. This is the next agenda item.

OLD BUSINESS

Poet system project - Update

Selectman Coppelman said that he and Ms. Ayer had participated in a call with the administrator and project manager from NH DES. He said the intention after getting the

grant was to move as quickly as possible to secure a contractor and get the work underway. He said there were a couple of missteps along the way and some non-responsiveness among the bidders that was compounded by some less than best advice from one of the Town's engineering consultants that had helped to put the bid package together. This resulted in the DES phone call and the Town is now in the process of selecting a new consultant that will help to begin the bidding process again. He said this unfortunately means another delay but hopefully there will be correct responses and a vendor can be selected to do the work. Chairman Bashaw went back through the entire process from the point of needing review by Governor and Council to approve the grant, to getting the bidding package put together with the help of engineering review by the Town's consultant, to selecting a contractor, and ending in being told that the engineering consultant had not included some important requirements that need to be included for grant funding, so both bidders had to be rejected. In answer to a question from Ms. Walsh, he said the company is Sanborn Head, and that there would be discussions on the invoicing for their work on this project. He said the intention is to get these systems installed as soon as possible but there are benchmarks that need to be met.

Ms. Walsh asked if the grant would expire before the work could be done. Chairman Bashaw said that it would not, the project is in the queue and earmarked for the funds. Ms. Walsh asked about the process having to start over, saying it's been going on for years. Chairman Bashaw clarified it is just the RFP for bids for that needs to go back out, and then there will have to be a 14-day period of time for responses. He said that this part of the process will take at least 4 weeks, and once a bid has been accepted it will be better known what the timing of the actual work will be.

Selectwoman Szwed asked about the list of consultants in the board packets. Ms. Ayer said that is a list of qualified consultants provided by DES that the Town can contact to obtain quotes for the consulting work. That is the next step. The grant will pay for that. Dan Doyle, 156 Main Street, asked if the grant specifies that the bid has to go to the lowest bidder. Selectman Bashaw said that is the case, unless it can be proven that the low bidder is non-responsible. Mr. Doyle said he has talked to several companies that are interested in bidding but will not because it's just going to the lowest bidder which means it will be some fly-by-night company with no experience, which he thinks is terrible. He asked if the RFP specifies the type of system; it does, a carbon system. Mr. Doyle then reminded the board of his concern about the bottled water supplied by the town, that it will freeze and be unusable in the cold weather. He asked if the water could be delivered to the firehouse and then be collected on a daily basis as needed. Ms. Walsh concurred that this would be helpful when she can't be home.

Chief Pellerin said there is space at the fire station but if they are out on a call no one will be there to bring in the delivery.

Mr. Doyle described the boxes that disintegrate and said the company will not deliver inside.

After some discussion it was agreed to contact the water company to see what can be set up.

Ms. Walsh asked about being updated via email; Ms. Ayer offered to send an email update to all 20 residents included in the water delivery.

ReVision Energy Option Agreement

Ms. Ayer said that she is waiting for a copy of this agreement to send out to the Town's attorney.

NEW BUSINESS - none

PUBLIC COMMENT 2:

Jef Flanders-McDougall, Main Street, said she is concerned about the last discussion and said that the Board needs to be proactive, not reactive, and to have empathy for the residents who have had to rely on bottled water. She said that the residents should not be told they need to attend public meetings, it is the responsibility of the Select Board to contact them.

Chairman Bashaw said this board is the first to take action and move forward with getting water for these residents. He said that this had been put on the back burner due to legal advice saying don't do anything until people make you do it, but this board took a proactive response. He said they have taken steps and provisions because it is so important. He said he can't force people to participate in local government, but they get upset because they didn't get handwritten correspondence about chip sealing on their roads, or recycling updates, and the board can't give personalized attention to every issue. He said the meetings are where the Town's business is conducted, and they can be watched in person, live streamed, or the recordings accessed any time on YouTube, and people need to participate and advocate for themselves.

Chairman Bashaw said saying this Board has no empathy is inaccurate, but all the information is not for private discussion and needs to come out in this room in public discussion.

BOARD BUSINESS

- Administrative abatements were granted for Kingston Awakening Ministries for an exemption that had not been processed in a timely manner, and also for a bill that went to SELT instead of the Town.
- A deed for a cemetery lot sale for Greenwood Cemetery was approved, on a Motion by G. Coppelman, Second by E. Alessio, all in favor.
- Three veterans credit applications were approved for 2024, on a motion by E. Alessio, Second by C. Hart, all in favor.

Hiring Committee, BI/CEO position

There was a discussion of gathering the committee and setting up interviews. Mondays or Thursdays were preferred interview days to include Planner Glenn Greenwood. The committee will be Chief Pellerin, Director Coombs, Mr. Greenwood, Select Board Members Szwed and Coppelman, and Electrical Inspector Tom Soterakopoulos.

Town Report Printing

The agreement with Brayshaw and Co. to print 200 copies of the Town Report at a cost of \$1,085 was approved, Motion by C. Hart, Second by G. Coppelman, all in favor.

Tapping of Maple Trees on the Plains

Chairman Bashaw read a request from Kingston Maple, a private maple syrup producer located at Alternative Sales on Route 125, to be allowed to again tap the maple trees on

the Plains from February through March, depending on weather conditions. The syrup is donated to various charities. Chairman Bashaw said this involves his father-in-law and brother-in-law, but he has no financial interest in their non-profit.

Selectman Coppelman asked if this is available to this company, is it available to anyone to tap the trees. It was agreed this is first come, first served for approval, as the town does not just allow tapping of the trees on town property.

Mr. Coombs was asked for his input.

MOTION: by Selectman Hart, to authorize Kingston Maple to tap the trees on the Plains with one restriction, that they use the smallest tap sizes available.

SECOND: by Selectwoman Szwed

In favor: Alessio, Coppelman, Hart, Szwed; Abstain: Bashaw; motion passes

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

MOTION: By Selectwoman Alessio, to approve the meeting minutes of November 13 and 15, 2023.

SECOND: by Selectman Hart

In favor: All

Audio/Visual

Technician Adam Faulconer said that the new unit need for the system has been received and he should be able to install it in time to resume live on-air broadcasting for the next meeting.

Mr. Faulconer also asked for guidance on muting out bad language on the meeting recordings; he said he is concerned about 1st Amendment rights but also that certain words are not allowed on the TV broadcast. It was agreed that he can mute the bad language, but also keep a copy of the original recording.

Mr. Faulconer then asked if he could purchase an inexpensive computer tablet to use for control of all the equipment. One of the tablets purchased for building inspectors that is not in use will be given to Mr. Faulconer for audio/visual purposes.

Warrant Articles 2024

The Board reviewed several draft articles, including one to increase the limits of the Elderly Tax Exemption. For this, the Administrative Assistant will research what nearby Towns offer.

There was a discussion of the warrant article requested by the Planning Board, to once again request that the Land Use Administrative Assistant be made full-time. The Board agreed this will be a Select Board article and they support it.

Chairman Bashaw said that it may be time to bring forward the subject of adding a Town Administrator, and that putting this on the warrant, even if it does not pass, would get the conversation started. Selectwoman Alessio agreed, saying it may take years to be approved but it's definitely time to bring it forward. She also said that this was attempted twice in the past and voted down. Chairman Bashaw said that Select Board members come in with varying degrees of knowledge or expertise, and having a full time professional engaged year-round in keeping on top of the budget and departmental activity would be very helpful. He said that in recent years with the large turnover of long-time personnel, this became very apparent, and some expensive mistakes may

have been caught. It was noted that a Town Administrator would also be on top of grant opportunities.

The needs of the Building, Assessing and Selectmen's offices were also discussed. Selectman Hart said it is a bad year to add more costly money articles and said an additional article to add a full-time Building Administrative Assistant has been suggested; having two new full-time positions plus possibly a town Administrator article on the same ballot could detract from the chances of any one of them passing. Other options for part-time help were discussed. The Administrative Assistant is continuing to receive help from one of the Town Clerk's employees to continue the record scanning project but can use additional clerical help. She said she has a person in mind, if even 5 hours per week could be found in the part time salaries line.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:37 AM

Respectfully submitted:

Susan H. Ayer, Administrative Assistant to the Select Board