

**Kingston, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting of December 4, 2023
FINAL MINUTES**

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

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

ABSENT: Vice Chair Chuck Hart

MOTION: by Selectman Coppelman, to adjourn public session and enter non-public session at 6:00 PM, per RSA 91-A:3, II (I) and (a) to discuss legal advice and personnel.

SECOND: by Selectwoman Alessio

All in favor via roll call vote

The Board returned to public session at 6:35 PM and voted to seal the non-public session minutes:

Motion made by Selectman Coppelman, seconded by Selectwoman Alessio, because it is determined that divulgence of this information likely would...

X Affect adversely the reputation of any person other than a member of this board.

__ Render a proposed action ineffective

__ Pertains to preparation or carrying out of actions regarding terrorism

Roll Call Vote to Seal Minutes:

Chris Bashaw	Y	Charles Hart	Absent
Laureen Szwed	Y	Glenn Coppelman	Y
Electra Alessio	Y		

Motion: PASSED

MOTION: by Selectman Bashaw, to increase the minimum paid hours for plow truck subcontractors, per piece of equipment on the road, from 10 hours to 15 hours per month, from December through March, starting in 2024.

SECOND: by Selectman Coppelman

All in favor:

APPOINTMENT:

Treasurer Appointment postponed until December 11

PUBLIC HEARING

The Chair opened a public hearing at 6:39 to discuss acceptance of a Highway Block Grant in the amount of \$48,160.67.

DPW Director Phil Coombs said that last year's block grant was \$143,000 including excess funds due to Covid-19. He said each year the Town receives a portion of this State grant, but as this is over and above the regular block grant funding, it needs to be voted on.

No members of the public wished to speak on the matter.

There were no further questions from the Board.

The Chair closed the Public Hearing at 6:43.

MOTION: by Selectman Coppelman, to accept the Highway Block Grant funds in the amount of \$48,160 from the State of New Hampshire.

SECOND: by Selectwoman Alessio

All in favor

PUBLIC COMMENT 1:

David Shaw, owner of land at 41 Dorre Road, said he is looking for approval to access his land in order to do a timber harvest. He said his property is 400 feet off of Hunt Road, and that the residents at 34 Hunt Road use the end of Dorre Road as part of their driveway and he would have to cross it to get to his lot.

Director Coombs said that a section of Dorre Road was discontinued, and when that happens, it reverts to the properties on either side. However, he said they cannot restrict access. He said the Town has no jurisdiction, but Mr. Shaw should approach the driveway owner, as he has a right to traverse it.

COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORTS

Wage Committee, Museum Committee and Heritage Commission are all meeting this week. Planning Board will hold a public hearing tomorrow night on the many land use articles being considered for the March ballot.

Selectwoman Szwed said that she had information from NHMA's legal team regarding committees, and the Social Services Committee can be considered an internal staff meeting, and does not need to act as a formal committee with postings and minutes.

Slides on transportation initiatives have been sent to the Board and will be presented on an agenda in January.

OLD BUSINESS

Capital Improvement Plan

The Board briefly reviewed the spreadsheet of projects anticipated over the next 6 years. Selectman Coppelman commented that there are a lot of peaks and valleys in the amounts of expenditures, and they should be spread out. He said that this year the CIP was done on a very compressed timeline, and there was no time for review by the Board as there usually is. He said these ups and downs would have been discussed if that review had taken place. The normal process for CIP was outlined, and it was noted that it was not done as it should be.

Chairman Bashaw said he would like to submit something in writing to the Planning Board to the effect that this should be done properly next year. He will write a draft and work with Selectman Coppelman on this.

Solar Option agreement

This is still being reviewed by Town Counsel, having just been received from Revision Energy after Thanksgiving.

NEW BUSINESS

Welfare Guidelines

Selectwoman Szwed has reviewed portions of this with Human Services Director Marissa Federico. She said there is no limit on rent assistance, which amounts to an unfunded mandate for the town. She said she will be following up on a few corrections.

Elderly/Disabled Tax Exemption guidelines

The Board reviewed a table prepared by the Administrative Assistant showing the income and asset limits as well as the amounts of exemption offered in Kingston as compared to area towns. The Chair noted that Kingston's numbers are very low and that they should be increased. Selectwoman Alessio will work with Selectman Coppelman and come up with a recommendation for changes to go to the Town warrant.

Complaint on condition of Town-owned property at 47 Newton Junction Road

The Administrative Assistant said the Town Clerk had received a complaint from the neighbor to this property, saying that it is run-down and also that there is an abandoned vehicle in the yard under a tree limb. She said the question is whether it needs to be cleaned up, or considered for sale, and what the options are. Chairman Bashaw said that there have been changes to the law so that it is no longer in the Town's interest to wait a certain number of years to sell a property; the municipality's ability to keep any excess funds is severely limited, and a considerable effort needs to be made to pay any excess funds to the person from whom the Town seized the property. There is a 90-day noticing requirement for the prior owner to have the opportunity to redeem the property. It was agreed to send out Health Officer Mike Dorman to evaluate the property.

Solid Waste and Recycling Committee

Selectwoman Szwed said that information was asked of NHMA about the status of this committee along with the Social Services group. She said there are two choices, to keep it as a formal committee with a Chair and follow all 91-A requirements or disband the committee and the volunteers will just work to support the collection center. She said they no longer have the volunteers that will step up to run the committee, so all that is really being done now is education and the collection center. She said the goal now is to move it under the auspices of Public Works.

Chairman Bashaw said it may need to be more formal again when the Solid Waste contract is renegotiated in the future. He said in order to dissolve the committee, because it was involved in a large component of the budget, he believes there should be a public hearing before the vote.

Selectman Coppelman said he would prefer it if the committee could go dormant rather than dissolving it. Selectwoman Szwed said that there are very few members left from the large group that started it. A public hearing will be held on this at the next meeting.

BOARD BUSINESS

Review proposed Warrant Articles

The Board was given a rough draft of the warrant in process.

PUBLIC COMMENT 2:

Andrew Berridge, 4 Chase Street, spoke about the Elderly exemption, saying he had come to the Town Hall to look into it, and he had noticed that the income requirements were last adjusted in 2008. He said he had done a little homework on his own and found

that the Consumer Price index states that it takes an individual \$56,000 to live in Kingston and get by. He said that you couldn't live in Kingston if you made \$2 over the income limits for the elderly exemption, taxes would be taking about 30%. Mr. Berridge said that his wife is disabled and the numbers for that are not much better. He added that over 70 one or two trips to the hospital are not unexpected, and (there is not enough money to pay for everything).

Mr. Berridge said if the Board does not place a warrant article, he would consider a citizens' petition for this, but that it would be better coming from the Board. It was affirmed that both Elderly and Disabled exemptions are being reviewed.

Stacy Dion, Budget Committee, asked for a copy of the CIP paperwork so that they will have it for the December 13 meeting. She was given a paper copy. Selectman Coppelman said that the CIP is just a tool to give the town an idea about expenditures planned for the future.

Ms. Dion said there will be a Kingston Days meeting on Thursday at 6:30. She said they are looking for Steering Committee members. She said a few people have reached out. Selectman Coppelman asked at what point a decision needs to be made whether or not to hold the event. Selectwoman Szwed and Ms. Dion said that there are a few things that need to be decided sooner or later, such as a reservation and deposit on the carnival and tents. January or February were mentioned as deadlines. It was also pointed out that corporate sponsors need to be approached early before their budget for donations is all earmarked for the year.

Rick Russman, Solar Committee Chair, came forward to say he appreciated the new LED lights in the Town Hall.

CORRESPONDENCE, APPLICATIONS, PURCHASE ORDERS:

One Veterans Credit was approved.

Three abatement applications with recommendations from the Assessor were read and voted on:

1. 1 Seventh Street, had severe damage from a fire but the assessment had not been adjusted accordingly; the abatement requested is \$3,839.27. This was approved on a **Motion** by Selectwoman Alessio, **Seconded** by Selectwoman Szwed, approved by **all**.
2. 28 Webster Grove Road also had a fire and the abatement requested is \$2,767.81. This was approved on a **Motion** by Selectman Coppelman, **Seconded** by Selectwoman Szwed, approved by **all**.
3. 64 North Road was incorrectly assessed as having an extra feature which does not exist; it was identified as a "pump" and assessed at \$462,000. This abatement requested is \$7,290.36. This was approved on a **Motion** by Selectwoman Szwed, **Seconded** by Selectwoman Alessio, approved by **all**.

There were three requests for DPW employees to retain unused vacation time into the new year. Chairman Bashaw said he had not been aware vacation time was not carried over. There was a brief discussion of the pros and cons of being able to save vacation time from year to year, and whether there should be limits.

The three requests were voted on individually:

1. 32 hours to be retained by "T.R." was approved on a **Motion** by Selectwoman Alessio, **Seconded** by Selectwoman Szwed, approved by **all**.
2. 22.5 hours to be retained by "J.C." was approved on a **Motion** by Selectwoman Alessio, **Seconded** by Selectman Coppelman, approved by **all**.
4. 16 hours to be retained by "L.P." was approved on a **Motion** by Selectwoman Szwed, **Seconded** by Selectwoman Alessio, approved by **all**.

A disbursement under the Lakes Association grant was approved for payment.

Several purchase orders were reviewed for payment.

Notice has been received that Benson's restaurant is applying for a liquor license.

This will be shared with the Planning Board.

A new postage meter was approved for purchase with a monthly lease.

Property Cards availability

The Administrative Assistant provided an example of property cards from the in-house assessing software (Avitar) as well as from the new CAI-GIS system which is on the Town's website. She said that this matter came up as a local realtor and others had been complaining they can no longer find the full Avitar property cards on the website. She said this is because it is a lot of work for the Town's assessing clerk to maintain them there, so once CAI-GIS went online they were discontinued; the other option is to pay Avitar \$2,760 per year to make the full property cards available on their public-facing site, the "kiosk". She said the town is on the kiosk, but only with basic information, which doesn't cost the Town anything. If a person wants to go in and access the full information, they would have to pay for their own subscription, which is \$150 per town. Ms. Ayer said that at the time this came up, it was decided that the CAI property card plus having all the property files online was sufficient and it wasn't necessary to pay the extra \$2,760 out of the budget.

Chairman Bashaw said that often people, including himself, like to see all the details on the full property card, and questioned how many times will they be coming in to the Town Hall to demand a printout, causing a lot of work for the assessing office. It was noted that if a property owner comes in the staff will print their own cards for free, but others pay \$1.00 per page. The differences in the types of property cards were looked at.

After some further discussion of what is and is not available, it was decided that it is worth paying the extra \$2,760 to offer the information to the public more easily and save time in the assessing and permitting office. This will be added to the budget.

Town Administrator discussion

Information gathered by Selectman Coppelmen regarding pay for Town Administrators in other towns, along with a job description from Henniker, were reviewed. Chairman Bashaw said he had talked with some local T. A.s as well. Differences between Town Administrators and Town Managers, and the differences in their duties from town to town were discussed. He said an organizational chart for the town is needed. He said if a warrant article is proposed it would be a long process as this is a major department head. He also said that while he is not proposing this and expecting it to fail, this will be a tough year to expect the residents

to support large expenditures. He also said that he doesn't want to force this on the other board members as he will not be continuing on the board next year. Chairman Bashaw said that the discussion needs to be continued, and there is also another non-public discussion to be had about employee concerns. Selectwoman Szwed said that March is not that far away, and that more structure needs to be in place before such a large and potentially disruptive transition occurs. Selectman Coppelman said that having better structure and planning in place will also make it easier to answer questions of the voters when it does go on the warrant. Selectwoman Alessio said that this would be a major change and she would be concerned about putting it forward this March. She said the same issues that made the Wage Study for town hall so difficult will be in play here. Selectwoman Szwed agreed, saying a plan should be developed. Selectman Coppelman said that while he believes the Town is way overdue to have this structure added, it does need planning.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

MOTION: By Selectwoman Alessio, to approve the meeting minutes of November 27, 2023, public and non-public, as submitted.

SECOND: by Selectman Coppelman

All in favor

MOTION: by Selectman Coppelman, to adjourn public session and enter non-public session at 8:00 PM, per RSA 91-A:3, II (a) to discuss personnel.

SECOND: by Selectwoman Alessio

All in favor via roll call vote

(out of non-public @ ?/ Meeting Adjourned at ____ PM)

Respectfully submitted:

Susan H. Ayer, Administrative Assistant to the Select Board