

**Kingston, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting of February 26, 2024
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

COMMITTEES AND BOARDS: Information and Discussion

Kingston Days Committee:

Stacy Dion, Chair of the 2023 Committee, said that another meeting of the committee was held to see if new members might sign up to serve on the 2024 Steering Committee. She said that only four people showed up, so there will not be a Kingston Days event this year, and she is in the process of notifying the vendors and then will post it on Facebook.

DEPARTMENTS: Information and Discussion

Fire Department - Chief Graham Pellerin:

Chief Pellerin made some comments about a structure fire on Scotland Road on February 21; he said they lost the house but also saved a life, as a firefighter had a health emergency and needed to be attended to and transported. He thanked the Police and DPW for their assistance, and also thanked the Fire Auxiliary for donating food, the Select Board for their support, and residents who cooperated and helped where they could during the emergency. He also cited Rockingham County dispatch for going above and beyond. In response to a question about how people can help the displaced family, Chief Pellerin said that the family has asked that any donations be sent to the Red Cross, the SPCA (as there were animals involved), or toward any fund created to help the injured firefighter.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector Tammy Bakie

Ms. Bakie said that her office has registered 618 dogs so far; there are 1,749 dogs still to go before the April 30 deadline. She said the Fire Department's Rabies Clinic will take place on April 6 from 9 am to noon.

She said that she and Deputy Clerk Caitlin Milhomme have attended training at the Secretary of State's office for the new Election Net software that is used for tracking election and voter information, and also that she attended a breakfast with legislators and has found someone to sponsor two bills.

In the Tax Collection department, delinquency notices were mailed on February 1, and her office is preparing for the lien and deeding process. They are also preparing for the upcoming election.

Human Services - Marissa Federico, Director

Director Federico said that Human Services has been fairly quiet so she is catching up on administrative work. She said she is also helping in the Finance office while the

Finance Director is on vacation, processing payroll and some invoices, and working with the auditor to get some information they need.

Library - Director Melissa Mannon

Director Mannon reported that the library foundation has been started, has received its 501 (c) 3 status, and once it is registered with the state, they can open a bank account. It will work primarily on capital projects long term. She said there are five residents on the board, and they are very active.

She said she has been working with Selectwoman Szwed on Transportation forums; the first was on February 22 and the second will be on February 27; the goal is to figure out if volunteer transportation is feasible for the area, and to see what other opportunities are available to Kingston.

Ms. Mannon said there is a new online library catalogue, that encompasses all library materials in one place. She said it is also a communication tool as there is a place to put news; she said this is available to other Town departments to share information.

The Director also said that the library has joined the Exeter Chamber of Commerce and will be hosting their morning mixer on April 2; all local businesses are invited to attend. On March 16 (snow date March 23) the seed library will be opening. Director Mannon thanked Pollinator Pathways for sponsoring this program at the library.

Recreation - Director Paul Butler

Director Butler thanked Chairman Bashaw for his service to the Town, noting that this will be his last Department Head meeting as Select Board member. He also thanked the Clerk's office once again for helping to collect and document Recreation fees. He said the summer camp is full, with a waiting list. He also handed out a calendar of upcoming events, including the Adult Easter egg hunt.

Department of Public Works, Director Phil Coombs

Director Coombs said that the Main Street bridge project is not dead after all; he met with FEMA and some modifications can be made to the calculations used for eligibility. The engineering firm engaged by the Town is working on updates to the plan and pricing, and the FEMA paperwork. To be eligible for this, the Hazard Mitigation Plan needs to be updated; the Board signed an agreement in February to pursue a grant to pay the cost of updating it. He said a PO for the cost of \$9,000 is in front of the board for approval tonight. He said that at a minimum, the federal government will pay 75%, and the Fire Chief is looking into whether the full amount may be paid through the State Emergency Management agency, but the Town needs to pay it up front.

Mr. Coombs said that logging has begun at the site of the Unitil solar project, and he will be notifying residents about the timeline of the project. He said that the new intersection is currently for construction only, but afterwards it will be paved as new primary access to Towle Road off of Mill Road. He said this needed to be done anyway, so it's a good deal for the Town that it is paid for by someone else.

He then noted that since the airing of Candidates Night, there have been many complaints about sound issues. He pointed out that the mics should be left on the table. He also said that someone else may want to look at the contract, but it seems to him that the company provided everything they said they would.

Mr. Coombs said that he has an agreement with the Town to graze cattle at the closed landfill and is working on a grazing plan through the Natural Resources Conservation system. He said that they want the Town as landowner to be aware of the grazing plan, and he would like a signature from the Board.

Finally, Mr. Coombs asked if anyone had any issues with the new iWorqs maintenance request software. Selectwoman Szwed said she will be working with the DPW Administrative Assistant on a policy for this; it was noted that all requests should be submitted through the portal, but emergencies should also be called in to be sure they are dealt with in a timely manner.

Selectman Coppelman asked for an update on the Grace Daly barn project; Director Coombs said that the tree will be taken down this week, and then they will start lifting the building.

Selectwoman Szwed commented on the sound system and how much the sound cut out during the Candidates Night. She said some is user error, but this shouldn't happen, and there is no indication there is a problem until you watch the video. There was a discussion of how to address the problems.

Police Department: Chief Joel Johnson

Chief Johnson said that one of his officers resigned, but after placing an ad for a certified officer, it only took four days to find a good candidate; he has made a conditional offer. He attributed this to offering competitive wages.

Building Inspection and Code Enforcement: BI/CEO Pedro Avila

Mr. Avila said that the building department has been busy with a steady flow of permits, some commercial that involve interaction with the Fire Department and DPW. Chair Bashaw noted that the Board appreciates Mr. Avila's weekly written reports.

BOARD COMMENTS:

Volunteer Forms

Selectwoman Szwed said she had spoken with the Finance Director and it was determined that any volunteer for the Town that is not an elected or appointed official needs to sign a volunteer form each year that will be signed by the Select Board.

Use of other than official Town post office boxes

Selectwoman Szwed said the question has come up on the use of separate PO boxes or mail receptacles by the departments. She said the concern is making sure mail goes to the proper department head, and for this reason each department who uses a separate receptacle is asked to identify what type of mail is received there.

Public discussion prior to paving decisions

Selectwoman Alessio said she had wanted this brought up, as there is some concern about the chip paving after it was done on Jericho Drive last year. There was a lengthy discussion of the cost of different methods of paving, and how most effectively to inform residents.

PRESENTATION: Permitting software

Building Inspector Pedro Avila facilitated an online meeting with representatives from Cloud Permit. The meeting room's projector and screen were used to share the presentation about the capabilities of their permitting software; there was also the opportunity to ask questions.

APPOINTMENTS:

DPW Director Phil Coombs: Town Hall renovations

Director Coombs went through the list of Town Hall upgrades, with the aid of a Power Point presentation, that have been brought up in reference to American Recovery Plan Act funding expenditures.

- Front steps: Design of replacement steps, \$6585; Construction of replacement stairs similar to current design, \$20,000 - \$40,000. The option of removing the current steps and replacing them with 8.5' wide precast stairs was presented; this would cost \$6585 and involve DPW demo to the wall, placement of helical poles and a poured pad. Landscaping would be added to both sides, and possibly a handicapped ramp on one side. This would total \$15,000 without the landscaping.
- Oil tank: The current 2,000-gallon tank is of unknown age and Irving will not fill it anymore without documentation of a leak test. Also, it is buried so low that there are problems with cold oil. Mr. Coombs said this should not continue to be used. Options of replacing it with smaller tanks or mini-split units were discussed.
- Insulation in the stairways and stage: Mr. Coombs said that the heat differential at the back of the building is obvious and needs to be addressed before any other energy efficiency measures are implemented. He said an energy audit is needed, and closing off the cupola would be helpful.
- HVAC: This is a 19-year-old system with many issues; Mr. Coombs said that he met with 3 contractors and was told the duct work is very bad to begin with and is not set up for the current office configuration. A complete rebuild of the system was estimated at \$160,000 - \$220,000. Another option is to put in a ductless electric system, at a cost of \$45,000- \$85,000, and to leave the current system in place as backup.
Mr. Coombs pointed out that currently, air conditioning in the meeting room is very loud, and said that there are some remedies to this such as extending the duct, replacing dampers, and adding a canvas collar.
- Electrical: Showing a picture of a "rats nest" of wiring in the office ceiling, Mr. Coombs said in addition to that problem, the panels are not to code and the system will not support a generator. The estimated cost of replacing the panels and isolating and restraining the wiring was given as \$47,000.
- Server System: As a remedy to the overheating issues in the server room, Mr. Coombs suggested new venting and possibly adding a new door into the Select Board Administrator's office, for more secure venting than by opening the hall door.
- Clerk's Office: A new service window is proposed, to be next to the other two windows. This will replace the "stop-gap" solution of putting a window in the hall door. This work will necessitate moving staff during construction, and ideally would be done at the same time as the other work.

- Fascia Work: The fascia at the top of the exterior of the Town Hall was repaired with improper materials and needs to be taken off and reflashed. This will be done under the Capital Improvements line, and the Director will be talking to contractors for guidance on best practices.

There was a discussion of the issues and how to prioritize them. It was agreed that the matters should be addressed in the following order:

1. Front stairs replacement with precast stairs over a concrete pad.
2. Remove or discontinue oil tank and replace with 2 smaller tanks in furnace rooms and mini-split units.
3. Replace electrical panels and secure wiring.

PUBLIC COMMENT 1: None heard

OLD BUSINESS

POET Project Request for Proposals: review draft:

The Board reviewed information on six questions from Verdantas, the Town's consultant preparing the RFP, that require Town input. The questions had to do with optional requirements for contractor proposals. Preferences were agreed upon and will be relayed to Verdantas.

Fairgrounds Group update and information:

Guidance has been received from NH Municipal legal assistance on the topic of small Board-appointed committees or work groups with reference to whether they need to comply with RSA 91-A Right to Know rules. The reply made it clear that since the Fairgrounds study group was opened to members of the public, it needs to meet the requirements of 91-A, meaning meetings need to be noticed and open to the public, and minutes need to be kept. There was a discussion of this, and that the requirements will not be too onerous to meet, but this group and also the Transportation Study group and Wage Study group will need to become more formal. It was commented that it is good that this misunderstanding was cleared up. How to handle non-public content during the Wage Study group meetings was discussed.

NEW BUSINESS

Tax abatements: review recommendations of Assessor:

The Chairman read the full letter of recommendation from the Town's previous assessor, KRT, for five 2023 abatement requests. These were:

1. 37 Great Pond Road: Motion by Bashaw, Second by Alessio, to deny the request based on the assessor's recommendation, unless a certified plot plan is provided to show the actual size of the parcel. All in favor.
2. 8 Lantern Lane: Motion by Alessio, Second by Coppelman, to deny the request based on the assessor's recommendation; All in favor.
3. 81 Little River Road: Motion by Coppelman, Second by Alessio, to deny the request based on the assessor's recommendation; All in favor.
4. 8 Mockingbird Lane: Motion by Bashaw, Second by Szwed, to deny the request based on the assessor's recommendation; All in favor.
5. 5 Rockrimmon Road: There was a discussion of this request, which was based on the well water being contaminated. It was taken into consideration that the

Town is in the process of providing filtration systems that will affect this property. Motion by Bashaw, Second by Coppelman, to deny the request based on this discussion; All in favor.

Boston Post Cane

A question has been received by the Human Services Director about whether the Town still issues this cane to the oldest resident. Information provided by the Administrative Assistant showed the Town's cane had been lost and replaced by a replica. The most recent recipient was Rita Jones in 2009, who was issued a certificate rather than the cane itself, which is kept in the Town Hall. It was decided that this tradition should be resumed; the admin will come back to the Board with proposed procedures and guidelines.

Historic Barn Easement: 108 Exeter Road, renewal

Selectman Coppelman recused himself from this matter as it is his barn. Chairman Bashaw read an email from the Town's assessor which explained the previous assessment vs. the current assessment for the barn, and the range of assessment reduction possible. For the past 10 years the barn has had a full assessed value of \$33,536 and was given a 50% exemption under the preservation easement program, reducing the taxable value to \$16,768. The current assessed value of the barn is \$54,873. If the board leaves the exemption percentage at 50%, the barn would be assessed for the next ten years at \$27,436.

Selectman Coppelman presented information on the barn, saying that it was built in 1900 and has been used for all kinds of farming and agriculture over the years, and is currently used for his Christmas tree farm. He said it is a prominent feature along Route 111. He said that over the 39 years he has owned the property he has put roughly \$70,000- \$80,000 into upgrades and repair. He said he has always thought it was of public benefit, it is an example of a traditional Yankee barn and is in the agricultural zone. He said it has been under a preservation easement for 20 years. He said he sees that the Assessor is suggesting the amount of exemption could be increased to 75% and said that he always felt it was worth that, but it's been at 50% since the beginning.

Ernie Landry, Chair of the Heritage Commission, came forward to comment, saying that the last barn easement applications were in 2021, when several were received. He said that the feeling of the board members at the time was that the decision-making process was not objective; the Heritage Commission then worked on criteria and a flow chart for the process. He said that part of the process is a public hearing. In discussion it was questioned if a public hearing is needed for a renewal, and Mr. Landry said that it is, unless the easement includes language that it will be automatically renewed.

There was a discussion of the criteria and how to determine the percentage. The prior work done to outline the process will be brought to the board and further research will be done; if needed a public hearing will be set later in March. It was noted that while applications need to be received by April 15, the town has 60 days from receipt of the application to decide on it.

PUBLIC COMMENT 2: None heard

BOARD BUSINESS

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

MOTION: By Selectman Coppelman, to approve the meeting minutes of February 12, 2024, as written.

SECOND: by Selectwoman Szwed

In favor: All

Applications, Correspondence

- A facilities use application has been received from the Fire Association to hold their annual Brewfest on the Plains on June 29, 2024. On a Motion by Chairman Bashaw, Second by Selectman Hart, the event was approved pending the Fire Chief's signing the document.
- A facilities use application was received from the North Shore Swing Dance club to hold their Spring formal at the Town Hall. Included in the request was to have food and a cash bar. After some discussion of the limitations of the meeting room, it was decided, on a Motion by Selectman Hart, Second by Selectwoman Szwed, to approve the request but without permission for alcohol service, and let the applicant know what would be needed to include alcohol, as there are no sinks or potable water available.
- A Facilities use application was received from the Congregational Church, to hold their annual Easter sunrise service on the Plains, and utilize the bandstand. This was approved on a Motion by Selectman Coppelman, Second by Selectman Hart.
- A purchase order for an addendum to the DPW's iWorqs software contract was approved in the amount of \$750, on a Motion by Selectman Bashaw, Second by Selectwoman Szwed. This will be paid through ARPA funds, as was the original contract.
- The grazing plan for cattle to graze on the closed landfill was signed.
- The purchase order for \$9,000 for up-front grant costs related to the Hazard Mitigation Plan was tabled until it is determined where the money will be appropriated from in the budget.

(Chairman Bashaw left the meeting at 12:50 PM)

MOTION: by Selectwoman Hart, to adjourn public session and enter non-public session at 12:52 PM, per RSA 91-A:3, II, (a) to discuss personnel.

SECOND: by Selectman Coppelman

All in favor via roll call vote

The Board returned to public session at 1:20 PM and voted to seal the non-public session minutes:

Motion made by Selectman Coppelman, seconded by Selectwoman Szwed, 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	Absent	Charles Hart	Y
Laureen Szwed	Y	Glenn Coppelman	Y
Electra Alessio	Y		

Motion: PASSED

Meeting Adjourned at 1:20 PM

Respectfully submitted:

Susan H. Ayer, Administrative Assistant to the Select Board