

**Kingston, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting of August 29, 2016
MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm in the Selectmen's Office of the Kingston Town Hall. In attendance were Chairman Mark Heitz and Selectmen Peter Broderick and George Korn.

Heritage Commission Discussion

Debra Powers and Ernie Landry of the Heritage Commission were present to update the Board on Commission projects.

It has been decided that the Commission will put off applying for a Department of Transportation grant program that would financially assist the town in reconfiguring the Plains and Main Street area. The application will require substantial planning and engineering in order to be competitive with the many other towns that are applying and are much further ahead in the process. The next round of applications will be received in two years and the Commission will consider an application for that round. Chairman Heitz advised that, before investing too much time or expense into the process, the Commission needs to get a sense from voters as to whether they would be willing to make the proposed changes, i.e. a new traffic pattern around the Plains among other changes, and whether they're willing to pay the 20% expense that the grant program requires. He suggested a Warrant Article that will ascertain whether, at least in theory, voters are interested in pursuing the changes that the Commission is proposing.

Ms. Powers advised that there also is a grant program for the installation of signs at entryways into the town. The Commission proposes that "Welcome to Historic Kingston" signs at various points of entry be purchased and installed as recommended under the Envision II project held this summer. The first step in this process will be to determine a design and the best locations, and to get the necessary permissions from the state to place the signs in DOT rights of way. The one question that the commission has is whether the matching portion of the grant will come from their budget. The Board advised that a line should be included in the Commission's 2017 budget proposal.

Ms. Powers then asked if bids had been obtained for the work to be done on the Nichols Building roof, because they and the Museum Committee are concerned that the Mooseplate grant that's been awarded for the project will expire. Road Agent Richard St. Hilaire advised that the project may cost more than originally anticipated, but that it will be done before the grant expires.

Conservation Commission Discussion

Conservation Commission Chair Evelyn Nathan was present to discuss with the Board two of the town's conservation properties at which illegal dumping, illegal ATV use, and general trespass issues are ongoing. One of the properties is the Frye Road town forest. Road Agent Rich St. Hilaire will be installing a gate at the entry to that area to discourage ATV use. He isn't able, however, to address the issues on adjoining private properties. With owner permission, the town will be placing some boulders at common entryways to those private properties to stop at least the dumping issues. Ms. Nathan advised that there has been improvement in the situation at Valley Lane town forest where that course of action was taken.

The second property that has become a concern is the Acorn Drive parcel. Signs and barriers that were erected by the commission all have been stolen. Surveillance cameras have caught some of the illegal activities and the Police Department is pursuing action on those, but the ATV use is continuing and causing substantial damage to the terrain. It was agreed that Chief Briggs will schedule officers for the coming weekend to surveil and enforce the restrictions on the property, and that the additional overtime costs will be paid from the Outside Duty fund. Chief Briggs explained that state funding that was at one time available for off-road enforcement issues is no longer available and that he doesn't typically allow for the additional shifts in his budget. Chairman Heitz advised, and the other Selectmen agreed, that due to the added expense of running the patrols, there will be no warnings to violators; vehicles will be towed and fines will be levied.

Ms. Nathan advised that those parcels under conservation easement to the Southeast Land Trust must be monitored and restrictions must be enforced or the town is subject to suit under the easement agreements signed by the Board. She stated that she was advised of this fact by SELT. Some discussion was held as to what benefit the town derives from granting easements to SELT if they remain responsible for enforcement issues. Mr. Landry advised that he will discuss the issue with the personnel at SELT and report back. Chief Briggs suggested that funds will need to be dedicated for equipment, personnel and signage if an enforcement program is to be instituted. He noted that the more property acquired by the town, the greater the problem becomes. Ms. Nathan reported that - on the positive side - many of the town's conserved properties have been improved by the commission, boy scouts, school groups and other civic groups and are now in pristine condition and the public is becoming increasingly aware of the benefits of preserving and protecting properties for future generations.

Ms. Nathan then reported that a property owner adjacent to the Valley Lane town forest has posted No Trespassing signs along the side of Dorre Road. She requested authority to contact the owner and ask for the signs to be posted in front of his own property rather than the town's. It was agreed that Chief Briggs will contact the property owner directly.

Private Well Issues Discussed

A resident of Half Moon Lane was present to report that her well has run dry and asked if the town can provide any assistance. Road Agent Richard St. Hilaire advised that water can be collected from any of the town buildings for private use, but the town doesn't have a public water system and doesn't become involved in issues with private wells. The state has some grant and assistance programs for elderly residents; it was suggested that the resident discuss options with the Human Services office to see what state assistance programs may be available.

Conservation Commission Chair Evelyn Nathan asked if the town intends to impose a ban on water use to protect the town's aquifer. Chairman Heitz advised that the present drought will only affect shallow, point driven wells. It wouldn't be appropriate for the town to try to restrict use of water by those who've incurred the expense of drilling a deep well, particularly since the drought is affecting primarily the ground water and not necessarily the aquifer. A listing of towns in the state that have imposed water bans primarily includes towns that have public water systems. Selectman Broderick suggested that the drought has been well publicized and that homeowners likely will adopt conservation measures of their own volition.

Tax Abatement Request Discussed

Kathy Burns, a reverse mortgage banker was present, along with a personal acquaintance of a property owner, to request on behalf of the homeowner a partial forgiveness of past due taxes owed. An earlier written request was denied by the Board. Particulars of the individual's

financial situation were discussed and Ms. Burns explained that a partial abatement of the total owed - which would largely comprise interest and fees rather than the original tax amount - would allow the homeowner to qualify for a reverse mortgage. Under that type of mortgage, the remaining tax debt and existing mortgage would be paid off, and there would be provision for future payment of taxes as well.

Selectmen pointed out that the homeowner in question already receives the maximum allowable elderly exemption. They suggested that if the property is mortgaged and if the tax burden is too high for the owner to bear, it might be advisable for him to consider alternative, affordable living arrangements while he still has equity in his property. Selectman Broderick noted that he likely would be eligible for subsidized housing at a local elderly housing community. That solution would leave him with some resources for future expenses.

The request for abatement was denied.

Recreation Department Updates

Recreation Director Paul Butler provided to the Board an update of the 2016 Summer Camp program, noting that revenues increased by \$10,000.00 over 2015, with an increase in expense of only \$1,238.00, due mainly to an additional counselor. He discussed his hope that counselor salaries can be increased so that trained, proven counselors will continue to return to the program. He also discussed certain line items that have been added to his 2017 budget proposal, to cover additional programming, purchase of a computer and an increase in the line for senior events. The department's capital improvements plan proposal was reviewed; Mr. Butler hopes eventually to install new flooring.

For next year's summer program, Mr. Butler would like to hold a preliminary sign-up period for Kingston residents only, to ensure that town residents have the opportunity to sign up prior to opening the program to out-of-town campers. He also believes that the program should not expand beyond the 65 to 70 average that attended this year. He may suggest an increased initial registration fee to discourage applications for children who don't actually attend.

Discussion of future use of the recreation site included suggestion that busses be used to transport campers to field facilities rather than creating a sports field; that some type of grassy field area be developed for outside play activities; and that a hot top area adjacent to the basketball hoop be created (also providing a handicap entry point). Mr. Butler noted that the Senior Luncheon program apparently is going to continue at the Congregational Church and will not be moving to the recreation building.

Chairman Heitz noted that purchase of the nearly 4-acre site on which the recreation building sits originally was approved with the proviso that a new fire station eventually would share the site. The site continues to be within the optimum area for a new fire station, so it's not advisable to invest in development of the entire site for recreation purposes. Selectman Korn advised that the Fire Department has established a building committee and that the site has not been abandoned as a potential location for the new station.

Administrative Issues

The Board signed appointment papers for new Historical Museum Committee members.

The Board acknowledged receipt of the resignation of Jason Sullivan from his position as Supervisor of the Checklist.

The Board reviewed a court order relating to an ongoing land use violation case.

The Board reviewed Capital Improvement Plan submittals of the School District and for the Museum Committee and Land Acquisition program (FOKOS).

Applications for the School District to hold September cross country events starting on the Plains were approved.

An application for a Veterans Credit was approved.

Review of Previous Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Upon motion of Selectman Broderick and second of Selectman Korn it was voted to accept the minutes of the August 8, 2016 meeting as printed. Chairman Heitz abstained from the vote.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 9:38 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

**Catherine Grant
Administrative Assistant**