

**MINUTES OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING
TOWN OF GORHAM
MONDAY, AUGUST 1, 2011, 6:30 PM
GORHAM TOWN HALL**

Selectmen Present: Terry Oliver, Chairman; David Graham; Paul Robitaille.

Also Present: Police Chief P.J. Cyr, State Representative Bill Hatch, Mike Guay, Jay Holmes, Don Provencher, Russell Smith

1. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:30 by Chairman Oliver.

2. Appointments:

a. Mike Guay, RE: Dog Ordinance:

Mr. Guay requested to speak with the Board about his concerns regarding the Gorham dog ordinance. This ordinance does not allow dogs on the Town Common or in the Libby's Pool area, except for service dogs. Mr. Guay stated that he travels regularly throughout New England and has encountered policies that are more pet friendly in towns such as Burlington and Bar Harbor. He mentioned that, in Burlington, business owners put bowls of water outside their businesses and welcome pets. He feels we are behind on this and that this policy may be discouraging some tourists from visiting the area and staying here. He pointed out the importance of the tourist trade to the Town and feels that the area would be more appealing to tourists and visitors if this policy was not in place. He suggested that the Town consider installing fixtures for "doggie bags" on the common. These would be similar to those along the multi modal route. He asked the Board to consider revisiting this issue and appreciated the opportunity to bring the matter before the board. Chairman Oliver thanked Mr. Guay and noted that it is always helpful to revisit such matters and the Board would consider this request. A general discussion ensued. Selectman Robitaille mentioned that some people are allergic to or scared of dogs. Chief Cyr was asked if anyone had been fined under the ordinance. He responded that he believed that this was handled through warnings which had always been sufficient. Don Provencher mentioned that in Montpelier, Vermont a walkway for dogs has been constructed next to the train tracks. Selectman Graham mentioned the issue of dogs without leashes. He suggested that this also be looked at when the matter is revisited. On behalf of the Board, Chairman Oliver thanked Mr. Guay for bringing this matter before the Board.

b. State Representative Bill Hatch:

Selectman Robitaille introduced Representative Hatch, who he had spoken with earlier. He was not on the published agenda but was added at his request to address the Board and share information. Chairman Oliver welcomed Representative Hatch.

Representative Hatch told the Board that he has been invited as one of ten leaders from New Hampshire to meet with President Obama at the White House. This meeting will also involve the President's Department Staff. This is an opportunity to voice any concerns about issues facing the region. Representative Hatch stated that he wanted to let the Board know this and also obtain the Board's input prior to the meeting, which will take place later this month.

Representative Hatch stated that one issue he planned to address was the importance of Community Action Programs to the region. These programs throughout the country have been faced with possible cuts. Given the importance of these programs to this area, Representative Hatch feels that cuts could be devastating to the area. He mentioned that our local CAP agency, Tri County CAP, is responsible for over 66 different programs. TCCAP has been the agency people turned to for help after the mills shut down and the economy began to fail. He stated that these programs have been critical to people to help them cope with these issues. He stated that there would be nobody left to help if TCCAP was not there. He asked if the Board would provide a letter of support for this. The Board acknowledged the importance of these programs and agreed to provide a letter of support. Representative Hatch asked the Board for their input on any other issues he might bring up in his discussions. Selectman Robitaille mentioned the problems of rural poverty and the lack of understanding of the complex issues involved. He stated that studies from the Carsey Institute at UNH support these concerns. Representative Hatch agreed that this was an ongoing concern. Selectman Graham stated that the issue of rail service was extremely important to the area since economic development often follows increased rail service. He asked Representative Hatch to put this on his list of issues for the area. Representative Hatch described himself as a recent convert to passenger rail. He mentioned that he has taken the train to Washington, DC the last two times he traveled there and found it to be a very positive experience. He also acknowledged the importance of economic development for the region. He thanked the Board for its support.

Selectman Robitaille asked if he could mention a non related issue. Chairman Oliver agreed, and he asked Representative Hatch about a possible legislative bill to allow us to place the Town Forest in current use. Presently, we are not allowed to do this because it is in a watershed. Representative Hatch stated that he had this on his list for the next session and would do what he can to see the matter is addressed. Don Provencher brought up the issue of the condition of Main Street. The state has delayed its very needed repairs. Don has spoken with Councillor Ray Burton who was supportive. He asked Representative Hatch to do anything he could to help get the state to address this issue. The Board thanked Representative Hatch for sharing his information with us and wished him luck in Washington, DC.

3. New Business:

a. NH-Maine Rail Rally:

Selectman Graham had requested that this item be placed on the agenda to publicize the upcoming rally to be held in Bethel, Maine on September 14th. He stated that Don Provencher has been attending meetings of the rail coalition on our behalf and has done a great job on this issue. He asked Mr. Provencher, who was present, to update the Board on new developments. Mr. Provencher stated that he will be attending a meeting of the coalition in Maine on August 3rd. This is the final planning meeting. He mentioned that Tony Donovan of the coalition has obtained a \$ 5,000 grant from the Tillotson Fund to help the coalition with this rally. They hope to have a large group, including elected officials from both states. The main speaker has not been finalized. Many prominent names have been mentioned for this. He hopes that we will get a good turnout and encouraged the Board and others to attend. The rally will be held at The Bethel Inn. There is a cost of \$ 25 per person, which includes a meal. Flyers were available with more specifics. On behalf of the Board, Chairman Oliver thanked Mr. Provencher for his work on this matter.

4. Old Business:

a) Noise Ordinance Update:

Gorham Police Chief P.J. Cyr was present. He provided a written report, including statistics on different types of noise. He stated that he feels that the new noise ordinance has brought about more awareness on this issue since being implemented in May, 2011. Chief Cyr addressed two items in particular. The first is an ongoing problem regarding barking dogs in the Alpine/Jewell/Howland Street area. This had been an issue prior to the ordinance and remains one. Chief Cyr has sent letters to approximately 40 residents of the area to help them understand the town ordinances regarding barking dogs. He also included information for the residents regarding tips to help curb excessive barking.

The second issue is the use of “jake brakes” in the Route 2 area. This has led to a number of complaints. Proper signage should help considerably. These are apparently in process and the town hopes these will be up soon. However, in the meantime, Chief Cyr has sent letters to approximately 33 trucking companies to inform them of the changes. Given the lack of signage, officers are presently issuing warnings and this has been effective. Chief Cyr also mentioned his previous suggestion for administrative processing of violations. This was discussed with the Board previously and was endorsed. Before this can take effect this must go before the Town Meeting next March and be approved. Chief Cyr has discussed this with the Town Manager and it is on the list of things to be addressed for the 2012 Town Meeting. He stated that has suggestions on how various ordinances can be made more efficient and will pass these suggestions on to the Town Manager. Chief Cyr also reported on another noise issue, an ongoing problem regarding the public address system at Berlin City and its use, in terms of volume and time. This has been reported by people in the neighborhood. Chief Cyr made a personal visit and heard and experienced the problem first hand. He himself has heard the intercom when he was far away. He has contacted Berlin City and they have agreed to try to work with him to correct this problem. Selectman Robitaille stated that in this era of electronic equipment, cell phones, etc., they should be able to find some way to address this. Chief Cyr will keep the Board informed of his efforts and progress in this matter. Regarding the noise ordinance issues, all agreed that signage is very important and should be done as soon as possible.

On other matters, the Chief reported that he had 16 applicants for the position of patrolman. Applications are now closed. On August 20 applicants will have a written test and agility test. On August 27 they will have an oral review. He hopes to be able to make a conditional offer of employment by September 3 followed by a background investigation.

Regarding the shooting range, Chief Cyr reported that he has secured a \$ 2 million liability policy with the Town as an insured. The Board had requested that he do this prior to using the range. He now plans to schedule training in the near future.

The Board thanked Chief Cyr for a thorough and comprehensive report.

b) Economic Development Follow up:

Selectman Graham would like to have Max Makaitis come to our next meeting, if possible, to discuss his economic development efforts. Graham stated that the Town contributed \$ 5,000 to this effort and he would like to see efforts directed specifically to Gorham. He mentioned formation of an economic development committee to work with Max and help to spearhead these efforts.

c) Winter Festival Update:

Selectman Graham reported that there was considerable interest in this issue. Now that the Fourth of July is over and summer is nearing an end, he hopes to bring some people together soon to discuss this.

d) Possible Student intern(s):

Selectman Graham mentioned that this had been discussed before and that he would like to see this pursued for the fall semester. He feels that there are many things an intern could do to relieve some of the pressures from the Town Manager or other staff. He asked that the Town Manager consider this when she returns from vacation.

5. Public Comment:

Jay Holmes spoke about the conditions on Main Street. He stated that the street is too wide and the right hand lanes on each side are often mistaken for a second lane or a breakdown lane, when they were meant for parking. He feels this whole situation is confusing to people coming into or through town and is not business friendly. He feels the Town needs to address these issues. Selectmen Robitaille and Oliver remarked that this road is subject to State oversight. They indicated some of the things that were in process along the road. The Town Manager is in the process of addressing these things. The Board thanked Mr. Holmes for his comments and suggestions.

Russell Smith is a resident of the Stonybrook area. He reported that a culvert failed in this area and asked what the town was planning to do to resolve this. As of this meeting, the Town had responded by erecting a “road closed” sign. The Selectmen had not been apprised of the situation as of the meeting. A discussion ensued concerning problems in the area. Mr. Smith stated that there also problems with two other culverts and the road itself. Chairman Oliver noted that the Board is well aware of problems in that area and has tried to address them. The Town has had surveys done, applied for grants, and done everything they could to try to help. He promised these efforts would continue and suggested he follow up with the Town Manager when she returns on August 8. Mr. Smith also mentioned the issue of cable access in his area. Apparently, when the area was wired, the company did not wire all the roads. Therefore, many cannot get cable. Selectman Graham mentioned that this issue was reported to Time Warner last year when a meeting was held to begin discussing a new cable contract. At the time, the Time Warner Vice President out of Portland, Maine noted the problem and said she would check into it. To date there not have been further discussions with time Warner. He will ask the Town Manager to follow up on this issue and get back to him.

Chairman Oliver thanked Mr. Smith for his comments and for taking the time to address these matters personally with the Board.

Don Provencher commented on a number of issues:

- a) He thought the report of Chief Cyr was very good. He feels that it is imperative to get signs up as soon as possible.
- b) He commended the Town on the conditions in the Libby Pool area. However, he feels the area is underutilized, like the airport, and needs to be promoted more vigorously. He stated that “ bigger and better things are possible there “.
- c) He reported that the net over the backstop has been removed and this has caused concern for residents in the area. This will be conveyed to the Town Manager who may talk with Paul Bousquet about this.
- d.) He agrees with Jay Holmes regarding Main Street and the need for repairs and street painting.

- e.) He is very pleased that the floodlights on the common are working. He noted that many are now enjoying evening tennis and this is something the Town might consider promoting.
- f.) He noted that the agenda was posted in a timely manner and he thanked the Board.

Chairman Oliver thanked Mr. Provencher for his comments.

6. Other Business:

a.) Sign Manifest: The Board signed the manifest as prepared.

b.) Sign Abatements (if necessary):

The Board reviewed a request for abatement from Diane Marshall. She had purchased two lots in a subdivision and later merged them. The total value of the two lots individually was \$ 205,200. The new valuation for the merged lot was \$ 122,400. Diane Labbe, Gorham Assessor, submitted a memo outlining the issue for the Selectmen to review and recommended approval. After reviewing this and discussing it, Selectman Graham made a motion to approve this request. The motion carried unanimously.

7. Non-Public Session: RSA 91-A:3, II (a & c):

The Board remained in regular session as there were no issues for discussion in non-public session at this time.

8. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm.

REVIEWED AND APPROVED:

Terry Oliver, Chairman

Paul Robitaille

David Graham