

MINUTES OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING
TOWN OF GORHAM
MONDAY, November 7, 2011, 6:30 pm
TOWN HALL CONFERENCE ROOM

Selectmen present: David Graham; Paul Robitaille. Terry Oliver excused.

Also present: Robin L. Frost, Town Manager

Max Makaitis, PJ Cyr, Don Provencher, Gary Aubin, Rene Guay, Steve Malespini, Brian Ruel, Glen Eastman, John Loven, Norm Provencher, Jeff Schall, Bob Demers, Bob Balon, Jay Holmes

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

2. Appointments:

a) **Max Makaitis- Economic Development Update** – Mr. Makaitis spoke about the economic development activities with which he has been involved over the past several months. Projects include Burgess BioPower and co-locating businesses, Gorham Paper Mill, FCI Berlin, Groveton Mill, and several others. He strongly feels the projects which are not in Gorham also benefit Gorham due to their proximity. He is also working on grant applications for tax credits and CDBG grants as well as historic rehabilitation. His involvement on several boards and committees enable him to stay abreast of the needs of the community and the available opportunities. He was asked a few specific questions about empty commercial buildings in Gorham to which he replied that he feels the region is heading the correct direction. Building the permanent job base will in turn build the population which will in turn entice more store openings where the disposable income earned will be spent. It takes time, but Mr. Makaitis feels that it will happen in the near future.

b) **Presidential Range Riders Snowmobile Club – Steve Malespini** – Mr. Malespini, who is the trailmaster for the Club, approached the Board about access to businesses in Town. The Club is proposing that the sidewalks or at least a snow road be open for snowmobile traffic the length of Main Street between the two junctions of Routes 16 and 2. There is currently access from the trail down certain roads to Main Street, but the access is not equal, which means that some businesses have more exposure than others. In order to make it work better for everyone, access up and down Main Street is proposed. Selectman Robitaille has concerns with pedestrians trying to use the sidewalks. The snow road beside the sidewalks would alleviate that problem. Chief Cyr stated that in the past there has been some confusion regarding access routes. The current OHRV Bureau letter references an old map and the Town needs a more specific ordinance to allow clearer access points. He feels there should be access to all businesses. One point Chief Cyr wanted to also make is that the Town needs to strike a balance between access and public safety. He feels that from Church Street to the southern junction of Routes 16 and 2 could be of concern. Mr. Malespini stated that the majority of the snowmobile traffic would be during vacation weeks and weekends. Selectman Robitaille stated that there are a lot of walkers in Town and snowmobile use on the sidewalks deteriorate the surface. Glen Eastman said that many years ago access was allowed on the sidewalks and there was not much deterioration. There were no pedestrian accidents in all those years either. When he sees snowmobiles at a business, it means they are bringing money to Town and he is against killing economic activity. Chief Cyr stated that the Police Department has had five complaints of people being forced off the sidewalks. Brian Ruel stated that they are working hard to make Gorham a

snowmobile destination since we have much more to offer in lodging, restaurants, gas, etc. There is already traffic on the roads and he doesn't see them driving from junction to junction. Selectman Robitaille asked for the map to be left for the Board to review what is already in place. Bob Demers said it makes sense to allow the access and perhaps it could be on one side only. Jay Holmes said Main Street needs to be laid out better and then there could be multi-use. It was then mentioned that there was a snowmobile club meeting tomorrow night.

3. New Business:

a) **Winter Activity Meeting Report** – Selectman Graham and TM Frost both attended this meeting last week along with Denise Vallee, members of the snowmobile club, and a few business owners. There was great discussion about winter activities for families in Gorham and how to attract others from outside the Town of Gorham to participate. They will discuss these activities at the snowmobile club meeting tomorrow night.

b) **Tax Rate/Tax Bills** – There were several people present for this discussion. TM Frost started with a review of the letter to the editor. The two significant reasons for the higher tax rate were mentioned; loss of \$10M in valuation and unpaid taxes, which restricted use of fund balance to reduce taxes. Jay Holmes stated that the citizens chose to stay home rather than participate. He said that the last Town Meeting was sad. Rene Guay said that he felt the citizens elected the Selectmen to look out for their best interests. Mr. Holmes said that the Budget Committee did not do their job in the past. Norm Provencher said that cutting needs to be done. People have not worked for awhile. He feels the Town is overstaffed in departments. Selectman Robitaille stated that the Town has tried very hard to come in with lean budgets. He feels this is a temporary concern. Bob Demers asked what amount of appropriation represents \$1 on the tax rate. It is approximately \$300,000. Mr. Holmes said that businesses like the Royalty and Top Furniture are suffering. Gary Aubin stated that people are refusing to buy homes in Gorham because of the tax rate. Jeff Schall stated that he built a house three years ago and it is just a three bedroom home. His dream is being shattered and he now has to put his house on the market because he can't afford the taxes. Selectman Robitaille stated again that he thinks this is temporary. He feels the prison will open and bring jobs, the mill is open again and people are being called back to work. The rail line is an asset to economic development. The Walmart assessment reduction is only for this year. In 2012, it will be reassessed. John Loven said they need relief now; 2012 needs to be lower. Brian Ruel said that there is no time to wait. We need to start cutting now. Steve Malespini suggested consolidating services with Jackson or North Conway. Glen Eastman stated that the general public doesn't understand how the budget works and that it is not the Town's fault. Circumstances are that we have lost revenue and valuation.

c) **Updated Budget Review Schedule** - TM Frost stated the dates to begin budget review with the Department Heads had to be changed and the Board will now meet on November 17th, 21st and 22nd.

4. Old Business:

a) **Personnel Policy** – TM Frost reviewed the proposed changes to the Personnel Policy again. **On a motion by Selectman Robitaille, seconded by Selectman Graham, the Board voted unanimously to approve the amended personnel policy as presented by TM Frost.**

b) **FEMA Update** – The projects are moving forward with bids being advertised tomorrow. The pre-bid walk through will be held Thursday afternoon at 2. TM Frost will be accompanying Jay Poulin of HEB Engineers and the potential bidders

5. Public Comment: All public comment was taken during the tax rate discussion.

6. Other Business:

a) **Town Manager’s Update:** Four tractor bids were opened and the range of bids were from \$455 to \$1027. **On a motion by Selectman Robitaille, seconded by Selectman Graham, the Board voted unanimously to award the bid to David Holt for \$1027.**

b) **Selectmen’s Reports:** Selectman Graham said that he likes the new website. It is easy to get around and he particularly likes the ability to subscribe and get notices when meetings are scheduled and minutes are posted. He suggested a picture of the train station to be placed on the site. He also mentioned winter parking regulations and whether they will be in the paper again. TM Frost stated that it will appear in the paper and on the website.

c) **Approval of Minutes (October 24, 2011): On a motion by Selectman Robitaille, seconded by Selectman Graham, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the meeting of October 24, 2011.**

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

d) **Sign Abatements (if necessary):** There were no abatements.

7. Non-Public Session: RSA 91-A:3, II (a): On a motion by Selectman Robitaille, seconded by Selectman Graham, the Board went into non-public session by roll call vote. Robitaille –aye, Graham – aye.

On a motion by Selectman Robitaille, seconded by Selectman Graham the Board returned to public session by roll call vote. Robitaille – aye, Graham – aye.

No decisions made as a result of non-public session.

8. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 pm.

REVIEWED AND APPROVED:

Terry Oliver

David Graham

Paul Robitaille