

MINUTES OF THE SELECT BOARD
Monday, March 21, 2016 – 10:00 AM

Present: Lorn Buxton, Chair, David McGuckin, Selectman, Bill Stewart, Selectman, and Bette Jane Riordan, Secretary.

Also present: Tom Smith, Peter Rice, VJ Strehl, Craig Strehl, Peter Tarlton, Andy Schulte, John Ireland, Pam Cullen.

1. Approve Select Board Minutes of March 7, 2016.

The Select Board Meeting Minutes of March 7, 2016 were approved as amended.

2. Public Question an Answer. (For Items not on the Agenda)

Craig Strehl asked about the status of the inquiries regarding the Tarbell fire and water issues raised as a result. Chair Buxton stated the Town has adopted a two-pronged approach: 1) Physical infrastructure: The Town is meeting with a professional engineering firm to look at water infrastructure and water flows. He explained this goes along with the potential Water Sewer Portsmouth project. There is a meeting Thursday, March 24th at 1:00 PM. The public is welcomed to attend but it is not a public hearing. 2) Appointment of a Task Force: Members will address non-engineering aspects with wide-open guidelines, such as reviewing ordinances, building codes, and auxiliary water sources. There is no formal agenda at this time. Members appointed are Brad Greely, Pam Yonkin and Nancy Jackson. In response to a question, Chair Buxton stated that the Fire Department will be giving input.

Peter Tarlton asked about the meeting with Underwood Engineering, specifically if it would address both short and long term issues. He stated that if recommended updates are substantial, was the Select Board thinking about short-term solutions. Chair Buxton replied that it depended on what the recommendations were. Mr. Tarlton asked if the Fire Chief's input as well as those of the Fire Wards and volunteers and would be included. Chair Buxton stated he assumed so.

Selectman McGuckin stated he assumed the first stop of the Task Force would be the Fire Chief with all of his resources. Mr. Tarlton asked how the different options would be presented and costed out. Selectman Stewart stated the water study, like the sewer study, would present the current state of the infrastructure, make recommendations for changes, and give preliminary cost estimates for those changes. Peter asked if the subject of back up water supplies would be addressed. Chair Buxton noted that the Task Force has not met yet, but stated that could be a possible topic. The Task Force will review the Underwood Engineering proposals.

VJ Strehl referred to the Task Force membership and stressed the need for the Select Board to articulate their mission. Chair Buxton stated he has drafted a mission statement which has been sent to the members for their review and edits. Craig Strehl asked about action items, both short-term and long-term. He asked if warrant articles were needed and whether or not the Select Board had the authority to pick a solution and proceed.

Chair Buxton described various situations where the Select Board could act and others where a Town Meeting vote is necessary. He noted the Town has trust funds for infrastructure; however a major capital expense project has to go to Town Meeting. Selectman McGuckin stated he realized the sense of urgency in getting the project done, but stated it was important to take the time and get it right. The Task Force will touch base with various constituencies. Peter Tarlton stated he was glad Selectman McGuckin stated that and that collaboration is important, but he feels the description of the Task Force is fuzzy. Selectman McGuckin stated it is an evolutionary process and will take time. Chair Buxton reiterated there is a mission statement to seek innovative and creative input. Craig Strehl stated it was important to have the right people ask the right questions, to have a clear mission statement, and he wants to make sure the Select Board makes the water issue a priority. Selectman McGuckin explained that the Select Board could have taken the lead, but decided instead to have the Task Force be the primary lead and have a level of objectivity. The Board still has to manage all other aspects of Town business. He noted that the meeting on the 24th with Underwood Engineering would be primarily to address the sewer pumps which are currently in tough shape. They will be reviewing a possible temporary set up which could cost in the vicinity of \$100,000. In response to a question by Peter Tarlton, Selectman McGuckin stated the water study would take 2-3 months and his intent is to present the findings at Town Meeting.

The Select Board resumed its Agenda.

3. Items.

a. Handicap Ramp.

Selectman McGuckin reported on the status of relocating the handicapped ramp from the front of the building to the side and/or rear of the building. The Building Inspector stated there was a problem with the roofline not being ADA compliant, so they are exploring other alternatives.

b. Rental rates for Recreation Buildings.

Selectman McGuckin stated there has been a growing demand for rental of the facility, and because of the cost of potential damages to the facilities by renters, the Select Board is proposing raising the usage fee from \$200 to \$300, and the deposit from \$100 to \$200. Andy Schulte asked about tennis usage, as currently the users pay nothing. The Select Board explained the difference between recreational use and special events or parties. After discussion with clarification by Pam Cullen, Assistant to the Select Board, Selectman Stewart made a Motion to approve the rate changes as proposed: \$300 for usage, and \$200 for deposit, effective immediately, with exception of reservations already made. Selectman McGuckin seconded, and the Motion carried.

c. Sewer Assessment Report.

Selectman McGuckin explained the recently completed report, and the entire report will be discussed at the Thursday meeting with Underwood Engineering. The report is available to the public. Selectman Stewart stated he had some questions regarding the conveyance issues. Discussion followed primarily regarding what repairs or upgrades would need to be

made either prior to or after a conveyance to Portsmouth and the timing of those repairs. He also questioned replacing the existing system in-kind and the inclusion of the private sewer on the Wentworth side of the island. VJ Strehl asked what New Castle can do for itself and what can we have Portsmouth do? She had concerns about costs and asked the Select Board to question the impacts of the conveyance.

Chair Buxton stated New Castle residents would be treated like Portsmouth residents with the exception of add-ons for predetermined upgrades to the infrastructure. He stated New Castle can't do it itself, but Portsmouth has the resources. In response to Peter Tarlton's question regarding whether or not New Castle will convey both water and sewer infrastructure, Chair Buxton replied in the affirmative. Mr. Tarlton questioned the amortization rate. Chair Buxton replied that Portsmouth is looking at longer than a ten - year time frame. VJ Strehl also asked about the plan to convey both water and sewer. Selectman McGuckin stated that Portsmouth understands it's both. Dick Spaulding asked about whether New Castle would have to pay for various upgrades in Portsmouth neighborhoods. Chair Buxton explained how New Castle infrastructure has deteriorated and there was not enough money set aside in the past. Selectman McGuckin stated the Board still has to discuss whether we do the "gold plated" or "bronze" upgrade. The final decision is of course, the Town's, then to the Portsmouth City Council. Andy Schulte pointed out the history of Portsmouth's failure to replace the water line on Wentworth Road despite several assurances it would do so. Chair Buxton noted that New Castle has the support of Peter Rice, of Portsmouth DPW but the matter will be decided by the City Council. Peter Tarlton stated that the projected time period seems long and we should look at short-term solutions.

d. Health Insurance.

Selectman Stewart stated he would present the health insurance option for employees at the next Select Board meeting. The Town continued the pre-existing plan for the first six months of this year, which will not be offered after this year. He will get clarification on next steps from the provider. He explained that the Town will have to change to another plan.

e. Street Lights.

Selectman McGuckin met with Eversource regarding replacing our sodium vapor lights with LED lights. Currently there are ten street lights out. It costs \$300 per light replacement for sodium vapor, as opposed to \$2-3,000 per light for LED. Given there are 68 lights, it would cost around \$200,000. He prefers keeping the sodium vapor lights. Tom Smith stated if there is 5 and 1/2 year payback it may make sense to do some LED's to brighten certain areas. VJ Strehl suggested an "Adopt a Streetlight" project which she would be willing to explore. No final action was taken.

f. Copier bids. Tabled.

g. Road and Street Warrant Articles.

After discussion, the Select Board agreed to have two separate warrant articles: To create a fund for road repairs, and a separate article to fund it.

4. Other Old Business.

a. Sailing School. ("Portsmouth Maritime")

Selectman Stewart reported that he met with Ben Wilson from the State of NH who asked for a Letter of Support from the Select Board, which he has drafted. Bill had just emailed the draft. Selectman McGuckin asked that this matter be tabled until the next meeting.

b. Selectmen's Letter for Town Report.

The Board reviewed the letter and asked Pam Cullen if there were any departments which had not provided their reports. She replied she still needed the Fire Department/Fire Chief's report. Selectman Stewart agreed to follow up with the Chief.

c. School Budget.

Chair Buxton stated the School had amended their budget at their annual district meeting with a \$30K reduction and stated there is a need for the MS 27 form to get to Deb Knowles, Town Accountant. Dick Spaulding agreed to follow up on this matter.

5. Other New Business.

a. Public Hearing: Planning Board.

Tom Smith reminded the public that the Planning Board is holding a public hearing this evening on proposed changes, one of which is to make Lavenger Creek a prime wetland.

b. Task Force.

Chair Buxton stated the Select Board needs to meet with the new Task Force and asked the Assistant to the Select Board to schedule the meeting.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned.