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Selectmen's Meeting Minutes

Monday, May 24, 2021

At the Selectmen's meeting held on Monday, May 24, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. the Selectmen participated via Zoom:

Peter Corey is at his home in Whitefield, maintaining social distancing.

Shawn White is at this home in Whitefield, maintaining social distancing.

John Tholl is at his home in Whitefield, maintaining social distancing.

Others in attendance via Zoom: Courtney Vashaw, Rob Larson, Terry Lufkin, Tom Ladd, Bob Loiacono, Fred Ingerson, John Ross, Melissa Vashaw.

Chairman Corey called the Meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Peter wanted to go over and re-enforce things relative to the Board of Selectmen Rules of Procedure. At times we need to take time to do a few adjustments. In light of a few things, thought it would be valuable to visit the rules of procedures for the Selectmen and employees who are listening. Make sure everyone understands under state law no single selectman can direct a person to take action. One selectman doesn't have the authority to undertake any specific action. Our authority comes from state law. With emails it gets comfortable and easy to reach out to people, and we need to be careful and guard against that. As an employee, someone should not be telling you to do something unless it has been voted on by the board at a public meeting especially with appropriations and budget. We should no be doing requests for decisions via email. If you need a decision and it is not an emergency, get it on the agenda for the next meeting. Fire Chief Ross asked the Board, via email, if he would allow Littleton to use our fire truck last week and that is reasonable for the Board of Selectmen to respond. Chief has authority to do that. In terms of large purchases, please follow the procurement policy. We have a form and attach the paperwork on the purchase to it. We sign documents every Monday. If it something out of the norm or unusual, we would ask for you to come to the board for a decision. The other thing is we respect the supervisory chain. If we want to talk to an employee, let the department head know we want to speak to that person. That should be respected. If there are concerns about somebody's performance, we have a process for that. We should address those concerns as a board.

Department Head Meeting

John Ross, Fire Chief

Chief Ross said that he doesn't have anything big going on. Got a call today from Rick Wright inquiring about the pancake breakfasts on the common, which will be held on July 4, August 1, and September 5. Chief said that he and Chief Samson were going to give them the guidelines for the universal best practices. Chief Ross wanted to be sure the Board is ok with having the breakfasts on the common. Peter, Shawn, and John did not have any issues with that.

Courtney Vashaw, Whitefield Public Library

Courtney said that they have a lot of cool stuff going on. She said thanks to Rob and his crew in getting the free pantry up and sound. Working with a number of people and agencies to get it going. Being well used already. Folks are taking advantage of the supplies. Community members and businesses have stepped up. Hope it continues. Summer program is starting. Excited to be able to do it this summer. Katelyn Wood is going to be running the program for kids and adults, which she is very familiar with having been involved in the past at Col. Town. Courtney has been in conversation with different agencies, Ammonoosuc Community Health Services, North Country Health Consortium to see how the library fits in. Trying to fit the library into a pilot grant program for community members to access in trusted locations. Would like to have a location people feel comfortable going to. Trying to find a way to help the library, the citizens, and the agencies. In light of Covid, they feel the library is the missing link. ACHS CEO is on the national scene, and he is hoping Whitefield will be a pilot site for rural communities for what we can do as a group to serve our community as a whole. It would allow the library to expand beyond our 22 hours, which we will be getting back to soon. It would entail expanded personnel time. As a building, we would be open 40 hours a week. Courtney said we don't have our 501-c-3. We are a municipal non-profit, but lots of grants they can't apply for unless they are a 501-c-3. By the end of the summer, they hope to have established a Friends of the Library and get their 501-c-3 status to make the community work more official. Very busy season. Hopeful and excited. They are getting a CARES allocation, as the library system got \$2 million and they are allocating it down to the libraries. They will be getting \$2937, which follows a very specific formula, which they will be using to expand operational hours. Hopefully more of that money will be shuffling down. Looking to see if it is possible to access some of the school system money. Trying to be creative. Peter said that is very exciting stuff. Congratulation on what you are doing. Ed Shanshala, the director at Ammonoosuc is great. He is a mover and shaker. Get involved in what they are doing, and it is good for everyone involved. He has the know how and will be great for all. Peter said people have been asking him when will they be going back to regular hour? She said hopefully within the first week of June. Courtney said she wants to make use of Katelyn while she has her. If any of these other moves come through, Courtney said she will play with what hours the town needs as she finds out what money she has available for funding. Planning on building out more as they go. Tom Ladd asked about the book sale. Courtney is thinking about tagging on to the pancake breakfasts. Not sure about community day and if it will happen this year or not.

## Melissa Farrow – Whitefield Recreation Department

Baseball is winding down. Put up a really nice banner on the fence for some of the sponsors. Didn't get word of the money the Lion's Club had sent until after the banner was ordered. She will order another one in the fall to get more sponsors on. First time to be able to do that. In the works of a summer program schedule. Working with Katelyn at the library. Bus company is on board for the summer, and some field trips are scheduled. We will have a little bit of normalcy coming back. Will check with John Ross about guidelines for masks, etc. Everything changes so frequently, we will wait until we start the sign-ups so parents will know what to expect. Plans to keep the portable toilet for the summer up, and she is under the impression it is ok for Fred to put in the temporary water line. She is planning on being back here at this building for the summer, and we are hoping to have a fun summer.

Are band concerts happening this summer? Judy said she has emails out to Kate Lombardi and Catherine Carter and Andy Tobin to see what their plans are. John Ross said there are strict guidelines for people singing or wind instrument playing. Courtney said that Lancaster is having the concerts. Not using the grandstand, but will be out on the ground socially distanced. Courtney said she will open the library during those hours so people can access a restroom.

John Tholl said he sees that Melissa is having trouble getting picnic tables. John said he would be willing to build them if we can get him the materials. Melissa has done a little bit of research. Tried Home Depot, very expensive. Lumber is pretty expensive. Costs would come out of the parks and recreation budget. Melissa said that she wouldn't want more than one or two. It will give them a space to eat. John said he can get with Melissa and get some pricing.

Courtney: How many kids are you going to have or can have? Melissa doesn't know what their cap is for down there. John Ross said that he will have to measure it up if they are all going to be inside. Doesn't anticipate any more than 25-30. Courtney said they have two weeks of presenters and they are fundraising for that.

## Fred Ingerson – Water Department

Fred said they have been working at the fire station to sort out to get the ballfield some water. Did get it taped and the line stumped over in that direction. Park Construction is working on the sidewalks and trying to finish up some of their final work. Is all the line in the ground? All the water lines are done. Might be some contingency funds to add in additional lines later on. Rob said he wanted to mention that Fred was good enough to put in the new spicket on the common for the common committee, and they are very grateful for that. Peter said it looks like two of the new trees have died. They make a big plastic wring to go around the trees to fill it up with water. Might be worth looking into that and think about replacement trees. Rob said when we purchased the trees, we were provided with a warranty so Rob will look into that. Rob said it may be a salt issue, not a drought issue. Shawn said he hasn't noticed the trees yet. They may have been put too close to the roadway. Shawn said when the trees by Cumberland and the bank

were put in, a lot of research went into that and it was determined that there were only a couple of trees that would survive on the common. Might want to get those same types of trees. Shawn said it was on the computer that got wiped out at the town garage.

Peter said he has been getting a lot of questions about the homeless person. Judy said they are working on a plan to get him relocated in the next couple of days.

#### Rob Larson – Public Works

The Sewer project is moving along nicely. Started seeding today. The preliminary calibrations are 85% completed. June 21<sup>st</sup> is target date to be fully operational. August we will go 100% without the lagoon. Rob said we were approved for an Eversource energy rebate in a form of a check in the amount of \$27,282. Rob said that is a nice bonus for this project. John Ross: When will the final walk thru be? John asked that Rob let him know so he can there. Rob said he things during the month of June.

Water project – sidewalks on Highland Street, the curbing is done. Dave Scalley built a new retaining wall at his property on Highland Street, and Rob would like to thank him for his cooperation. Paving will be done in a couple of weeks.

Route 142/Elm Street – sidewalk done this week, pavement done soon. Some residences got awarded new driveway additions by DOT. Have to put in driveway entrances. Rob said he wanted to talk to the board about how we do this. Do we charge the homeowner? It was a last-minute decision by DOT to allow it. Put the curbing in, and now they will allow those. The Board can decide how to handle that. Shawn said it is their driveway, they are responsible for alterations to that. Peter agrees the taxpayers do not have to eat that cost. John said he agrees, taxpayers should not have to pay for something the homeowners have asked for. These are second driveways for the lots. Matter of convenience and driveway permits are getting issued today. They were not approved before the project started. The Board felt that the homeowner should foot the bill. Courtney asked about application date verses the approval date? Can't hold up the project based on an application that may or may not be approved. DOT does thorough work and it takes them quite a while to sign off on a permit. John Ross: Shouldn't the homeowner be responsible from step one? Why is the town involved? Why isn't the homeowner doing it themselves? Rob said we are trying to get it done before we pave and put in the final piece of the sidewalk. Trying to get done in cooperation with the homeowner. Shawn said all we should only be responsible for is the sidewalk gets put back 100% how the town wants it. The rest is on the homeowners. Don't want to pave it and then have the homeowner dig it up two days letter. Concrete has not gone in for those two homeowners. Should we go to them tomorrow and tell them they need to alter the sidewalk before they pave it? Rob needed a decision on that tonight. They can hire whoever to change that. Don't want to waste money putting materials down then it gets dug up.

Legion Field Project – Rob said because of the cost to cut trees, the town will cut the trees and will be doing the stump removal to expand the parking lot then put the sewer line in. The plumbing for the water is going in now and then have a plumber to hook up the toilets and sinks. Still have electrical and partitions to put up. Some carpentry work needs to be done. Laflamme has given an estimate for that work and moving in that direction. Shawn asked if the board signed off on that estimate? Has a pre-approval been done on that? Rob said he will make up a full budget on the project for the Board's review and approval. Rob said the minutes of the last meeting it was stated we needed to get this done, and Rob thought that it was an approval to go ahead with it. Shawn wants something on record that we have an estimate and the board signs off on it. Melissa asked to be kept in the loop so she knows the time frames. She said they start the summer program on the last Monday of June. Melissa wants to be sure we are on the same page so they are not in the way of construction. The hours they are open are 7:30 to 5:00.

Solar panel proposals – where does that all stand? Grant coming in September for 100% of the cost, which will be awarded in January so Rob said he is holding off on that. September is a good realistic date. Rob wants to have the bids for both buildings submitted under the new grant application. Rob thought it was worth the wait to get it funded 100%

Courtney said that the Library board has been asking about the solar conversations? Rob said the library board can be included if they want it to be. Courtney said yes, 100%. Rob will include that in the grant proposals if the Board approves it.

Tom Ladd asked about the scheduling plan for the Kimball Hill Road project? Rob said as soon as we get done with the ballfield, probably late June we will start culverts and prep for paving. Paving is scheduled for second week of July.

New hire to replace Mike Webster – Rob said he would like to request a new hire who would work 4 days at the transfer station and one day at DPW. He may spend more time at DPW depending on needs at the transfer station. Rob said he would like discuss the details in the non-public session as it entails personnel discussion. What about water licenses? Shawn said a couple of years ago he brought up that the water department didn't need two guys. Shawn said the way the department used to be was in the summer time they had two gentleman and then during the winter that person worked in the highway and helped with plowing sidewalks. Shawn said we told we needed two in the water department because of the regulations. The budget for the employee is with the Water Department. There is no money in the transfer station for an extra person. Shawn said he doesn't want to see another employee added to the transfer station if we don't have it budgeted. We need to give Fred an extra guy in the summer time, and the Highway needs help in the winter plowing sidewalks. Shawn said that the mechanic is making top dollar plowing sidewalks, and it really should be done by an entry position and the mechanic person should be doing the mechanic work, which is falling behind. Rob said he differs with that comment that the mechanic work is falling behind. Rob said that nothing is falling behind as far as Bill Rines' work is concerned. That is a false statement. Rob said the

one day a week in the DPW is for the very reason for plowing sidewalks. Rob said he has always agreed with that. Rob said he would like to take this issue in non-public. Fred still needs a full-time employee to join him in the water department. Asset management program needs to be done, and we need to allow for Fred to take time off.

Tom Ladd asked if the Water Department employees are paid by the water users? Yes, that is correct. Source of money is split into a couple of different areas depending on what department they work for.

A motion was made by Shawn White to approve the Selectmen's Meeting Minutes of May 10, 2021. The motion was seconded by John Tholl. Roll Call Vote: Corey: Yes; Tholl: Yes; White: Yes. Motion passes, 3-0. Minutes of May 10, 2021 approved.

American Rescue Fund – Chair Corey said that the funds are flowing directly from the treasury to the towns. Whitefield will be getting \$220,000. Open it up to the department managers to see if they have any needs in that list of usable expenditures. We are not making any final decisions tonight. Get some ideas on the table. Courtney is wondering if she is allowed to be part of this conversation? She is not sure if she falls within the categories. She is looking to expand the library hours, 25 extra hours a week. She is looking at \$20,000. Looking at expanding on social service work. Pay for that training, which is about an 80 hour training. Work with these organizations to do homeless outreach and food security issues and expand on what is considered library services. Judy will send her another copy of the allowable uses for her to review.

Melissa said she didn't go through it with a fine-tooth comb. She is wondering about using it for scholarship funds? Peter thought of for the rec department, where they have been dealing with the public or exposed to the public, similar to EMS and police received a special stipend for dealing with those situations. Peter thought we could go back for a certain amount of time, and add a stipend to those recreation paychecks and compensate them for what they have had to put up with during the special circumstances. Peter said that is a thought he had, and he is not sure what it would look like. He will put some numbers together. Melissa said she is looking to benefit the program, and possibly snag some of those funds to help out the community.

Fred said that there is always water infrastructure that could be updated.

Courtney said she just got a grant on boosting their outdoor Wi-Fi, that came under some federal funds. She said she is not sure where to look for that stuff. She would like to create outdoor access points for people. Peter said he will give her the name of the woman and contact information to figure that out.

Shawn suggested that Rob and Fred might be able to come up with some projects. Fred has projects ready to go. Union Street project was mentioned.

John Tholl said it is pretty broad what you can use the funds for.

Shawn wanted to go back to the transfer station. Shawn said he is not sure why our hours were changed at the transfer. Shawn said he feels the transfer station is open more than it should be. When we changed our hours our transfer station gained another 8 hours so we are open 33 hours a week. That is a lot to ask one or two people to keep up with. Other transfer stations in the area are not open anywhere near that many hours. Lancaster is 25 hours, Colebrook, 20 hours, and even Littleton is only open 24 hours. How about we lessen the hours instead of being open to the public 33 hours a week? Peter said that is an idea. We gave people regularity with the hours. Shawn said it used to be Tuesday 8 to 5; Wednesday 10 to 2; Friday Noon to 4; and Saturday 8 to 4. Shawn said that would be a help and a money saver. We are open 13 ours more than Colebrook. 8 hours more than Lancaster. Peter said maybe we should look at closing one of the days and not go back to those crazy hours. Rob is ok cutting the open hours. He would not go back to the old schedule as there was always confusion as to what day was what. OK with cutting the hours. Shawn said those hours were not changed in his 11 years. He doesn't think people were confused about the hours.

Terry Lufkin asked in reference to rebuilding Route 3 what does that consist of? Rob said we are talking about the drainage and water line. Those are the biggest issues. Terry asked if it is true that they are going to put the sewer and water in under the sidewalks? Rob said no.

Peter Corey said given the relaxation of the covid restrictions, he thinks it would be prudent and ok to return to in-person meetings beginning in June. He said he knows in Vermont everything is open back up. Free to be indoors and outdoors. Protect yourselves. Spoke with Chief Ross and he feels we can do it safely in the meeting room. We will begin with Monday, June 14<sup>th</sup> with in-person meetings. Tom Ladd asked about the select board requirement on mask wearing within social distancing of each other? John Tholl said as long as they can be socially distanced, they won't require a mask, and unvaccinated people should wear a mask. This will be the requirement for all town buildings. Melissa said she thinks for her situation where she is dealing with school-aged kids, she is going to have them keep the masks on while they are in the building just until school is out. When they are outside, she is ok with them taking it off. In schools they are keeping them on until the end of the school year.

A motion was made by John Tholl to enter Non-Public session at 7:49 p.m. pursuant to NH RSA 91-A:3 II(a) the dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee, or the investigation of any charges against him or her unless the employee affected (1) has a right to a public meeting, and (2) requests that the meeting be open, in which case the request shall be granted and pursuant to NH RSA 91-A:3II(e) consideration or negotiation of pending claims or litigation which has been threatened in writing or filed by or against this board or any subdivision thereof, or by or against any member thereof because of his or her membership therein, until the claim or litigation has been fully adjudicated or otherwise

settled. The motion was seconded by Shawn White. Roll Call Vote: White: Yes; Corey: Yes; Tholl: Yes. All in favor, 3-0. Motion passes.

The board adjourned from non-public session at 8:35 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.