

Meeting Minutes
Freedom Board of Selectmen
Date: 7-3-2023
Approved 7/10/23

In attendance: Ron Price, Steve Bennett, Ryan Willette, Jim Waterman, Beth Owen-Mishou, Elaine Higgins, Nathan McCann, Tyler Hadyniak, Bob Kanzler, Becky Kanzler, Trudy Price, Laura Greeley, Kevin Greeley, Kyle Price, Barbara Littlefield, Ron Littlefield, Tim Biggs, Samantha Turner, Ian Winter, Jennifer Turner, Josh Sutor, Raven Carlezon, Kirk Thomas, Bryan Murphy, Joe Cyrs, Lincoln and Joanna Frasier, Kyle Laurita, Ben Feeney, Joe Freeman, Alexis Bennett, Billy Turner, Brandon Sutor, Dawnella Sutton

New Zoom Meeting: Meeting ID: 431 235 8395
Passcode: TownMeet

- Call Meeting to Order / Finalize Agenda: Ron Price called the meeting to order at 6pm.
- Review and Approve Minutes: Secretary's Report: Ryan Willette made a motion to approve the minutes as amended and put on file, Steve Bennett seconded and all approved.
- Fire Chief & EMA Director Reports: Jim Waterman
 - There are some residents in town that are receiving a letter from LS Power regarding a powerline they may be running through town. Meeting at the Bessy building in Albion July 19th from 4-7 in the evening. The line will run from Caribou and possibly through Freedom. An additional public meeting will be held at the Windsor Fair Grounds on the 20th from 4-7 pm.
 - 4th of July and a Farmer's Market at The Lost Kitchen. Parking will be challenging. The Fire Hydrant will not be accessible to the fire department. It will run from noon to 4pm. He cautions everyone to be careful. No parking signs will be posted from the post office to the bridge on Pleasant Street.
 - Steve Bennett mentioned that Jim has met with the people from the Lost Kitchen and the select board will have ongoing conversations with them.
 - Freedom FD will be in the Brooks parade
 - Burn permits are free on line. If you go on at 9 am it is good til 9 am the next morning.
- Public Works:
 - Jeff is working on pressure washing, and general maintenance
 - Interviews for the positions are pending.
 - Looking into fixing the culvert issue on the Mitchell Road. It has washed out.
- Treasurer's Report: Cindy Abbott not present/no report
 - Payroll warrant= \$5996.90

- Ryan Willette made a motion to pay the payroll warrant in the amount of \$5996.90, Steve Bennett seconded and all approved.
- Town Clerk & Tax Collector Report: Cindy Abbott, not present/no report
- Citizen's Issues and Questions:
 - Tyler Hadyniak: spoke with the project manager on the transition lines. He spoke with her this week and she reiterated that the route through Freedom is a preferred alternative route. She asked to speak with him due to his membership on the planning board. Tyler invited them to the July planning board meeting but it was too soon so they may join for August. Elaine Higgins asked if it would affect people's CMP lines and the answer was no.
 - Update on the FOAA request Tyler Hadyniak had made. He reviewed the reasons for the FOAA request. He wanted facts and not supposition. He filed a Freedom of Information request to further understand what was happening. He filed his request on June 15th then filed an amended request. After a conversation with Ron he determined that collating this information would be time consuming and cumbersome. He felt there were two documents that would be most helpful: an internal investigative report, and a disciplinary letter. Tyler contacted the town attorney and was given the disciplinary letter. The investigative report was not available as part of FOAA. The letter is 4 pages long and was signed by Steve Bennett and Ryan Willette and was based on the investigative report. Tyler Hadyniak has no desire to disclose the letter to anyone. His only interest was in the alleged nepotism. Tyler met with Ron and let him know how he was going to present the information. Tyler read a portion of the letter.
 - Was Maine DOT was informed of the drug failure? Ron Price stated that they were notified immediately. Ron Price stated that he was told that Travis might not pass, by Travis.
 - Ron Price stated that the test was administered on the 10th and he was told by Travis on the 11th that he might fail the test. He was shocked and did not respond positively. Travis did not tell him why. He does not remember saying that he would inform the other select board members. Ron Price says he accepted the responsibility for not saying anything. He reacted as a father and he made a mistake. Ron Price said that he is not familiar with drugs and the process.
 - How many drug tests have occurred over the time we have had a public works department? Ron Price stated that we are part of a testing company and that tests are done randomly. Cindy Abbot handles this for the town. Steve Bennett and Ryan Willette were informed the day after the testing results came in. The town lawyer was then informed and Ryan Willette and Steve Bennett then dealt with the process. Ron Price said that Travis Price had passed every other drug test. Ron Price stated that any instances that occurred were addressed with the entire select board.

- Steve Bennette was asked if there was ever a time when he was asked to shield Travis by Ron Price. Steve stated that he heard about it 11 days later. He followed the process set out by the town lawyer. It was and is a difficult situation. Steve Bennett said he would not carry it out. The attorney was recommended who investigates these types of situations. He and Ryan Willette were told not to discuss the situation. He asked the town atty if they could speak today and was told no. Steve Bennett read the town Atty's letter. It will become public record following the appeal period but personnel files are not public record.
 - Ryan Willette stated that he did not feel that drug testing was approached correctly.
 - Steve Bennett stated that he felt that he and Ryan were muzzled by the town regarding the sharing of information about the situation.
 - Travis was an employee of the town. Travis was paid hourly. Ron Price responded that when Travis had an issue he was redirected to speak with the town selectman, the board.
 - Laura Greeley asked if the attorney stated something about prior drug tests. Tyler reread the letter and it appears that there were previous testing delays alluded to in the letter. She stated that she was concerned that there were not policies in place to address this type of issue.
 - Elaine Higgins stated that all of the policies are being reviewed and updated as necessary. Elaine Higgins stated that Travis had come to her regarding his attendance at the select board meetings and being reimbursed. She feels that Ron has held Travis accountable with other issues. There was discussion about whether Travis' attendance was a requirement at the board meetings. Laura Greeley stated that she has had long term concerns about over budgeting in the Public Works Department.
 - Ron Price does not feel that he has done anything in the past to favor his son over any other employee. Ron Price stated that he did not intercede in any other drug test. If it was put off it was because people were working. He has suggested that they be sent the next day so they could complete their work. Travis has worked since 2014 and there were times when tests were put off due to people working. A citizen asked if it was more important to complete a job or follow through on the drug test?
 - Following state guidelines doesn't say you put it off til the next day.
 - The person who quit when asked to do a drug test did not get rehired.

- Kyle Price spoke: after a 4-wheeler accident Travis became sober. Travis was sober for 13 years and Travis reported that it was a one-time failure. The investigative reporter stated that Ron Price did not shield Travis at any time from drug testing. In 2018 Steve Bennett wrote into Travis job description that he would need to attend the board meetings.
 - The concern was the process the board took. Tyler Hadyniak did ask for the investigative report and that it was denied.
 - Steve was asked if he ever dictated when a drug test was performed. Elaine Higgins had not either during her tenure and it was asked why Ron made the decision. Cindy Abbot brought the issue to Ron regarding the drug testing that was to occur.
 - Ryan Willette stated that it should be between Cindy Abbot and the employee and that the Select Board should not be involved in the process.
 - Not showing for a drug test is a failure.
 - Steve was asked if he ever saw nepotism or favoritism between Ron and Travis on any issue. Steve said no. Steve said he was placed many times in defending Travis due to Travis' difficulty speaking diplomatically.
 - Ron Price made a public apology for his decision in this situation and admitted that he did not handle it effectively.
- Review Correspondence
 - Request from CDAC they are putting in a partnership grant application and they need someone from the select board to sign the application. Ron said they are also soliciting a letter of support for that application.
 - Ryan Willette made a motion to sign the application and letter for the CDAC application grant, Steve Bennett seconded and all approved.
 - The audit review date has not yet been selected
 - Waiting on a third quote on the Fisher house.
 - Steve Bennett has had conversations with Jackie and the value of the town. It is currently valued at 90% ratio. She has recommended adding another 3%. State evaluation 72 million, 68 million is what the town says the town is worth, this is established by a professional assessor.
 - 706A request for a 30-day extension, Ron Price asked if anyone responded to that letter. The new date is August 12th for their reply.
 - Ron Price was asked how the property is taxed and he responded as commercial property.
- Town Officials Reports
 - Code Enforcement Officer: Jackie Robbins

- Ryan Willette spoke to her about a property on Smithton Road and it appears that no permits had been submitted. She will look into this this week.
 - Emergency Management Officer
 - Waste Management:
 - Health Official
 - Assessors Report
 - Animal Control Officer: Peter Nerber
 - Health Committee
 - Planning Board:
 - Recreational Committee:
 - Meeting first Sunday of July at 4pm, this meeting is canceled and will be rescheduled.
 - Appeals Board:
 - Charter Committee: Tyler Hadyniak
 - Historical Society:
 - On July 15th Jennifer Neves will be doing a reading at the Town House from 1-2pm. There will be books for sale and memorabilia. The town house will be open.
 - Cemetery Committee:
 - Budget Committee:
 - CDAC Committee:
 - BroadBand:
 - Direct Communications will be providing a presentation at next week's Select Board Meeting
 - Solid Waste Director: Phil Bloomstein
 - School Board: Elenore Hess
- Old Business:
 - New toilet for the post office next week.
 - New Business:
 - Date of Next Meeting: Monday July 10, 2023 at 6pm
 - Adjourn: Steve Bennett made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:32 pm. Ryan Willette seconded and all approved.