

**Meeting Minutes
Freedom Board of Selectmen
Date: 10-6-2025**

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

Select Board Meeting

Approved 10-14-2025

1. Call Meeting to Order / Finalize Agenda: Laura Greeley called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.
 - **Rene Ouellet moved that they go into executive session at 5:01 pm for Legal Consultation 1MRSA405 (6) A, Lissa Widoff seconded and all approved.**
 - They came out of executive session at 5:55 pm nothing was determined.
 - **Laura Greeley made a motion to end the select board meeting at 5:55pm, Lissa Widoff seconded and all approved.**

Special Town Meeting

1. **Vote on the Sale of 67 Belfast Rd. property:** Cindy Abbott brought the meeting to order at 6pm.
 - a. Choose a moderator:
 - i. **Lissa Widoff moved to approve Ron Price as moderator, Tim Biggs seconded and all approved.**
 - ii. Ron Price was sworn in by Cindy Abbott as moderator.
 - b. **To see if the town will approve the sale of town-owned property at 67 Belfast Road Mapp 11 Lot 60.**
 - i. **Elaine Higgins made a motion that they approve the sale of the property at 67 Belfast Road Map 11/Lot 60, Rene Ouellet seconded and all approved.**
 1. Lissa Widoff clarified the wording of the article.
 2. Elaine Higgins asked if the Historical Society approached the town with regard to this property. Lissa Widoff stated that because it is a town owned property it is going to be listed and sold.

3. Bob Kanzler asked if there was a working well and septic. Lissa Widoff stated that we are not sure. It is a quick claim deed. It was previously working.
4. **Heather Donahue made a motion to allow Sasha Ray to ask a question as she is a reporter and not a town resident, Elaine Higgins seconded the motion and all approved.**
5. Sasha Ray asked about the history of the property and Lissa Widoff responded.
6. Tim Biggs asked how it would be deeded and the response was a quick claim deed. He asked about the percentage the realtor would be receiving. The town is hoping to negotiate that with whatever realtor that is chosen.
7. Elaine Higgins asked how much money the town has invested in the property to date. Lissa Widoff responded that she is not sure, but would look into it and have that information when they next met to discuss the property.
8. Tim Biggs asked what has been invested to date. It is unclear but the select board will look into it.

ii. The Article passed.

- c. To see if the town will approve engaging a realtor to represent the town for the sale.

i. Rene Ouellet moved to approve the article, Elaine Higgins seconded and all approved.

1. Gerry Spaulding asked if it is necessary to engage a realtor to cover the proceedings with this property. He also asked why the selectmen did not come to the meeting with the amount that the property has cost the town to date.
 - a. Laura Greeley stated that it is not necessary to engage a realtor.
2. Rene Ouellet stated that if all of this is approved tonight, they will come back to the town prior to approving the bid. This property was donated to the town.
3. Heather Donahue asked if it still makes sense to sell the property, in that there are plans for the village.
4. Brian Murphy asked if the driveway has to be approved by the state. Lissa Widoff stated that it is an established driveway and would be grandfathered.

5. Elaine Higgins spoke about the driveway. Lissa Widoff mentioned that there are related issues that they are aware of.
6. Bob Kanzler asked if anyone has talked with the state regarding the setbacks? Lissa Widoff stated that anyone wanting to purchase the property would have to comply with town building regulations. Cindy Abbott stated that the state would have written to the town of Freedom in a letter if the bridge work would have impacted that property.

ii. The article passed. 10/4

d. To see if the town will place the proceeds from the sale, less realtor fees, into the Dangerous Buildings account up to \$20,000 and any remainder to be put in the general fund.

- i. Elaine Higgins made a motion to accept the article as read, Bob Kanzler seconded and all approved.
 1. Heather Donahue asked if more money could be put in the dangerous buildings fund due to more dangerous properties being in town.
 2. Gerry Spaulding asked about the consent agreement and what the town's responsibility is.
 3. Lissa Widoff clarified that the Dangerous building fund can only have \$20,000 in it, based on a town vote to that effect.

ii. The article passed

e. To see if the town will vote to amend Article #6 from the annual town meeting March 2025 to read: taxes would be due and payable when bills are mailed and interest at 7% would begin to accrue commencing 31 days after taxes are committed.

- i. Rene Ouellet made a motion to accept the article as stated, Elaine Higgins seconded the motion and all approved.
 1. Tim Biggs asked how we have continued to run the town without a Tan note. The response was that we have not sent the money for the school bill without the taxes being committed.
- ii. Dick Bickford asked if there would be a penalty for not paying the school payment. Laura Greeley stated she had let the school board president know and he stated that there is no penalty assessed.

iii. Ron Price moved for a vote.

iv. The article was passed.

f. Motion to adjourn was passed.

Public Hearing for the General Assistance Ordinance

Rene Ouellet spoke to the general assistance ordinance. He attended a training last week and will attend another in a couple of weeks. It is not meant to take the place of other forms of state assistance. It is made for emergencies. For the Town of Freedom, most requests appears to be related to heating oil. The state came and reviewed our general assistance program.

The General Assistance Ordinance and appendix will be voted on by the Select Board.

Elaine Higgins stated that the General Assistance person will follow state guidelines. Rene Ouellet stated that yes that is accurate although there is some room for flexibility. Heather Donahue asked what the changes were, Rene Ouellet stated that he was unsure. Cindy Abbott stated that the appendices have been changed and the amounts for reimbursement have been changed. A resident asked about how what the town can do is different from the state. Rene Ouellet stated that it is for emergencies.

Tim Biggs asked how many requests there were last year and the response was that there were none last year. Ron Price stated that 99% of the time the people who ask for GA assistance do not want to ask for assistance. Ron Price reviewed what GA has been used for in the past.

Beth Powell asked if there is any reason someone could not just help someone out. Cindy Abbott stated that the information is confidential. How much was being given out was discussed.

Laura Greeley called the Public Hearing to a close at 6:50 pm and the Select Board Meeting was initiated at 6:50 pm.

Select Board Meeting

In attendance: Laura Greeley, Lissa Widoff, Beth Owen-Mishou, Bob Kanzler, Beth Powell, Cindy Abbott, Brian Murphy, Elaine Higgins, Richard Bickford, Dave Spencer, Gerry Spaulding, Joe Freeman Sr, Tim Biggs, Heather Donahue, Patrick Terry

2. Announcements:
 - Rene Ouellet excused himself from the meeting as he was not feeling well.
3. Review and Approve Minutes: Secretary's Report:
 - **Lissa Widoff made a motion to approve the select board minutes as revised, Laura Greeley seconded the motion and all approved.**
4. Fire Chief & EMA Director Reports: Jim Waterman

- Jim Waterman reviewed the results of their inspection. He is working on the requested changes.
 - Lissa Widoff asked if there was a letter from the Safety Board.
- Colby Robbins chief of Unity Ambulance spoke. (he provided a brief report, attached)
 - Unity Ambulance has responded to 38 calls in Freedom Jan 1, 2025 to September 30, 2025.
 - They are moving toward their full-time model and they are still waiting for one town to sign. All of the towns have appropriated the money.
 - Bruce Cook has retired. He will still drive for the ambulance.
 - Once the contracts are signed then they will be able to move forward with MMA and benefits to all of the employees. He is thinking November is when they will be able to hire their full-time employees.
 - They are in the midst of creating a budget. They are going to create a board of directors with representatives from each town. They will send monthly updates to the towns.
 - Bob Kanzler asked about the billing. Kolby clarified.
 - Dick Bickford asked about veterans and how they know to bill the VA. Kolby clarified.
 - Elaine Higgins asked if they can bring a veteran to Togus. Kolby stated no.
 - Heather Donahue asked about reimbursements based on what is happening at the state level. Kolby stated that it has not gone up yet.
 - Brian Murphy asked how many communities were involved. 5 was the response. Unity, Unity Township, Freedom, Thorndike and Troy.

5. Treasurer's Report:

- Payroll 10-6-2025: \$10967.67
- A/P warrant: \$35,811.87
- **Lissa Widoff made a motion to pay the payroll warrant for the week of in the amount of \$10967.67, Laura Greeley seconded and all approved**
- **Lissa Widoff made a motion to pay the A/P warrant for the week of, in the amount of \$35,811.87, Laura Greeley seconded and all approved.**
- Camden Municipal Checking: \$ 329,955.44
- Received Checks from:

6. Public Works: Loren Fitch

- The trash truck is in bad condition. We are at a place where the truck is not going to last much longer. Loren is collecting information on a new truck versus repairs. One of the select board members will look into what it would cost to have another agency collect our trash. They will gather all the information and present it in a future meeting.
 - Bob Kanzler asked why the grader was on Rollins Road in the ditch. The response was that they are waiting to grade the road.
7. Town Clerk & Tax Collector Report: Cindy Abbott
- Recall: Petition for recall Rene Ouellet Town of Freedom Maine
 - There were 49 signatures.
 - Laura Greeley read the reasons:
 - Bob Kanzler submitted the petition.
 - The town now has 10 days to approve and bring it to a ballot.
 - Heather Donahue asked about the FOIA and if it would be made available and if it was public information, the response was yes. Anyone who made a request can request the contents of the FOIA.
 - Tim Biggs asked about the potential buyers and if they were planning to create an event center.
 - Patrick asked if the sellers were going to sue. Laura Greeley stated that they have not received any information about a suit.
 - Heather Donahue asked if the seller is an Atty. Laura Greeley stated that the owner of the island is an Atty from CT.
 - Ron Price asked Cindy about the 10 days to accept the petition.
 - Laura Greeley discussed asking Rene Ouellet to resign. She will probably do this at the next Select Board meeting. Lissa Widoff stated that she is always cognizant of being a select board member when she speaks to people outside of meetings.
 - The Warrant to have a recall vote will be signed on 10/20 then the vote would be on 12/2 and any time within that period a hearing would be an option, so that Rene Ouellet could respond to the allegations.
 - Abatements:
 - There are 60 days to act on the abatement but that statement is not on the abatement. Laura Greeley would like residents to be aware that the select board has 60 days and if the resident does not hear from them they can contact the select board.
 - Appeals board: Cindy Abbott stated that there is not an appeals board application. Laura Greeley stated that the appeals board has

created an application. There is a period of time that the resident has to appeal the decision. She would like that time period to be in the letter and/or on the application.

- The town office is closed on Monday and Wednesday next week.

8. Citizens Issues:

- Ron Price asked why Pleasant Street was posted. Laura Greeley explained.
- Heather Donahue asked what the state of the Beaver Ridge Law Suit is. Laura Greeley reviewed what she could report.
 - They are starting fresh and our 54 F was granted. Some of the motions should not have been placed on the town. The judge has ordered mediation which will occur on November 14th. A surveyor has been picked and they are waiting on an engagement letter and the mediator. They will meet in Augusta. Jim Dorsky will be engaged as the surveyor. It was asked why we are engaging a surveyor. Laura Greeley reviewed why we are using a surveyor.
 - Dick Bickford asked about Beaver Ridge Road. Additionally, he asked for an accounting of the money spent.

9. Review Correspondence:

10. Town Officials Reports

- Code Enforcement: Cindy Abbott
- Assessors Agent: Jackie Robbins
- Health Official: Patricia Ashland
- School Board Director: Eleanor Hess
- General Assistance Officer: Rene Ouellet
- Plumbing Inspector: Cindy Abbott
- Solid Waste Director: Phil Bloomstein
- Animal Control Officer: Johnna Hatt
- Town Boards & Committee Reports:
 - Planning Board
 - Recreational Committee: Chair yet to be determined
 - Appeals Board: Michael Smith
 - Cemetery Committee: Steve Holmes
 - Budget Committee: Laura Greeley
 - CDAC Committee: Lex Bennett
 - Broadband Committee: Phil Bloomstein
 - Ad Hoc Policy Committee: Elaine Higgins
 - Budget Committee:
 - Comp Plan Committee:

11. Old Business:

- Special events policy needs a few more edits, Lissa Widoff will complete these and bring it to the next Select Board Meeting.
- **Lissa Widoff made a motion to approve and adopt the General Assistance Ordinance and GA appendices for the period of October 1, 2025- September 30, 2026, Laura Greeley seconded and all approved.**
- **Lissa Widoff moved to approve the Town Board and Committee Vacancies and Appointments Policy, Laura Greeley seconded and all approved.**
- Laura Greeley stated that there have been no bids on the dump body. Loren wants to wait til spring and put it out to bid again.
- Lissa Widoff reviewed town communications:
 - Email distribution
 - Website updates
 - Zoom will be used for the official town meetings
 - Beth requested that committee chairs provide their meeting times.
 - Laura Greeley asked that we be mindful of the Budget and use of the secretary's time.
 - Emergency texting options.
- Lissa Widoff, Laura Greeley met with Jim ... assessor and there is nothing they could do. Jackie will have to go in and manually override all taxes at last year's numbers. We will be taking a hit on our homestead exemptions. Our evaluations should be accurate. Laura Greeley will be gathering names for assessors. Jim ... stated that he would act as a mentor to anyone who wants to become an assessor. It was suggested that a capital reserve account be set aside to cover assessor costs.

12. New Business:

- County Budget Committee Meeting: They have just completed their 2021 audit. Laura Greeley discussed the outcome of that meeting.
- Planning Board Openings:
 - 2 seats are open
 - They have received letters of interest from Peter Abello, Tyler Hydiniak and Christopher Spaulding, Lindsay Knapp, Richard Bickford
 - **Lissa Widoff made a motion to reappoint Peter Abello to the planning board; Laura Greeley seconded the motion.**
 - Laura Greeley advocated for Christopher Spaulding for the planning board.

- Lissa Widoff advocated for Tyler Hadyniak due to his legal experience and experience with the committee. Laura Greeley reported that she has not found any value in Tyler being a lawyer. Lissa Widoff also stated that she is taking into account the other committee members' opinions regarding Tyler's participation.
 - Cindy Abbott will be asked to let Peter Abello know and they will table their discussion about the second position.
 - 2 Openings of the Budget Committee:
 - They have received 4 letters of interest for the Budget Committee
 - Laura Greeley nominated Barbara Littlefield for a position on the budget committee.
 - Lissa Widoff supports Prentice Grassi being reappointed to the Budget Committee.
 - **Lissa Widoff moved to reappoint Prentice Grassi to the budget committee, Laura Greeley seconded and all approved.**
 - Lissa Widoff supports reappointing Doug Vanhorn to the committee.
 - **Laura Greeley made a motion to appoint Barbara Littlefield to the budget committee, Lissa Widoff seconded and all approved.**
 - Laura Greeley would like to send a letter thanking Doug Vanhorn for his years of service to the town.
 - Laura Greeley will send Lissa Widoff the information on the FOIA request regarding Tyler Hadyniak's comments on the select board members.
 - Abatement for the Heppard's: Jackie has not gotten back to Laura Greeley. Laura Greeley will be contacting the neighbor regarding a shed.
 - Lissa Widoff thanked those who attended the Cannery Lot meeting. Comp Plan Committee will meet on Wednesday night.
- 13. Date of Next Meeting: Monday October 14, 2025 at 6:00 pm.
- 14. Adjourn: **Lissa Widoff made a motion to adjourn at 8:55pm., Laura Greeley seconded and all approved.**

Recording Information:

https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/tPorhune1sZYZB0BE_1WPUhTpb4oD-0C_82a-dmnekBihcHDvoiPygyzD4_s6tkj.rjcQPiuAZWC90m8p

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