

Meeting Minutes
Freedom Board of Selectmen
Date: 5-8-2023
Approved 5-15-2023

In attendance: Steve Bennett, Ryan Willette, Jim Waterman, Beth Owen-Mishou, Bob Kanzler, Ron Littlefield, Barb Littlefield, Jacob Brugger, Alyssa Brugger, Jasmine Willette, Tim Biggs, Joe Freeman, Nathan McCann, Laura Greeley, Jason Young, Elaine Higgins, Tyler Hydiniak (via zoom), Anne-Marie Adamson (via zoom)

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

1. Call Meeting to Order / Finalize Agenda: Steve Bennett called the meeting to order at 6pm.
2. Review and Approve Minutes: Secretary's Report: Ryan Willette made a motion to approve the minutes as amended, Steve seconded and all approved.
3. Fire Chief & EMA Director Reports: Jim Waterman
 - Head on accident 2 cars on the 3rd of May. Unity Ambulance responded very quickly and it took 2 hours to clear.
 - \$3936 year to date, funds recovered
 - \$4773.00 in cost recovery, submitted
 - Jim has submitted reimbursement for \$5100 and wants to purchase for 2 turnouts.
 - Steve made a motion to allow Jim Waterman to purchase the turn out equipment, Ryan Willette seconded and all approved.
 - Ryan Willette and Jim Waterman will meet next Monday to do a water draw for testing.
4. Public Works:
 - Grading will start tomorrow: and will take about 2 ½ weeks.
 - Crushed stone base may be the only thing that happens this summer for a variety of reasons. There was a discussion about crushed stone base versus paving. Ryan Willette stated that the crushed stone base would be a more cost-effective solution for some roads in town. Steve Bennett stated that paving costs have risen substantially. He feels the crushed stone would last longer.
 - There is not enough in the budget to pave the Raven Road.
 - Citizens mentioned that other towns have used crushed stone and sprayed it with something and it appears to be working well.
 - Ryan Willette asked how the citizens feel about having crushed stone. He stated that we could improve many roads for the cost it would be to do the Raven Road.
 - Ron Littlefield asked what it would cost per yard, Steve stated it would cost 21.80 per ton 3,1/2 ¾ \$20.95
5. Treasurer's Report: Cindy Abbott

- Payroll \$6884.22 and A/P \$ 3,389.55
 - Checkbook balance: not up to date due to them needing a fix
 - Cemetery Committee looking for approval to purchase items.
 - Laura Greeley asked how the cemetery committee could request the money that was budgeted for the cemetery. Steve Bennett clarified and said the checks are usually not sent out until September.
 - Laura Greeley also asked if the auditor is working with Cindy regarding fixing the books. Steve responded yes.
 - Steve made a motion that the payroll warrant be paid in the amount of \$6884.22 and the A/P warrant in the amount of \$ 3,389.55, Ryan Willette seconded and all approved.
6. Town Clerk & Tax Collector Report: Cindy Abbott
7. Citizen's Issues and Questions
- The flyer said the price should have been \$2.50 versus \$2.00 for the tires. If Joe keeps track of the people who are making the bags too heavy, he can let the select board know and they will send out a letter from the town. Steve Bennett stated that our solid waste is working well and doing it ourselves saves the town money.
 - A towns person asked if it would be less expensive if the townspeople had to bring their own garbage to the garage. Elaine Higgins clarified that if we did that we would need a transfer station, as this was looked into.
 - A citizen asked if the garbage could be picked up on both sides of the road. Joe said he goes on both sides.
 - Owen will be back for at least 3 weeks
 - Laura Greeley stated that she knows personnel issues are not to be discussed. She feels empathy toward peoples struggles.
 - Steve Bennett stated that he is sorry but he cannot discuss personnel or legal issues per state law.
 - Laura Greeley asked who would be doing the roads and Ryan Hall will be doing the roads. She asked if he has been trained for this.
 - She was also concerned about the pay and nepotism.
 - Steve Bennett stated, again that he cannot discuss this. It is not up to the Select Board to make these decisions as per the town Atty.
 - A citizen asked if the town has a policy on the books to deal with the personnel situation. Steve Bennette stated no. He also stated that they continue to write policy.
 - There is a proposal by citizens to develop a committee to develop personnel policies.
 - Steve Bennett stated that the town Atty. has suggested a number of times that we have a Town Manager.
 - Laura Greeley asked if it is the Select Boards purview to terminate someone's employment. Is it fair to the town to pay someone for 90 days if they are not working.
 - Bob Kanzler was at the town landing and said that the water is running over the dam and the water is moving too fast for young children to be around it. (The footbridge) He suggested a better

railing and snow fence. Ryan Willette said he would go down and take a look at it.

- A citizen asked about a report presented and if the town had reviewed it.

8. Review Correspondence

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9. Town Officials Reports

- Animal Control Officer: Peter Nerber
- Planning Board: Tuesday May 9th at Curra's farm.
- Recreational Committee
- Appeals Board
- Charter Committee: The proposed charter draft and public hearing announcement are posted on the website.
- Historical Society
- Cemetery Committee: Jeff was at the town office today and he is going to start cleaning up the cemeteries. Cindy Abbott has asked that it be completed before Memorial Day.
- Budget Committee: 6pm on the 23rd of May.
- CDAC Committee: Meeting in May
- School Board: Laura Greeley has requested that the school board committee chair for the town attend the select board meeting more often and hear town concerns.
 - Hearing on the school budget on the 24th of May at 6:30 pm at the school.
 - Laura Greeley has encouraged the citizens to review the proposed budget and ask questions.

10. Old Business

- Ryan Willette reported that he has the last of the water sample materials and they will be collecting all of these on Monday.
- Steve Bennett strongly recommends that people get out and come to the hearing on the charter. He feels that it is excellent and the vote will be on June 13th.
 - Cindy Abbott asked if we could record the hearing on Wednesday.
 - Laura Greeley asked if it could be done on Facebook Live.

11. New Business

- Tax anticipation note. Steve Bennette discussed this and explained that many towns submit a tax anticipation note. Our budget is not voted on until the end of March and by this time we have already spent a ¼ of the money we haven't voted on. We also don't commit our taxes until June. Then we have spent 9 months of money without money coming in.
 - To solve this, we can change the fiscal year to begin for example July 1st.
 - We can also over-tax to build up a healthy reserve. Then the money is in the bank and does not earn interest.
 - Tax anticipation note started 3 years ago. You review your bills and revenue and determine what you will need moving forward. He

presented 22 expenses and revenue. If there is more revenue than expense then it is good. If expenses exceed revenue in that month, then the excess money is requested through a tax anticipatory note. He has spoken to the bank and Eaton Peabody, who does this for many towns. We are approved to borrow \$285,000. This is much less than last year. He does not expect that we will need this this year.

- A citizen asked about the money that was given to purchase all of the purchases that were made on equipment. Laura Greeley stated that because the figure is approved the money can be spent on a variety of things. The citizen (Bob Kanzler) would like to have a closed ballot system that could be used so that if people could not attend the town meeting they could still vote. Cindy Abbott clarified what can happen at a town meeting. He would like to see a ballot that all citizens could vote, even if they could not attend the meeting.
 - Steve Bennett stated that he likes the debate and discussion that occur at the town meeting and that this is tradition. It is against the law to put the town report in the mail boxes.
 - Steve Bennett stated that he feels we should change our fiscal year. He spoke with a tax atty. It can be a tax-exempt loan or a taxable loan that you would not have to pay the fee for the bond counsel opinion. There is a 75-basis point difference in the rate, but there are other hoops to jump through.
 - Laura Greeley stated that in the past we did not need these types of loans and wonders why we need to overspend. Steve responded that we were having an 11% increase in taxes in those years. Now we are only increasing 1. % per year.
 - Clint Spaulding stated that he is hearing that the town is trying to make money, why are we not trying to save money and reduce the budget.
 - Bob Kanzler asked how is the town taxing the tiny homes on wheels, Steve stated that we don't. He feels that it is living space and should be taxed regardless of it being on wheels. Ryan Willette stated that it should be looked at like mobile homes.
 - Elaine stated that the wind mills pay taxes but there is depreciation each year. They have been depreciated by 44% since they were first installed according to Steve Bennette. If they receive another depreciation this year then cumulatively, we will be losing \$100,000. The turbines have been sold and are now owned by CPV based out of Maryland and is a subsidiary of an Israeli company.

- A citizen asked on a state level what do the turbines do for this town. Steve Bennette stated that as they reduce in value there is a smaller evaluation for the school and town. In the last 3 years we have raised everyone's evaluations by 21% and we have lowered theirs by 44%.
- Elaine Hlggins reminded everyone that the vote on the Charter is on the 10th and that these types of issues are discussed in the charter. (Conflict of interest)
- A citizen asked if there was any progress on the broadband committee. Elaine Higgins gave a review of things currently.
- Ron Littlefield asked about a sign at the end of his driveway. It says Elliot Lane. His driveway runs parallel to Elliot Lane. When the road work is done, they want to make sure that it does not affect their driveway.

12. Date of Next Meeting: Monday May 15, 2023 at 6pm

13. Adjourn: Steve Bennett made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 pm. Ryan Willette seconded all approved.