

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Freedom Board of Selectmen**  
**Date: 7-10-2023**  
*Approved 7-17-2023*

**In attendance:** Ron Price, Steve Bennett, Ryan Willette, Jim Waterman, Beth Owen-Mishou, Cindy Abbott, Elaine Higgins, Nathan McCann, Tyler Hadyniak, Bob Kanzler, Trudy Price, Laura Greeley, Kyle Price, Samantha Turner, Joe Freeman, Alexis Bennett, Billy Turner, Susan B, Nancy Farrah , Jacob Brugger, Meredith Coffin, Rene Oullet

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

1. Call Meeting to Order / Finalize Agenda: Ron Price called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm
2. Review and Approve Minutes: Secretary's Report: Steve Bennett made a motion to accept the meeting minutes as amended, Ryan Willette seconded and all approved.
3. Fire Chief & EMA Director Reports: Jim Waterman
  - o Rain continues
  - o Jim was called 3 times during the day on the 4th due to the Farmers Market at the Lost Kitchen. He would like parking signs to be put out especially around the triangle area.
  - o Jim asked about the dead-end signs and if they had been posted. Ryan Willette said he would into it.
  - o Several parades and festivities in our town and area towns. The Fire Department will be doing a chicken bbq.
    - August 12th is Palermo day
    - Sept 16th Thorndike parade
  - o LS Power proposal was reviewed.
    - Steve Bennette mentioned the meeting from 4-7 at the Bessy Building in Albion on July 19th.
  - o Domestic Extremism workshop "threats to our power grids" was mentioned.
4. Public Works Report
  - o Whole in the Mitchell Road by the bridge has been worked on.
  - o Steve Bennett reported that they interviewed a candidate for the public work employee. Isaiah Humphrey was interviewed. Steve Bennett made a motion that Isaih Humphrey be hired, Ryan Willette seconded and Ron Price stated that he is not in favor, due to the process and not the individual. (the motion was retracted) Ryan Willette will set up a meeting for next Saturday with Isiah Humphrey so Ron can attend.
    - Ron Price mentioned that he received an email at 2pm on Friday afternoon about the interview occurring at 7 am on Saturday

morning. He is also concerned that we have not interviewed more candidates. He was concerned about the process and being kept out of the process.

- Two citizens asked about how many candidates were interviewed.
- Samantha Turner mentioned that since there are two positions and the one person who has applied and is qualified be hired and then we continue to look to interview more applicants.
- Elaine Higgins asked why Ron Price was not included in the interview. Ryan Willette stated that he had attempted to call Ron's home on Thursday and was not able to get through.

5. Treasurer's Report: Cindy Abbott

- Payroll warrant: \$2873.44 A/P warrant \$18090.04
- March cash balance 208,995.80 this is from Trio
- Camden National Balance = \$175,741.16 as of 7/10/2023
- Postage Meter from Pitney Bowes was ordered and updated
- Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens: \$150 one-time fee, sends two people per day to the gardens from May to October. It is a library pass program. It was suggested that it be offered by the Rec. Committee. They have an upcoming meeting and will vote on it.
- 30 Day notices were mailed on 7/1/2023, for 2022 taxes
- Thank you note from the YMCA
- Received check from USPS for rent, \$884.17
- Ryan Willette made a motion to pay the payroll warrant for \$2873.44 and A/P warrant \$18090.04, Steve Bennett seconded and all approved.
- Cindy Abbott about her meeting with Karen. Steve asked when they would be reviewing the audit and Cindy stated that Karen stated that it was up to Ron Smith.
- Elaine Higgins has asked to speak with the drug testing company that we work with for guidance on how to write our policy.
- Ryan Willette stated that he would be more comfortable if Cindy Abbott contact the drug screening company. Ron Price asked if anyone had assigned Cindy as the administrator of that policy. Cindy stated that in 2003 the drug policy was put in place. Steve Bennett asked for clarification of the policy and he stated that in 2015 when he returned to board there was no policy/drug policy. Ryan Willette said that he was under the impression that Cindy Abbott was the acting administrator of the policy and as the officer she should be the person gathering the information.
- Laura Greeley: asked about the policy that is being developed. Since the lack of the policy is costing the town, where is the town atty in the development of the policy so the town is protected. She asked why the old policy was not reapproved. She thinks it would be a good idea for Atty. Kelly to come and speak at a meeting.
- Bob Kanzler asked what the state guideline policy says. He also asked what the federal guidelines are.
  - Steve Bennett reported that we followed the Atty's direction.

- Steve Bennett stated that the director should handle the testing.
  - It is a random draw generated by the company that we contract with.
- Laura Greeley stated that she is concerned about the Town's reliability.
- Samantha Turner asked why we cannot make Cindy Abbott the director of that program since she is currently the contact person for that company.
- Ron Price stated that the problem is not the fact that we have this program, the question is how soon do we need to send them. Example: J is part time and he gets noticed on a day that he is not working.
- Samantha Turner clarified that there are environmental issues that make sense but if there is a request made and the person is full time they should go when requested.
- Elaine Higgins just wanted to contact the company to see what they recommend as a drug policy for our employees. Alexis Bennette was wondering if the company would give you a policy. Ron Price stated that they give you a template for developing a policy. Nancy asked if we could look at policies that were developed by other towns.
- Kyle Price: stated he has materials from JJ Keller. He also suggested the code of conduct. JJ Keller had a policy and procedure. He reviewed the guidelines from these. DER (designated employee representative): an individual identified by the employer to be in contact with the service agency. The person has to have supervisory responsibilities.
- Samantha asked who can be informed of drug testing and who made that decision. The board was unsure.
- Steve Bennette stated that he appreciated Kyle Price's provision of information but he does not think that it applies to the town.
- Ryan Willette asked if we had checked with surrounding towns about their policies.
- Steve Bennett stated that we are a small town and that has a public works dept, sanitation department and owns its post office. We are at a growing phase that we need to go through what larger towns do. He feels part of this is growing pains.
- Cindy Abbot presented the FOAA requests. There appear to be 6.
  - Ron Price asked that in addition to Bill Kelly does anyone else have to respond. The response needs to be made within 5 days. Cindy Abbot provides you with the requests and Steve Bennett and he forwards the request to the atty.
    - Ryan reported that Bill Kelly has responded to 3 of them. He said that moving forward that it would be a good idea to have a policy and a person to respond to

them. Cindy Abbott reminded the board that she had sent them information on having a FOAA respondent in the town. Ryan Willette also stated that town officials all need to complete FOAA training.

- Laura Greeley asked about the cost of these FOAA requests. Ryan Willette stated that someone makes a request to a town, the first hour is free, the next 2 hours can be billed at \$15 per hour and any other time after that is \$20 per hour. FOAA has a pay schedule. The individual making the request is responsible for the cost. Ron Price stated that Bill Kelly put an estimate on how much it would cost, when he responded to the individuals.
- Tyler Hadyniak asked what was being requested. Ron Price reviewed what was requested.

6. Town Clerk & Tax Collector Report: Cindy Abbott

- Cindy provided a report .
  - Steve Bennette stated that he felt that this report was positive.
  - Cindy Abbott reported on the tax reports and bills that are out.

7. Citizen's Issues and Questions

8. Review Correspondence

- There are currently 5 FOAA requests. Atty Kelly has responded to 3 of them letting them know that they have been received.

9. Town Officials Reports

- Code Enforcement Officer: Jackie Robbins
  - Property on 207 Smithtown Road, no permits were requested and there are many buildings there. Jackie Robbins has spoken to them and let them know that there will be a fine and that they need to file for a permit.
    - Laura Greeley asked if there were policies in place regarding how many people can live on one lot. The answer was yes.
    - Nancy said that a 10 x 10 building was permitted. Ryan Willette stated that they are bigger than that.
- Health Official
- School Board Director: Elenore Hess
- General Assistance Officer: Ryan Willette
- Plumbing Inspector
- Solid Waste Director:
  - Ryan Willette will pick up the tires on the Mitchell Road. The tires continue to be increasing in number.
  - There is a resident that is over packing their garbage and despite notes.
- Animal Control Officer Peter Nerber

10. Town Boards & Committee Reports:

- Planning Board
- Recreational Committee:

- Meeting Thursday Night at 6pm
- Appeals Board
- Charter Committee
- Historical Society:
  - Elaine Higgins reminded that Jennifer Nebes will be at the Town Meeting Hall on Saturday. All the proceeds will benefit Keene Hall.
- Cemetery Committee
- Budget Committee
  - Meeting has not been set up yet due to wanting to have the final meeting with the auditor. Ron Price stated that he will contact Ron Smith tomorrow.
- CDAC Committee
  - Application has been submitted. Alexis Bennett reported that they need the proof insurance from the town and that can be added post submission.

#### 11. Old Business

- Jane Sullivan from Unitell/ Direct Communication was not able to be here tonight. She could be here next week at 6:30pm.
  - Laura Greeley reported that Starlink now services Freedom.
  - Jacob Brugger stated that it is the streaming that is important.
- Steve Bennett made a motion that Ron Price sign the Pitney Bowes contract on behalf of the board, Ryan Willette seconded and all approved.
- The toilet was not installed in the post office today, it is rescheduled to this Monday as a person from the post office needs to be in attendance while someone is there.
- Steve Bennett mentioned putting Ryan Willette in charge of driveway and culvert permits on behalf of the Public Works department and Select Board. Steve Bennett made a motion to have Ryan Willette act as interim permit provider Ron Price seconded and all approved.
- Tax Commitments: Cindy Abbott asked when the select board would be filing the tax commitments. Cindy was concerned about not providing people with much time to respond to the amounts. Steve Bennett stated that he wants to make sure everyone is taxed fairly.

#### 12. New Business

- Steve Bennette wanted to add to his comments in the previous meeting regarding the closing of portions of Beaver Ridge Road.
- 706A request, besides the question on the value, there was an additional question regarding who owned the wind turbines on April 1. Competitive Power Ventures/CPV Beaver Ridge. Taxes are assessed based on who the owner is as of April 1 so we know who to send the tax bill to. Steve Bennett wrote a letter to be sent regarding who the owner is and when the property changed hands. He has asked Cindy to send out the letter via certified mail.
  - Steve Bennett stated that he does not feel Ron Price should be involved in establishing the taxes on these due to a financial conflict. Steve Bennett made a motion that the select board block

Ron Price from any decisions regarding establishing a fair value for taxing the turbines, Ryan Willette seconded.

- Trudy Price requested to hear the letter that Steve Bennette is sending to the presumed owners of the turbines. Steve Bennette read the letter.
- Meredith Coffin stated that she is concerned that they are removing Ron Price from this process. She feels that shutting him out completely is a poor idea.
  - Steve Bennett offered to read the conflict-of-interest statement.
  - Steve Bennett reviewed his concerns with the depreciation of the Wind Turbines as stated in previous meetings.
  - Ryan Willette stated that we have a standardized way of addressing wind turbines.
  - Steve Bennett stated that everyone should be treated fairly. Steve stated that we were being bullied by the company from the beginning.
  - Elaine Higgins reviewed the things that had occurred 3 years ago. She stated that the town had tried to raise what we were charging them and they countered stating that we had an agreement.
  - This is about gathering information. Ron Price was asked if he wishes to recuse himself. Ron Price does not mind recusing himself from this process. He stated that everyone signed the depreciation schedule and he did not sign. The board decided that they were not going to honor the depreciation schedule. There was a zoom meeting with the Select Board. They were going to apply for an abatement if we did not honor our contract and this would have been detrimental to the town. Their lawyer stated that they were agreeing to do this against his advice. Ron Price voted to keep the same depreciation schedule. The wind mills provided \$2 million to the town. This has come off of our state evaluation. We are the lowest participating town to the school board of all the participating towns. Ron Price said the wind turbine people are not trying to hide anything.
  - Steve Bennett said that when he talked about bullying. That is what he meant. The turbine company said that they were going to ask for an abatement and charge us more if we did not continue as stated. Steve Bennett stated that if the statute that was in force at that time was enforced the turbines would never have gone up.
  - Elaine Higgins feels that this should go to the board of appeals and be resolved.

- Steve Bennett said that the appeals board is not an assessor's agent. The assessor has recommended that we do this.
- Trudy Price: Feels that Steve Bennett has been violating a non-disclosure agreement.
- Cindy Abbot suggested that Steve and Ryan have Jackie sit in when assessing the value of the turbines.
- Samantha Turner stated that Ron Price should be able to choose how he handles his participation in the decisions about the wind turbines. Ron Price does not intend to participate and he does not feel that there needed to be a motion to ban him from discussions and decisions.
- Steve Bennett talked about the rule of necessity. In an email from Bill Kelly, it said if Ron Price decides he wants to be part of the decisions of valuing the turbines. If individuals feel that they are in conflict then they can abstain from voting.
  - Ron asked if Steve Bennett was authorized by the board to discuss things with Atty. Kelly.
- Kyle Price stated that the turbine company has done many positive things for the town. They have given much money to the town for a variety of things.
- Steve Bennett acknowledged that they have been good neighbors.
- Steve Bennett made a motion that Ryan Willette and Steve Bennett sign the letter to Atty Moser and Ron Price seconded it, all approved.

13. Date of Next Meeting: Monday July 17, 2023. 6pm

14. Adjourn: Ron Price made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 pm, Ryan Willette seconded and all approved.