

Meeting Minutes
Freedom Board of Selectmen
Date: 12/11/2023
Approved 12-18-2023

In attendance: Steve Bennett, Ryan Willette, Laura Greeley, Beth Owen-Mishou, Elaine Higgins, Jim Waterman, Brian Murphy, Tyler Hadyniak (via zoom), Meredith Coffin, Joe Freeman, Heather Donahue, Kyle Price (via zoom)

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

1. Call Meeting to Order / Finalize Agenda: Steve Bennett called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.
2. Announcements:
 - Laura Greeley reported that there are money issues in town that need to be fixed. There was a conference call with Vernice and the Town Accountant. Vernice had to do so much work that she is now being paid \$1,000 per month. Both she and Ron Smith (the auditor) had serious concerns about our accounts. The select board is actively working on fixing the issues. A plan has been put in place to fix the bookkeeping moving forward. Ryan Willette clarified that no one has walked off with money. It is more a matter of checks and balances that were never checked or balanced. There were over \$100,000 in issues and now it is down to \$24,000. It will show up as an auditor's correction line until it is figured out. Steve Bennett further clarified that it is not a new problem. They are trying to provide transparency. There are a lot of errors in the bookkeeping. \$150,000 worth of errors in the beginning of this. The money is unaccounted for in a proper way.
 - Meredith Coffin: was glad that there is a plan regarding how to prevent errors moving forward.
3. Review and Approve Minutes: Secretary's Report: Laura Greeley made a motion that the minutes be accepted as amended and placed on file, Ryan Willette seconded and all approved.
4. Fire Chief & EMA Director Reports: Jim Waterman
 - EMA Director: North Palermo Rd flooded again. Is there any way to propose to the state that they fill it in to allow the culver to work more effectively? There were multiple spots on Palermo Road that were flooded. Ryan Willette will call Peter Coughlin.
 - Steve Bennett found someone to call regarding the beavers. Ryan will call Warren Heath.
 - Jim asked about Unity Ambulance and if it is now completely volunteer. Ryan said Unity is trying to find 2 full time people and will be coming to speak to the towns.

- Truck One is fully operational. It cost \$2500 in labor and \$4500 in parts.
- Based on the budget this will be the first time that he will end the year in the red. He is assuming that the money would come out of the fire department reserve account.
- There is an outstanding bill from Reliant Equipment.
- He keeps an excel sheet at home that matches the information in Trio.
- Delivering Baskets on Saturday for Waldo Cap.
 - Elaine Higgins asked about it being on the web page. It was clarified that it had been on the web page and that it was taken down when the date of application had past.
- He will be attending the meeting tomorrow evening with Knox.
- 5. Public Works Director Report:
 - Ryan Willette reported: (no report given)
- 6. Treasurer's Report: Cindy Abbott (not present)
 - Payroll Warrant = \$5,081.77 A/P Warrant = \$7,796.86
 - Ending Checkbook balance \$208,995.80 March Cash Balance
 - Camden National = \$244,640.45 (12-11-2023)
 - Two Checks:
 - Town of Knox: \$3198.19 for FVFD Fire protection agreement. Moving forward it needs to be made out to the town of freedom.
 - EQ Shareowner Services for \$67.50 for dividends. There is also a transaction request form included for the Select Board to look at.
 - Elaine Higgins suggested they ask for a print out on the dividends distribution. That would allow us to better track the amounts coming in.
 - Ryan Willette made a motion to pay the Payroll Warrant = \$5,081.77 and the A/P Warrant = \$7,796.86, Laura Greeley seconded and all approved.
 - Cindy Abbott has requested that someone be appointed to monitor the flags.
- 7. Town Clerk & Tax Collector Report: Cindy Abbott
 - Nomination papers remain available and have to be returned by 1/12/2024
- 8. Citizen's Issues and Questions
 - Meredith Coffin asked about the planning board vacancy and when the decision was going to be made.
 - Steve Bennett made a motion that the planning board vacancy be posted in public spaces, Laura Greeley seconded and all approved.
 - Meredith Coffin asked about the appeals board review of the charter board ordinance and why they want to wait prior to having the lawyer reviewing it. She offered to help review the charter. Steve stated that the select board members would like to review it first. Steve Bennett clarified
 - Elaine Higgins mentioned that Rene Ouellet offered to review materials and she asked if it would be worth having him look things over.
 - Heather Donohue asked if we could look at our comprehensive plan, which needs to be reviewed every 10 years and is due to be

reviewed. She asked if there could be a link between the solar and power line ordinances. She asked for clarification as to the purpose of the comprehensive plan. Steve Bennett reviewed what the comprehensive plan is.

- Meredith Coffin: asked for clarification regarding the ads that went into the paper. It was for the bids for the CDAC committee.

9. Review Correspondence

10. Town Officials Reports

- Code Enforcement: Jackie Robbins
- Assessors Agent: Jackie Robbins
- Health Official: Patricia Ashland
- School Board Director: Elenore Hess
- General Assistance Officer: Ryan Willette
- Plumbing Inspector: Jackie Robbins
- Solid Waste Director: Phil Bloomstein
 - Joe Freeman asked how we are progressing with the trash bags. We are currently working on putting together an order.
- Animal Control Officer: Peter Nerber

11. Town Boards & Committee Reports:

- Planning Board: Tuesday December 12th with the goal of finalizing the solar array ordinance.
- Recreational Committee: Alyssa Brugger
 - Upcoming Christmas Craft Fair December 17th
 - Elaine Higgins asked if the vendor's need to bring their own tables?
- Appeals Board: Michael Smith
- Historical Society: Wilson Hess
 - Ryan Willette is still working on the granite.
- Cemetery Committee: Steve Holmes
- Budget Committee: December 13th 6pm
- CDAC Committee: Lex Bennett, December 20th.
- Broadband Committee: Phil Bloomstein
- Ad Hoc Policy Committee: Rene Ouellet
 - December 19th at 6:00pm
- Education and Enrollment Ad Hoc Committee: Laura Greeley
- High Impact Transmission Line Ad Hoc Committee: Heather Donahue
 - Heather Donahue mentioned that Chip Curry is having office hours from 3-5:30 at the library this Friday. She will be going as well as other members of the committee. They will also speak to him about the eminent domain bill and ask for a copy. They are going to ask for more transparency around the documents being discussed. Doug Molvey had presented an op ed in the Kennebec Journal and she plans to rebut this. She is questioning the actual benefit to Maine. LS Power is going to be putting out new letters.

12. Old Business

- CD for the paving fund. Steve Bennett is suggesting an 18-month CD which would generate the greatest amount of interest.
 - Ryan Willette made a motion that Steve Bennett make an inquiry regarding the current rates on the CD for \$101,000 and inquire about our current rate on our checking account, Laura Greeley seconded and all approved.
- Special Revenue account for heating assistance. Ryan suggested they ask Vernice about this. Laura Greeley will contact Vernice about this.

13. New Business:

14. Date of Next Meeting: Monday, December 18, 2023. 6pm

15. Adjourn: Ryan Willette made a motion to adjourn, at 7:30 pm, Laura Greeley seconded and all approved.