

Town of Freedom Select Board Minutes August 1, 2022

Present: Elaine Higgins, Ron Price, Steve Bennett, Travis Price, Cindy Abbott, Jim Waterman, and Amanda Jamison.

Present on Zoom: Tyler Hadyniak and Dylan Turner

Ron Price called the meeting to order at 6:03pm.

Motion by Elaine: To accept the July 25, 2022 minutes as presented and place on file. Unanimous.

FVFD: Jim Waterman said dry hydrant head is on order, will complete installation of dry hydrant on the N. Palermo Road once it arrives. The Association is doing a chicken bbq in Knox on August 13th & 14th, Freedom Field Day on August 20th and for Pleasant Hills Cemetery in September. The Bridges' family is suggesting that in lieu of flowers, to make a donation to the Freedom Volunteer Fire Department in honor of Glen Bridges. Jim said the fire department received two checks from Maine Cost Recovery for 2021 reimbursements that Jim had submitted totaling \$1,144.00. Jim asked Eric Lund, who was conducting downed power line training for CMP, about the fire department getting reimbursed for doing traffic control for CMP when an incident happens with one of their lines. Jim was informed he now will be able to submit an invoice to Central Maine Cost Recovery for traffic control.

Public Works: no report

Citizen's Issues: none

Treasurer's Report: Cindy Abbott reported the Payroll Warrant in the amount of \$6,545.54 and the first A/P Warrant in the amount of \$2,602.20 and the second A/P Warrant in the amount of \$16,684.43. The ending checkbook balance is \$154,954.56.

Motion by Ron: To pay the RHR Smith invoice of \$2,875.00 out of the Emergency Fund. Elaine 2nd. Unanimous.

Motion by Elaine: To pay the Harris training invoice in the amount of \$81.00 and to take it out of the Trio Support line. Steve 2nd. Unanimous.

Motion by Steve: To pay Payroll Warrant in the amount of \$6,545.54 and the first A/P Warrant in the amount of \$2,602.20 and the second A/P Warrant in the amount of \$16,684.43. Elaine 2nd. Unanimous.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector: Cindy Abbott said Peter Curra is looking for one Freedom resident to get the vegetables that Town votes to fund at Town Meeting. Select Board will get in touch with Peter Curra. Cindy said the minutes for the Special Town Meeting are complete.

Motion by Steve: For Ron to sign for the Select Board, the letter to join the KVCOG Resiliency Program as voted on by the citizens of the Town. Elaine 2nd. Unanimous.

Motion by Steve: To authorize Ron, as Chair of the Board, to sign Broadband Interlocal Agreement on behalf of the Town of Freedom. Elaine 2nd. Unanimous.

Motion by Elaine: To sign commitment tonight so we can get the property tax bills in the mail. Ron 2nd.

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Discussion about committing taxes.

Steve recommended that the Select Board not sign tonight and wait until the Board can get a legal opinion about whether Ron or Steve has a conflict of interest in signing the tax commitment. Elaine said she is not in favor of asking attorney. She expressed concern about how long it would take to get opinion and that the Town needs the tax revenue. Steve said he would not vote to commit taxes tonight, because for the last seven years the Town has lowered the valuation of Beaver Ridge Wind by over 40%, and that the Select Board has not lowered anyone else's valuation but has raised the valuation of homeowners by 21%. Ron said the State depreciates windmills in unorganized territories at 5% per year. In addition, the State follows each town's depreciation of windmills. The Town of Freedom will depreciate them another 3.5% for 2022. Ron said this depreciation of the windmills has come up a few times in the past and by agreeing to this type of depreciation, the Board avoids attorney's fees that would be passed onto Freedom property taxpayers. Steve said that because of the 40% depreciation over seven years, the Town has lost \$360,000 of property tax revenue and that Beaver Ridge Wind is asking for a 3.5% depreciation in value this year. Neither Elaine nor Ron agreed with those numbers.

Vote on motion: 2 in favor (Elaine and Ron), 1 opposed (Steve)

The mill rate is set at 19.4%

Steve video called Bill Kelly, Town Attorney. Steve informed Bill of Select Board vote on committing taxes and asked about the conflict of interest. Bill Kelly mentioned the Rule of Necessity. He said that if any of the Select Board members feel they can't vote fairly, then that person needs to say that for the record and abstain from voting. Bill said since the vote has already been taken with a 2 to 1 vote in favor, then the vote carries. Bill said the Select Board, as assessors, have a job to do for the Town. Despite Steve's onetime payment in 2008 from Beaver Ridge Wind and Ron's income generated from Beaver Ridge Wind, each person needs to decide, individually, if they can vote fairly. If parties have disclosed conflict of interest and feel they can vote fairly, then that is the assessor's role to take a vote. Bill continued that the vote stands until it is challenged. This is the process, and people can appeal if they feel it necessary. Bill added that comparing values of housing vs. Beaver Ridge Wind valuation is far more complicated. Beaver Ridge Wind is so unique whereas housing value are based on sales which have been increasing in value. Bill added that Select Board could vote to hire an outside party to evaluate Beaver Ridge Wind valuation.

Correspondence:

1. Amanda Jamison's email about Sick time/PTO time: Ron said there was no paid sick leave up until Select Board just voted on the policy. He added that with all full-time employees able to earn up to 52 hours of sick time/PTO time per year, that individual circumstances would be taken into consideration by the Select Board. Based on reviewing State of Maine's earned time off law passed on January 1, 2022, Ron will look at current policy and rewrite it.

Town Official Reports: none

Town Boards and Committees:

Recreation Committee: Cindy said they are planning the Parade and Field Day for Saturday, August 20, 2022. She said she called about getting a police officer at the end of Bryant Road to help with the parade.

Cemetery Committee: Steve Holmes dropped off quotes to replace headstones this year. Select Board agreed to let Cemetery Committee decide which stones to purchase that are

appropriate for deceased's age. Cemetery Committee just needs to let Select Board know final price of stones for Select Board to approve the purchase.

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Budget Committee: Next meeting Thursday, September 15, 2022 at 6pm.

Community Development Advisory Committee: Next meeting rescheduled for Wednesday, August 10, 2022 at 6pm.

Old Business:

1. Steve met with owner of Carmichael Transport, who delivers mail to the Post Office. They will fix roof damage, siding, and light on Freedom Post Office. Steve will also let them know about front bumper damage. No date set yet for repairs. Steve will report when he learns more.

New Business:

1. Steve said Maine Municipal Risk Management sent Town a check for \$1,510.00 for workers comp dividend since the town has had very low work-related incidents.

Motion to adjourn at 7:44pm.

Respectfully submitted, Amanda Jamison