

TOWN OF JEFFERSON
SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
November 25, 2019

The regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen for the Town of Jefferson was held at the Select Board Office Monday, November 25, 2019, at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Kevin Meehan, Chair; Tom Brady and Cindy Silver--members comprising a quorum of the Board

OTHERS PRESENT: Kathi Marshall, Assistant to the Select Board; Jeff Young was also present.

Members of the board signed warrants for payroll and accounts payable. Invoices were approved for payment December 2, 2019. Members also signed a building permit for a Verizon antenna installation upon an existing site at 87 Albert's Drive. A pistol permit and trapping permit were also approved.

Meeting Minutes Approval: Cindy moved to accept the Select Board public meeting minutes for November 18, 2019, as recorded. Tom seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Tom Brady led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Report of Departments and/or Boards

Highway: Mark was not present, but Kathi informed the board that he and Mike had been busy sanding and shoveling. He said everything is going along really well with the new truck. Tom said he thinks the new truck is making a difference—the roads look great.

Business: Kathi said this week she followed up on several things the board had discussed the week before. She got back to the funeral home, followed up with ADG and Spectrum. She also met with representatives from Bank of New Hampshire who would like to speak with the board about changing banks and what Bank of New Hampshire has to offer. Kathi also said she had a good deal of time taken up with a call from DES and the follow-up.

New Business

Liz Milligan: Liz came to present the library budget for the fiscal year 2020. She pointed out the cost of books and the rise in price of the library post office box. Liz mentioned that some budget items went down this year, but others increased. She noted there has been a decrease in their senior patrons since they have difficulty making their way into the building. Tom asked if Liz had last year's figures so they could be compared to the proposed budget, and she said she would get them to him. Liz informed board members the trustees allowance portion will be going up and library wages stayed the same. Utilities were kept the same as last year, as well as the Directors' Conference. Their budget does not reflect any cost-of-living increase the town might add. There was a new expense added which was a charge for sand/salt.

Chris & Tracy Nelson: The Nelsons own The Old Corner Store and came before the board to address the ongoing water issue they have on site. They asked the board if there was any way they might purchase the property that has the well on it that supplies the skating rink. The store currently has a surface water system and as a commercial establishment they are required to have an underground system. For several years they have been working with the Department of Environmental Services in an

effort to locate a feasible spot where a well could be dug. However, due to the underground fuel tanks, the required set-back distances and basic lack of appropriate space, they have not been able to dig a well on the premises. Tom said if they were to sell town property it would have to go to a vote at town meeting with a warrant article. He also mentioned we probably wouldn't have an answer on the school situation until at least March and whatever occurred there could have an impact on the town's use of the well.

Tracy mentioned the town voted to allow them to use the water from that well, but did not give them water rights. Accessing the well would cost \$14,000. Without water rights a new select board could change the situation, and the store could literally be without water in the future. They are seeking a more permanent solution. Chris and Tracy have investigated putting a well on a couple properties, but have encountered other issues. A couple of locations do not have septic systems, and if they were granted permission to put a well on the property there would be a mandatory 75-foot circumference around the well on which nothing could be built. That impacts where a new septic system could possibly go in the future, and land owners are not apt to want to deal with that. Other options require them to go across Route 2. Chris said there are many lines that run there, and if you hit one or interfere with one, they would be liable. And they have no idea how many lines are there or how they run.

Tracy said she has been testing the store's water every month for the past two years, and it has always been good. The last test was positive for E-coli, so they have been using bottled water for the coffee and tea for their customers. The Department of Environmental Services has been working with them in an effort to find a constant, dependable source of clean water. There was a corner the DES agreed would be suitable for them to dig a well, but the Department of Transportation rejected it since it was too close to a right-of-way. They are simply trying to find a permanent solution, and are hoping they can acquire the land from the town that has the well.

Kevin asked if they would mind, if the property was sold to them, if there was wording in the warrant that made it clear the town could use the property and the skating rink. The Nelsons agreed. Tom said at this time he would not be in favor of the warrant article, since the school situation has not been resolved yet. He also pointed out that piece of land is the site of the old school, and there is also a monument there. He felt the Nelsons should work with DES to exhaust every other possibility before the town was asked to let the property go. Tracy then asked if the town would be willing to give the store water rights. Kevin said we would have to go back and see what the lawyers had to say about the issue. It was possible if the town granted water rights they would have to charge a fee. They would also have to have the water checked. There could be other fees involved as well. It was decided to check with DES regarding stipulations.

Cindy said it would still be possible to put a warrant at the store to try to get the necessary signatures of support from patrons. Tom said the warrant articles have to be sent to DRA (Department of Revenue Administration) for approval. Kevin said whatever warrant article is presented at Town Meeting has to be approved with regard to exact wording regarding legality and finance. In 2017 the town did vote yes on Article 11 which states: *To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board to sell water from the Skating Rink well to the Old Corner Store at a price and under conditions to be negotiated by the Select Board.*

Tom said we need to find out what the requirements would be in selling water to the store. What would be required for testing. Board members agreed before any decision can be made we must check with DES regarding all contingencies.

Kathi had followed up on the concerns about the water running from the back of the Old Corner Store

that has effected some residents' properties. They expressed concern about the content of the water and wanted to make sure there were no contaminants. The water was tested by Rick Triess in early August, and it is only water, nothing else.

Unfinished Business

ADG: Kathi confirmed Stuart will be coming for the meeting Monday, December 2, at 6:00 p.m. Cindy asked if he needed anything else from the board, and Kathi said he asked her for information about the septic system and if the town could be the only “owner” of it. Tom was curious why Stuart was asking about this type of information, and Kevin said it was because one of the considerations in the feasibility study was the sale of the town office building. Tom said the building could be sold without the septic system property, and Kevin said there would have to be serious consideration about a sale since the septic system also runs under the parking lot.

Spectrum: Kathi also confirmed that John Maher, negotiator for Spectrum, has agreed to a phone conference call on Monday, December 2, as well. He will call the town office at 5:00 p.m.

Israel River Campground: Kathi had sent each board member the report from Shane Csiki who had come up to study the overflow situation on Larcomb Road. Cindy mentioned Shane was sending a report to the owner of the Israel River Campground, so she would know what was going on as well. Kathi asked if there was anything else the board wanted to do regarding this issue, but it was determined the town had done all it could.

Town Hall Rental: Previously the board had made decisions regarding the new town hall rental agreement to become effective January 1, 2020. Since there were price changes and procedures that changed they agreed they should let the public know beforehand. It was decided the information could be posted in the town office, on the bulletin board and online. (Kathi mentioned the town website was very limiting, and the quality of the work done there left a lot to be desired. Tom suggested they look into a government-operated website, and Kevin e-mailed the information to Kathi. The idea of creating a “user-friendly” website was briefly discussed, and Cindy asked that it be put on the agenda for a future meeting.)

Funeral Cost Assistance: With regard to the cremation costs Ross Funeral Home was asking the town to pay, Kathi called Ross to let them know there was a grant offered by the Phaneuf Foundation that offered to issue a grant to any person, family member, friend, funeral home, etc. who applied for assistance to help with someone's burial costs. The grant was \$1,000. Ross told Kathi that Phaneuf was their competitor, and they would not go to them and ask for money. They said they would rather write it off. Kathi asked the board members if the town should pay the \$750 in this case, and they decided since a grant was available, the town should not have to pay.

Warrants: Norman Brown went out to the two properties that have been returned to the town in order to make sure they have been vacated. He will also arrange for the locks to be changed and a plumber to winterize the residences. One home had been vacated, but the other still had someone living there. Michelle Smith presented Norman with a check for back taxes telling him she was instructed that it was what she needed to pay in order to keep her house. Kathi said the house is no longer hers, but the town's, since the deed had been filed with the Registry of Deeds in Lancaster. Norman did not evict her but returned the check to the town office. Kevin said he was not aware of a time when the town had been in this situation. Usually people paid their past due bill before the eviction date. Tom was concerned about the town's liability now. He asked if the check had been deposited, and Kathi said it had not. Kevin said Kathi should check with the lawyers, because there may be some unwanted legal repercussions if we deposit the check.

School Gymnasium: The Whitefield Recreation Dept. has requested to use the gymnasium at the school for basketball. At the last meeting Kevin asked if they could supply us with their schedule. Kathi said they want to use the gym Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays from 4:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. throughout basketball season. Cindy asked when the boy scouts were there, and Kevin said they come in about 6:30 p.m. on Thursdays. Kathi said now the board is presented with the issue of entrusting alarm codes and door locks to another group or having someone there every day the gym is being used so they can open up the school, close it, and set or disengage the alarm. Tom said he was not comfortable giving out the security code to anyone who rented the building. He was also concerned about having groups use the building and not having someone there to supervise. Board members did agree the school building was worth charging a rental fee for to outside entities wishing to use it. Kevin said even Colonel Town charges user fees.

Tom mentioned someone made a suggestion to him about trading off the rental fee for paying a custodian to open up and close the building when it is rented. Cindy felt it might be too early to begin renting the building because of these issues. She said it would be good to use the building because we are heating it, but we need to work out important protocols first. Tom mentioned there is no emergency phone at the school yet, and we don't know if a cell phone will always work there either. It was decided it's too early to begin renting out the school, because we simply don't have the procedures in place to safely accommodate the proposed activities. Kathi said she would let the Whitefield Recreation Dept. know it was not possible at this time. Cindy asked about the boy scouts who are currently meeting there, and Kevin said they are the Jefferson Boy Scouts, and are a town-affiliated organization. Going forward the board will look at each request on an individual basis.

Eversource Energy Choice: A representative from the Eversource Energy Choice program reached out to the town in order to see if they could present a possible lower fixed-rate for the town's electricity costs. Kathi faxed them the bills, and they did a cost analysis. Tom said if we were going to change we should probably do a bid process and see what other companies would offer. The board studied the proposal submitted, but the price differential was so minor, they decided to stay with the plan we currently have.

Accounts: At the previous meeting Tom asked about the reserve account and what the balance was, and Cindy inquired about the account for roads and highway maintenance. The Highway account we use to purchase sand and gravel has \$1,000.00 in it, and the reserve account has over \$600,000. The \$18,000 given by the governor for municipal aid (one of two installments—the second to be given next fiscal year), was used to temper the raise in property taxes this year.

Non-Public RSA-91-A:3 (If needed)

Public Input: Jeff Young mentioned that Tuesday, February 11, 2020 is our primary for the presidential election. And this week Will Decourcey was formally nominated as alternate for the Planning Board.

Any Other Business

Bank of New Hampshire: Representatives from the Bank of New Hampshire have asked to come before the board to demonstrate what their bank could do for the town. Kevin asked where their nearest branch was, and Kathi told him it was in Whitefield with another in Gorham. Kevin said if we did go that route we should have Terri sit in on the meeting since she is the Treasurer. Tom said he always wants to follow through on opportunities that may mean more income for the town, however at this time with everything going on, it might not be a good idea. Tom said Kathi was still learning the position, and the school project was going on—he asked if we wanted to take on another financial study at this time. Cindy said it might be better to explore this in the future when things have settled

down. Kathi said she was glad they decided to put it on hold since she was looking at the upcoming budget, the town report, and the annual audit. Kevin said we have changed banks before and it is a long process. The board will hold off for now.

School Maintenance: Cindy had an update from John Silver on the work in progress at the school. A new screen was put into the pellet stove. He had to get a new eye-sensor, and a new pellet heater motor. They started the pellet stove and everthing worked well.

Adjournment - Tom made a motion to adjourn. Cindy seconded the motion. The motion carried.

The next meeting will be December 2, 2019.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,