

TOWN OF JEFFERSON
SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
December 2, 2019

The regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen for the Town of Jefferson was held at the Select Board Office Monday, December 2, 2019, at 6:00 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; Mary Gross, Bruce Hicks, Ken Jacquart and Jeff Young were also present.

Members of the board signed warrants for payroll and accounts payable. Invoices were approved for payment December 9, 2019.

Spectrum: John Maher, the representative from Spectrum called the town office to see if he could help the Select Board with their questions about internet service throughout Jefferson. Kevin said the town needed information regarding the recently-expired contract with Spectrum. Kevin went on to say the town ordinances in Jefferson do not allow houses to be built as close together as Spectrum stipulates in order to supply internet service. Due to the 2-acre lot size there will never be 30 houses in one mile. It means that most citizens of Jefferson cannot get internet access. Tom asked how Spectrum will create expanded service to the town. John said he will have to talk to engineering and construction to see what Spectrum can do. Kevin told him Spectrum runs service through Jefferson on the main corridor, but anyone living off the main road cannot hook up to service without an extreme cost to them individually.

Tom suggested John come up to a meeting to discuss the contract in person. Tom also commented on the fact the contract with the town is written up as a cable television franchise. He wanted to know why it did not specify internet. John said Spectrum is a cable television franchise that offers internet service and sometimes phone service, but the only thing communities can negotiate on is cable television. Tom said it was interesting that surrounding towns have negotiated to have internet service in their entire town. Tom went on to say there are many families in town who are angry they have no internet access. They come to board meetings and want to know why Spectrum is not servicing their roads when Spectrum has done some others. Tom said the neighboring entire town of Randolph has internet availability through Spectrum, why not Jefferson.

John asked if the town had done a survey to obtain this information from townspeople. Tom and Kevin both said the board didn't need a survey. Everywhere they go people ask them why the town has no service. John inquired if that was the "number one issue." Tom said the number one issue is that people are angry they have no service. They consider it discrimination since Spectrum is denying their children the basic needs to aid in their education. Tom said internet access is no longer an elective or luxury, it is a necessity. Spectrum is not supplying Jefferson, and that's the problem.

John asked if the library and school had access, and Kevin said they did. John asked if the town had access to Verizon or AT&T, but Kevin said there is nothing that serves the community at large. Of what is available, there is no consistency or dependability, and no access to all. Tom said companies that utilize satellite, have data restrictions on them and the cost makes it nearly impossible for families. He said Spectrum has what is needed for our town, and they are withholding service. Kathi asked why

Spectrum is advertising all over Jefferson with full-color ads in the local papers. When people call for service they are told it is not available. Kevin asked if there was anything else John wanted to say, and he said he did not. He promised to find the answers to questions presented. Tom also said the town would like a copy of Spectrum's liability insurance (which was supposed to have been provided earlier) to have on file in case of damage claims. Tom said the insurance should be dated back to 2004, and if it is not, that leaves Spectrum open to having been in violation of the original agreement. Cindy reiterated that people in town cannot run businesses out of their homes, and it is not fair to them. She said we need to see progress and what is being planned in order for us to move forward.

John said he would get back to them. Tom asked when, and John said after the holidays. Tom said the agreement expired in November, and we have been trying to remedy this for months. Cindy thanked John for his time, and said the town wants to work with Spectrum, but we really need to see positive action. John said he would get back to the board in 4-5 weeks.

ADG: Stuart Arnett of ADG presented his report on a variety of plans moving forward on the school with regard to pricing, tax impact and viability. He had also been asked to begin work on the wordg for a warrant in time for town meeting in March.

He presented five scenarios beginning with “No Improvements” and moving up to “Code Compliant and High-Energy Efficient.” The first three categories needed little or no change with regard to code requirements, while the other two would have to meet particular energy and other state codes.

Stuart said he was also asked to estimate the tax impact to townspeople with regard to school changes, and that would be effected by the amount of the bond and the length of time in which the bond had to be paid back. He said it is important to organize funding for any project where major changes will be made. You would need to consider the pledges made to the library building campaign. Are those funds available to go toward this project? Would the town consider selling the land on which the library was going to be built? Could those funds go toward this project? How much would the library and the Historical Society be willing to contribute? Financing would be very crucial in order to keep moving forward.

Tom asked to go through Stuart's report column by column. Stuart reminded the board the report did not reflect revenue, only costs. **Column A** reflected estimates of cost if the school was left “as is.” The sub-total was estimated to be ±\$165,000 (That includes costs for miscellaneous, a savings for unplanned repairs or replacements, other capital costs, project management, etc.), which is about a \$13 cost per sq. foot. Stuart said the estimates were liberal, but any building that has not been occupied for a period of time will have issues once everything is up and running.

Column B reflected minor improvements with no code requirements. He said these costs reflected changing flooring where needed, door locks, fixtures, work in the bathrooms, and making certain areas are created that allow ease of operation for the departments going into the school, such as library, Historical Society, and town offices. It would also include work on the cafeteria/community space as well as the other capital costs, project management, etc. The sub-total was estimated to be ±\$636,000, which is about \$50 per square foot.

Column C reflects a step-up because it includes altering the building's appearance. It includes replacing finishes, wall partitions, painting to walls and ceiling, lighting, handicap access, kitchen work and major floor replacements. You would have a nicer looking building, better insulation, the desired lay-out for offices, etc. This estimate would be ±\$1,432,000, which is about \$113 per square foot. Stuart mentioned there was still asbestos beneath the flooring in some areas, and there were carpets that

really needed to be pulled up and replaced. Kevin mentioned that two or three rooms have asbestos under the carpeting and if we pulled up those carpets, we would remediate the asbestos.

Columns D and E reflect much more extensive work and are estimated to be around \$1,661,000 for Column D changes (\$131 per square foot) and \$2,072,000 for Column E changes (\$163 per square foot).

Tom mentioned the cost for work in the bathrooms in Column B was \$25,000 and in Columns C, D and E the cost was estimated to be \$90,000. He asked what the higher cost reflected. Stuart told him that was to add a shower to one of the bathrooms and make them all handicap accessible with updated fixtures. Those changes dictated going into one of the existing closets in order to accommodate the new shower. (Note: Showers would be needed in the school was ever to be considered an emergency location for townspeople in the event of some disaster. The board was looking at that possibility because there may be grants available if the town has an emergency location.)

Tom also inquired about the difference in price for the library costs for Columns B, C and D. Stuart said column B was simply to make sure the library could set up and their stock could be displayed, etc. The rise in price in Column C reflected the aesthetic upgrades to the walls, floors, lighting, etc. Column D goes down because now some of the physical changes to the library are the same changes needed to accommodate the Historical Society, so those costs are not doubled but are reflected as a kind of “package deal.” Column D goes back up again because now all of the sections of the school are sharing the operating costs, better insulation, lighting, heat, etc.

The kitchen prices reflected replacing some of the older equipment with new. Kevin mentioned the Fire Department put in a new grille, new frylator, a new hood (up-to-code), etc. The kitchen may need a new dishwasher. Stuart also mentioned issues with the freezer. Kevin said the Fire Department also put some shelves in the storage area, and Stuart commented the outside entrance needs some work. Tom asked about the \$110,000 in the kitchen. Stuart said it reflected new flooring, ceiling work, lighting, new tables and adaptations to allow for recreational activities.

Tom said he wants to make certain this project is ultimately feasible with regard to cost for the citizens of Jefferson. He asked if some of this pricing didn't necessarily have to spent right off, but might be done over a period of time. Stuart said that was up to the town to decide. He said there are a lot of “optional” things, such as the kiosk and children's playground, so those costs could be deferred until the town was ready.

Cindy said we're at a point where we might want to look at this project from an “a la carte” aspect. We may elect to pick and choose the things we know we need to do, and put off some of the things we don't have to do at this time. She said it would be good to put together a committee to really look into what is needed.

Tom said it is important we make this information available to the public, especially with regard to what the actual financial impact will be. Within the report the financial interest rates are reflected. Ultimately, if the town borrows one-million dollars and the school district doesn't go up or the county doesn't go up, the cost to taxpayers would be \$66.00 per \$100,000 of property value.

Tom said the next step is to check with the fire marshall to determine what would be “code-compliant.” Once we determine that, we will know if we are restricted to Columns A, B, and C or if we could consider Columns D and E. Stuart reminded board members the report does not reflect revenue, and funds we have toward the project will also have an impact on the ultimate cost.

The question was asked about the school and its conceivable value on the market. Stuart said there are not many other buildings like it with which to compare prices, but there is a former dental office in Lancaster, and that is going for about \$10 per square foot. He said even going with the complete renovations on the school, it would be much less than what a new building would cost.

With regard to resources on hand, there are donations that were made toward the library fund to build the new building, but each of those donors would have to be contacted to see if their donation for a new library could be used to renovate the school. There are also pledges to the new library fund that have since expired. Those people would have to be asked if they would re-pledge toward the school project.

Stuart also presented wording suggestions for the warrant that would be presented at Town Meeting in March. The exact wording will depend on many things, including revenue on hand, the plan we elect to go with, whether or not we make changes over time or all at once, etc. There would also have to be a separate warrant if the board wanted to repurpose the money that was originally donated toward the new library project to fund the school renovation.

Cindy asked members who were in attendance if they had any questions or comments about the report Stuart gave. Ken said he was really interested in how the new changes to the school would effect his taxes. Bruce said he wanted to discern if he would be getting any services out of this project or if he was just paying for something he would never use.

Kevin said we are running out of space. The town offices are much smaller than they need to be and regardless of whether or not the town votes to renovate the school, we are going to have to expand or build something to accommodate the town employees.

Tom felt the next logical step was to go to the school with the fire marshall, discuss the changes, and find out what we have to do to be code-compliant. That should be done as soon as possible, and he felt it was the responsibility of the board members to do that. Tom said that would help to gain clarity so the public would know exactly what they were voting on at Town Meeting. Cindy said we definitely need to narrow down the choices of what we plan to do. Tom said the fire marshall should issue a report or send a letter to the board so we have it to support what we do moving forward. The board agreed that a committee should be formed to follow through on the details.

Meeting Minutes Approval: Cindy moved to accept the Select Board public meeting minutes for November 25, 2019, as recorded. Tom seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Kathi asked to change a sentence in the minutes that were approved. Tom made a motion to reconsider the minutes and Cindy seconded the motion. The motion carried. Kathi said she wanted to delete one sentence under the Old Corner Store portion because DES was not monitoring the water overflow there. If the town wanted DES to get involved they needed to file a report. Cindy moved to delete the line "It is currently in the hands of DES and will be monitored." Tom seconded the motion and the motion carried. Cindy made a motion to approve the amended minutes for November 25, 2019. Tom seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Tom suggested a letter be sent to DES with a return letter requested, and ask what this water run-off is, where is it coming from, and why did it suddenly appear. Can someone make sure the containment structures there are solid. The water runs across our sidewalks and we would like to make certain there is no cause for concern for our citizens. Tom made a motion for the letter to be sent and Cindy seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Mary Gross/Abatements: Mary presented a list to the board members of taxpayers no longer in residence at the campgrounds, but who were on the current tax list. She said they all needed an abatement. She wasn't sure if the town assessor had been to the campgrounds this year to check this list and remove those who needed to be taken off the list. Kevin asked who was responsible for removing the names, and Mary said she believed it was the tax assessor. She confirmed the campgrounds send a list annually of the people who need to be removed from the list. Mary said she would check with John Trumbull about the procedure. The board approved the abatements.

Mary also presented an abatement for Mr. & Mrs. Frederick Lovejoy at 789 Meadows Rd. The value of their property was never changed for the 2019 warrant (\$230,000). An abatement was needed to reduce the tax amount to \$120,000 as authorized on April 8, 2019. Mary also presented an abatement request for William S. Lauze. A parcel of his property was deeded to the town and was not posted to the 2019 warrant as exempt and therefore, needed an abatement. Tom moved to “abate the property of Frederick and Susan Lovejoy in the amount of \$110,000 and the property of William S. Lauze in the amount of \$556.00. Cindy seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Cindy made a motion to do an abatement for campers on the list presented to the board by Mary Gross in the amount of \$2,504.00. Tom seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Report of Departments and/or Boards

Highway: Mark was not present, but he wanted the board to know that the signs were being made for the truck and should be ready at the end of the week.

Business: Kathi said she had a short week so some of the things she wanted to follow up on were not completed. Kathi also mentioned the new town truck has been recalled. She will get in touch with Mark so he can take it in and have them address the issue.

New Business

Planning Board Survey: Bruce Hicks mentioned he received the survey from the Planning Board regarding the 10-Year Plan. He said it was a good idea, but it seemed like a lot more spending again. His concern was there is no mention of how we will pay for the things it would be good to have such as internet service, bicycle trails, and sidewalks. He would like to see the Planning Board keep the public posted with the projects they plan to do. Bruce also expressed concern about Fish and Wildlife staying within certain boundaries, and he knows they have tried to acquire land on Owl's Head. Kevin said they did come to the board and inquire about that land, but the board declined. To date they have not advanced the issue. Bruce also mentioned that with the town's 2-acre lot size requirement there is no more available land on main highways and possible new owners are forced to move back off the roadways to build. That creates a huge expense for roads, phone and electric services, etc. It basically kills the town's tax base. Bruce felt we did need some development in the town to increase our tax base.

Kevin mentioned the regulation specifies a 2-acre lot if you want to build, but it also stipulates it must be a 5-acre plot if you are doing a subdivision. Bruce said they had once considered a panel to work on subdivision regulations and maybe that's not a bad idea.

Tom said we have to be careful about regulations, because the more you regulate the more difficult you make it for people to afford to build on a lot. The state says they want more affordable housing. They say you can't have an effective workforce without it. But with more regulation you are simply making it impossible. Bruce agreed and said there are ways to build off the main roads that offer cluster housing that does not interfere with the views and landscape. Jeff Young said the Planning Board wants feedback on what the town is looking for, so they can present a warrant to determine how the public

would like the board to proceed with changes or improvements.

Kevin said to be fair, the past two ten-year plans were approved without changes. The reason the survey is going out now is because the town is in the 12th year without a plan, so the board is really looking at what the public would like to see, and how we can go about making it happen. Cindy asked if people might wonder why the survey is out now with everything that's going on with the school. She said it's actually all a part of the overall plan, and both projects will work together for the ultimate look and function of the town.

Tom said a surveyor told him the 200-foot frontage requirement in Jefferson prevents people from accessing land behind certain properties because they can't get to it. It is another barrier to increasing the number of residents. Bruce agreed. These regulations are also a part of the reason cable companies won't bring internet access to the town. If there aren't that many homes down that road, they aren't going to run cable there.

Unfinished Business

Deeds: Kathi mentioned the deed served on Michelle Smith and the check Michelle wrote to the town to recover her property. Kathi did not deposit the check and the board wanted to make certain we checked with the lawyers about how to move forward. The property has been returned to the town, but there is someone living there. Kathi will call the lawyers for information concerning liability and what, if anything, is inferred if the check is deposited.

Old Corner Store: Kathi did not have time during the short holiday week to contact DES regarding the water rights for the Old Corner Store to the well on town property. Tom said the Old Corner Store is not the only building that is being served by that surface water system—there are about six or seven other residents. He said he is already being asked by one of those residents if they can hook up to the town well. Kevin said we need to know if once we allow the store access, do we have to allow others access? Kathi asked if it would make a difference since the store is a commercial business as opposed to being a resident. Tom said they are all taxpayers, so commercial or residential probably makes no difference. Tom said we also need to ask DES if they have tested the source of that surface water system. If the store has tested positive for bacteria, are the other residents also being effected. Tom said this entire issue is really not the town's business. It is a private issue. However the town has been drawn into it because of the request for access to the town well. Kevin said that's a question for DES.

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

Public Input:

Any Other Business

Athletic Association: Cindy mentioned the Athletic Association will be setting up the ice skating rink so townspeople can ice skate. She said it will be set up, they are just running a little bit late.

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

The next meeting will be December 9, 2019.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,