

TOWN OF ACTON SELECT BOARD MEETING

August 14, 2024

6:00pm

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. WARRANTS/BILLS - Signed

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Norwood made a motion to approve the agenda for August 14; seconded by Walsh. All in favor. Motion carried.

4. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Norwood made a motion to approve the minutes of July 31 and August 7, 2024; seconded by Walsh. All in favor. Motion carried.

5. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR WEEKLY UPDATE

- A. Conference call with Cartiographics was held regarding adding cemeteries. If the cemetery committee marks a 11 x 14 set of the maps with red pen where the cemeteries are and note their names, Cartiographics will at no charge create a layer to be put on top. A charge of \$300 - \$500 would only occur if the Select Board didn't want to wait until the annual maintenance update in April.
- B. Maine Municipal sent a dividend check for \$4,070 for the Town's good behaviour in loss prevention efforts and workers comp.
- C. A member of the Conservation/Forestry Committee who was elected at Town meeting (Sheri Vaness) has decided to not continue in that role; position is opened and being advertised.

6. LIASION UPDATE

McGurty: Municipal Finance, Warrant & Finance Committee, APAT

- Noting for Warrant & Finance – waiting to get started.
- APAT – Nothing new other than the Director's appointment.
- Municipal Finance – There was a meeting on 8/14/24 with O'Donnell, the outside accountant (Marc Roy), Jennifer and Lauren. Thanked Jennifer and Lauren for their preparation efforts. Meeting only took an hour to go through everything. This is an agenda item this evening where material will be presented regarding proposed tax rate and adjustments.

Walsh: Transfer Station, Mary Grant Committee, Animal Control Officer

- Transfer Station – new hire is working out well.

Norwood: Fire Department, Recreation Committee, Conservation Forest Committee

- Fire Department – Discussion will be had about some items that came up with the liasions discussions with Chief Ham.

- Recreation Committee – The job description will be put out with the job posting. Still looking for people interested in the Recreation Committee.

Jon Denekamp gave an update on Soccer. There 68 children signed up for soccer. Coaches are in place for all grades; can use another coach for the PreK-K, Grade 4 and Grade 5-6 teams. Working on pulling Cheering together with Coach Nicole.

- Conservation/Forestry Committee – Sent Sherri a thank you for all the work she did to facilitate last weeks presentation by the Chair. Also had a workshop where the Town's property on Hebo Hybo was looked at. Found it very informative.

Denekamp: School Department, Planning Board/Land Use, Cemetery Committee

- Cemetery – actively looking for another member to join the committee.
- Planning Board will be meeting on August 15, 2024; will not be able to attend.

Winchell Jr.: Roads & Road Committee, Municipal Grounds

- Municipal Grounds – needs to notify winning bidder so that they can get started on the Memorial Grounds.
- An invoice was received from design company on proposal they are getting together.

7. DEPARTMENT HEAD / COMMITTEE CHAIR UPDATES

n/a

8. OLD BUSINESS

A. Law Enforcement Services

Walsh and Denekamp met today with the Chief in Rollingsford. This is a town comparable to Acton in size and roads. They currently have 3 full time officers with 2 officers in process to be hired. Discussions went well and was eye opening. Not a cheap endeavor, town has some growing to do before endeavor should be undertaken; there was a lot of items to consider that originally not even thought upon (number of officers, cars, computers, body cameras, bullet proof vests, guns, ammo, shotguns, holding cells, etc.). Recommendation is to find out what it will take to get a full time sherriff. Discussion ensued about options. It was suggested that Wakefield's information should also be considered in the comparison.

9. NEW BUSINESS

A. Mooring Ordinance Update

Letter was received by Island Fisheries regarding the Mooring Ordinances voted on at Town Meeting. After review, the Town's attorney put together a statement to be read, released and put on the website. Town Administrator read statement aloud.

B. Tax Rate

McGurty presented information on how the Select Board decided on what the new tax rate for the fiscal year would be set at. McGurty reviewed a spreadsheet of past, current and forecasted financial information explaining how the different components (operating budget, reserves, school budget, assessments, etc.) interacted and effected the tax rate. McGurty explained the

process and presented the details to get to a new tax rate of \$7.07 to be committed. Further explanation regarding following policies and using finances in accordance to those policies were also explained. Details will be posted on the website.

Discussion ensued.

Joyce Bakshi approached the Board to see if the same effort that was put into this presentation could be done with the school budget and started now instead of waiting until April. There are a lot of changes going on at the school that will impact.

McGurty indicated the school did a nice job but it would be useful to know earlier where those budgets will go. Winchell indicated every department in town will be going through the process.

The Select Board thanked McGurty for his hard work and efforts in presenting this process.

McGurty made a motion to set the tax rate for FY2025 at the rate of \$7.07; seconded by Norwood. All in favor. Motion carried.

Fire Department – AED Purchase

Fire Chief Ham approached the Select Board to ask the permission to spend the grant money on AED units and wall mounts for the Town and Transfer Station and wall mounts for the schools' AED units which they already purchased. To expend as close to the \$15,000 as possible the remainder will be used to purchase AED pads.

Walsh made a motion approve Chief Ham to spend no more than \$15,000 on the items set forth in his presentation; seconded by Norwood. All in favor. Motion carried.

Chief Ham notified the Select Board that he found out today that he secured funding to purchase a small generator and do the electrical work with the Town's Electrician with the help of EMA; invoice will go directly to EMA.

C. Personnel Policy

Norwood indicated that during a conversation with Chief Ham the personnel policy should be looked into to address some of the concerns that he had. Packets were provide with policy to review with recommended changes and Manine Municipal income protection plan which employees can sign up for at their expense, and freedom of coverage which can be offered.

Winchaell asked Chief Ham to explain his concerns with the personnel policy. Chief Ham talked about PTO being low, longevity, and the town should take a proactive approach to the benefits package and have it reviewed to stay up with market.

Winchell indicated the Select Board would need to see the list the Fire Chief had with the Fire Department then hold a workshop to discuss, upgrade and make right; compare to others in the area.

Chief Ham indicated if a third party could do the review the personal objectivity would not be in question.

McGurty indicated the turn over rate and a prolonged period of time with vacancies indicates if there are problems and the data would be helpful for the study. Fire Chief indicated it is not an issue yet but that people are looking elsewhere and comparing. He want to make sure a comprehensive was looked into recruiting and retaining.

Discussion ensued because the same trends are happening across departments. Winchell wanted to separate the Town Hall because they have committed a lot of efforts to make the work environment good.

Winchell expressed that the Fire Chief needed to list out what he needs to operate his department, what is needed for benefits, what the estimated costs are going to be, how it is going to impact the budget and then submit it to the Select Board for review. During the review, the Select Board can also see how those items can effect the Transfer Station, Roads, Town Hall personnel, etc.

McGurty indicated the Board needs to start with what the Fire Chief's expectations are before hiring an outside source because they may not align.

Discussion ensued.

- D. Excise Tax Agreement between Acton and Shapleigh
Motor Vehicle audit on Tuesday went well. One of the items recommended was to update the Excise Tax Agreement servicing between the towns.

McGurty made a motion adopt the letter as presented dated August 14, 2024 for the motor vehicle department concerning excise tax support between Acton and Shapleigh; seconded by Walsh. All in favor. Motion carried.

- E. Boondock Farm's Catering Request
There is a one day wedding at the Blueberry Hill Farm and the licqour application needs the Select Boards approval.

Winchell made a motion to approve the licqour license for Boondocks Farm's catering request for 8/31/24 at Blueberry Hill Farm; seconded by Norwood. All in favor. Motion carried.

- F. Pole Permit
McGurty made a motion to approve the CMP Pole permits for two poles located at the intersection of Hopper Road and Sam Paige Road; seconded by Walsh. All in favor. Motion carried.

10. PUBLIC COMMENT

Joyce Bakshi approached the Board regarding the research going into looking into a Town police force. Her interest lied in the crimes percapita and their seriousness to warrant expending the money to have such a department.

Norwood indicated the reason the Select Board is looking into this item in order to keep the town safe, especially if the contract deputy option goes away. Winchell indicated it was in order to be prepared with a backup plan if needed.

Denekamp indicated that putting a plan together might not be necessary now, but maybe in a few years. McGurty indicated coverage is about 20 hours a week and the feeling of the towns residents is to have more police protection, especially as there is a school in town. They as a Board are just trying to get ahead of it.

11. PENDING

- A. Rec Director Position
- B. Brush Removal/Chipping Bid
- C. Skid Stear Bid

12. MEMBERS PRESENT – David Winchell Jr., Tom McGurty, Jon Denekamp, Ed Walsh, Dan Norwood and Jennifer Roux

13. ATTENDANCE – Jason Sevigny, Joe Ruma, Wayne Ham, Joyce Baski, and Virginia Deborer

McGurty made a motion to adjourn at 7:22 pm; seconded by Walsh. All in favor. Motion carried.