

New Salem Select Board

Meeting Minutes

February 1, 2024

Selectboard Members Present: Susan Cloutier, (SC) Chair, Zara Dowling (ZD), Rick Taupier (RT)

Also present: Aaron Thibeault and Cody Hamlett, Highway Dept. Employees, Tim Hunting, Andrew Ohlson, Arthur Adams, Ann Colby, Jeanne Clayton, Steven Schutheiss

SC opened the meeting, held at the Highway Department barn, at 1:00 pm and introduced Tim Hunting as a prospective interim Highway Superintendent due to the resignation of Jacob Cooley. Tim gave an introduction to his background as Highway Superintendent for the Town of Shutesbury for over twenty years. He discussed his experience with road maintenance. He stated he was willing to work for the town as the interim Highway Superintendent. RT asked if he had any constrictions on time due to his retirement. Tim stated he has some constraints but he thought the interim job would fit in with the constraints of his retirement.

Both Cody and Aaron stated they wanted more inclusion in decisions made regarding the Highway Dept. and the need to address community problems. Aaron stated he thought the department was running on “flat tires”. RT stated it was good to hear the comments from the employees and that it might be useful to have a second in command in the department and that overall there is a need for better communication. Aaron and Cody thought they need better access to communication while working and suggested cell phones or two way radios and make sure the office answering machine was monitored. They also suggested better use of the town website. The Selectboard asked them to notify RT of problems.

Aaron stated that he thought they needed a mechanic as they were currently down a plow truck. A suggestion was made to have a local mechanic to work on the highway vehicles and Tom Carey was mentioned as a possibility.

Jeanne Clayton asked a question on the number of employees that were in the department and number of hours worked.

SC commented that we should look at what is needed for the department for the next five years. Jeanne suggested that there be annual work plans. Aaron suggested the possibility of posting what is planned monthly.

There was discussion regarding obtaining better material for dirt roads as sand washes away. We need engineering on dirt roads for drainage issues, Tim stated he can do some of that.

There was a question on whether the town needs back-up plows as currently we are down a plow. Cody said if it snows five inches or less they can handle it but over five

inches they need assistance if Cam Dunbar is not available to help out. Cody also suggested a yearly evaluation of all equipment.

There was discussion of needed licenses for the employees: CDL and hoisting licenses and covering the cost of them for the employees. Cody thought the new building should be finished and heat was an issue in the existing building. There was some discussion about resolving the hearing issues so that the wood stove would not be needed. Cody and Aaron asked that their job description be emailed to them as they had not received them.

SC adjourned the meeting at 2:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Neal