

**Town of *New Salem* Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
June 13, 2022
Town Hall, New Salem, MA 01355**

Convened: 7:00 pm

Present: Hugh Mackay, Carl Seppala, Selectboard; Kathy Neal, Town Coordinator; Sarah Kohler, Planning Board; Jen Potee, Board of Health

Selectboard Reviewed & Signed the Following:

- Payroll & Vendor Warrants

Discussion Items

Appointments of Employees 2022

Hugh noted that he asked for a separation of employees and committee, board, and commission members this year. This will allow for a bifurcation of the process and will also allow the Selectboard to simply approve employees who should be retained, and also allow the Selectboard to more readily consider vacancies. Hugh also pointed out that in doing the new town website, it was discovered that several deceased persons were still on committees. This has to be rectified. Sarah noted that Planning Board needs a new Associate Member. This person is appointed, unlike the other members who are elected, and they are really there for things like Special Permits in the absence of an elected member. This is similar to how Associate Members function for the Zoning Board of Appeals. The term is two years. Hugh responded that this is part of why we need to work on this front. We need to take a look at the various bodies and make determinations. He asked Sarah if Planning Board has any candidates. Sarah responded they don't at this stage, but are working on it. She invited any interested residents in town to consider coming forward. Carl suggested we could post vacancies on the new town website as well as possibly publishing the vacancies on the towns website and in the *New Salem News*. Hugh then briefly read over the appointments. This including noting several town officers up for re-appointment like the Highway Chief and the Public Health Nurse. The Public Health Nurse wasn't on this meetings list, Jen noted. Kathy responded that was an oversight and she would be up at the next Selectboard meeting. There was a question regarding Town Counsel by Sarah. She noted that to her recollection the Barletta Project was to stay with prior Town Counsel. Carl noted any such decision was prior to his service. Hugh recalled discussions last summer over the hiring of the new Town Counsel, but wasn't certain as to Sarah's particular recollection. It was suggested meeting minutes could be reviewed. Discussion returned to the appointments. We have a new Constable and need an alternate. Hugh noted there are a few odd positions such as the Fence Viewer and Field Drivers. These positions are old and hard to fill. Jake interjected to note that both positions are hard to fill and often co-appointed, i.e. same person. Hugh noted we also have a vacancy for a Hazardous Waste Coordinator. Jen agreed to see if anyone on Board of Health would be willing to serve in that role.

Review of Appointments for Committees (List of Vacancies)

Hugh brought up a number of vacancies. Several outstanding ones include the Agricultural Commission, of course that Alternate for the Planning Board, and the Animal Inspector. Jake reminded that the Animal Inspector is appointed by the Board of Health in conjunction with MDAR. Jen responded that Board of Health hasn't been able to take action on that front as of yet. Hugh asked them to do so when they are able. He then also recalled that there is a vacancy on the Board of Registrars. Carl noted that the Town Clerk usually provides names for that. It was agreed to consult with her to see if the incumbent member wishes re-appointment. A number of followups were determined as Hugh wanted to be sure that committee, commission, and board members who are appointed are asked if they wish to continue. There was brief discussion of the Conservation Commission, which has two members up. Council on Aging appears to be up in its entirety. Jake suggested to Kathy that the statute for Council on Aging be reviewed as he recalled it's usually a 3 year term. They're a creature of statute. Carl brought up the Cultural Council. There are some tricky things to remember with that body as it is also a statutory creature and has things like term limits. Jake concurred noting they can only sit for two consecutive terms and then must go off the Council for a period before any return to service and they always get a 3 year term, i.e. they don't fill a remainder of vacancy. Carl then turned to some positions that have to be filled by the Selectboard's

members. He agreed to take the position representing the town to FRCOG. Carl agreed to be the representative to the regional transit body.

Discussion on Selectboard Vacancy

Kathy reported that with Randy's resignation the Selectboard must determine if it wishes to call a Special Town Election or to continue working with the vacancy. Under MGL, the Selectboard is the only elected body that does not possess an alternative appointment route. With any other body their remaining members can meet with the Selectboard then jointly appoint someone to fill the vacancy until the next Annual Town Election. But the Selectboard cannot. Further, if it does hold a STE, that will not elect someone for the remainder of the term, but rather for the period between the STE and the next ATE. Hugh asked about the expense of holding an STE. Kathy noted it would be several thousands of dollars. A date would also have to be determined with the Town Clerk. Carl was comfortable with waiting and seeing. Hugh agreed submitting that they could continue with the vacancy unfilled and if it became an issue a STE could be called. Jake reminded that in these instances a tie vote is a no vote. So it's not too hard to govern with just two members.

Website Coordination

Hugh reported on the development of the town's new website. Things are mostly going okay, but he's having to serve in many ways as the webmaster. This is proving to be difficult as he does have a full time job. Carl submitted that this would not do and it was asking too much. He strongly felt that the town should pursue paying a vendor to carry out these duties. It was agreed to talk to a vendor the town was well acquainted with for web services, Tiny Town. They might have some ideas that could help the town determine how to move forward. Another might be to identify a person and pay them a stipend. Either an existing employee or someone new.

Board of Health Update

Jen noted she doesn't have a lot to report on Board of Health specifically. But she could report on the Orange District Health body that New Salem belongs to. They meet quarterly. She just came from their latest meeting. This district manages the grant funding from FRCOG for contact tracing. The district is centered in Orange and includes New Salem, Wendell, Warwick, and Petersham. Hugh asked how this is compared to what was done in the recent past. Jen responded it's been great because now there are pooled resources for these communities and having someone to do the contact tracing is extremely helpful for her. Otherwise, the towns are mostly the same for cases. She receives weekly updates and still oversees certain bigger picture questions in the town. If something like tuberculosis arose, she'd remain point. But the district's contact tracer handles the COVID. Another innovation from the contact tracer is that they can help with data that will provide trends. So we can know if infections are higher with students or seniors, etc. Jen then reminded that the Commonwealth is no longer going to be funding weekly testing for students anymore. It ends at the end of this school year. Carl noted that it's already transitioning to the "honor system" at this point.

ARPA Funds Discussion

There wasn't much to discuss for an update. The main focus is for work relating to the Fire Station. Hugh noted the Fire Chief is working on obtaining updated quotes as requested by the Selectboard. Carl indicated he in particular is interested in seeing updated ones. Kathy recalled that Board of Health obtained the new walk ways for the Transfer Station and that Broadband had some plans depending on how a few grant opportunities for them shake out. Jen then brought up the need for some of the funding to be earmarked for Public Health Nurse. The pandemic remains ongoing and now we have Monkeypox out there. There are already six cases of it in Massachusetts. The virus usually starts with flu-like illness and swelling of lymph nodes. Thankfully, unlike COVID-19, this virus does not spread as easily among people. Nonetheless it underlines the need for the town to continue supporting heightened public health. Hugh and Carl both agreed that funding should be set aside for Public Health Nurse services.

Old Academy Building

Hugh reported on this item. The main issue is locating some plans for the Old Academy Building. His architect friend needs the plans to assist with their work in helping advise on how to resolve several issues with the building. Sarah, as a former member of the Historical Commission who was part of the preservation and restoration project done several years ago, noted a few filing cabinets where the plans might be located. She was

pretty sure the town had them and provided Kathy with an idea of where to look. Hugh finished by relaying that once those are located plans for resolving issues with the buildings maintenance can keep moving forward.

Minutes

The Selectboard reviewed the minutes for May 31 and June 7, 2022. The Selectboard saw no reason not to accept them but determined a change should be made to the motion to adjourn on the May 31 minutes to correct it from reflecting Wayne Hachey to Carl Seppala. The other set is for the Selectboard's traditional pre-Annual Town Meeting meeting where they discussed several topics including some brief discussion with Town Counsel. The Selectboard determined to approve that set as written.

A motion was made by Hugh to approve the minutes of May 31, 2022, as amended. Carl seconded the motion and it passed by majority vote.

A motion was made by Hugh to approve the minutes of June 7, 2022, as written. Carl seconded the motion and it passed by majority vote.

A motion to adjourn at 8:25 pm was made by Hugh. The motion was seconded by Carl and passed by majority vote.

Respectfully Submitted
Jakob K. Voelker, Selectboard Clerk