

**Town of *New Salem* Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
June 27, 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; Cam Dunbar, Board of Health; Kathy Soule-Regine, Tax Collector; Gabe Voelker, Treasurer; Joe Cuneo, Fire Chief; Stacy Senflug, Town Clerk; Lisa Finestone, Tree Committee; Nancy Slator, *New Salem News*; Marley Ashburne; Frances Arnold; Karyn Briand; David Briand

Selectboard Reviewed & Signed the Following:

- Payroll & Vendor Warrants

Discussion Items

Approve Contract with QDS for Software for the Tax Collector

Kathy went over the the process she used to come to the conclusion of this vender. This contract will be for one year. It's all gone through Finance Committee and been reviewed. The funding was also allocated at town meeting. So this is the final step. Hugh asked if there were multiple vendors. Kathy responded several were considered. This will be a whole different system then she's used before. It will have a tax title portion which will be great for the Treasurer. The town will retain ownership of its data. Which is important because some companies will hold you hostage if you ever try to leave. Carl noted as long as it's ready to go he was fine with it. It was clearly vetted. Hugh asked if it's an annual contract that after 3 years it be re-bided. Kathy responded she'd like to pursue a longer term contract. One year was settled upon because it's so new and it's kind of complicated. Wendell is implementing the same software and we got a group discount buying at the same time as they did. Hugh was agreeable as was a Carl.

A motion was made by Carl to approve the contract with Quality Data Service, Inc. with software for the Tax Collectors duties. The motion was seconded by Hugh and passed by majority vote.

Discussion of Stonewall Repair Across from Stowell Building

Lisa reported on the legwork she's done so far including procuring an estimate. The stonewall in question is collapsing in numerous places. It was built at a later period than the other stonewalls in towns and lacks some of the support structure. Hugh noted it wouldn't require any bidding given the price, but we need to be sure that there is liability coverage among other related provisions. He did have some questions as to how this particular vender was found. Lisa elaborated that he was trained by a well known stone worker in the region whose known in New Salem. That person was unavailable, but this gentleman was. Hugh elaborated that this is a specialty and the price we're seeing is good. So assuming we can get the proper paperwork and insurance in order there is no reason for the town not to be in favor. Lisa noted the pricing is for \$3,500. Some "harvesting" of stone might be needed. The vender has suggested that the Highway Dept. might have some stones in mind. Most Highway Dept.'s have a stone "dump" of some sort. Lisa then turned to the causes. It appears that the wall has been damaged due to undermining from vegetation. Hugh agreed to help get in writing any agreement with private property owners abutting the area for vegetation clearing. There's little point in putting the funds in if we don't maintain it.

New Heating System for Fire Station

The Fire Chief could not make it to this meeting and it was determined to table the matter.

Accept Retirement of Joseph Camden as Chief of Police

Hugh announced that the Police Chief has submitted a letter of retirement effective as of June 30th, 2022. The Chief has offered to assist with transition for the subsequent two weeks. Gabe didn't think he could do that. But

most of the Chief's in the area would be willing to help anyone who replaces him. Hugh noted that the Police Lieutenant, who is a resident in town, is willing to step into the role at least as an Interim. He's done the bridge academy so he's capable and qualified. Gabe asked about other officers bridged. Kathy reported that one is in process and another will start the process soon.

A motion was made by Carl to accept the retirement letter from Joseph Camden as Chief of Police. The motion was seconded by Hugh and passed by majority vote.

Hiring of New Police Chief & Establishment of Search Committee

Hugh noted that one good piece is we already have the Police Future Committee. They've done a survey and will be posting results from that soon. They are planning another public forum with residents to discuss the results and where the town wants to go with it. Gabe noted they can help with the search, but the Selectboard is ultimately the appointing authority. Still, Gabe wondered why we would hire a new Chief of Police while we are still determining what the future of our department is.

Consideration of Interim Police Chief

Hugh asked about an Interim Police Chief. Gabe responded they will need to be appointed and sworn in. A term of service will need to be determined. Hugh concurred with that concept suggesting that if we can simply keep and maintain an Interim Chief of Police, we probably should for the time being. Gabe outlined how the pay would be considered and reminded the Selectboard that the department is on call. She cautioned that we also have to be careful not to have officers work more than 19 hours given the benefits that might accrue. Karyn asked about the formal process of determining an Interim. Gabe responded it has to be a vote with the person appearing on the agenda for appointment prior.

A motion was made by Hugh to formally offer the position of Interim Chief of Police to start July 1st, to the Police Lieutenant. The motion was seconded by Carl and passed by majority vote.

Questions with Town Clerk Regarding Possible Special Town Election

Hugh took advantage of the Town Clerk's presence to bring up this unanticipated item by asking Stacy about the vacancy on the Selectboard. Specifically whether the Selectboard should consider a Special Town Election. Stacy responded that the Selectboard is the one position where a vacancy can never be filled by appointment by remaining members. So the only options are to either leave the vacancy or calling a STE. Operating with two, the quorum would remain on two. Tie votes would be no votes. This can be tricky, but it is workable. There is a timeline that occurs once an election is called. This covers everything from registering to vote, voting absentee, and then of course the actual date. She didn't think an election could be called before early August. Which would be somewhat challenging for her with the Primary. The cost is usually somewhere between \$1,000 and \$1,500. Hugh asked if that would throw her budget off. Stacy responded that this is an election heavy year given the Primary and the General Election. But we don't have a Presidential Primary in March. She felt reasonably confident she could absorb it, but if not then she'd have to ask for a transfer. Hugh then turned to the idea of possibly moving the towns Annual Town Election. Stacy responded it could be done by by-law. We have fairly good records for recent years, but most of our records prior to the 1930's were consumed by fire. She wasn't even certain about why the election always happens on the first Monday in May. She recalled that the Annual Town Meeting used to happen earlier in the year. Jake interjected to say that the town could pass a General By-Law to address the ATE. This includes setting the date formally. Either codifying the date as the first Monday in May or changing it. Carl was in favor of a by-law being considered. He was okay with not necessarily calling a STE at this stage, but he'd like to be prepared and to "fix the system." Gabe asked if the Selectboard has ever considered adopting the provisions of the Municipal Modernization Act for allowing one Selectboard member to sign the warrants. This is something allowed for under the Municipal Modernization Act 2016. Jake noted that there is a provision of MGL that has to be adopted by the Selectboard, specifically session law Chapter 218's Sections 57 and 58. It was agreed to put it on the next agenda for the Selectboard.

Appointments of Committees for 2022

Hugh then turned to the list of appointments with an inquiry to Stacy about her Board of Registrars. She responded she usually does provide the names for those and was happy to continue doing so. Kathy then went over the candidates that she's confirmed. Hugh was pleased that there were confirmations and it was agreed to

produce the slips to prepare for signature. He expressed the desire to ensure that committee, board, and commission members are active and engaged. Kathy then asked Stacy about an Assistant Town Clerk. Stacy responded that up until a few years ago we didn't have an assistant. Designating someone as an Assistant Town Clerk is mostly for swear ins and for death certificates. But it's become less of a concern as the Commonwealth has modernized some things to allow processes like funerals to go forward. Jake noted that the Town Clerk is the only authority, by statute, who can appoint an Assistant Town Clerk. Stacy concurred and reminded the Selectboard that in the case of her resigning or leaving office unexpectedly they would be able to appoint a replacement for her until the next Annual Town Election. But an Assistant does fall under her purview. There are plenty of options should an elected official become unavailable. Discussion then shifted to the Town Forest Committee. That body is currently inoperable as it only has one member. David submitted the name of a forester in town who might be interested in service. Kathy then turned to the re-appointment of Calvin Layton as Deputy Tree Warden. The Selectboard was happy with Calvin remaining in that position. Kathy then went over the Inspectors, the ZBA, Tree Committee, and a variety of other posts. She noted that the Animal Inspector position remains vacant as Board of Health has not found someone as of yet to co-appoint in conjunction with MDAR. Kathy then brought up some of the regional appointments. Carl interjected to note he'd like to be the representative to FRCOG. It was so agreed. Hugh agreed to sit on the regional transportation authority. Carl reminded on that subject that there is a committee on transportation for the region including rail service. Hugh confirmed the Commonwealth is looking to restore some rail connectivity between Boston and Western Massachusetts. Kathy then reported on a few vacancies including importantly on the Historical Commission. Hugh had three people possibly interested, but was waiting on confirmation. Karyn noted there are a lot of vacancies and suggested posting them in various locations like the towns new website. Perhaps a primer on how to request appointment could be included. Kathy noted that we have put some things up on the website and in the *New Salem News*, it has helped generate interest. Kathy then highlighted one particular body that needs help. Cultural Council is down to three members and two are about to be term limited off.

Board of Health Update

Hugh noted unfortunately we didn't get to this item before Cam departed.

ARPA Funds Discussion

Hugh reported that there isn't much new to report on this item at this time.

Old Academy Building

Hugh had no new progress to report on this item. The hunt continues for the building plans from the restoration work.

Dangerous Tree

Karyn brought up this unexpected item. Noting there is a dangerous tree on her road and asked if the Tree Warden could address the matter. David noted he was working in his garden close to the area where the tree had a limb drop and it could have been a tragedy. It was agreed that either the Tree Warden or the Deputy Tree Warden would be dispatched.

Minutes

The Selectboard noted that they didn't receive the minutes from June 13th, 2022, soon enough to adopt them. It was agreed to table them until the next meeting.

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