

**Town of *New Salem* Selectboard**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**July 11, 2022**  
**Held Virtually via Zoom**

**Convened:** 7:00 pm

**Present:** Hugh Mackay, Carl Seppala, Selectboard; Kathy Neal, Town Coordinator; Joe Cuneo, Fire Chief; Zara Dowling, Green Communities; Carla Halpern, School Committee; Stacy Senflug, Town Clerk; Elijah MacCullagh, Library Board of Trustees; Sarah Kohler, Planning Board; Marty Ashburne; Brian Uphold

**Selectboard Reviewed & Signed the Following:**

- Payroll & Vendor Warrants
- Appointment Slip(s)

**Discussion Items**

***Carla Halpern Village Ultra 2022 Road Race***

Carla briefly reintroduced herself for this matter noting that this event started in 2018. It's less a race than a running event and is done on Labor Day Weekend. The event is 24 hours. Participants can join up to 4 different "courses" doing one, two or all. The two goals are fundraising for a charitable cause and the other goal is to help people to get out and exercise and to work on their own personal goals in that realm. In the past they have not had any problems, including participants always taking their trash with them. They've never had any issues with traffic or that sort of thing. Hugh asked when it starts. Carla responded it starts on that Saturday and ends the subsequent Sunday. They usually then setup and breakdown. Hugh asked about restrooms and emergencies. Carla responded that the event usually obtains permission from the town to use the Town Hall's facilities. As for emergencies, they work closely with the Fire Dept. All participants sign a release which releases the event organizers and the town of any liability. Hugh asked about opening the Town Hall. Carla responded they would need to arrange that. In the past camping has been allowed in the nearby field, but few have taken advantage of that. Most have rested in their cars if they do need request. It is understood that there is no parking on the Town Common. Hugh noted a few areas where parking could be facilitated for the event and saw no issue with approving the request. It's been approved in the past. Carl asked how access to the Town Hall is monitored. Carla responded she takes responsibility and is present the whole 24 hours. Joe noted that he's never had any issues with how the organizers conduct the event and was happy to work with them as he has in the past.

A motion was made by Carl to permit the 2022 Village Ultra to take place from Saturday, September 3 to September 4 with access to the Town Hall's restrooms with responsibility to the Village Ultra's organizers. The motion was seconded by Hugh and passed by majority vote.

***New Heating System for Fire Station***

Hugh noted that ARPA funding will assist with this project. There will be two fossil fuel systems, one oil heating and another propane for a generator. Hugh suggested combining the projects further to have it all be propane. Zara suggested it could be electric and use a heat pump. Hugh acknowledged that but submitted some limits to that idea. Zara returned that there needs to be a plan for the town, which is that when we are replacing these systems we bring it to her committee so that this can be done with the potential consideration of greener solutions. There is no reason why we can't seek both cost effectiveness as well as cleaner more renewable energy. She did not feel it absolutely necessary that the system be fully electric. But we should not simply focus on installation costs, but also long term costs and greenhouse gas emissions and the transition to renewables. She stressed that she isn't saying it's the only option. But certainly it can be incorporated and she was happy to assist. Joe noted that this request has been pending for the last 4-5 years. He had no issue with Green Communities participating otherwise. Still he stressed this system needs to be installed and worried about delay. He was generally in favor of the idea Hugh proposed of possibly combining the two projects into one propane system. He was not in favor of biomass or wood burning component systems. Carl noted he agrees with the idea that there wasn't much communication. If this has been a capital item for 4-5 years and nobody got Green Communities involved, and we're a Green Community, that's an issue. Regardless he reported on consultations he had with

FRCOG in relation to this. The Fire Station is in good and acceptable condition and he noted FRCOG recommends an engineer who can take a look at the building and tell the town what combination would work best. We could likely adopt a hybrid system that would move us in a greener direction. It would be a long term investment, but given the one time nature of ARPA funding, it makes sense. Hugh generally agreed. An engineer could assist with writing the scope of the work for the RFP which could assist in the bid process. It's not the Fire Chief's speciality to put together an RFP for something like this.

It makes sense to have someone like an engineer do it. Still, he did feel having one fuel source would make sense. Even with an electric system, there is some fossil fuel element. Most of our power generation in Massachusetts is still fossil fuel based. The town has solar panels and has done offsets to buy renewable energy. Zara concurred noting that the current system has been in place for 40 years. At some point the Commonwealth is likely to mandate electrification. So it makes sense to work on some kind of hybrid. We can keep the propane, as a backup, but we should consider the other options. She felt it important that a full range of options be considered. Joe stressed we only have \$21,000 voted to do this and there is only so much we can use of the ARPA funds. We are also up against the timeframe. No heat is not an option. Whatever is done must be done rather quickly. Further, whatever system we pick must be essentially bullet proof as the Fire Station is also our emergency command center. Hugh stressed that this project must be done sooner rather than later. It was agreed Carl would continue to work with FRCOG on finding an engineer for this project. It was agreed to seek a ballpark cost for that as well. Hugh asked Zara to work on a 5 year plan process. Zara agreed suggesting that either she or another member of Green Communities would assist on this. In the meantime, she asked that Green Communities continue to be included in these sorts of discussions, ideally at an earlier stage. Joe suggested not waiting for people to come to them. Zara acknowledged that, but stressed the ball has been dropped here by multiple parties. We can all only do so much. Joe expressed concern that this could delay the project. Carl assured Joe that this won't be dropped. Joe submitted we have really a month to figure this out and to get started as this will need to be done prior to November. He reminded that if this project isn't done in time, we'll have to rent some kind of temporary system. Zara asked for some basic information about the Fire Station and its heating system noting she can send that around to various entities that might be able to help including Mass Save.

***Acceptance of MGL Chap. 41, §52 & §56 (part of Chapter 218 §57-58 of the laws of 2016) to Designate one Member of the Selectboard to Sign Warrants***

This provision is part of the Municipal Modernization Act of 2016. It allows the Selectboard to designate one of its own members to sign warrants and authorize payment of bills for administration. The Town Treasurer has recommended the Selectboard adopt this legislation and so designate one member given the present vacancy on the Selectboard. Carl was in favor of designating it as Hugh. He outlined his understanding of the rules, including that Hugh would report on what he's signed at the meetings. He also stressed that he would still review warrants and sign them from time to time. But this would ensure that in some situations if Hugh is the only member available, he can sign.

A motion was made by Carl to adopt the provisions of the statute and to authorize the chair, Hugh, to sign the warrants under the provisions of the law on behalf of the Selectboard. The motion was seconded by Hugh and passed by majority vote.

***Appointments of Committees for 2022***

Kathy highlighted the appointments left on a number of public bodies. Sarah then interjected to note that the Planning Board has a nominee to be its Associate Member. His name is Brian. He noted he rented for a few years and then purchased the property he lives in. He's been a resident for 5 years. Sarah reminded this position is for situations when one of the elected full members can't be present or has to recuse themselves. Carl had a question about the length of the appointment. It wasn't clear if it is for one year or three years. Stacy noted the unusual circumstances of this. Sarah responded it's in MGL. Their voting is specifically for Special Permits. They can't participate and vote under all circumstances. It was agreed that David Cramer who is an elected member would send some correspondence which would provide more detailed information. Brian noted he'd be interested in eventually joining as an elected member, but the vacancy is for the Associate Member. The Selectboard was in favor of adding Brian to its appointments and appointing him to this position. Stacy noted she has returned to having Monday evening hours from 5 pm to 7 pm for swear ins. Carl then reported that he found the term length. It's for 2 years. Discussion then shifted to the Board of Registrars. Stacy reported there aren't any new names. The appointments include the Election Warden as well.

A motion was made by Carl to appoint Brian Uphold as an Associate Member to the Planning Board. The motion was seconded by Hugh and passed by majority vote.

#### ***Joint Session with the Library Board of Trustees to Fill Vacancy***

Kathy noted the candidate is Mailande DeWitt. Mailande then briefly reported on her background. She is a third year law student at the University of Connecticut and is a resident of the town who would like to be more involved. Eli noted that this is a vacancy in an elected office and the appointment would only run until the next election. Hugh had no issue with Mailande being appointed, Carl also so no reason not to support the appointment. It was agreed to proceed. This appointment falls under the jurisdiction of the MGL Chap. 41, §11.

A motion was made by Hugh to appointed Mailande DeWitt to the Library Board of Trustees, the motion was seconded by Carl and passed with Carl, Hugh, and Eli in favor.

#### ***Declaration of Surplus Property with Intent to Dispose***

Kathy reported on this topic. We have a number of older items that should be disposed of including some animal control materials that still need to be dealt with. One item is a fax machine, another is a printer. The animal items include some fencing, a catcher animal trap item, and some other odds and ends. Hugh suggested contacting the new ACO to see if they need it. As for the fencing specifically, he recalled the Selectboard happy to allow the old ACO to purchase it for \$100 at a prior meeting. He recalled it being voted upon. Carl recalled discussion, but not a specific vote. Hugh noted we don't want to disassemble it and move it somewhere. It's also not in the best shape anyway. Kathy agreed and suggested we may need to adopt some policies on disposal of town property in such circumstances. In the meantime she asked for a vote on the items. Hugh noted that we need to determine who our Chief Procurement Officer is. MGL Chap. 30B controls this sort of disposal. But only for over \$10,000. So these sorts of items aren't likely to come under that, but still we should have a CPO determined. Kathy stressed the policy she's talking about would be for under \$10,000. Until we have something further in process he wasn't comfortable with taking any votes until then. It was agreed to add that to a future agenda.

#### ***Board of Health Update***

Seeing no member of the Board of Health present it was determined to forego this topic.

#### ***ARPA Funds Discussion***

Hugh noted that few departments have come forward with requests. Still, he did receive a request from a resident for consideration of holding a town meeting to discuss the dispensing of the funds. Kathy noted that the town isn't required to hold a town meeting to determine how to expend the funds. But some towns have put together *ad hoc* committees. Stacy interjected to note that she has seen email traffic on this but asked for consideration that something be published in the *New Salem News* and on the towns website. She stressed that as long as the law allows us to hold virtual meetings we should invest in equipment for that. Hugh noted that there are some stipulations as to what can be approved. Kathy outlined the general criteria and reminded that the rules have been relaxed to basically being able to cover just about any legitimate government purpose. Hugh still felt it best to have some sort of plan for this. As for virtual meetings, it appears the General Court is poised to extend virtual meetings until December. Possibly into 2023. Hugh noted a few difficulties of hybrid meetings and the various needs. Stacy noted that the Library Board of Trustees and the Planning Board have made hybrids happen. But the boards don't have to meet hybrid if they don't want to. Assuming the law is extended allowing virtual meetings, a fully virtual meeting makes sense too. Hugh wasn't against using ARPA funds for equipment, but reminded that there's more to it than just buying equipment. Carl reminded that this is what he's saying. We can't expect members of the Selectboard to just do all of these things. It may work for other bodies, but for this one it's a bit complicated. New Salem isn't the only community with this problem and he suggested again that we talk to FRCOG. He then turned to the question of public meetings suggesting that this would likely take too much time. So instead we should likely include something on the website that would allow people to submit in writing ideas. This would allow public input but avoid some kind of lengthy public meeting. Zara responded that there is a value in a public forum. She suggested having some kind of ability for people to respond and to collaborate. Carl stressed that he's not saying he doesn't ever want to have a meeting on it. Just that we need to get ideas that are serious and that can be essentially listed. Zara suggested that the Selectboard's Clerk could assist with that. Jake responded it is very difficult to take minutes and also run a hybrid meeting. Kathy agreed noting in her hometown they do hybrids and they usually have more than one person so that it's not all on one person to take

minutes and try to run a hybrid meeting at the same time. Sarah recalled that in Planning Board's case, Steve Blinder takes the minutes while David Cramer handles the Zoom portion. It's not one person. It was agreed to pursue other alternatives.

### ***Old Academy Building***

Hugh reported this item is still ongoing.

### ***Potential Change in the Annual Town Election Date***

Stacy brought up some old business in relation to the Annual Town Election. In a prior meeting there was some discussion about addressing this and changing the date. She noted she has lived in town for 30 years and the ATE has consistently been held in May. Like Old Home Day it happens every year. Long standing tradition of holding these events on those days is what helps residents know when things are happening. The town already has relatively low voter participation and she worried about that. She also reminded for the Annual Town Meeting it has to be held sometime, under MGL, between February and June 30<sup>th</sup>. These dates can be set and modified to some extent by by-law. She noted that newly elected officials who feel uncomfortable with being elected then immediately attending a town meeting in that office thereafter, could wait to be sworn in after the town meeting. Technically under the law, the prior official carries over until the new official is sworn in. Carl understood Stacy's points, noting he has no interest in moving the Annual Town Meeting away from May/June. But he felt that the current system sets up officials to be not be prepared. He personally didn't learn a number of things until the town meeting floor. Stacy submitted that in all honestly it's unlikely anyone can fully anticipate everything. Further, if two of the three members are prepared, the newest member shouldn't be expected to participate to the same level as the other two.

### ***Minutes***

The Selectboard noted that they didn't receive the minutes from June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022, soon enough to adopt them at the last meeting. They also have the minutes from June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022 as well. Noting one minor error, that the minutes from June 27<sup>th</sup> should be amended to reflect that meeting was virtual. Otherwise it was agreed to adopt those set as amended.

A motion was made by Carl to approve the minutes for June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022 as written. The motion was seconded by Hugh and passed by majority vote.

A motion was made by Carl to approve the minutes for June 27, 2022 as amended. The motion was seconded by Hugh and passed by majority vote.

A motion to adjourn at 8:27 pm was made by Carl. The motion was seconded by Hugh and passed by majority vote.

Respectfully Submitted  
Jakob K. Voelker, Selectboard Clerk