

New Salem Selectboard

Meeting Minutes

August 14, 2023

Select Board members present: Sue Cloutier (SC, chair), Zara Dowling (ZD), Rick Taupier (RT)

SC called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

During the public comment period Shelly Robbins (66 West St) spoke about encountering a full garbage can near the overlook. Soon after, she asked the Highway Department to empty the garbage can, and they did. She noted that she thinks the town website should feature a prominent notification about the upcoming debt override vote for the Fire Department pumper truck. She asked the Select Board several questions about the new fire truck, the funding for which was approved by the town at its 2023 Annual Town Meeting. The Selectboard indicated that much of this information was discussed at Town Meeting. Robbins expressed several general complaints about town affairs. The Select Board encouraged Robbins to attend Town Meeting, read the New Salem News, read committee and board minutes, and otherwise participate in town government.

Arthur Adams stated that the Fire Department pumper truck is unreliable to the point of being dangerous, sometimes needing to be towed, and needs to be replaced.

ACTION: At a future meeting, the Select Board will discuss what needs to be added to the website. KN agreed to talk with the Fire Chief and provide information about the pumper truck on the town website.

KN presented the Town Coordinator's report.

She met with a National Grid representative, who said the company plans to invest in technologies that will enable them to more efficiently fix problems that arise with the power grid. RT noted that he had a frustrating time with National Grid during last winter's largest storm. SC suggested the Select Board write a letter to National Grid about RT's experience.

ACTION: ZD, KN, and the Energy Committee will work together to update the town's Schedule Z form

KN noted that an OWL webcam costs about \$1000, and that the projection screen costs extra. The board determined that the additional screen is not necessary at this time.

VOTE: ZD motioned to authorize the Town Coordinator to expend \$1000 from the Technology Fund that was approved at the 2022 town meeting, for the purchase of an OWL webcam to better facilitate hybrid Select Board meetings. SC seconded. Passed unanimously.

KN noted that contractors recently finished repairs to a stone wall on South Main Street across from the Stowell Building, as approved at the 2022 town meeting. RT asked about the history of the stone wall project. SC elaborated that the section of wall that was replaced was one that had been replaced previously, and subsequently failed again, and that the section of wall that was *not* worked on recently is an older historical section of wall that has never been replaced and remains intact.

Brad Foster, Director of the 1794 Meetinghouse, was present to discuss his request for town assistance for a new fire alarm system at the 1794 Meetinghouse. SC stated she thinks more information is needed because she wants to make sure town money is being used wisely. ZD said that reestablishing a formal lease between the town and the Meetinghouse organization is very important to her, since a non-town entity operating out of a town building could present liabilities for which the town needs to be covered.

Foster noted that he put together a package of information about where things stood when the previous discussion about a lease stalled out, including a copy of the last active lease, a new lease that was proposed, and another version of the proposed lease that was reviewed and revised by the Town Counsel. Foster is now in contact with someone who has experience with nonprofits buying town property, who has suggestions for how to shape the proposed lease going forward. Foster also wants to find out more about town zoning rules. He hopes to get a new lease in place with the Select Board in the next couple of months. RT expressed enthusiasm for this.

ZD stated that the board needs to check with Town Counsel about the rules for selling town property, specifically whether a request for proposals needs to go out. Foster noted he believes that RFPs are needed for both long-term lease and sale, but that one might not be needed for a short-term lease to a current tenant. He wants to work toward a long-term lease or sale because the 1794 Meetinghouse needs one in order to be able to apply for many types of grants.

Select Board members agreed to first formalize a lease with the 1794 Meetinghouse before moving forward with any potential purchase and sales agreement.

ZD asked about insurance coverage for the 1794 Meetinghouse. Foster stated that the Meetinghouse organization carries liability insurance for events, and the town carries the building insurance.

ZD asked KN whether other town buildings have monitored fire alarm systems. KN stated that the Old Academy Building, the Library, and the town offices do. ZD stated she doesn't feel it's necessary to put in the monitored fire alarm system right now. RT noted he doesn't have a position on it because of how murky the situation is with the lease, though that in his mind it may make sense to spend the money that would be spent on installing a new alarm on the process of finalizing the lease instead. Foster concurred. SC said she feels the money should be spent

on something other than the fire alarm. Arthur Adams noted that the building is probably gone even if the fire alarm does go off.

Foster concluded the discussion by saying that he wants to finalize a lease and ultimately work toward purchasing the building in order to restore it, and that despite the funding for the fire alarm system not being approved he is happy to have moved the lease discussion forward.

ACTION: KN will forward the lease information from Foster to all Select Board members.

ACTION: ZD will look at the Old Academy Building lease for reference and will compile this information along with the information forwarded from KN and any other relevant information or examples into a draft lease to share with other Select Board members for further discussion.

The Select Board discussed the progress of work on the floor at the highway barn. The board discussed how important it is for funding for similar projects to be approved ahead of time, which did not happen in the case of the first phase of the highway barn floor project. Regarding the first phase, SC said that Town Treasurer Gabe Voelker will be submitting an itemized list of expenses, to be approved by the Select Board retroactively. This itemized list will serve as an example for the Phase 2 and 3 proposals, which must be submitted before the work is done. *For a description of the three phases see the Select Board minutes of 7/31/23.*

ACTION: ZD asked KN to send the current scope of work for Phase 2 to Wayne Hatchey, as discussed at the previous Select Board meeting, and to make sure he knows that his job at this point is only to make a plan, not to do the on-site work. SC will work with Gabe Voelker to provide an itemized list at the next Select Board meeting.

KN reported on a quote she received from Entre' technologies for emails for the Police Department, Fire Department, and Town Coordinator. The price for the three emails is a \$1300 setup fee plus \$56.85 per month.

VOTE: ZD moved to allow \$2000 from the Technology Fund approved at the 2022 town meeting to be expended for setting up Microsoft 365 for the town, including an initial set of email addresses for the Police Department, Fire Department, and Town Coordinator. SC seconded. Passed unanimously. The service will be provided by Entre' Technologies.

ACTION: KN will confirm the amount of money remaining in the Technology Fund.

The Select Board discussed the status of the town flagpole in front of the Abouds' property.

VOTE: ZD motioned to accept an in-kind gift of the painting of the flagpole on town property in front of the Abouds' house. RT seconded. Approved unanimously.

The Select Board discussed the condition of several town roads. SC mentioned that Lovers Lane has been closed for multiple days. No one knew why the road was closed or who closed it.

RT stated that Moosehorn, Cooleyville, and Branch Bridge roads, all of which have berms that direct the water into the road rather than off of it, are in need of attention. Karrie Lenard (123 Cooleyville Rd) and Paul Beachell (28 Cooleyville Road) noted persistent issues with the road washing out in front of their houses on Cooleyville Road. Lenard said she thinks the berms on the side of the road are a big problem. RT told Lenard and Beachell that the Select Board is focusing on this issue as a high priority but that it will take some time.

RT said he thinks the bridge over Moosehorn Brook is not going to survive, and that it probably needs to be replaced and a larger culvert installed. SC suggested the state may help with this engineering because it's close to Route 202. Select Board members agreed that once the state is contacted about potential funding, the next step should be an engineering study of the bridge.

Paul Beachell stated he doesn't want the board to lose focus on Cooleyville Rd as a priority and RT responded that this issue is at the top of the board's list for the highway department. Beachell stated that other towns have received money related to wetland protection because road runoff has been damaging to wetlands, and that New Salem may be able to get some funding this way.

RT posed the question of whether the town should close Moosehorn Road for now, until the bridge issue is resolved. Arthur Adams suggested that this would raise issues with abutters needing property access and with the fact that fire trucks use a pump located on the road.

ACTION: RT will follow up about the issue on Lovers Lane.

ACTION: KN will send Select Board members the names of the people from FRCOG who helped the highway department plan for road improvements in the past. KN will give RT a copy of the 2019 report from FRCOG.

ACTION: RT will contact FRCOG about bringing in an expert in dirt roads to help create a plan.

ACTION: KN will contact MEMA about getting funds for helping with the roads.

Arthur Adams stated that tree cutters should be required to fix stone walls when they get broken during tree cutting.

VOTE: ZD motioned to appoint the following people to the Agricultural Commission and to re-activate the Commission. SC seconded. Passed unanimously.

Martha Nicoll
Barbara Pauli
Richard Nicoll

KN discussed the job of the new intern in the Town Coordinator's office. His main job will be to compile town bylaws into one place. He will look at other towns' bylaws to help determine an appropriate order. Once compiled, the town can more easily determine what bylaws are lacking. KN contacted the Attorney General's office about bylaws the town should have but doesn't.

RT said it's important that the intern's job is well-defined and that the current job description could use clarification. SC suggested rewriting the current job description to be more specific about the intern's responsibilities and the expected outcomes of the internship, which KN said she would do. In addition to better defining the scope of the internship, ZD suggested being clear about how much time commitment is involved. SC and RT stated their preference for a project-based payment, rather than hourly. RT stated that as the intern goes through the old annual reports he could take pictures of the relevant pages to be digitized as text, rather than just taking notes on where the bylaws are currently filed.

ACTION: KN will provide a revised job description to the Select Board and the intern, including clearer definitions of the intern's responsibilities and a timeline for expected deliverables.

VOTE: SC moved to approve a \$500 stipend for the intern for working on the town bylaws. ZD seconded. Passed unanimously.

RT suggested reviewing the authorization for SC to sign warrants alone, feeling that it's unfair to subject one person to a greater degree of liability. SC suggested getting to the meeting half an hour early, once the schedule is back on track, in order for Select Board members to sign warrants.

The Board chose its next meeting date: Tuesday, September 5.

VOTE: SC motioned to accept the minutes of the 7/31/23 meeting without amendment. ZD seconded. Passed unanimously.

VOTE: SC motioned to close the meeting at 9:08. ZD seconded. Passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Maurer