

New Salem Selectboard

Meeting Minutes

October 23, 2023

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

SC called the meeting to order at 7:03.

Town Coordinator KN presented her report.

- KN noted that a slate roof expert recently assessed the town hall roof and found that except for the pieces that have fallen off, the slate is in good condition. The roofer also found that the valleys of the roof are in poor condition and need to be redone. He provided a ballpark estimate of \$20,000 for repairs.
- KN stated that she will talk to Building Inspector Phil Delorey about assessing the two fire stations for any needed repairs. The Board discussed that more information is needed about the library.
- KN reported that she talked to Orange Oil, who said the town hall used about 2500 gallons of oil per winter before the building was deactivated.
- She reported that her intern has made progress on finding town bylaws in old annual reports, noting he has located some bylaws she missed in her initial review of the reports. She stated the intern is now looking at other towns' bylaws for comparison, in preparation for compiling all New Salem bylaws in one place. RT asked KN to give the intern an end date for this project.

KN presented the Board with two options for video conferencing equipment: a used OWL from the Stoneleigh-Burnham School for \$300, or a new camera from a different brand for \$799.

VOTE: RT moved to rescind the Board's previous vote on this issue and allocate \$300 for the purchase of a used OWL video conferencing camera from the Stoneleigh-Burnham School. SC seconded. No further discussion. Passed.

The Board discussed road maintenance with Highway Department Supervisor Jacob Cooley. Cooley stated the crew has recently been able to catch up with deferred maintenance after this year's rains, and that they are currently cleaning out ditches and drains and getting ready for winter, which includes getting sanding equipment ready and splitting firewood.

RT asked whether Cooley maintains a list of outstanding issues for the crew to deal with. Cooley responded that the department maintains a whiteboard list of to-do items and that among the to-do items there are a few roads that still need work, including the bottom of Shutesbury Road (where it turns to dirt), and West St., where one of the cross drains isn't working properly. He also noted that the crew needs to address several areas where

townspeople have reported potholes in pavement. He confirmed he has responded to all reports of road issues he's received.

Cooley noted that Cooleyville Road has been graded with a new fill material which has held up better during heavy rain than did the previous one. The Board discussed that if the new material is more expensive but more effective it may be worth it to switch to the new material in some cases. Cooley agreed to provide the Board with information about the difference in cost between the two fill materials.

RT noted he recently learned that the Highway Department used to have a 10 hour per week administrative assistant, a position which was vacated soon after Cooley was hired. RT asked Cooley whether hiring someone for this position would be helpful to the department, to which Cooley responded that it would, especially if the position is filled by someone with strong organizational skills. Cooley suggested hiring someone temporarily and having them come up with efficient systems that could eventually be handed off to Cooley or another staff member.

ACTION: The Board will look into the budget to determine whether there is room to bring on an administrative person for the highway department. The Board will discuss this issue again at its next meeting.

RT suggested bringing in an expert to go over dirt road maintenance with the highway crew and Cooley suggested FRCOG, based on the thorough report the group did on Moosehorn Road. Due to anticipated future needs, SC suggested increasing highway department hours in the summer. The Board will continue this discussion with Cooley.

ACTION: KN will get in touch with FRCOG to ask about options for bringing in a road expert.

SC voiced her concern that there is not a concrete description somewhere of Highway Department responsibilities. She wondered whether some groundskeeping-related projects should be under the responsibility of the department. Cooley and RT noted that these responsibilities are not typically covered by a highway department but instead a dedicated grounds crew. SC noted that the cemetery has staff member(s) for this. RT noted that groundskeeping is an unmet need for the town, which can be discussed at a future meeting.

SC asked whether the highway department would be able to brush hog the area behind the town hall, in order to prepare it for regular mowing. Cooley noted that he is waiting for a mower part but that the department would be willing to do it once the mower is fixed.

RT asked for Cooley's reaction to the Highway Department job descriptions drafted by RT. Cooley said he was comfortable with the job descriptions, with the exception of a section about planting, which is not something the department has ever done in the past.

Cooley stated the department is up to date with all relevant licenses. RT stated that all highway

department employees will sign the new job descriptions and at that time will present copies of their current licenses, to which Cooley agreed.

Karen Laramie (Cooleyville Road) asked Cooley about his plans for dealing with problems on Cooleyville Road. Cooley responded that the original plan was to pave the road, but the town decided against this, and now the next step is to have the person from FRCOG (or another expert) look at the situation. Cooley expressed the opinion that the solution may be to rip out the current pavement in that area and replace it with gravel. The Board noted that Cooleyville Rd is the next major road priority in town. Carrie Lennard (Cooleyville Road) mentioned that there is a drainage pipe that needs to be cleared on the road, and Cooley confirmed that this project is on the department's roster and would be completed on the day following the meeting. Lennard noted another issue: a culvert where tree roots are being dug up. Cooley noted that this culvert is also going to be cleaned. Lennard gave Cooley an old manual of gravel road maintenance instructions and suggested that older methods of road maintenance may still be relevant. She noted appreciation that Cooley accepted the materials.

There was a brief discussion of the importance of Cooley periodically attending Select Board meetings and the necessity that he attend yearly Town Meeting.

VOTE: RT moved to adjourn at 8:00. SC seconded. Passed.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrew Maurer
Select Board Clerk