

New Salem Select Board

Meeting Minutes

December 11, 2023

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

ZD opened the meeting for public comment at 7:01pm. There were no public comments.

Town Coordinator Kathy Neal (KN) presented her report, which included the following:

- Another slate roof expert will look at the slate roof on the town hall on 12/21.
- Previously-discussed town building inspections are still pending.
- Her intern said he will finish compiling the list of town bylaws this week and hopes to look at other towns' bylaws for reference.

ACTION: KN will check on whether New Salem has a town charter.

Members of both the Historical Commission and the Trustees of New Salem Academy asked the Board whether the town may at some point want to sell the Old Academy Building.

Members and trustees in attendance included Brian Casey, Mike DuPont, Randy Gordon, Polly Johnston, and Gabe Voelker.

Casey outlined the town's long-standing relationship with the Trustees and noted the historical nature of the building. He stated the building is deteriorating and needs repairs and said the Trustees have hired an architect named Brian DeVries to assess it. Casey has toured the building with paint and moisture experts and will receive reports from them to be incorporated into any future plans.

He noted the building was owned by the Trustees from 1838 until the 1980s, at which point it was sold to the town. He stated some New Salem Academy Trustees are interested in purchasing the building in order to restore and maintain it permanently, while some Trustees disagree with this course of action.

RT stated he thinks it would be a service to the town for the Trustees to purchase and maintain the building. SC raised questions about totally transferring the building back to the Trustees and suggested the town could enter a partnership with the group. Gabe Voelker expressed interest in this idea. Brian Casey and Randy Gordon expressed concerns that the building's future would be less certain in a partnership and that the Trustees would be better equipped to maintain it in perpetuity if it were solely in their care.

ZD asked what the Trustees currently pay in building-related expenses. Randy Gordon said monthly expenses total approximately \$300 and cover the alarm system, electricity, and wifi.

RT asked whether there is a point in moving forward with this discussion with the Select Board right now. Brian Casey responded that the Trustees are currently split on the issue, but some specifics

from the Select Board would allow their internal discussion to continue. Gabe Voelker made note that any potential sale would need to be public and would need to go to Town Meeting for approval.

ACTION: KN will look up the Save America's Treasures grant that was received for maintenance of the OAB. KN will ask Town Counsel about:

- a) whether there are successful examples of municipal/non-profit joint ownership projects
- b) restrictions on the town talking to a potential purchaser (specifically the entity that sold it to the town and maintains a strong interest in it)
- c) the town's ability to place restrictions on a sale during the procurement process

Gabe Voelker of the Finance Committee discussed changes to FRCOG's accounting program and the need for the town to purchase new accounting software. She presented a letter from Bob Dean of FRCOG stating the FRCOG accounting program is going away at the end of FY24, and that towns will at that point need to purchase their own software, rather than FRCOG using one license for multiple towns. She outlined the total fees for MIP Fund Accounting software, which FRCOG currently uses, as follows:

- Annual fee total \$12,733, comprising:
 - License fee: \$9583/year
 - Annual software cloud hosting fee: \$3150/year
- One-time implementation, conversion and training fee: \$7350

Voelker said FRCOG wants to know if the town wants to stay with MIP Fund Accounting software through software vendor Zobrio. She thinks it makes sense because our town accountant uses it and the Tax Collector uses a software that interfaces with it. She also proposed creating an agreement with Wendell and Northfield to share Erin Williams as an accountant and share some of the burden of paying for her benefits.

ZD said she thinks sharing employees makes sense.

There was some discussion about whether the town might get help from the state.

ZD and RT both expressed reservations about the amount of money being requested. RT stated he would like to avoid having to go to a special town meeting to request funding if possible.

ACTION: GV will put together a proposal for how to go about transitioning to the new software, including identifying funding sources and required personnel, and will also inquire with Northfield and Wendell about their interest in collaborating.

ACTION: KN will draft letters to FRCOG and Jo Comerford letting them know about the town's concerns with the change in software.

VOTE: ZD motioned to approve the Class II Used Car Dealer License application submitted by New Salem Auto for calendar year 2024. RT seconded. Passed unanimously.

The Select Board estimated the town's summer population increase to be 25 for purposes of reporting to the Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission.

The Board discussed that the Swift River School PFAS mitigation project requires approximately \$1000 of additional ARPA funds for completion.

VOTE: ZD motioned that up to \$1000 of ARPA funds be used to complete the Swift River School PFAS mitigation project. RT seconded. Passed unanimously.

The Board discussed which job descriptions KN has found for town employees. ZD made note of these. The board continued to discuss which positions still need descriptions.

ACTION: KN agreed to put out a second request to solicit job descriptions, to try to fill in gaps.

VOTE: RT moved to approve the minutes of 11/27/23 with minor amendments from ZD. ZD seconded. Passed unanimously.

VOTE: ZD moved to close the meeting at 8:44pm. RT seconded.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrew Maurer
Select Board Clerk