

New Salem Select Board

Meeting Minutes

January 8, 2024

Present: Sue Cloutier (chair), Rick Taupier, Zara Dowling

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

There was no public comment.

The minutes of the previous Select Board meeting were approved with minor changes from ZD.

Town Coordinator Kathy Neal presented her report, including the following items:

- She will follow up with Building Inspector Phil Delorey and the engineer who inspected the town buildings in November. She noted Phil Delorey is resigning effective in April.
 - **ACTION:** KN will follow up with Phil Delorey and the engineer who previously looked at the town hall and other town buildings.
- During the Town Coordinator's report the board discussed letting Wayne Hachey know not to finish the estimate for the highway barn.
 - **ACTION:** KN will tell Wayne Hachey not to finish the estimate for the highway barn, and reach out to Jacob Cooley to get the name of the person who came out to look at the highway barn previously.
- Before Christmas another person looked at the slate roof on the town hall. He wanted to know whether the town wanted a new roof or to repair the current roof. ZD requested estimates for both. The Select Board discussed that the assumption has been that the town would repair rather than replace.
 - **ACTION:** KN will follow up with the second person who looked at the slate roof on the town hall and ask for estimates for both repair and replacement, though the assumption is that the town will repair rather than replace.
- According to Town Accountant Erin Degnan there is \$182,277 left in ARPA funds, all of which needs to be committed by the end of this calendar year.
- KN noted she has been talking to Wendell about hiring accountant Erin Degnan directly, through a joint contract with Wendell and Northfield. Degnan currently does New Salem's accounting through FRCOG, but the FRCOG accounting program is likely going away in the near future. KN noted that Degnan would be pleased to move forward working with New Salem, Wendell, and Northfield, and that New Salem's part of her salary would be similar to what it is already paying FRCOG.

ACTION: KN will follow up on letters previously sent to Bob Dean of FRCOG and Senator Jo Comerford.

The Select Board briefly discussed preparations for budget planning for next fiscal year.

ZD suggested the Select Board come to its next meeting ready to discuss anticipated expenses for next year, in preparation for communicating with the Finance Committee, and that this discussion should include a determination of any anticipated increases in the budget, for example for buildings and grounds, the purchase of materials, or new employees.

ACTION: KN will send an email to town committees requesting their input on capital expenditures. She will follow up with FRCOG to find out whether there is someone to help with capital planning.

ACTION: To the next meeting's agenda KN will add: discussions of budget planning for FY25, how to allocate remaining ARPA funding, and a discussion of West Street road maintenance.

KN noted she had looked up prior grants and restrictions related to the New Salem Academy. She stated the town has received a Save America's Treasures grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission and that she would forward information to the Select Board about restrictions on the deed of the New Salem Academy building associated with this grant.

KN noted that New Salem needs to hold a special town meeting to approve the proposed school bus contract for next year.

VOTE: ZD motioned to hold the special town meeting on Wednesday, 1/31/24 at 7pm, or if that day doesn't work it will be held on the next day. No discussion. Passed unanimously.

KN reported that she has received no further job descriptions from town departments. ZD and KN will meet a week from Friday in order to review all available job descriptions and determine which descriptions do not exist. They will also draft a Building Inspector job description at that time. At the next Select Board meeting the Board will discuss a timeline for posting and hiring the Building Inspector position.

SC moved to close the meeting at 8pm. ZD seconded. Passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrew Maurer
Select Board Clerk