

Town of *New Salem* Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
October 3, 2022
Held Virtually via Zoom

Convened: 7:00 pm

Present: Hugh Mackay, Carl Seppala, Selectboard; Kathy Neal, Town Coordinator; Joe Cuneo, Fire Chief; Stacy Senflug, Town Clerk; Susan Cloutier; Joe Larson; Rob Watkins; Nancy Slator, *New Salem News*; Marley Ashbourne

Selectboard Reviewed & Signed the Following:

- Payroll & Vendor Warrants

Discussion Items

Update on Bids: Fire Station, Oil Bids, and Town Barn Floor

Kathy reported that this bid is out and bids are coming in. Hugh asked if the package has been updated. Kathy responded it is and the pre bid meeting is October 4, 2022. Hugh asked about the oil bids. Kathy responded that there were no bids to the rebid. But she had the impression Orange Oil had intended to bid. Hugh suggested putting it out again. Kathy then reported on the Town Barn floor. Jake Cooley is working on it. Carl concurred noting there are a lot of aspects in terms of design features. We need to figure out what we need in place now, but also keep an eye on the future. Kathy then noted a few vendors she got from a few towns in the region. So we have some alternatives. Hugh asked about electrical work. Carl responded that's not likely, but we may need a little plumbing for draining so there's a little more to it than just a floor. But we've done our research so it should be possible to get a floor in.

Vote on Polling Locations for Elections

Hugh reported that a few entities were asked. The Swift River Elementary School principal is happy to host. But we've also asked the Library. Stacy reported that the Library Board of Trustees hasn't met yet, but she understands they are not opposed to hosting. She may need to appear at their next meeting to answer questions. Hugh then asked about timelines which Stacy answered in detail. The Library is the best of all considerations for her. She noted the specific concerns with using the Town Hall basement. While Swift River Elementary is a great option for town meetings and it should be seriously considered for that. It's also worth noting that town meetings and town elections don't have to be held at the same location. Carl suggested a special meeting of the Selectboard to approve the location as he had reservations about the Library. The feedback he reported hearing from Library sources is that they don't want to be hosts. They're concerned that the election will cause the Library to have to cease normal functions on that day. Stacy was surprised at that. She couldn't recall more than a few handful of elections with a line. And at most it's 4-5 people. Carl suggested that the Town Hall basement could still work as it was used recently by the Board of Health for the flu clinic. Stacy disagreed submitting that it is not a healthy environment. She conceded Swift River is an option, but it isn't suitable for elections. She also disputed that the Library's position can be represented without the Trustees having met yet to discuss it. Carl noted he's read the information and understands the positions of all parties. But he doesn't want to see the Library "taken over." Stacy responded that she's asking to use the Community Room. It can be closed off from the rest of the Library and is used by others for many uses. She also stressed that many residents are voting by mail and that will reduce the total number of people showing up in the space.

She asked that any representations made by the Library be shared and not just referred to. Hugh noted he hasn't heard any public objections or opposition and was himself waiting until the Trustees had time to respond. Carl noted an email that had concerns and asked if they were addressed. Stacy responded she did respond to that email and provided a wealth of information. So she wasn't certain what concerns were still outstanding. Carl outlined several he was aware of and conceded he is aware of Stacy's response but felt that it didn't answer everything. Hugh acknowledged the challenges with the options and made some suggestions. Stacy interjected to say she is not comfortable with the school. She needs to access her offices several times throughout the election. It's one thing to walk between municipal buildings in the Town Center and another having to drive 20 mins across town.

Further schools often have to close for the day. This is really only 1-4 times a year. It's not asking a lot to use the Community Room. An election won't disrupt the Library, but if it's truly a worry the Library could close for the day. Hugh felt it a future discussion time. Carl concurred feeling it shouldn't be done for this election. Stacy appreciated the Library's concerns, but with the physical affairs of our buildings there must be a willingness to host elections, which are vital to our democracy. We need to have suitable spaces to host our elections. Further the Selectboard should listen to the towns chief elections officer on this matter as it is within the scope of her expertise. Honestly, if forced to choose she'll use the Town Hall Annex building. It's not ideal, but it is the choice we are left with. Hugh submitted the idea that perhaps we consider this a choice for just this election and we require masking and air purifiers, the Annex might indeed be suitable. Stacy asked that moving elections to the Library be seriously considered after proper input from the Trustees can be considered. Regardless, we must remember that each time we change the location we have to send mailings to each resident. Susan felt like we really need to hear from the Trustees. She grew up in a town where the schools were used. But she understood Stacy's position and expressed hope that the Trustees be allowed to meet.

Hugh generally agreed that we need input from them that's official. Still he was in favor of the school being used. Still he conceded the Town Clerk has reasonable issues with that location. It is unfortunate that we've reached this point with our public buildings that we are running out of suitable space. Stacy noted that the state computer she has to access is setup by the Commonwealth and cannot be moved. She stated for the record she will not willingly go to the school. Carl responded that to his mind the school remains the best location due to COVID-19 concerns. Kathy noted that no vote to change would result in the Town Hall basement remaining the location. Hugh asked if the Town Hall Annex can be used. Stacy was okay with it as it is accessible, although it's not truly as accessible as it should be for election purposes. Hugh asked what happens if the Selectboard makes a decision and the Town Clerk refuses to go. Stacy responded she is willing to step down. She is the chief elections official and if the obstacles are such that she can't do her job properly, she would resign. She was clear that in mind her opinion on this shouldn't be disregarded as it is strongly felt. Carl was fine with the Town Hall Annex the Town Hall or the school. But he suggested the town may have to consult the Commonwealth. Hugh was amenable to the Town Hall Annex. Stacy asked again that we wait to hear from the Trustees. Carl was opposed even if they change their opinion. Hugh was fine with a special meeting to make a decision. Kathy reminded that the Trustees meet on Wednesday. It was agreed to hold a special meeting to discuss this on October 11, 2022.

Right of First Refusal under MGL Chapter 61A

Kathy reported on this. It's a route in item. When people have their property in chapter status and they take it out of that status to sell it the Selectboard has a first right of refusal. This is 2 acres owned by Richard and Lori Oliver on West Main street and West Street. Conservation Commission has taken the position that the town should waive the right. Carl was amendable if they were. Kathy noted there will be roll back taxes determined by the Assessors which will have to be paid by the. The Selectboard saw no reason to exercise its right and determined to waive it.

A motion was made by Carl to waive the towns right of first refusal under MGL Chapter 61A as to this 2.01 acres as noted on the agenda and owned by Richard and Lori Oliver. The motion was seconded by Hugh and passed by majority vote.

ARPA Funds Discussion

Hugh stressed the school remains the top priority other than the projects already approved. Kathy noted some reports from the towns engineers on this subject and stressed we've met DEP's deadlines. Hugh was relieved to hear that and noted the various things we know and what the costs are. Carl reminded the engineering will still cost us some funds. Hugh conceded that but noted we have a \$40,000 earmark from the General Court. Carl agreed but reminded the costs could exceed that mount and we've already spent some of that on engineering. It was agreed to wait on further allocation on this front until we know more. Kathy then noted we also intended to use some of these funds for the skunk issue at the Town Hall Annex. Stacy reminded that the situation still isn't great. Kathy agreed and noted it'll cost us a couple hundred dollars to a thousand on a few different solutions. Hugh stressed that we are in October now and already feeling the cold. We should do some of these solutions now while they remain viable.

Minutes

The Selectboard considered the minutes for August 24, 2022 and September 19, 2022. The Selectboard noted it had tabled the August 24, 2022 minutes.

A motion was made by Hugh to accept the August 24, 2022 minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Carl and passed by majority vote.

A motion was made by Hugh to accept the September 19, 2022, minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Carl and passed by majority vote.

A motion to adjourn at 8:00 pm was made by Carl. The motion was seconded by Hugh and passed by majority vote.

Respectfully Submitted
Jakob K. Voelker, Selectboard Clerk