

**Town of *New Salem* Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
December 12, 2022
Held Virtually via Zoom**

Convened: 7:00 pm

Present: Carl Seppala, Susan Cloutier, Zara Dowling, Selectboard; Kathy Neal, Town Coordinator; Claire McGinnis, Finance Committee; Jen Potee, Board of Health; Wayne Hachey, Zoning Board of Appeals; David Cramer, Planning Board; Brian Casey; Patrick Biely, Entre Technologies; Nancy Slator, *New Salem News*; Marny Ashburne; Anna Colbern, Friends of the New Salem Library

Selectboard Reviewed & Signed the Following:

- Payroll & Vendor Warrants

Discussion Items

Public Forum

Susan called the meeting to order and began by briefly explaining the purpose of the Public Forum which is to allow for public comment. Anna spoke first then Nancy and then Brian.

- *Friends of the Library Reading Aloud for Grownups*

Anna reported that the friends usually hold a few events for reading for adults that includes wine (at no charge). They are seeking permission to continue this practice. Susan noted that this is the kind of item that has to be on an agenda, but saw no issue with considering it at a future meeting.

- *New Salem News Request*

Nancy asked if a link could be placed on the town website. Kathy responded she'd be happy to help. Zara asked if she'd like to post the newsletter on the towns website directly. Nancy responded that it appeared a bit too complicated for her to do that and suggested her request as a good alternative. Kathy agreed to help Nancy with this request.

- *Trustees of the New Salem Academy Regarding the Old Academy Building*

Brian noted he's a Trustee and at their recent meeting they've voted to spend \$10,000 to hire an architect to look at long term planning for the Old Academy Building. They've been renting the building for a few years now, but it's basically unusable due to a parade of issues including bats and water. Susan thanked Brian for the Trustees work in this area. Zara echoed that sentiment and asked that the information be shared so that all parties can work from the same document. Brian was amendable to that noting that nobody wants a bandage. We want a long term plan to follow. This is also why they're seeking someone who specializes in historic buildings. He then reminded the Selectboard that there are funds in the town budget done by article vote which is to help remediate mold issues in the building. He expressed hope those funds would be expended.

- *Solar Panels on Town Highway Garage/Barn Roof*

Wayne noted that when he was on the Selectboard there was work to put solar on the roof. He didn't know what the cost would be, but he asked the Selectboard to consider the matter further and to authorize himself or others to move forward. He suggested that the credit for solar with the utility could be given to Swift River Elementary. He also expressed hope that there would be grant funding available in 2023 or 2024, or failing that, funds from Free Cash at a town meeting. Zara suggested this would make sense as an Energy Committee project and invited Wayne to join the committee. Wayne was willing to consider it, but suggested he may be able to do more as a private citizen. Susan noted that we need to know the numbers and how it would fit in with the school or other town buildings. Zara responded she has much of that information through the Energy Committee.

Highway Dept. Update – Jacob Cooley

Susan reported that the Highway Chief won't be able to attend the meeting as he worked through the night plowing snow. Carl noted he was driving as recently as 4 am. Otherwise he reported on repairs being done on one truck and some scheduled work on a second truck. Kathy interjected to say that the first truck will be back in a week or so. We'll have some insurance on some of the work that's being done. Carl then continued his report stating that the plan is that in the next month we should receive solid proposals for the floor at the Highway Garage/Barn. Some of the past issues he was concerned about appear to not be as problematic as first feared. Susan asked about the gravel for storms matter. Carl responded that Highway will make best efforts to prevent such large rocks from coming through. It's just not an easy task for them giving the sourcing of the material. Susan conceded that, but reminded it's a potential liability concern for the town.

Entre Technologies Proposal Regarding Town Emails, Cyber Security, & Other Upgrades

Patrick began by introducing himself. Entre is West Springfield based. They have about 50 employees and 15 years of experience in the state. They have been on the list of contracts for the state for more than a decade. They also serve several towns already. He then reported that they have been accessing the needs of the town for technology for the past few months. The main proposal for email would be the adoption of Microsoft 365 products. This is a good option given a number of public record law concerns as well as security needs. They would also provide antivirus, dual factor authentication, and offsite backups. Microsoft 365 thankfully meets all of the states current mandates. Zara noted the town has a website and asked if we have an email option through it. Kathy responded that the towns website does not provide email. Zara then asked if Microsoft 365 also includes Microsoft Office. Patrick responded that it does not come with those. But it does support internet access such that you can open a word document from your Microsoft 365 email. Susan asked about the options for reading emails. Patrick explained you can log on from the internet or you can download and utilize Outlook on your computer. Susan asked about notifications. Patrick elaborated that a notification could be setup. Kathy asked about archival of old emails. Patrick elaborated on the options including being able to bring them over to the new email.

Returning to the domain question, Patrick explained that they can use the same domain as a the existing website which is what most clients ask for. He then turned to the security piece. They use BitDefender for antivirus. They also provide backup and disaster recovery. Offsite backup is often critical for both concerns. He also suggested use of the Microsoft OneDrive product for cloud based file storage. Another critical element for security is multi-factor authentication. Kathy reminded the towns insurer would like to see multi-factor authentication adopted by the town. Susan asked if all town devices would be covered or not. Patrick responded it can be or it doesn't have to be. It depends on what existing employees have in place and what the town wants to do. Zara suggested before we do something like this, we should do an inventory of devices owned by the town. This is great as we are getting a sense of the options, but we don't have enough yet to make a determination. Further she submitted she works with OneDrive a lot in her professional work and to her that wouldn't make sense for all town employees. Patrick conceded that may be the case and then turned to various technology upgrades. The main focus would be to document and map current devices and making a "discovery of needs" They can also leverage relationships with various suppliers like Dell, HP, Lenovo and others and can get things on state contract pricing. The total cost is estimated by Entre to be around \$4,524.70. Susan thanked Entre. After a little further discussion it was agreed to place several related items on the next agenda. This included the need for an inventory of devices and a standard guide of best practices. Wayne interjected to remind we should look into what might happen if this company does all this work and then goes out of business or something. We need to ensure our data remains accessible. Towns have run into issues with software companies where the town doesn't end up owning its own data and if it leaves the company loses it.

Correspondence from National Grid

Kathy then reported on the correspondence. It relates to some herbicide and tree work by National Grid. This is regulated and managed by the state so they are really just informing us. Zara agreed submitting we can't really say no. The state makes the decision, but we can provide feedback. To that end she suggested referrals to Conservation Commission and Tree Committee.

Town Salaries

Susan noted this was first brought up by the Board of Health over difficulties hiring a new Transfer Station Attendant. It has raised a question about wages for other town employees. She suggested a subcommittee be formed to consider the fairness of wages in town and some decisions should be made on whether we should keep employees capped at 19 hours a week in most instances or embrace going to 20 hours for them. She conceded that going to 20 hours would bear costs, but we should know what those are. Zara asked about the Personnel Board. Kathy responded it is defunct. Zara asked about Finance Committee. Kathy responded they can help with some of the numbers and costs, but we should probably have a committee to investigate. We should also keep in mind unique qualifications. Towns often need specific things for departments, for example, Highway needs its Laborers to have commercial licenses. Susan asked if we have anyone on the Personnel Board. Kathy responded Gabe Voelker is still on it, but she's the only one at the moment. She recalled Hugh Mackay has served on it as well. Zara suggested asking the Finance Committee their sense and whether they might know of people willing to serve. They might also have some of the answers already on some items. Zara then reminded that we're still thinking about policing as well and that probably should be part of the conversation as an agenda item. Carl agreed on the police as we need an update on where things stand for future planning. We don't have a stable Police Department. We have one full time officer, lost our part time officer and our present Police Chief is technically retired. We really need two full time people in that department. Zara suggested inviting the Police Future Planning Committee to attend a joint session with the Selectboard in January. She also felt the Police Chief should be invited. Susan and Carl agreed. It was also agreed that Kathy would contact FRCOG to ask for their latest wage analysis.

Town Coordinator Updates: DEP PFAS Grant, Oil Bids, Town Hall & Town Building Issues, Accessibility of Town Buildings, & the Resignation of a Highway Dept. Employee

Kathy started by reporting on the PFAS Grant. We'll be submitting an application in the next day or two to DEP. Swift River Elementary has written a letter to accompany the application. Correspondence has also been had with Senator Comerfords office in the hopes that the Senator might be able to also express support. Kathy then reported on the oil. We're on the state program now. It's a little bit of a markup, but not much. She then turned to Town Hall and other town building issues. The Town Hall's water was shutoff for winter, but we still had a problem with the water heater. Zara noted that we have a tank now and it doesn't make sense. Given our use of that building, we should have a tankless system. Kathy then reported on work by FRCOG regarding analysis of the towns buildings being accessible. There is no cost to this. The ramp on the Stowell Building is mostly acceptable, mainly the pitch and length. The Town Hall Annex also had its ramp looked at. Given the way it's built it doesn't need a railing and is mostly okay. The work there is in repair or replacement of the brick. The Library's ramp is modern and was done less than 20 years ago. Kathy then reported on the resignation of a Highway Dept. laborer. Susan expressed a desire to have a selection committee so as to include the

Highway Chief. It was agreed Carl would also sit on this also. Discussion then shifted to the December 27 meeting. It was agreed to hold a meeting if necessary. But if there is no need, it can be canceled. It was further agreed that the Police matter in particular as well as some other wage matters should be considered for January 9's agenda.

A motion was made by Zara to appoint Kathy Neil, Jacob Cooley, and Carl Seppala to the selection committee to conduct interviews and make a recommendation on hire to the Selectboard for an Highway Laborer. The motion was seconded by Susan and passed by majority vote with Carl abstaining.

Agenda & Minutes

The Selectboard considered the minutes for November 14 and November 28, 2022. It was recalled that Zara had provided a number of proposed changes and Carl had one change regarding discussion around the playground. It was agreed to pass the November 14 minutes as amended. Zara also had proposed changes for the November 28, 2022 minutes. It was agreed to table those minutes until the next Selectboard meeting.

A motion was made by Zara to approve the minutes for November 14, 2022 as amended. The motion was seconded by Carl and passed without objection.

A motion to adjourn at 8:47 pm was made by Susan. The motion was seconded by Zara and passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted
Jakob K. Voelker, J.D.
Selectboard Clerk