

**Town of *New Salem* Selectboard  
Meeting Minutes  
December 27, 2022  
Held Virtually via Zoom**

**Convened:** 7:03 pm

**Present:** Susan Cloutier, Zara Dowling, Selectboard; Kathy Neal, Town Coordinator; Joe Cuneo, Fire Chief; Nancy Slator, *The New Salem News*; Marny Ashburne; Dan Grubbs

**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. Marny spoke briefly to note she's with the Friends and in attendance regarding their request. Susan responded that the matter is a vote on the agenda for later in this meeting.

***Discussion of Shared Fire Chief Position with Wendell upon Retirement of Chief Cuneo & Development of a Memorandum of Understanding for the Position Thereof***

Susan asked her colleagues to empower her to negotiate with Wendell on a shared position and the drafting of a memorandum of understanding between the towns for said position. Zara expressed favor, but asked about the timeline. She felt it likely that Carl would support it, but recalled there are some in town who may not be in favor of it and we may want to take this vote with a full Selectboard. Susan was okay with waiting until the next meeting, but stressed Wendell's desire to move forward on this topic and her feeling that she needs to have proper authority to negotiate. Joe stressed that this authority really should be granted as soon as possible. Susan noted that the next meeting is already likely to have a number of substantive issues concerning the Police Dept. a third meeting may need to be scheduled in January to accommodate.

***Discussion of a Home Rule Petition to allow Chief Cuneo to work beyond the Mandatory Retirement Age for Firefighters***

Susan began discussion on this item noting that this not only needs a vote of the Selectboard, but also a town meeting vote and then has to be submitted to the General Court which must approve it also. She then reminded that Joe retires next fall. This petition simply gives us the opportunity to have him stay on past his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday. Zara was in support of the idea, but expressed reservations that with this meeting being right after the holiday weekend, and in the absence of Carl, she also felt this should be tabled. We made clear at the last meeting this meeting wouldn't likely be critical items. She felt January would be more accessible noting many are still traveling for the holidays. Joe then spoke about the process elaborating that this really should be approved at a Special Town Meeting as it would be too intense a discussion for the Annual Town Meeting. Further there is the time factor. He wasn't adverse to waiting two more weeks, but reminded that the General Court could end up deliberating for a long time before making a decision so we need to factor in not only a STM but also the General Court itself. Susan noted she has heard from Wendell and they want to hear a decision by New Salem as soon as possible on this. Zara asked Joe if he is agreeable to continue serving. Joe responded he has some factors in his own personal life to sort out. But the process has to go forward now if it's to even be an option by the time of his mandatory retirement. Kathy reminded that we also have to have 14 days notice for a STM warrant. We would still have time at the first January meeting to decide definitively. Joe acknowledged that, but reminded that Carl has previously expressed support. Susan agreed submitting this really provides us options and ultimately buys us some more time to do the complex planning of having a shared Chief in a way that makes sense for both towns and the conducting of a proper hiring process. Kathy agreed reminding that we should also continue moving forward on the MOU to facilitate any hiring.

**ACTION ITEM: A vote on the shared Fire Chief position, drafting of an MOU, and Discussion of a Home Rule petition will be added to the January 9 meeting agenda.**

***Public Forum Component of Select Board Meetings***

Susan then suggested we should consider keeping the Public Forum to five minutes. Zara was in general support of a shorter time but suggested ten minutes to ensure any who attended for this reason would have the opportunity to speak.

***Police Department Staffing***

Zara then briefly reported on her work to schedule various stakeholders to attend in regards to the Police Dept. discussion.

**ACTION ITEM: Zara will check in with the Future of Police Committee and Police Chief to confirm they are able to attend the January 23 Select Board meeting to discuss future police staffing.**

***Vote to Approve Serving of Wine at the Library as part of the Reading Aloud for Grownups event sponsored by the Friends of the New Salem Library on January 17, 2023, February 14, 2023, and March 21, 2023***

Marny noted that this is an annual series of events. Susan expressed support for this event and called for a vote. Zara had no problem with this, but asked about the process and whether it's a temporary liquor license. Kathy responded it's not really that. It's just permission for them to serve. There's no charge and it's among adults in a reading group. It's permission to have it on town property. Marny asked about an event in April. Susan felt most comfortable with votes on specific dates.

A motion was made by Susan to approve the request from the Friends of the Library for permission to serve wine at their Reading Aloud for Grownups events on January 17, February 14, and March 21, 2023. The motion was seconded by Zara and passed by majority vote.

***Consideration of Highway Department Appointment***

Susan noted there are a number of reasons that need to be considered regarding staffing levels at the Highway Dept. She felt that the hiring process should be tabled for the moment to allow more discussion on this topic, mainly to allow the Highway Chief, Jacob Cooley, the opportunity to address the Selectboard and other stakeholders within the town about staffing needs.

***Town Coordinator Updates: Highway Department Employee Applications***

Kathy reported we have 7 applications and she has sent them for review to Jacob Cooley the Highway Chief and to Carl the member of the Selectboard designated for the screening committee. Susan suggested this discussion can be had more fully at the next meeting. The two priorities for that meeting will be the Fire Chief matter and the Highway Dept. Kathy then reported on her outreach to applicants to let them know that the town is still considering.

***Agenda & Minutes***

The Selectboard considered the minutes for November 28 and December 12, 2022. Susan noted in Carl's absence she felt it prudent to table both sets of minutes until the next meeting. It was so agreed.

A motion to adjourn at 7:30 pm was made by Susan. The motion was seconded by Zara and passed unanimously.

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