

**Town of *New Salem* Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
January 9, 2023
Held Virtually via Zoom**

Convened: 7:00 pm

Present: Susan Cloutier, Zara Dowling, Selectboard; Kathy Neal, Town Coordinator; Joe Cuneo, Fire Chief; Jen Potee, Board of Health; Cam Dunbar; Rose Lyman

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. Seeing no one interested, Susan turned to the agenda.

Discussion of Highway Dept. Staffing Needs

Kathy reported that Jacob Cooley is unable to attend the meeting for this discussion. It was agreed to table the matter.

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

Susan stressed the importance of starting this process. It was agreed to pass a series of motions to authorize the pursuit of a shared position and to allow for negotiations to establish and enter into an inter-municipal agreement with the Town of Wendell. Joe noted a few thoughts about the motions which the Selectboard were willing to include.

VOTE: A motion was made by Zara to express the intent of the New Salem Selectboard to pursue a shared position of Fire Chief with the Town of Wendell. The motion was seconded by Susan and passed by majority vote.

VOTE: A motion was made by Zara to authorize the beginning of negotiations for an inter-municipal agreement with the Town of Wendell for a shared position of Fire Chief. The motion was seconded by Susan and passed by majority vote.

VOTE: A motion was made by Zara to authorize Susan, in her capacity as Selectboard Chair, to negotiate on the Town of New Salem's behalf for said inter-municipal agreement. The motion was seconded by Susan and passed by majority vote.

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

Susan reported that Wendell has already circulated language for such a Home Rule Petition and asked Kathy to begin the process of planning a Special Town Meeting. Zara asked if a vote is needed for this. Susan responded we have to obtain wording and then we have to put it on a warrant. She felt Wendell's model to be acceptable. It was agreed to use it as a model for New Salem. Kathy asked if Wendell has called its STM for this as of yet. Susan responded they had not to her knowledge as of yet, but she would look into it. Kathy otherwise agreed to work on the matter and to reach out to the Town Moderator and the Town Clerk to determine dates for consideration. There was a question about where the meeting would be held given the winterization of the Town Hall. Joe suggested the Town Hall Annex would work as it has in the past prior to COVID. Zara reminded that Carl has often said that Swift River Elementary would be willing to host. Susan then asked for a motion to authorize the Home Rule petition.

VOTE: A motion was made by Zara to approve the Town Coordinator to start all necessary actions to have a Home Rule petition drafted, and presented for approval at a town meeting then sent to the General Court, which would allow the Fire Chief to continue working beyond the mandatory retirement age for firefighters. The motion was seconded by Susan and passed by majority vote.

ACTION ITEM: Kathy will initiate necessary actions to have a Home Rule petition drafted, including speaking with the Town Moderator and Town Clerk to determine possible dates for an STM.

Appointment to the Franklin Regional Planning Board

Zara noted that we already have two people from New Salem involved. It's not a tragedy if we don't find someone, but otherwise should invite someone from the community. She suggested it be put out in the *New Salem News*. Susan felt that reasonable and it was so agreed.

ACTION ITEM: Kathy will ask Nancy to include an item regarding the opening in *New Salem News* to determine if anyone is interested in serving that role.

Consideration of Highway Department Appointment

Susan asked for a formal vote for a committee. Zara recalled that we'd already setup an interview screening committee. Susan responded Carl may not be able to participate as planned. Zara suggested that the two other members of the committee can proceed with scheduling interviews and other work. There was some brief discussion about potentially replacing Carl on the committee. Kathy suggested she and Jacob Cooley could proceed on their own and he can join later, or resign and a different member of the Selectboard or from the community be appointed later.

ACTION ITEM: Kathy will proceed with Jacob Cooley to screen candidates and conduct interviews, with the intention of making a recommendation to the Select Board for hiring.

Town Coordinator Updates: Highway Department Employee Applications and FRCOG and the DLTA Grant

DPW Interviews. Kathy went over the applications for the Highway Dept. with Jacob Cooley. They've narrowed down to 3-4 applicants that they'd like to interview. One of the considerations is the seasonal nature of some of the work and skill sets that are needed in addition. Susan asked what their weekly hours are. She responded they work 40 hours. Zara asked about snow plowing. Kathy noted that snow plowing is difficult to predict and so it can be difficult to bank hours ahead of time. Susan suggested the potential for a few changes in how hours are allotted between seasons.

DLTA assistance from FRCOG. Kathy then went over the DLTA request form noting a few areas that usually are beneficial for New Salem. She also promised that she would go over various parts of it with Department Heads like the Fire Chief.

ACTION ITEM: Kathy will check in with Department Heads regarding DLTA priorities. Select Board members will review the DLTA options for discussion at the next meeting, since a response is required before early February.

Meeting Time Shift

Susan brought up this unanticipated item asking if meetings could start earlier in the evening. She suggested a start time of 6:30 pm. Zara was okay with that time change at least seasonally. Susan then suggested limiting the Public Forum to 10 minutes at the start of each meeting. Topics cannot have deep consideration unless they're on the agenda. So fuller discussion can always occur later. For the purposes of when we schedule appointments like Dept. Heads or public hearings, we don't want to keep people later than we have to as many are coming after work when attending and coming for the specific matter.

ACTION ITEM: Kathy will update future agendas to begin at 6:30 and include 10 minutes of Public Forum instead of 15.

Agenda & Minutes

The Selectboard considered the minutes for November 28, December 12, and December 27, 2022. Susan suggested accepting Zara's previously proposed edits. It was so agreed. Susan then suggested approving the December 27 minutes with a small edit as to the wording of a section regarding the Highway Dept.'s process. Zara was not comfortable with adopting the minutes for December 27 as she'd not had a chance to read them prior to the meeting due to illness. Susan asked that the focus for amendments to minutes going forward be on clarifications. The goal should be to ensure reader comprehension not just revision.

A motion was made by Susan to approve the minutes for November 28 and December 12, 2022 as amended. The motion was seconded by Zara and passed by majority vote.

A motion to adjourn at 7:33 pm was made by Susan. The motion was seconded by Zara and passed unanimously.

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