

**Town of *New Salem* Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
March 13, 2023
Held Virtually via Zoom**

Convened: 6:33 pm

Present: Susan Cloutier, Zara Dowling, Selectboard; Kathy Neal, Town Coordinator; MaryEllen Kennedy, MLP, Rose Lyman, Nancy Slator, Marny Ashburne

Selectboard Reviewed & Signed the Following:

- Payroll & Vendor Warrants

Discussion Items

Public Forum

Susan called the meeting to order and briefly explained the Public Forum's purpose. There being no comment, Susan moved forward with the agenda.

ARPA Request-MLP

MaryEllen requested ARPA funds for bringing internet to East Eagleville Lane in the amount of \$14,838.75. The work has been completed and paid out of the operating funds of the MLP. There was discussion of what had been spent, what projects were on the list, and whether ARPA was the most appropriate source to cover these costs. Discussion of other projects to be considered for ARPA funds including work on town buildings. Kathy noted that she found some information in her office on building projects. The Selectboard suggested a special meeting to discuss the building needs, with members of the former Building Action Committee and possibly with the Finance Committee.

Action: Kathy to send list of approved ARPA funds to Selectboard and projects that have been proposed for ARPA funding.

Zara to reach out to Hugh Mackay (or other members of the Building Action Committee as needed) to try to track down documents and plans put together by this Committee.

Selectboard to discuss with the Finance Committee strategic use of ARPA funds vs. other town funding mechanisms.

Discussion on shared Fire Chief with Wendell

MOU: Sue began discussion on a draft Memorandum of Understanding between New Salem and Wendell regarding a shared Fire Chief. Zara suggested considering dividing costs in a similar fashion as Swift River School (capital costs 50-50 and normal costs split per capita). Sue said there would still be two fire departments and we are paying for professional leadership and separate office space/administration in both towns. The following changes were discussed and will be proposed to the joint Committee for consideration by Wendell Selectboard (and ultimately Town Counsel):

-On number 8 of the MOU, we might want an easy way to re-negotiate the MOU if one of the towns has a housing boom and a large increase in population. The board discussed in number 8 after "withdraw" adding the words, "alter, or re-negotiate".

-Number 4 may need clarification: change "that" to "each" in the third line.

-Zara also mentioned that the MOU should address what happens if one town is unhappy with the chief and may want to fire him/her but the other town does not want to fire the chief. This could be added to Number 3. There was further discussion on the possibility of a one year's notice of intent if one town wants to fire the chief and the other does not, and there could be a one year notice of intent to withdraw-this needs some clarification in the language.

-In Number 3, in the second sentence on screening potential candidates using an impartial procedure could be interpreted to mean that the hiring committee might chose to use a partial procedure in hiring. The intent of the wording was that the current chief had suggested that in the hiring process, we give the candidates case studies to respond to, as that would be more impartial. The suggestion was made to change the sentence to "The committee may use its discretion to determine an appropriate and impartial process to screen potential candidates."

Position Funding-If legislation passes, and we have a joint chief, we need to budget accordingly for FY24. Fincom is aware of this and will be discussing it with the Selectboard.

Project Description – There was brief discussion of the draft job description, but this component is not critical time-wise as we do not anticipate hiring in the near future. Sue asked if we have a personnel policy, Kathy said we do and will send to Sue.

Action: Kathy to send personnel policy to Sue.

Selectboard to discuss funding of joint chief with Finance Committee prior to the ATM.

Update on Special Town Meeting

Sue asked if Kathy had received information on the election. She reported that the meeting can be opened and then postponed to a date certain. However, Cam will be on vacation at the end of March, unless he appoints an assistant Moderator. It is critical to get the

legislation in soon as Wendell has already voted. A question was raised on whether the voting rolls could be obtained through another source due to the issues with the Town Clerk computer.

Action: Kathy to check with the Town Clerk to determine if the Special Town Meeting can go forward as planned. If not, Kathy to check with Cam regarding postponing the meeting and, if necessary appointing an assistant Moderator.

Hiring of new clerk for Selectboard

Due to Jacob's resignation as Selectboard clerk, Kathy reported she had found two examples from MA towns regarding clerk positions for town boards/committees. Kathy will put something together and send to Zara for further input. There was discussion about the wage and the recent increases across the board in pay-rates in new hires. The board will ask the Finance Committee about whether they have a figure in mind for pay increases for FY24. There was discussion on what was paid to other committees' clerks.

*Action: Zara and Kathy to review/finalize clerk position description.
Selectboard to discuss FY24 pay increases with Finance Committee.*

Energy Committee update

Tracking municipal solar generation: Zara shared how the Energy Committee came up with their own way to track electricity generation from the town's municipal solar array, which is necessary for annual Green Communities reporting and also for ensuring the panels are functioning properly. The results will be added to the town's website.

SREC to REC transition: The town has been selling SRECs via Hampshire Power to other entities. However, the SRECs only last 10 years and we will soon reach that point. We would then generate RECs which could still be sold but would be significantly less money (e.g., \$25-30 per REC instead of \$250-300 per SREC).

Net metering credits redistribution and electricity accounting. In addition, we get solar net metering credits on the town's electricity costs. The town needs to do some one-time changes as there are some large balances and then re-align the Schedule Z so we don't continue to get large credits. We should consider having central payment of electrical bills so that we can better monitor the credits so that we can lower overall electrical costs for the town. The credits only cover 40% of the electrical use of the town.

Solar on DPW barn. Wayne Hachey was going to get a quote on solar panels on the town barn. The federal government will now give 30% of the cost of solar to the town.

VOTE: Zara made a motion that once the SRECs run out, that we retire the RECs and not sell them, so the town would be considered 40% solar powered. Sue seconded. All in favor.

*Action: Zara to discuss retiring RECs with Hampshire Power (who administers SREC sales).
Selectboard to discuss with Finance Committee possibility for paying electricity bills centrally in the future.
Zara to work with Dan Grubbs to add solar array tracking to town website.*

DPW garage floor and Heating system

ACTION: Wayne had wanted to present a plan for using the flooring material already purchased for the town barn. He did not appear at the meeting. He will be notified of the next meeting and added to the Agenda if he is available.

Town Coordinator Reports: Budget Process, new town emails for key official, update on opioid funds

Select Board/Town Coordinator budget. Kathy reported that she had met with Finance Committee on her budget. The only possible increase was in the legal account as it is already close to the budgeted amount.

Stowell Building generator. Kathy reported that she received the quote for Larry Eaton on the cost of getting the Stowell building generator operational.

Town Hall generator. The board discussed who could turn off the generator during an outage, since it must be left on for weekly testing to ensure it is in good working order.

E-mails. Kathy reported that she had been investigating various options for emails using our domain name: newsalemma.org. She had investigated a few options. There were questions on how it would work, including e-mail forwarding.

Opioid funds. Kathy reported on webinars she has attended on the opioid funds we are receiving. Sue commented we should have Bd of Health, police, and fire on a meeting.

OSRP funding. Zara mentioned we will also need to organize for the Open Space and Recreation grant received.

*Action: Kathy will investigate further e-mail forwarding and related options for e-mails using our domain name..
Kathy will organize a Selectboard meeting with the Board of Health, Fire Chief, and Police Chief to discuss use of opioid funds.
Kathy will investigate allowable uses for opioid funds and a rough estimate of available funds.
Kathy will check with Larry Eaton and Larry Ramsdell regarding who could turn off the Town Hall generator in case of a storm.
Forming an OSRP committee will be added to a future Selectboard agenda.*

VOTE: Zara made a motion to authorize Larry Eaton to make the repairs and servicing of the generator, an amount up to \$750. Sue seconded, vote: all in favor.

Minutes

The Selectboard considered the minutes for February 21. Zara had some proposed edits. After review, Susan agreed to the proposed edits.

VOTE: Zara made a motion to approve the minutes of February 21 as amended. Sue seconded. Vote: all in favor.

VOTE: A motion was made by Sue to approve the minutes for February 10, 2023 as written. The motion was seconded by Zara.
Vote: All in favor.

A comment was made that we will need an executive session to approve the executive session of February 10, 2023.

Action: This item will be added to the next Agenda.

VOTE: A motion to adjourn at 8:23 pm was made by Sue. The motion was seconded by Zara. Vote: All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted
Kathy Neal