

Town of *New Salem* Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
March 20, 2023
Held Virtually via Zoom

Convened: 6:32 pm

Present: Susan Cloutier, Zara Dowling, Selectboard; Kathy Neal, Town Coordinator; Claire McGinnis, Chuck Hartwell, Joe Cuneo, Nancy Slator, David Cramer and Deb

Selectboard Reviewed & Signed the Following:

➤ Payroll & Vendor Warrants

Susan opened the meeting explaining that the open ten minutes would be at 7 PM, after the Finance Committee discussion.

Discussion Items

Finance Committee

Mahar Regional Accounts. Claire started off discussing the Special Town Meeting warrants. Claire stated that the Finance Committee had met with Mahar Regional School regarding the Stabilization accounts they were suggesting. The Finance Committee had suggested some changes which Mahar had agreed to and Kathy will check with Cam Dunbar on whether the changes would come within the scope of the article as written. The Finance Committee recommended using free cash for the unpaid bills of prior fiscal years as free cash had been certified.

There was a question on Mahar-Regional. Schools have E & D (excess and deficiency) similar to Free cash in towns but they can't carry more than 5% of the budget as E & D or there must be a decrease in town assessments. Mahar wants to put the excess of E & D into a Stabilization fund and in the case of Medicaid, put any unused Medicaid funds in a Stabilization fund to be used when there is a sudden spike in special ed costs.

Fire Chief MOU. The Finance Committee had no view on the article regarding the fire chief as there are currently no financial ramifications at present but there would be if we enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Wendell regarding the chief as it would bump up his salary and give him benefits. Claire stated there is currently no money in the budget for this. It has been proposed that New Salem and Wendell would each pay half of the Chief's salary and benefits but the Finance Committee pointed out that one town would have to take the lead as the employer, with the other town reimbursing the lead town. Claire stated that New Salem provide higher benefits. Sue stated that we need to clarify if policies align. Claire stated the Fire Chief would be the employee of one town and those policies would apply. If New Salem is the employer, then Wendell would be billed by New Salem. Claire noted that the ramifications of OPEB on Joe's retirement would be unknown. Claire commented on the one year notice

requirement if either town wanted to withdraw from the agreement and stated that 6 months might be more doable as municipal contracts can only last three years anyway. Chuck thought that Wendell should be the employer as he already gets benefits there.

Zara said there were likely other items to discuss with FinCom and we should set a date in April.

Finance Committee members left at 7:02.

Special Town Meeting warrants

The Selectboard discussed the unpaid bills on the Special town meeting warrant, articles 1-6. Kathy gave an explanation on the unpaid bills. Joe Cuneo commented on the Central Square bill for the fire department that it was not in on time, which was the case with all the unpaid bills.

Zara made a motion to support all articles for unpaid bills and the Mahar articles. Sue: second. Vote: All in favor.

Sue made a motion to support Article 9 regarding the Fire Chief special legislation. Zara: second. Vote: All in favor.

Joe will answer questions on Article 9 at the town meeting.

Public Forum

No public comments were made.

Fire Station Bids

Kathy reported that there were three bids, the two lowest were brought to the Selectboard as the third one was double the amounts of the lower bids. Joe was concerned about the bid of CDS as it was a bid for the same generator as the second bidder but for substantially less money. Both Kathy and Joe had checked references and found that CDS received good references, including one from a town not listed by the vendor. There was some concern on whether we would have CDS provide service beyond the one-year warranty due to their distance from town. Sue commented that we need good service for the Fire Station and that we'd been having trouble getting adequate service for the generator at the Hut.

VOTE: Sue made a motion to approve awarding the bid to CDS with the use of ARPA funds which had been previously voted in the amount of \$65,000.00. Although the bid for CDS was just under \$51,985.00, there will be other expenses with propane tanks so we will keep it at \$65,000 for now and any ARPA money unused can be reallocated. Zara-second. Vote: All in favor.

Joe left the meeting at 7:30.

DPW garage floor and heating system

Wayne was unable to attend the meeting. Sue had talked to Wayne about the supplies already available for the DPW floor. Since they are also thinking of putting in a small office, there may be a need for a heat pump as the office space would be heated differently from the open floor space.

Action: Wayne will be put on the next agenda.

Town Coordinator reports: emails, clerk updates, building issues.

E-mail. Kathy reported that gmail professional at \$6/month looked favorable with the availability of calendar and sufficient storage and ease of forwarding. Hover is \$20/yr per email and is very basic. Zara said Hover might be suitable for the Selectboard as they would not need other accessories.

Select Board Clerk. Kathy reported that she had posted a job description for reporting secretary. Zara stated she was going to work on the description with Kathy. Zara would look at it for any adjustments to be made for the job description.

Building issues. Kathy reported that the furnace in the Stowell building had not been working on March 22. She called for service and also had it cleaned as it had not been cleaned since 2017. We need to come up with a system to track routine maintenance.

Oil Bid via FRCOG. Kathy asked if the board would want to do the oil bidding through FRCOG.

VOTE: Sue made a motion to use FRCOG for the oil bid, Zara second. Vote: all in favor.

Mold at Police Station. Sue brought up the mold in the police station and suggested that a good air filtration system might improve the air quality. The police budget has quite a bit left in its budget and the chief should look into a filtration system.

Action: Kathy will send links to both gmail and Hover (newsalemma.org domain name holder) to Sue and Zara to take a look at.

Kathy will suggest an air filtration system to the police chief.

Minutes

The Selectboard considered the minutes for March 13. Zara had some proposed edits and commented that the action items helps everyone remember what was to be done after the meeting.

VOTE: Zara moved to accept the minutes as amended. Sue seconded. Vote: All in favor

Executive Session-Approve minutes of executive session of February 10, 2023

Sue made a motion to go into executive session to approve the minutes of February 10, 2023 pursuant to MGL c. 30A, sec. 21(a)(3) and (7) as the acceptance of the minutes in open session could have a detrimental effect on the town's litigation position, with adjournment from the executive session. David Cramer asked why we would go into executive session just to approve minutes. Kathy stated that the matter under discussion in the February 10 meeting is still in litigation and could affect its litigation position in an open session. David asked that the minutes be shared with him so he could prepare the executive session minutes for the Planning Board. The Selectboard agreed. All those present left the meeting except the Selectboard and Kathy.

VOTE: Zara moved to accept the minutes as amended. Sue seconded. VOTE: All in favor.

Action: Kathy will send approved minutes to David.

Selectboard adjourned at 8:11 pm.

Respectfully Submitted
Kathy Neal