

New Salem Select Board Meeting

6/12/23

Select Board members present: Sue Cloutier (SC), Zara Dowling (ZD)

SC opened the meeting at 7:10pm.

During the public comment period, Stacy Stenflug asked the Select Board to investigate why the Highway Department hasn't swept the streets this year, noting that the job is normally done around the time of April school break. Town Coordinator Kathy Neal (KN) said she has asked the Highway Department about this and that there may not be money left for it in this year's budget.

The Select Board looked at the intergovernmental agreement laying out the reorganized Fire Chief position to be shared with Wendell (ATTACHMENT: "Intermunicipal Agreement for Shared Fire Chief Services Between the Towns of New Salem and Wendell"). SC stated that town counsels from both towns have looked at the agreement and approved it.

The Select Board briefly discussed some language in the agreement. ZD had questions about whether New Salem would have the right to terminate a chief if he is technically an employee of Wendell as the document specifies. ZD suggested several minor changes to language in the agreement. SC noted that there could be parts of the document that will need to be rewritten next year, in consultation with Wendell, after getting some experience with the collaboration in practice.

VOTE: ZD motioned to authorize SC to sign the intergovernmental agreement with whatever modifications are agreed to by the select boards of the two towns and the finance committees, taking into account the suggestions that have been made to the language during this meeting. SC seconded, passed unanimously.

ACTION: KN will check whether New Salem has been granted a home rule petition to allow the Fire Chief to serve beyond the normal mandated retirement age.

The Select Board discussed when to hold the debt exclusion vote for the fire department pumper truck authorized at town meeting.

VOTE: SC moved to hold the vote on August 29. ZD seconded, passed unanimously.

The select board discussed re-convening the dormant Agricultural Commission so that the Commission can meet with the animal control officer to look at other towns' livestock bylaws and develop one for New Salem, as decided in the Select Board meeting of 5/15/23. SC stated that both parties from the 5/15/23 hearing regarding backyard chickens will be invited.

ACTION: SC will contact the agricultural commission and have them set up a meeting with the animal control officer.

The Select Board reviewed the list of committee appointments for accuracy and checked for members who will need to be reappointed for the coming fiscal year. ZD suggested asking committee chairs to list committee member contact info when they submit their annual reports. SC suggested sending quarterly reminders about keeping track of committee news, progress, and any other information the committee may want to add to its annual report.

ACTION: KN will reach out to committee members who need to be reappointed.

The Select Board briefly discussed hiring an intern to help the Town Coordinator. In particular there is a need for help compiling all town bylaws in one place.

VOTE: SC moved to appoint Jon Bonafini as police chief and have the term of office expire June 30, 2026. ZD seconded, passed unanimously.

VOTE: ZD motioned to designate 35K of ARPA funds for the PFAS project at Swift River School. SC seconded, passed unanimously.

VOTE: SC motioned to designate a total of \$4500 for needed repairs to a stone wall on South Main Street. ZD seconded, passed unanimously.

SC reflected on this year's town meeting, noting that it went smoothly thanks to the hard work of many community members. The select board signed thank-you cards for several school employees who came to the meeting, as well as a card wishing the Fire Chief well for his upcoming knee surgery.

Randy Gordon clarified the term start dates for the current members of the Historical Commission. He suggested the town should look into legal restrictions related to minimum term lengths.

ACTION: KN will look into MA requirements for town committee term lengths.

The Select Board signed a Permit to Solicit or Canvass for a solar developer who would like to go door-to-door in town.

KN made note of an upcoming interview with a highway department candidate. In discussing the interview, ZD suggested that the town's hiring process should be formalized and written down. The Select Board concurred that the hiring process and job descriptions should be written (or collected, where they already exist). The Board noted that committee descriptions also need to be written down.

SC and ZD discussed some takeaways from a seminar they attended for new Select Board members. ZD suggested formalizing the time policy for the public comment section at the beginning of Select Board meetings. To accomplish this, SC suggested putting a sentence or two in the agenda about how the public comment section is conducted, including a specific amount of time allotted to each speaker. Along the same lines, SC suggested adding to each agenda a note stating that the Chair can call a two minute warning on extended discussions of agenda items.

In addition, ZD noted she learned that all documents related to Select Board meetings need to be accessible along with the minutes.

ZD presented a spreadsheet of possible Select Board areas of focus, for other select board members to review in order to set policy priorities, to be reviewed at a future meeting.

VOTE: SC moved to close the meeting at 8:52pm. ZD seconded, passed unanimously.