



Select Board /Assessors Meeting Summary

Dec. 13, 2023

6 p.m.

Select Board members present: Wesley Daniel, Katherine Grinnell and Mitchell Garnett

Others present: Town Clerk Mary Anderson

Wesley Daniel called the Select Board meeting to order at 6 p.m.

Approve Summary of Nov. 22, 2023: Motion to approve summary by Mitch, Kate seconded; all in favor, motion carries.

Sign Treasurer's Warrants dated Dec. 14, 2023:

P/R Warrant #99: \$7,634.42

A/P Warrant #100: \$2,551.66

Motion to approve warrants by Mitch, Kate seconded; all in favor, motion carries.

Road Foreman Report: Written by Frank Jones Jr. and read by Wes

12/3: Frank mixed up sand; Steven came in to help put plows and winds on P600, P100, P500 and P200

12/4: Frank called in Steven, Jonathan and Ricky to plow

12/5: Frank called in Steven, Jonathan and Ricky to plow; washed trucks and worked on plows

12/6: Replaced muffler on P200 and put on the wind; worked on backhoe; Frank called for parts

12/7: Jonathan and Frank worked on tire chains; Travis Kilbreth worked on P300 and P100.

CEO Report: None.

Health Officer Report: None.

Town Clerk/Treasurer's Report: Mike White picked up "the big maps" on Thursday to update and there is money in the budget to pay for the update. Mary and Stephanie met with Leticia from Knox County to talk about setting up a central database of maps; the cost of the work is included in Knox County taxes already paid. The checking account balance is \$834,250.

Broadband update: None.

Other Agenda Items: There will be an executive session on Tuesday, Dec. 19, at 9:30 a.m. at the town office, per 1 MRSA 405(6)(A) to discuss a personnel matter.

Select Board members signed the November bank statement.

Wes made a motion to appoint Mary Anderson, Sara Bullard, Jeff Grinnell, Peg Hobbs and Joan Tognacci to the Comprehensive Plan Committee; Mitch seconded, all in favor, motion carries.

Following a motion by Wes and second by Mitch, Select Board members agreed to adopt changes to the Personnel Policy, effective Jan. 1, 2024.

Other business: Select Board members recessed at 6:16 p.m. and reconvened at 6:26 p.m. with the Recreational Trails Committee. Members of the Recreational Trails Committee present were Lisa Sharp, Peg Hobbs, Sara Bullard and Steve Ocean. Lisa began by reading the committee's mission statement and asked if there are any additional expectations from Select Board members. Mitch asked for a written copy to verify but in general, all Select Board members agreed with the mission statement. The committee hopes to create its own website that is independent of the town site and requested up to \$500 to do so – the funding will cover the website and domain costs for the first two years. Kate asked if the Recreational Trails Committee intends to seek town funding in the 2024 budget, which is being developed now; Peg said there are no plans to request town funding at this time. Select Board members agreed to allow up to \$500 from the Recreational Trails Committee account to be spent on a website.

Committee members posed a number of specific questions about the draft trails ordinance and will submit the questions in writing to the Select Board before the next meeting. Most concerns can be addressed in easements with individual property owners. Mitch suggested a review similar to the Planning Board site plan review be created to vet each property and situation going forward that would offer a checklist-type document for the Recreational Trails Committee to consider. Committee members asked that the section addressing legal liabilities be sent back to the town attorney in the hope of softening the language – currently the committee feels the language is too vehement. There are also concerns about ongoing costs of parking lot and/or trail maintenance the committee would like to have answers to prior to town meeting, when residents are expected to vote on accepting the trails ordinance. Select Board members will use the written submission from the Recreational Trails Committee as a guideline for needed answers, and will check with legal counsel again before the March town meeting.

Questions/comments: None.

Kate made a motion to adjourn, Mitch seconded; meeting adjourned at 6:57 p.m.

The Budget Committee met for discussions starting at 7 p.m. Committee members present were Don Grinnell, Dave Williams, Joan Tognacci, Wendy Carr, Kim Linscott, Deb Bocko, Sean Donaghy, Jesse Casas and Kathy Ocean. Also present were Select Board members and Town Clerk Mary Anderson. The group went over the budget worksheet and asked questions of Select Board members about changes. Jesse, who also is an alternate member of the Ambulance Advisory Committee, noted that Union Ambulance's Jesse Thompson has stated there is no major increase expected to the ambulance budget this year. The ambulance budget will be voted on in June, alongside the RSU 40 budget. The county budget and TriCounty Solid Waste budget both are expected to increase.

Office Administration costs were discussed, as several lines are expected to increase. There was some discussion about changing over emails for the town office, public works, CEO, etc. as the town transitions to a municipally owned broadband internet service. There is a cost associated with each email address that is currently being paid to Consolidated Communications but the email switch would allow municipal staff to do away with @fairpoint.net addresses and move to @washington.gov addresses. Mary will look further into the costs and how they might be offset.

Mary explained that a paperwork error on 2021 led to the town grossly underpaying its workers compensation premium. Because it was partially an MMA error, a portion of the underpayment was forgiven, but the remainder – more than \$5,000 – must be paid by June 2024.

There were several questions posed by the Budget Committee about Fire Department requests. An Assistant Fire Chief position and a captain position had been paid the same annual stipend as all firefighters but Fire Chief Phil Meunier requested a larger stipend for those positions in 2024. Those holding the positions remain the same as years past. As

well increases to stipends for the chief and deputy chief are requested. Budget Committee members were unclear on the difference in job duties and pay between the chief officer positions. Fire department general support and equipment lines have requested 20 percent increases as well. Budget Committee members questioned an increase in general support because nearly \$5,000 was returned to the general fund from that line this year.

Under Public Works, the largest increase is the cost of road salt, which jumped more than 40 percent from last year. One truck has been paid off.

Budget Committee members questioned the need to spend \$10,000 on the Comprehensive Plan update. The cost estimate is from MidCoast Council of Governments, that will assist the volunteer committee in updating the plan. The last update was in 2005 and was completed entirely by volunteers.

Paving this year will take place on Calderwood Road and the funding has been broken out on its own line.

Bids for snow removal, roadside mowing, and grounds maintenance came in higher (55 percent, 10 percent, and 25 percent, respectively).

Several items will be addressed at town meeting: a new rollover fund to replace fire department air packs (\$2,500 /year); a total of \$18,135 over two years for Midcoast Council of Governments for updating the Comprehensive Plan; lines for excavator maintenance (\$2,000/year) and trailer maintenance (\$500/year); salary increases (5 percent) for town employees; and an increase to 100 percent coverage of town employee health insurance (currently the town covers 80 percent of the employee insurance).

The Budget Committee will next meet on Wednesday, Jan. 17, at 7 p.m. in the Bryant Room of Gibbs Library.

Respectfully submitted by Stephanie Grinnell