



## Select Board /Assessors Meeting Summary

February 15, 2023

6 p.m.

**Select Board members present:** Wesley Daniel, Thomas Johnston and Mitchell Garnett

**Others Present:** Town Clerk Mary Anderson; Budget Committee members Donald Grinnell, Jesse Casas (also an Ambulance Advisory Committee member), Debbie Bocko, Sean Donaghy and David Williams (by phone); Union resident and Ambulance Advisory Committee member Heather Jackson; Union Ambulance Rescue Chief Jesse Thompson; Ambulance Advisory Committee member Libby Casas; Friends of EMS for Maine President Kevin McGinnis; resident Norman Casas

Jesse Casas opened the meeting at 6 p.m. with an introduction of Kevin McGinnis, a consultant hired (grant-funded) to study Union Ambulance Service and its needs for the future. Heather Jackson also was introduced as a member of the advisory committee.

Kevin explained that the EMS Informed Community Self-Determination program was developed to help emergency services providers that are struggling – but he emphasized that Union Ambulance is in good shape based on interviews with locals, town officials and others as well as Maine EMS data on response times and the like. The study can be used to find any issues that need to be addressed and offer solutions to those issues.

Calls for Union Ambulance have increased to an average of two per day and most calls are made between 6 a.m. and 9 p.m., with weekends seeing the most activity. On average, it takes Union Ambulance 14 minutes to reach Washington residents, an improvement of three minutes since 2019. Other services that respond to Washington average between 19 and 34 minutes to reach Washington residents.

Issues identified by the study include last year's lack of communication about the budget increase, accelerated costs for equipment and staff, the "fragility of care" and a need for a second ambulance. Kevin described the fragility of Union Ambulance as staffing-related, mostly due to paramedic Jesse T. going on nearly 30 percent of calls – meaning if Jesse T. chose to leave Union, the rescue would become very short-staffed, especially at the paramedic level. The study suggests, and Ambulance Advisory Committee recommends, hiring one full-time equivalent position this year, which will increase the 2023-2024 budget by about 28 percent (Washington's share would be \$150,188.32).

There was some discussion about the level of emergency service typically required for most calls and if a full-time paramedic is necessary. Union Ambulance Service still would be staffed at a lower EMT level if a paramedic is not available; however, there are calls for which a paramedic is required and if there is not one immediately available, one could be picked up from another service.

Libby compared the ambulance service to insurance – something we all pay for but only use when we need it. She also noted people who work as paramedics, even those who are full-time, have to work multiple jobs to make a living. Libby described the ambulance as a rolling emergency room that saves people's lives. She noted the entire advisory committee voted in favor of adding a full-time position. Wes said the mission of the advisory committee was to determine the best service for the town and he feels it did so.

There was some discussion about why the per diem line of the budget wasn't decreased in light of adding a full-time position – Jesse T. explained the full-time position was added in with the per diem line (he probably will list per diem and full-time separately for future meetings).

Libby said the billing versus collections ratio also came as a surprise to her. Jesse T. said last year, \$425,000 was billed but only \$175,000 was collected, mostly because of low reimbursement rates for MaineCare and Medicare.

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**Select Board members present:** Wesley Daniel, Thomas Johnston and Mitchell Garnett

**Others Present:** Town Clerk Mary Anderson

Wes Daniel called the Select Board meeting to order at 7:16 p.m.

**Approve Summary of Feb. 8, 2023:** Motion to approve summary by Tom Johnston, Mitch Garnett seconded; all in favor, motion carries.

**Sign Treasurer's Warrants dated Feb. 16, 2023:**

P/R Warrant #13: \$7,227.16

A/P Warrant #14: \$10,946.39

Motion to approve warrants by Tom Johnston, Mitch Garnett seconded; all in favor, motion carries.

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

2/6: Put up road posters; put seat in P200; started to fix P500 plow

2/7: Worked on P500 plow; called out to plow

2/8: Plowed and washed off trucks; salted/sanded Town Office

2/9: Sanded dirt roads for ice; mixed up sand; back to sand for ice

2/11: Sanded for snow and ice

**CEO Report:** None.

**Health Officer Report:** None.

**Town Clerk/Treasurer's Report:** Mary asked for approval of the Axiom note and chart so Sara Bullard can distribute it publicly. The checking account balance is \$642,778. A snowmobile refund of \$311.14 was received and will be given to Hill and Gully Snowmobile Club via Tom, who is treasurer of the organization. Gibbs Library refunded \$225 to the town for its portion of the failed delivery lockbox.

The appointment list will be posted by the end of the month for appointments expiring May 1.

Mary has reached out to Mike Mayo about moderating town meeting and received a tentative positive response.

The annual audit will take place Tuesday and Wednesday; auditors will meet with Select Board members Friday or Monday (Feb. 24 or 27). The Town Office will be closed Monday for Presidents' Day.

Stephanie has a phone meeting Friday to talk about town website upgrade costs – MMA legal advises ARPA money can probably be used for it.

**Broadband update:** Sara Bullard confirmed with Mark Ouellette of Axiom that an August event to promote sign-ups for service can include a bounce house and T-shirts will be sold for a donation to benefit the Evening Star Grange roof fund.

**Other Agenda Items:** Select Board members looked over suggested changes to the Town-owned Property Ordinance suggested by town attorney Peter Drum. It will be included on the warrant.

**Other business:** Wes has asked Frank to replace the battery in the generator at the fire station. Public Works employee Steven Jones is out of work for a while because of a medical condition that is unrelated to his position at Public Works. Frank will ask Ricky Linscott to fill in, if needed, (he would be paid the regular full-time rate while filling Steven's position).

Tom let the other Select Board members know he submitted an application on behalf of the fire department for a light and air truck in the amount of \$525,000 – if the grant is awarded to Washington, a 5-percent match is required (\$25,000).

Mitch asked if Select Board members simply needed to give a thumbs up on the Axiom note/chart – they did so.

**Questions/comments:** None.

Mitch made a motion to adjourn, Tom seconded; meeting adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Stephanie Grinnell