

**Approved Minutes**  
**MAIDSTONE SPECIAL SELECTBOARD MEETING**

Monday, November 27, 2023; 7:00 pm

Hybrid Meeting, both in person at Town Hall and by Zoom Video Conference

Members Present in Town Hall (in-person): Scott Lovell, Chair; Brad McVetty, Bruno McKenzie

Town Officials and Staff Present via Zoom: Town Clerk and Lister Amy Pear; Treasurer, Delinquent Tax Collector, Lister, Zoning Board and Planning Commission member Bob Champagne-Willis; Zoning Board and Planning Commission Chair Chris von Alt; Zoning Board and Planning Commission member Bruce Barker; Administrative Assistant to the Selectboard Mary von Alt

Also Present via Zoom: Lin Mixer, Andy Champagne-Willis, Jan Barker, June Lockert, Laurie and Bob Snowman

Chairman Scott Lovell called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm. He introduced the Agenda for the meeting, then called on the Treasurer, Bob Champagne-Willis, to start the meeting off.

Bob introduced the background materials that he had prepared and supplied to each Selectboard member for this meeting. First was the Budget Worksheet for 2024, listing each expenditure item in the 2023 Budget for which the Selectboard must decide the amount to propose in the 2024 Budget that will be voted on at Town Meeting on Tuesday, March 5, 2024. For each item, the Budget Worksheet lists the amount allocated in the 2023 Budget with a corresponding line on which the amount actually spent in 2023 will be listed. Bob explained that the amount actually spent will be calculated in January after fiscal year 2023 has concluded.

Bob also provided documents used in the extensive discussions held at Selectboard meetings in January 2023 about the calculation of the Town Clerk's and Town Treasurer's salaries for fiscal year 2023, utilizing the formulas with which these salaries were determined. Brad did a great deal of work at that time assembling all of the background facts and figures, calculating what should have been paid in 2022 if the formulas had been implemented as intended, and calculating the correct pay levels for 2023 according to the formulas, to which he added the amount underpaid in 2022. To facilitate the salary discussions for 2024, Bob summarized Brad's 2023 salary information on the sheet provided to the Selectboard named "Calculation of Town Clerk and Town Treasurer Salary 2023", and provided Brad's worksheets detailing how he calculated his proposed 2023 salaries that were later adopted by the Selectboard. Bob said that if the Selectboard wanted him to, he would gather the information needed for the formulas.

**Town Clerk and Town Treasurer Wages:** After pointing out the problems with the formulas as historically implemented, Brad said that his opinion was to do away with the formulas and go to a straight salary. In the discussion that ensued, Brad suggested that the Selectboard stick with the same 2023 salary for the Town Clerk and the Town Treasurer and add a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). Bob provided the Federal and Vermont COLAs - 3.2% for Federal Social Security benefits, and 2.2% for the State of Vermont union employees. The Selectboard decided to use the average of those two figures, 2.7%, for the Town Clerk and Town Treasurer salaries, resulting in a 2024 salary of \$17,850 for each position. These salaries will be voted on at the next Selectboard meeting, which is scheduled for Monday, December 4, 2023.

The Selectboard then continued the discussion of town wages, following the list in the Budget Worksheet.

**Cleaning Wages:** The amount allocated for that has not been fully used. Town Hall does not have a cleaning person at present and is in the process of advertising that open position. Typically, cleaning takes an hour to an hour and a half each week, with more required for occasional additional cleaning projects. Bob said the \$1500 allocated should be enough, though Bruno pointed out that it might be difficult to find a cleaner.

**Assistant Town Clerk Wages:** Since Suzy is retiring, this position has been advertised at \$17/hour for 4 hours per week. The Town Clerk and Treasurer would like retiring Assistant Town Clerk Suzy Irwin to continue for a period of time to train her replacement. Additionally, Amy pointed out that the current allocation of \$3,300 equates to an hourly rate of \$15.86, which is a little low for someone who would be required to perform all Town Clerk duties in the event of Amy's absence. Bob calculated that \$4,600 would be needed to

cover that overlap and a pay level of \$17/hour, an increase from the current budget allocation of \$3,300. The Selectboard then agreed on an allocation of \$4,600.

**Assistant Town Treasurer Wages:** The Assistant Town Treasurer, Kathy Intoppa, who works remotely on a monthly basis. Bob said the current allocation of \$800 is sufficient.

**Lister Wages:** The Town has not used the entire \$8,500 allocated for Lister Wages, but Bob expects that a total of \$8,000 will be used in 2023. In 2024, due to the reappraisal that is happening, Bob is expecting the largest grievance hearings that have ever happened in Maidstone. Informational meetings are typically held prior to the grievance hearings in order to help people understand what is going on with the property values; Bob thinks a couple of those will be needed. Given this anticipated workload, Bob recommends keeping the Lister Wages allocation at \$8,500; if not needed, the money will not be spent.

**Moderator Wages:** The Town does not have a Moderator, therefore will not be spending the \$100 allocated. David Atkinson was the Moderator at the Town Meeting in March 2023, but did not run for re-election. Bob explained that the Moderator elected in March will then serve as the Moderator at the Town Meeting the following year. The first item on the Agenda at the Town Meeting in March 2024 will be to elect a Moderator.

**Selectboard Wages:** The Auditors set the Selectboard Wages. Bob said that he will make sure they understand their responsibility in this area and meet before the budget is established.

**Selectboard Secretary Wages:** The Selectboard Secretary, Mary Von Alt, said she sees no need to increase this.

**Ballot Clerk Wages:** Currently set at \$500, this needs to be increased as 2024 will have increased demand due to more elections. Bob thinks that the Town has spent \$350 in 2023 for one election. In 2024, there will be three elections plus the local elections on Town Meeting Day. Additional workers will be needed to count the ballots for the Presidential Primary, also held on Town Meeting Day, which must be reported that night. Counting will not begin until after Town Meeting, as the Town Clerk, by law, is the scribe for Town Meeting. Bob calculated that \$1,300 is the amount that should be allocated.

**Zoning Wages:** Bob said that the Town does not yet have the final year end dollar amount spent. Zoning wages are comprised of two different payments: one is the \$60/permit application that is paid for by the permit application fee of \$85; the other is payment for additional hours for office hours, violations, and research. Bob said he believes the Town had 29 permit applications this year; at \$60/permit, that yields a total of \$1,740. Brad and Bob agreed that the allocation for Zoning Wages in the budget should not include anticipated payment of \$60/permit, as that money actually comes from the permit fees that the Town charges; factoring the payment of the \$60/permit into the budget allocation results in the Town raising the money twice - once from the permit fees and once from the budget. Bruno said he thinks the Town should bring the pay back to the \$60/permit and get rid of the \$20/hour fee. Brad said that must be done at a Selectboard meeting with it posted on the Agenda, so the Selectboard can act on it. The Selectboard also must vote to get rid of the formula for calculating the Town Clerk and Town Treasurer salaries. In response to questions from Brad and Scott regarding the timeframe within which these decisions must be made. Bob said the budget is set at a special Selectboard meeting in mid-January; this preliminary discussion is intended to help streamline that January meeting. The Selectboard therefore decided to add action on Town wages to the Agenda for the upcoming December 4th meeting.

Bob said he had some pushback against eliminating the \$20/hour for additional work by the Zoning Administrator (ZA); that \$20/hour compensates the ZA for time spent on additional legwork for violations; without the \$20/hour fee, there is no money to pay the ZA for that work. Scott asked what the \$3000 in the budget is for, to which Brad replied, "That's what we are doing away with." Mary reminded the Selectboard that Bruno proposed and the Selectboard voted to pay the ZA both the \$60/permit and the \$20/hour for additional work when Eileen Thietten was briefly the ZA in November 2022. Bruno said that was because Eileen requested that to take the job, in accordance with what she was paid in Guildhall. He continued to say that the issue is that a lot of this work is volunteer work, and he thinks that people are "taking advantage of the pay off the Town." He remembers when the ZA did not get paid at all; Bruno said he was the one who

brought up that the ZA should get paid for the job, back when Ricky Hart was doing the job. "This isn't a job where people should make a living out of it, make money out of it. Basically, they are doing it as a volunteer and making a little money at it." Amy said that she had asked for the additional money when Lloyd was the ZA, when he was doing a lot of extra work with research and letters, but was not getting paid for that work. The Buyak case is a perfect example, she said; Lloyd did a lot of work for that case, but because there was never a permit pulled, there was no pay. She said that wasn't fair to do to Lloyd, that Bruno thought that the person he brought in to be the ZA was worth the \$20/hour, and that sometimes there is a lot of work the ZA is doing that we just do not see. Bruno concluded the discussion with saying that this topic would be discussed at the December Selectboard meeting.

**Town Auditor Wages:** This is \$100/auditor to do their work. Bob said that Towns pay a lot of money for audit work when they bring in outside firms. Maidstone is a small town, not legally required to do any extra auditing. The Town did eliminate local auditors and hire an outside firm at one point, but then returned to electing local auditors, which seems to be working. Maidstone's three Auditors are Jack Donnelly, Donna Bouthilier, and Sandy Gray. The Auditors basically work in January and early February, a tight window in which to prepare their report. This year Bob has been providing the Auditors on a regular basis with the bank reconciliations, the warrant, and a copy of all of the receipts that have come in, to give them a basis for their work. Bob says the Town is getting a bargain at \$100/auditor. The Selectboard decided to leave the allocation as is.

The rest of the information on the Budget Worksheet will be filled in by Bob after the end of the year. As he has reported earlier, we have gone over budget for software; that will be addressed at the January budget meeting. The Town over-budgeted for Trash and Recycling based on what Dottie had told them about how much she would increase the fees; the increase was not as much as originally thought, so the cost for the year will be under the amount budgeted. The numbers for Landfill Transport, Tip Fees, Scale, Waste Pickup, Recycling, and Additional Trips will not be nearly as high in the 2024 Budget.

Brad brought up the amount of money allocated for trash bags, \$7500, and wonders if the Town should move to using stickers like Guildhall does. Amy said that \$7500 was for a two year supply of trash bags, which was required because the company would not handle a smaller order. Brad said that he thinks Guildhall pays \$900 for stickers for a year. Bruno commented that he hates the stickers because they do not stay on; Amy concurred that everybody hates stickers. As the money in the 2023 Budget covered a two year supply, the Town does not need to consider trash bags for this 2024 Budget.

Overall, Bob anticipates that our municipal budget will be reduced this next year with the costs of trash bags eliminated and waste pickup related costs decreasing. Amy pointed out that we have not yet received any of the contracts for our emergency services. Bob thinks those costs will go up, but the decrease in other costs will offset that.

Chris von Alt suggested that in the Appropriations for Town Meeting, the Town might consider returning any money to the Planning and Zoning Fund that is used this year. We do not yet know what is happening with the Municipal Planning Grant Application, but eligibility for other grants that may be needed requires that the Town vote to put money into the planning process. Bob said this would be an appropriation on the Town Warrant this next year to refund the Planning and Zoning Fund.

Scott asked if we could address the donations on the list, but Bob has not heard from everyone who requests donations yet. He has heard from about half of the organizations that typically request donations, and none have increased the amount requested.

Bob said the Town has used only a minimal amount of the \$3,000 allocation for the Direct Fire Support, therefore he does not think the Town will need the same amount in the 2024 budget. Scott brought up the email sent to the Selectboard by Amy this morning, which Brad pointed out requested a donation to the State fund for dry hydrants. Scott asked if dry hydrant funding comes out of the Direct Fire Support fund. Bob said it does, but this year it has been used only minimally. Bob had not yet seen the email and will check it out when it is forwarded to him. The email instructed Petition Towns to ignore the donation request. Amy said she believes that Petition Towns are those towns that put each petition on a warrant, because then the Selectboard would not be making the decision. Brad expressed concern about the numbers listed on the

spreadsheet attached to the email recording the amount of money collected for this grant fund and the amount actually spent on grants. Bob will read the email and get back to the Selectboard.

Bob introduced the topic of the proposed Twin States Clean Energy Link project, which he said he would address in more detail at the upcoming Selectboard meeting. The money that would come into the Town through grants from the NVDA, if the proposed project is implemented, would be a good source of funding for any dry hydrant work, rather than coming out of the Town coffers.

The rest of the items on the Budget Worksheet will be addressed in January.

Amy said she had put a copy of a letter on the Signing Desk that she received regarding a marker that might have been moved at Taylor Cemetery. Brad said he never gave anyone permission to move any gravesites. Amy will give the Selectboard any information she can assemble with regard to this. The Selectboard will look into this matter.

The business of the meeting concluded, Bruno made a motion to adjourn; Brad seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:56 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mary von Alt