

Approved Minutes
MAIDSTONE SELECTBOARD MEETING

Monday, February 5, 2024

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, Vice Chair; Bruno McKenzie

Also Present in Town Hall (in-person): Essex County Sheriff Trevor Colby

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 member Bruce Barker; Zoning Board and Planning Commission Chair Chris von Alt; Lister, Auditor, and Health Officer Sandra Gray; Selectboard Administrative Assistant Mary von Alt

Also Present via Zoom: Lin Mixer, Lisa Plourde, Andy Champagne-Willis, Suzy Irwin, Burt and Carol Kline, Sam and Carol Gorham, Laurie and Bob Snowman, Jim Bennett, Jan Barker

Chairman Scott Lovell called the meeting to order at 6:59 pm. He reminded all in attendance that the Rules of Participation are to be followed.

APPROVE MINUTES:

Bruno made a motion to accept the January 29th Special Selectboard Meeting minutes; Brad seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

ESSEX COUNTY SHERIFF TREVOR COLBY:

Sheriff Colby updated the Selectboard and Town about an amendment to the Law Enforcement Service Contract with the Essex County Sheriff's Department made in accordance with Vermont Bill S.17 (Act 30). The Sheriff's Department's work for Maidstone includes patrols, investigations, compiling reports and arrest records, and all court related proceedings. The amendment impacts billing for this work, as well as requiring that the Department provide the Town with reports of all traffic stops and incidents it has handled in Maidstone. The report provided to the Selectboard at this meeting is for all Department work conducted in Maidstone in 2023. The Sheriff said these reports will be issued quarterly from this point forward, just as invoices are. The reports do include addresses, but no names. Bob asked if addresses would also be provided for incidents of domestic violence. The Sheriff replied that if the Selectboard preferred, addresses can be left out. The members of the Selectboard, however, all agreed that there was no reason that addresses should not be in the reports. The Department has not been spending down the money that Maidstone has given it consistently, the Sheriff explained, for two reasons. One is that the Department continues to be understaffed. That means the Department has not been able to do all that various contracts are asking of it. The Sheriff cited Island Pond as an example of the Department returning money because it could not perform all that was in the contract. A second reason is that their contract with the Court takes precedence. The Court has been trying to catch up with their scheduling, resulting in increased demand for officers' presence in the Court. This past year the Department did \$160,000 of work for the Court. Requests from the Court for officers sometimes restricts the availability of officers for other tasks due to the Department's shortage of manpower.

Amy pointed out that the signature page of the Law Enforcement Service Contract only required one signature and asked if the Selectboard would like her to prepare a signature page that includes the signatures of all three Selectboard members. The Selectboard decided that all three members should sign the Contract.

Brad said the Contract dates for the period of coverage indicated that the Contract began after it finished, referring to the following wording in the Contract: "This agreement ... shall be for one year, beginning on the period of the July 1, 2023 through the June 30, 2023." The Sheriff said the Town could make the correction changing June 30, 2023 to June 30, 2024.

Scott thanked Sheriff Colby for attending the meeting and updating the Town. The Sheriff then left the meeting.

Brad made a motion to accept the Law Enforcement Service Contract from the Essex County Sheriff's Department; Bruno seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

REPORT OF THE ROAD COMMISSIONER:

Brad said he only had one item for the Selectboard, the Certificate of Highway Mileage that the State requires the Selectboard to sign annually. This reports the Town's annual highway mileage to the State and reports any new highways added. Maidstone did not add any highways in the past year. The Town's current highway mileage listed by the State is correct. The Certificate of Highway Mileage for 2024 states:

- Class 2 Highways: 5.93 miles;
- Class 3 Highways: 9.91 miles;
- State Highway: 8.425;
- TOTAL MILES OF HIGHWAY: 24.265 miles.

The Selectboard signed the Certificate.

REPORT FROM THE TOWN CLERK:

Election preparations are in full swing for the local elections as well as the Democratic and Republican presidential primary elections in March. The Town Warning lists the articles that will be voted upon at Town Meeting beginning at 7:00 pm on March 5th. The Town Clerk has posted all of the information inside and outside at Town Hall and on the bulletin board at the lake. All of the information is [posted on the Town website](#) as well. This information includes:

- 2024 Annual Town Meeting Warning
- Democratic Party Sample Ballot
- Republican Party Sample Ballot
- Voter Checklist - Local & Presidential Primary 3/5/24
- Warning - VT Presidential Primary
- Notice to Voters for Local Floor Annual Meeting
- Notice to Voters for Local Elections
- Vermont Voter Bill of Rights
- NEK Choice School District Ballot

The Town Report preparation is coming to a close.

It is the time of year for canine licensing from January 1, 2024 until April 1, 2024. After April 1, there will be a penalty charged for late registration.

Amy received an update today about the Peaslee Bridge project from Spencer Howard, Bridge Management and Inspection Program Manager for the Vermont Agency of Transportation. The Request for Proposal (RFP) for the bridge repairs went out last week and will be open for two weeks. The fix will be minimal, taking less than two days, after which the bridge will be opened immediately. The materials required are readily available, so there should not be any hiccups. The State expects that the bridge project will be completed and the bridge reopened by the end of February or beginning of March. Bruno asked if Amy knew how much grant money had been received. Amy replied that she did not know, but thinks the cost is being split evenly between New Hampshire and Vermont.

REPORT FROM THE TREASURER:

Bob reminded everyone that there will be no Budget to Actual Report until after the budget is approved by the voters at Town Meeting; the next Budget to Actual Report will be at the April Selectboard meeting or at a Special Selectboard Meeting in March, should one occur. The Selectboard Warrant for the month of January is on the Signing Desk.

Bob gave an update based on the news about school budgets. There is a new way of counting students this year. As a bridge between this new way and the old way, the Legislature has capped the increase in a school

district's tax rate at 5%; this is not a cap on the budget, but on the actual tax rate, which is the base tax rate for a Homestead Education Tax. Bob said that some school districts are raising their expenses (in their budgets) much higher than 5% because they know that the State will pick up the burden of paying for those expenses, which means all Vermont taxpayers will help pay. However, Bob reported that our School Board has reduced its budget this year from 6.8 million dollars to 6.5 million dollars, and has reduced its tax rate from 1.49 last year to 1.37 (that's what it should be for this year).

Bruno asked if the student count issue had been resolved. Bob responded that the only remedy for the miscount of students in the 2023 school year, a count which was made in 2022, is legislative. It is in process, with legislative committees working on it. The current administration of the ENSU (Essex North Supervisory Union) is doing a great job of staying on top of everything, really paying attention to the NEK Choice School District, said Bob.

REPORT OF THE DELINQUENT TAX COLLECTOR:

The Town has no 2021 delinquent taxes, which means there is no possibility of a tax sale this year. We have three taxpayers on the 2022 Delinquent Tax List. Bob has not found a report with only one year of delinquent taxes in his search of past Delinquent Tax Collector Reports. This is good news for Maidstone. Last year's tax sale is coming to conclusion. The required waiting period after a tax sale will end on February 16th for last year's tax sale. During that waiting period, the delinquent taxpayer (in this case, the Wiedemans) has the opportunity of repaying the delinquent taxes and reclaiming their property. At the close of that period, Bob will initiate a deed as the Delinquent Tax Collector representing the Town of Maidstone and transfer the property to the winning bidder. The attorney is completing the work associated with this tax sale. Bob brought it to the Selectboard's attention that in accordance with the law, the Town is holding a sum of money that belongs to the delinquent tax payer; that money is the amount paid by the bidder that was over the amount of delinquent taxes, interest, penalties, and attorney fees owed to the Town. By law, that account must be closed and the money must be sent to the delinquent tax payer, i.e., the Wiedemans, by February 19th, if the Wiedemans do not pay the delinquent taxes, penalties, and attorney fees and reclaim their property by the 16th. Bob can only issue the check if the Selectboard signs off on it; the necessary paperwork will be put on the Signing Desk when he has some better instruction from the Town's attorney.

REPORT FROM THE LISTERS:

The reappraisal is moving along. It had a hiccup, as Vermont's Property Valuation and Review (PVR) finally took a look at all of the paperwork for people who were reappraising in 2024. They had some pretty good questions about Maidstone's Statistical Reappraisal. The Board of Listers met with the District Advisor and went through the questions. The District Advisor then reported back to the PVR. Bob has received a verbal notice that all has been approved and our reappraisal is back on track for April 1, 2024, but is waiting for that notice in writing that he has requested.

OLD BUSINESS:

- **Update about Maidstone's proposed meeting of the Selectboards of the 7 towns directly impacted by the Twin States Clean Energy Link proposal:** Scott has heard from Bloomfield that they want to participate. Brad has heard from Guildhall that they will participate. Bob has heard from Dave White, the Chair of the Lemington Selectboard, that they will participate. The Lunenburg Selectboard has declined. The meeting will proceed as planned. Bruno asked if the meeting would be on Zoom; Brad and Mary confirmed that it would be. It is a public meeting, which anyone can attend if interested. This meeting is for the Selectboards and townspeople; the Maidstone Selectboard is not inviting participation from legislative representatives or representatives from the Twin States Clean Energy project at this time. Scott reported that he had responded to Corey Parent, a Twin States project representative, who had expressed interest in attending a Selectboard meeting. Scott told him that would be scheduled at a later date. Perhaps after this joint meeting, Scott said, the Selectboard will have another public meeting about this to which the legislators and Twin States representative(s) will be invited.

NEW BUSINESS:

Discuss vacant position of Town Moderator: Amy explained that there were no candidates for the position of Town Moderator at the election on Town Meeting Day 2023. David Atkinson received the most write-in votes, but at the time that Amy contacted him about assuming the position, David did not think he would be in town on Town Meeting Day 2024. However, David will be in town after all. According to Vermont Statute, he can assume the position of Town Moderator at this time. The Selectboard asked Amy to contact David and relay the information that if he is willing to serve as Moderator for the Town Meeting in March, he just has to come into Town Hall to sign the oath of office.

Request for approval to purchase new vacuum for Town Hall: The Town Hall vacuum is no longer functioning. Brad made a motion to spend up to \$400 of the ARPA funds (American Rescue Plan Act) to purchase a new vacuum cleaner for Town Hall; Bruno seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

NEW BUSINESS:

Lin Mixer had two items of New Business:

1. He received the letter from NVDA in favor of the Twin States Clean Energy Link project and is concerned about which towns will receive the money from NVDA that was referred to in the letter. He thinks that should be addressed at the upcoming joint Selectboards meeting in March.
2. With regard to the total solar eclipse on April 8, 2024, Lin said there is a lot of concern among landowners in Vermont about the public accessing private lands in order to view the eclipse. He does not think that will be an issue in much of Maidstone, but perhaps will be of concern in some areas such as Hall Road. Amy said that VLCT has been holding meetings about this in which she has participated. The State is working with Town Clerks to make things go smoothly. Amy has ordered solar eclipse viewing glasses for the people of Maidstone.

Bob reported that new contracts for services are being received now, and asked the Selectboard for clarity about when contracts with the Town should be signed. The money for the contracts is part of the budget that voters will be asked to approve at Town Meeting on March 5, 2024. Two of the contracts begin on April 1. The Selectboard decided that signing these contracts should be on the Agenda for the April 1, 2024 Selectboard meeting. In the meantime, Bob said he will leave the contracts on the Signing Desk for review.

The business of the meeting concluded, Brad made a motion to adjourn; Bruno seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:37 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary von Alt