

Draft Minutes

MAIDSTONE SELECTBOARD MEETING

Monday, May 6, 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 and 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; Assistant Town Clerk Sam Graham; Lister, Auditor and Health Officer Sandra Gray; Zoning Board and Planning Commission member Bruce Barker.

Also Present via Zoom: Linwood Mixer, Andy Champagne-Willis, Suzy Irwin, Sam and Carol Gorham, Bob and Laurie Snowman, Jim Bennett, Jan Barker, Ray Lovell, Paul Kamins, June Lockert and Burt Kline

Chairman Scott Lovell called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

APPROVE MINUTES:

Brad made a motion to accept the April 1, 2024 Selectboard Meeting Minutes with amendments. Brad requested that on page 3 the cv cv cv at the end of the first sentence be removed and the note for interest at the bottom of page. Also at the bottom of page 4, change the word sill to window trim. Bruno seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Brad made a motion to accept the April 9, 2024 Selectboard Meeting Minutes; Bruno seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Bruno made a motion to accept the April 15, 2024 Selectboard Meeting Minutes; Brad seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

SELECTBOARD

Discuss and take action on letters of interest received for the following positions:

The Selectboard tabled this agenda item until after discussing the later item of increasing the number of Planning Commission members.

REPORT FROM THE ROAD COMMISSIONER

- The road is dying up and has been spot graded 2 or 3 times. Brad said one more grading should take care of it. Ditching will be started from the campground to the telephone building and will be covered by the Better Roads Grant.

REPORT FROM TOWN CLERK

- The Guildhall Library is now open. It will be open until mid-October. The hours have been posted on Maidstone's website. The librarian is Karen Littlefield.

- There was a letter received from an anonymous person that requested it to be added to the Selectboard minutes however it cannot be and Amy cannot reach the person who submitted the letter to explain why because it was received anonymously.
- Town Clerk and Town Clerk Assistant training was very productive.

REPORT FROM THE TREASURER

- The budget-to-actual report was provided and is on the website. Bob states the tax collection received has been normal and we are starting to have an increase in the bank account. NEK Choice has been paid and Bob stated he will be paying the State of Vermont for the school taxes. Bruno questioned the software expense being at 75%. Bob said it is still on track but may be over or under by the end of year. The biggest expense has been paid to NMREC which holds our grand list, establishes values and tax bills so it is needed which is \$5600.
- The Selectboard Warrant is on the Signing Desk for review and to be signed. This is one of the biggest warrants because all the charities the Town of Maidstone supports each year have been paid.

REPORT OF THE DELINQUENT TAX COLLECTOR

The Delinquent Tax amount was \$53,691 in delinquency on April 15, 2024 and since has decreased to about \$37,000 differing from the report provide as a payment has been received Monday. Bob said he believes this will decrease quickly. Bob stated there are 2 taxpayers from 2022 which will be eligible for tax sale April 15, 2025 according to the Town of Maidstone's delinquent policy.

REPORT FROM LISTERS

Bob stated the pre-grievances have come and gone as of May 2, 2024. The hearings were Good. People came in with questions and observations that the Listers were able to address. The formal Grievance Hearings are scheduled for May 16th and 17th. Grievance letters were mailed to every taxpayer in town and it has been posted on the website. Grand list itself has risen by 75%. We will have hearings and there is a contact number on the mailings that went out and posted on Maidstone's website as to who to contact to get set up for a hearing. The grievance window will be closed next Friday, May 17th. The Grand list number will be determined after the grievance hearings and Bob stated the municipal tax rate will be considerably less than last year.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Discuss and take action on the Zoning Board of Adjustment position, three-year term (Bob Champagne-Willis's appointment ends in 2024):** Bob stated he would like to continue on the Zoning Board of Adjustment and the Planning Commission. Brad made a motion to appoint Bob Champagne-Willis for the Zoning Board of Adjustment and the Planning Commission for a 3-year term. Bruno seconded the motion. All voted in favor.
- **Discuss and take action on the Planning Commission position, three-year term (Bob Champagne-Willis's appointment ends in 2024):** Motion made above.

- **Update on the purchase of the flagpole:** Bob said the flagpole has been purchased and there have been emails received that questioned the ability to deliver at Brad's house. Brad stated it has not arrived and he hasn't received any calls. Brad said he called regarding the concerns on delivery issues and they did not know anything about it and didn't believe it was set up for shipment as of yet. Bob stated it's been paid and he will send them an email to communicate directly with Brad only and remove himself as a contact to lessen the communication gaps. Brad asked Bob to let them know he will need to know delivery date the day before it is arriving.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Review and readopt the Rules of Procedure Rev 1:** Scott stated nothing has changed to the Rules of Procedure. Brad made a motion to accept the Rules of Procedures. Bruno seconded the motion. All voted in favor.
- **Discuss contracted work at Taylor Cemetery:** Scott said he went up and cut and removed the tree out of the way. The Selectboard moved this to next month's agenda to check the status of the contracted work that is needed.
- **Hire someone to mow the Town Hall and the two cemeteries:** Brad said that Jason is still interested in mowing at the same price. Bruno moved to rehire Jason McVetty. Scott seconded the motion. All voted in favor.
- **Status update for the Town Plan:** Bob stated it's on hold and there has not been a meeting since the last meeting posted. He said we lost the chair that was doing a boat load of work on this and nothing has been done since Chris resigned. Scott asked if Chris has documents that have not been given to the board. Bob said Chris was working on the energy plan and did not believe it had gone anywhere. Bruno requested this be put on hold as Bob was extremely busy with grievances. The board agreed to put it on hold until the grievances were over and at that time come up with a plan, elect a new chair and move forward with the plan. Bruno asked Paul Kamins if he was interested in joining the Zoning Board and Planning Commission. Paul said he'd be glad to help. Bruno asked him to submit a letter of interest and he agreed.
- **Discuss & Act upon increasing the number of members of the Planning Commission and Zoning Board:** Bob inquired on why the increase, what the plan was and what was going wrong with the board of 3. Scott said at the last meeting, Jesse had several good ideas. He feels getting more input with more people would be better. Bob asked how that would happen. Scott said getting input from the 20% that didn't fill out the survey could only help. He thinks we should reach out to those who didn't submit the survey. Bob asked if he thought if there were more people on the zoning that they would reach out to people. Scott said no the increase would be for more input and several people have asked to be on the board. Bob stated he was happy with 3 and again reiterated they lost one because of politics who was doing a boat load of work. Bob questioned if the board has asked the interested parties questions as he has concerns if he was going to be doing the bulk of the volunteer work and only receive complaints from other members of the board. Bob also stated he wants what is best for the town. Linwood Mixed thought a minimum of 3 maximum of 5 and that it made sense to him to have more voices and input. Burt said 80% responded and

inquired and that 100% is not reality. Scott agreed but trying is a good idea as well. Burt Kline questioned if it was sent 100%. Bob stated that every landowner, renter and voter received it as well as emails that went out and it was posted on the website and at the Town Office. Burt Kline believes it's the person's responsibility to respond not the Town to contact them. Amy stated there was a lot of effort into the survey. She feels Jesse was saying it wasn't the 20% that didn't respond but smaller groups be brought together and that it could have been people that did respond to the survey. She felt there were 2 different issues. Scott agreed that could be. Laurie stated her and Bob felt most people don't chase 20% that didn't respond which was at most 15 people and 80% is pretty good in a town the size of ours. After some discussion Bruno made a motion to increase the number of members to the Planning Commission and the Zoning Board to 5 members. Brad seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

- **Approval of a TAN (Tax Anticipation Note) for July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025:** Bob said that TAN stood for Tax Anticipation Note. He said we have never needed this however VMCA shows that most towns in our situation (which is a calendar year for budget and tax payments in another part of the year) use it to pay for expenses until taxes are collected for October 15th. Bob requested authorization for a new TAN that would be active from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025 since the current TAN expires on June 30, 2024 in case we need to use it. He is unsure what the interest rate is but assures the Board that it's a good rate. Bruno made a motion to authorize the Treasurer for the Town of Maidstone to open and sign for a Tax Anticipation Note (TAN) with Passumpsic Bank in the amount of \$250,000, maturing June 30, 2025. If the TAN is needed, the Selectboard will issue a written notice authorizing the Treasurer to draw a specified amount against the TAN. Brad seconded the motion. All voted in favor.
- **Authorization of Town Clerk, Town Treasurer and Town Assistant Clerk to attend VMCTA conference September 11 and 12, Montpelier. Room rate \$211.00 plus fees:** Bob requested the continuation of training as in past. This conference is a 2-day conference, two rooms needed for 1 night in Montpelier. He said he can't advocate on the experience that this conference brings to them. Bruno made a motion to authorize attending the VMCTA Conference and hotel for 1 night on September 11, 2024. Brad seconded the motion. All voted in favor.
- **Decision of duration of contract with Repro for publication of Annual Report:** Amy said the contract was left on the Signing Desk. She needs to know if the Selectboard want a 1, 2 or 3 year contract. She stated the price decreases with each increase in number of years. Bob said it will lock in price for duration of the contract instead of increasing each year. The Selectboard looked over the contract. Scott asked Bob his opinion on what to do and Bob agreed the 3-year contract would be a great idea since it locks in a price. Bruno made a motion to accept the 3-year contract with Repro. Brad seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Discuss and take action on letters of interest received for the following positions:

Selectboard Administrative Assistant: There were no letters of interest received.

Planning Commission member(s) and Zoning Board of Adjustment member(s):

The Selectboard received three letters of interest. Raymond Lovell, Jim Bennett and Ed Tully submitted letters. Since submitting his letter of interest, Ed Tully has rescinded his interest.

Scott asked Jim Bennett what he'd bring to the zoning board/planning commission. Jim said he would help out when he can and maybe keep the city stuff out of it. Jan Barker stated how much work it takes to be on board. She said her husband has worked hours on it and that it may take 3 to 5 hours to find what you are looking for if you are not clear on what you are working on. She also wanted to be clear it's not just an opinion job and that it's a lot of work. She stated if you do not understand the subject, you need to become efficient to be able to make accurate decisions.

Scott asked Raymond Lovell what he was going to bring to the planning commission and how can he help? Ray stated his experience of living in this town 77 years. He said he does not know what will be asked of him so he's not sure how to answer the question. Scott reiterated what Jan stated that it is a lot of time and commitment. Ray said all he can do is try to meet those commitments.

Bob asked in the discussion we've had leading up to this point and there's been a lot of divisive language for people that live at the lake. He said recently Raymond posted something on Facebook about needing to drain the lake. Bob felt that is not helpful and asked why we want someone on the commission that posts something like that. Ray said it was a joke but Bob said it is a hurtful joke. Ray explained it was about what he thought the state was going to do in the future regarding mandating the sewer systems. Amy stated concerns on appointing Ray Lovell. She lives at the lake; she is the town clerk and treats everyone the same that comes in the office. She feels Ray is stirring the pot with comments made regarding the lake. She does not feel he should be appointed because of the things he's stated and posted. Suzy wanted to reassure Raymond regarding the report that goes out report how clean the lake is and we were in the top 3 cleanest lakes for several years. Linwood stated it's been like 30 years since this testing and we still remain in the top 3. Bob stated he didn't want Maidstone to turn into what Rays property has turned into. It's an embarrassment to Maidstone. He's violated the bylaws and doesn't feel Ray should be on the committee. Bruce feels there are other people we can work with that does have the best interest of the town and are able to work together. Bruno said they approve the board and will do their best to attend the meetings and if there is an issue they have the right to terminate the individual. He said he's seen how people separate the town people from the lake people and we don't want that. He said we need both town people and lake people involved. Jim stated that all comments are personal and Ray has been in this town all his life and should be appointed to the board. Bob reminded people we have a conflict-of-interest policy you cannot do anything personal that you personally profit from with the decisions made by the commission. Arguments were raised between Bob and Jim regarding Bob double dipping on positions. Bob stated he does not violate any conflicts with any of his positions. Scott stated he believes this issue should be tabled and we need to work together and not argue that we need to treat people with respect and be civil. Agree to disagree without hollering and personal attacks and be more productive. He tabled it for a month. He asked the interested parties to think about how to act and what they will do to bring good to the commission.

After this item was tabled, Andy wanted to clarify if someone isn't in compliant with the bylaws and not doing it themselves, he doesn't understand how someone can be appointed regarding the stuff on Ray's lawn and around his house. Scott stated he doesn't like to see it but someone

else might like to see. We don't live in a democracy. Jan stated he isn't saying he doesn't like it; he's saying it's against compliance and why should he be allowed to participate. Bruno asked how he was not compliant and stated that several years ago the Town of Maidstone brought Ray to court which cost the Town a lot of money. Bruno believed the court ruled in Ray's favor because it was grandfathered and this is getting carried away. Amy asked Brad (as she thought he stated in the past) if the case went to court and the court determined that ray had to clean some of it up and there would be a fence installed and no more contents be added to the land or it would be a violation. Brad said it was years ago and can't remember but the documents should still be in the town office. Amy wondered if she found the documents for them to review if it would help to make a more productive decision. Brad said if she wanted to dig it out, he had no problem with that and that it's somewhere in the vault.

OTHER BUSINESS

- Amy stated there was a stone or 2 down at McDade Cemetery. The Selectboard said it was all fixed.
- Amy said the paperwork for the Health Officer was left for the Selectboard but it's already been filled out and signed by the Health Officer and there is nothing more to be done with it. An official document should be received.
- Brad wanted to let everyone know about scamming emails going out and he had been received one from "Scott". Scott confirmed he would never ask anyone for money. Hackers/ Phishing are working their way through the list of Town Officers Bob stated emails from both "himself and Amy" have been received so be sure to look at the email address and confirm it's the official email for the Town Officer. If questioned, call the town office to confirm any email that may not sound official.

ADJOURN:

The business of the meeting concluded. Scott made a motion to adjourn the meeting for May 6, 2024; Bruno seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:18 pm.