

Town of Casco

Minutes of the January 26, 2016 Selectboard Meeting

Selectboard Members Present:

Holly Hancock, Mary Fernandes, Calvin Nutting, Tom Peaslee and Grant Plummer

Staff Present:

Town Manager David Morton and Administrative Secretary Bob Tooker

Approval of Agenda:

The Selectboard moved (Plummer), seconded (Peaslee) and voted to approve the agenda for the January 26, 2016 Selectboard meeting: 5 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

Approval of Warrants:

The Selectboard moved (Plummer), seconded (Peaslee) and voted to approve bills and sign warrants: 5 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

Approval of Minutes: (January 12, 2016)

Holly Hancock amended the minutes of the January 12, 2016 Selectboard meeting to correct a misspelling of "patient."

The Selectboard moved (Hancock), seconded (Plummer) and voted to approve the minutes of the January 12, 2016 Selectboard meeting as amended: 3 in favor, 0 opposed, 2 abstentions.

Town Manager's Update: (David Morton)

The Town has been working diligently on the new Town Office project and will be presenting the Site Plan to the Planning Board on February 8, 2016. The Town is working with a variety of contractors to obtain pricing for all aspects of the project. Geothermal and solar voltaic heating and cooling options appear to be too costly at the present time. Vehicles parked on public roads during snowstorms may be towed. They create a public safety problem for neighborhoods because blocked roads cannot be plowed. Vehicles parked on private roads with public easements during snowstorms may be cause for the Town to stop providing plowing services.

Winter sand for Casco residents is available at a small kiosk on Leach Hill Road across from the Casco/Naples transfer station. Please observe the “Enter” and “Exit” signs and please do not enter through the gated area used by service vehicles.

Holly Hancock inquired about the new General Assistance process. David stated that a contract with a General Assistance Administrator to process applications has been in place for a week. David stated that this approach is freeing up staff time and allowing the Town to deal with the uncertainty of when applicants come in to apply, adding that the new General Assistance Administrator handles applications and background checks and the Town continues to disburse funds. David stated that this approach has worked well for several other towns in the area and reminded the Selectboard that the new approach is for a three month trial period. David stated that the process worked smoothly during the first week.

In response to an inquiry from Calving Nutting regarding potential concerns about a non-local person handling the process, David explained that the new General Assistance Administrator handles four towns using the same Maine Municipal Association guideline and was provided with State levels of assistance specific to Casco’s zone.

Committee and Staff Reports:

Bob Tooker, Casco’s Administrative Secretary, provided an update on the Town Ordinance codification project, a process of consolidating and organizing all of the Town’s ordinances and making them available on the Town website in a full text searchable format. Bob stated that the project is contracted to General Code and requires the significant involvement of Town staff. Bob stated that the project is currently in the Organizational Analysis phase and will soon move to the Editorial and Legal Review phase, after which the codified ordinances will need to be adopted by the Town in the form of an Adoption Code. Bob stated that the Town hopes to complete the project in about a year.

Public Participation:

Tom Mulkern, Casco’s Addressing Officer, challenged the Selectboard to recognize that many roads in Casco are in need of repair when it addresses plans for road reconstruction in 2016. Tom noted that piecemeal projects, as he felt was the case for the recent Libby Road project, take a very long time. Tom stated that Cooks Mills Road is in desperate need of repair and that Tenney Hill Road and Point Sebago Road are both in tough shape. Tom added that since money is currently inexpensive to borrow and currently low oil prices make paving less expensive, he feels that the Selectboard should challenge the Budget Committee to look at a comprehensive bonding project to handle road maintenance.

Guest Speaker:

Fire Chief Jason Moen stated that the Casco Fire and Rescue Department has been dispatched for six to eight years and that it is very happy with the service it is receiving. Jason stated that the

Department has representation on the dispatching Board of Directors and a lot of input in the development of policies and procedures. Jason recommended that the Selectboard approve another three year contract.

In response to an inquiry from Calvin Nutting, David Morton noted that the three year contract calls for rate increases of approximately three percent per year, adding that it is considerably less than the \$75,000.00 to \$80,000.00 per year the Town was paying for dispatching services before it went to the county program.

In response to a request from Holly Hancock to update the Selectboard on the new tank truck, Jason stated that construction has begun and that he expects delivery sometime in late April or early May. Jason stated that the out-of-service Tank 7 has been returned to Brian Hogan for an amount of one dollar based on the advice of legal counsel. In response to an inquiry from Grant Plummer, Jason stated that except for a quickly repaired issue with the re-gen system, the new ambulance is working very well, the crew likes it, it is set-up nicely and it has already been out on a few codes.

In response to an inquiry from Mary Fernandes, Jason explained that the dry hydrant system is a series of dry hydrants throughout the Town that allows the drawing of water from lakes via hydrants. Jason stated that because many of the dry hydrants have fallen into disrepair over the years, the Town allocated \$30,000.00 for maintenance and the replacement of dry hydrants that have been taken out of service.

The Selectboard skipped to Agenda Item 5: Vote regarding renewal of the county emergency dispatching services contract.

The Selectboard moved (Hancock), seconded (Fernandes) and voted to authorize the Town Manager to sign the contract for county emergency dispatching services for the next three years: 5 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

Old Business:

1. Discussion regarding plans for road reconstruction in 2016.
 - a. Johnson Hill Road.
 - b. Edwards Road.

David Morton stated that for budget purposes, he needs direction from the Selectboard as to what it plans for road reconstruction in the coming year. David pointed out that cost estimates from Sebago Techniques for phases one and two of Johnson Hill Road and Edwards Road amounted to nearly a million dollars, adding that actual bids come in lower. In response to an inquiry from

Holly Hancock, David stated that engineering reports for both roads cost approximately \$5,000.00 including the preparation of bid documents, and that an additional \$10,000.00 would be needed for engineering reports on other roads being considered including Leach Hill Road, Tenney Hill Road, Cooks Mills Road and Point Sebago Road. In response to an inquiry from Calvin Nutting about assurances that any work done will not result having to repeat the process too soon, David stated that such problems tend to occur when roads are repaired instead of reconstructed and that the goal is to do a thorough job of rebuilding roads to a standard. In response to an inquiry from Grant Plummer, David stated that the Town budget includes \$340,000 for road maintenance, of which \$200,000.00 is for paving and \$140,000.00 is for reconstruction, adding that all of these funds have gone into the Libby Road project in recent years.

In response to an inquiry from Grant about how short the budget would be if the Town were to complete one of the two roads in a year, David estimated the budget shortfall to be \$250,000.00. Grant noted that bids for completing two segments of the same road at once would be lower than bids for completing one segment at a time. Grant expressed his view that the Selectboard should pick one road to complete and convey to the Finance Committee its view that it ought to be in next year's budget. Holly Hancock noted that even if all of Edwards Road is completed next year, the Town would still not be keeping up with road maintenance needs. Grant noted that perhaps this is the time to do the math with respect to bonding, perhaps in the coming year for a possible solution in fiscal 2018 and beyond.

In response to an inquiry from Tom Peaslee, David stated that if the Town increased the budget by \$250,000.00 and completed all of either Johnson Hill Road or Edwards Road, it would still have money left for road maintenance. In response to an inquiry from Calvin Nutting about budget categories, David noted that a budget increase in any category would result in an overall budget increase.

Mary Fernandes commented on the need to address other roads and the need to prioritize, adding that at the current pace the Town will always be back peddling. David noted that additional engineering reports at a cost of approximately \$10,000.00 could provide needed information on four or five other roads that could be used to estimate costs. Holly stated that the Selectboard needs to determine what the impact and costs would be if a bonding approach was taken. Grant agreed and questioned whether engineering reports would be necessary in order to predict costs. David stated that it generally costs about \$400,000.00 per mile to reconstruct a road, which could be used as a basis for rough estimates.

Grant questioned how to approach the public regarding the need for more money to fix roads and called for a hard look at the budget with the Finance Committee's help to make the budget more digestible. Holly noted that bonding for more long term repairs would likely reduce maintenance costs. David noted that bonding can be done as needed, adding that it is not necessary to bond for all road reconstruction at once. David added that the issues include how much tolerance the Town has for bonding and what would the debt payment on a bond over five, ten or fifteen years look like in the budget.

The Selectboard discussed the potential costs of having to consider environmental issues such as runoff into lakes, and solutions that may include erosion control, catch basins and channeling water underground. David noted that environmental issues are a factor in a decision making matrix for determining what roads to focus on. In response to an inquiry from Calvin, David stated that with few very minor exceptions, the only money available for roads is what taxpayers are willing to pay.

David stated that he would be happy to develop a million dollar bonding scenario based on various repayment terms for the reconstruction of Johnson Hill Road and Edwards Road to present to the Finance Committee for their thoughts, adding that it will ultimately be a Town Meeting decision. In response to an inquiry from Holly, David confirmed that the engineering reports for the two roads could be used to extrapolate rough bonding costs for other roads without additional engineering reports. David added that he does not believe the Town should bond three, four or five million dollars all at once, instead recommending incremental bonding for projects.

In response to an inquiry from Grant, David noted that a budget increase will be necessary regardless of bonding and that bonding is not a one-time fix. Mary expressed her concerns that other financial needs such as the Pleasant Lake/Parker Pond dam, the new Town Office, the Crooked River School, the Village septic system and the possible need to hire a harbormaster all need to be taken into account and prioritized in order to know how the Town can make all of it work. Tom Peaslee expressed the need to invest in roads and infrastructure and that the items Mary mentioned cannot be ignored, adding that the Town needs a plan for moving forward.

Tom Mulkern expressed his view that the Town needs a new budget line for bond payments under capital improvements and that such projects should be viewed as part of a fifteen year plan based on how much the Town can afford to spend on bond payments each year.

Grant expressed his view that it is important for the Selectboard to decide which segments of Johnson Hill Road and Edwards Road will be handled first even if none of the funding approaches under discussion go through.

2. Budget process.

David Morton stated that he is still pulling budget numbers together and that meeting dates have not been set, adding that he expects meetings to be held on Wednesday evenings at Central Station. David stated that meeting dates will be published on the Town website and that meetings will be recorded and televised by Lake Region Television. In response to an inquiry from Holly Hancock, David confirmed that there is still an opening on the Finance Committee.

3. Personal property collections and policy.

Holly Hancock called attention to several handouts including a draft policy for personal property collections drafted by Mary Fernandes. Mary stated that she took it upon herself to draft a policy and that she found herself drafting procedures at the same time, adding that Maine revised statutes and a sample Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) filing statement are available to include in the policy package. Mary expressed her view that it is important to discharge delinquent personal property taxes under \$200.00 because efforts to collect them are not cost effective. Mary questioned whether notices should be sent to everyone who owes delinquent personal property taxes, noting that according to the Maine Municipal Association, the Town has up to six years to pursue collections and two years to enforce them. Mary suggested that the Town file UCC liens as soon as possible for delinquent personal property taxes from 2014 forward. In response to an inquiry from Calvin Nutting regarding writing off taxes under \$200.00, Mary explained that in some cases the cost of filing liens exceeds the amount owed. Holly Hancock expressed that perhaps rather than writing them off, the Town would not go through the lien process. David Morton clarified that the two year limit on enforcing collections means that actions such as property seizures need to take place during those two years and that UCC liens affect peoples' credit and free and clear title to their property. David added that it costs \$20.00 plus staff time to file a UCC lien.

The Selectboard reviewed a list of delinquent personal property tax accounts. In response to an inquiry from Holly Hancock, David expressed that it makes sense to establish a financial threshold for filing a UCC lien and find out from the tax assessor what that threshold might be, below which threshold efforts to collect delinquent personal property taxes would not be cost effective.

David expressed his view that Mary did a great job with the draft policy and suggested that the Selectboard might want to consider adopting it with the understanding that it could be amended later. Mary added that her efforts were merely intended as a framework to get the ball rolling. Calvin Nutting expressed that he would like some time to read the draft policy more carefully before taking any action. Holly stated that it will be added to the agenda for the February 9, 2016 Selectboard meeting. Mary emphasized that the need for a policy is long overdue.

4. Discussion regarding EMS billing and collections.

The Selectboard reviewed a list of delinquent Emergency Medical Service accounts and noted that one individual is deceased and another had an inconsistent middle initial. Holly Hancock stated that some of the accounts had not been sent to collections because payments were being made, but that payments stopped and the entire list is ready to be sent to collections. Holly noted that 1) procedures recommended by an auditor are being followed; 2) the individuals had received multiple letters including a stamped letter; 3) no one requested an abatement for hardship; and 4) the letters were ignored. The Selectboard discussed balances resulting from amounts not covered by insurance and contractual issues related to Medicare and MaineCare. Grant Plummer noted the lengthy process of developing the procedures and that by the time

delinquent accounts arrive at this stage, they have been properly vetted by insurance, adding that all of the procedural boxes have been checked and that it is simply an issue of non-payment.

The Selectboard moved (Plummer), seconded (Peaslee) and voted to send the list of delinquent Emergency Medical Services accounts dated January 26, 2016 minus run number 07-18-1 to collections: 5 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

New Business:

5. Vote regarding renewal of the county emergency dispatching services contract.

The Selectboard addressed this agenda item earlier in the meeting.

Selectboard Comments:

Holly Hancock added disposition of foreclosed properties to the February 9, 2016 Selectboard meeting.

The Selectboard discussed recently received correspondence regarding the Holden property. David Morton advised the Selectboard to hold off on taking any action regarding the correspondence until he had a chance to discuss it with legal counsel.

Holly Hancock added guest speaker Dave Libby to the February 9, 2016 Selectboard meeting and possibly Renee Lachapelle, the Tax Assessor, to the March 15, 2016 Selectboard meeting. In response to an inquiry from Grant Plummer about Dave Libby's focus when he speaks about cell phone reception, Holly stated that Dave is interested in gathering information and asking questions before offering possible solutions for improved cell phone reception. The Selectboard discussed various issues related to cell phone reception throughout Casco.

In response to an inquiry from Grant Plummer, David Morton stated that the Finance Committee will begin its work on the budget in February.

Holly Hancock stated that the Pleasant Lake/Parker Pond Dam Committee will meet on February 4, 2016, adding that she hopes to find out more about what needs to be done at that time.

Mary Fernandes added the issue of whether the Town needs a harbormaster in support of its Mooring Ordinance and the potential cost of hiring a harbormaster as a possible Selectboard agenda item.

Grant Plummer noted that the Town of Sebago will be voting on February 2, 2016 on whether to initiate the process of withdrawing from the school system, adding that a decision to withdraw could have financial implications for Casco. David Morton stated that he has been in touch with Al Smith, Superintendent of SAD 61.

The Selectboard moved (Peaslee), seconded (Plummer) and voted to adjourn: 5 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

ATTEST:

Robert Tooker
Administrative Secretary