

Town of Casco

Minutes of the March 15, 2016 Selectboard Meeting

Selectboard Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

Town Manager David Morton and Administrative Secretary Bob Tooker

Approval of Agenda:

The Selectboard moved (Fernandes), seconded (Peaslee) and voted to approve the agenda for the March 15, 2016 Selectboard meeting: 5 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

Approval of Warrants:

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

Approval of Minutes: (February 23, 2016)

The Selectboard moved (Fernandes), seconded (Plummer) and voted to approve the minutes of the February 23, 2016 Selectboard meeting: 5 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

Town Manager's Update: (David Morton)

A second referendum to vote on a proposal for renovations to repurpose the Crooked River School to once again hold elementary classrooms will take place on Tuesday, April 12 at the Casco Community Center. School Superintendent Al Smith will be our guest speaker at the Tuesday, March 29, 2016 Selectboard meeting to discuss the proposal and the school budget.

The Selectboard will hold a public discussion regarding the future of the Grange Hall building on April 26, 2016. The concerns are whether or not the Town should consider continued and extensive investment in the building in the absence of any significant Town use. The building is currently used for the Head Start program. The Town is faced with repairs to the building in the vicinity of \$60,000 to \$70,000 over the next two or three years if the Town wishes to retain the building. This will be an opportunity to discuss the future of the building and determine if the Town still values this old building.

Town roads are posted to prohibit heavy vehicles in an effort to protect the road surfaces, which are fragile during the period that frost is leaving the ground. Please call the Town Office with any questions.

Eric Hanscom, our supervisor of the transfer station and bulky waste recycling facilities, is retiring after twenty years. We are looking for a qualified person to fill this position. Information and applications are available at the Town Office and on the Town website.

The new Town Office project is progressing. We are beginning to look at financing that was authorized at last year's Town Meeting. The Town has authorization to borrow up to \$600,000. We believe that the project will come in slightly under that amount. Debt service for the \$600,000 will begin later this year. In addition, the Town is proposing a bond for public works purposes to cover the anticipated \$225,000 to \$250,000 cost of repairs to the Pleasant Lake/Parker Pond dam and the reconstruction of several roads. Bonding will allow the Town to do road projects with one bid from one contractor over one period of time, which will save money as a result of consolidated equipment mobilization and the bulk purchase of materials. The Town anticipates the reconstruction of Edwards Road, Johnson Hill Road, Cooks Mills Road, Tenney Hill Road and possibly portions of Point Sebago Road.

Committee and Staff Reports:

None.

Public Participation:

None.

Old Business:

1. Budget process.

David Morton stated that the Finance Committee has completed its reviews and recommendations with the exception of the Grange Hall. The Finance Committee deferred action on the Grange Hall until after a public hearing is held on April 26, 2016 at the Central Fire Station at 7:00 p.m.

Calvin Nutting questioned a delay in the issuance of bulky waste coupons until September. David explained that in an effort to move renewals of the coupons from July when the Town Office is very busy due to seasonal demands to September when it is less busy, additional coupons were included in books to carry folks through to September based on the same allocation of coupons per month, adding that coupons will now be picked-up in September instead of July.

Grant Plummer expressed a need to provide as much information as possible at the upcoming public hearing on the Grange Hall. David stated that he has not come up with a unique use for the building that would lend itself to the public investment of funds needed for repairs, adding that one purpose of the hearing is that someone might have an idea for its use and how to make it a valuable asset to the Town. David stated that issues related to the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits the Town from making much use of the building. David stated that if the Town chooses not to retain the building, then the issue becomes options such as removing the building and retaining the lot or offering the building for sale, adding that the building sits on a lot that is not much larger than the footprint of the building.

Holly Hancock stated that a partial list of known repair costs had been developed, adding that the Selectboard requested that David include the cost of a roof and an elevator to make the building ADA accessible. Holly suggested presenting those expenses at the public hearing. Grant summarized options for the public hearing as keeping the building and investing in it, selling it, or removing the building and either retaining or selling the lot. Tom Peaslee expressed that if the Town invests in repairs to the building, it should have a purpose for it, adding that the \$60,000 to \$70,000 investment only covers necessary maintenance. David added that it only keeps the building standing and maintains structural integrity without making the building useable.

David reminded the Selectboard that in 1978, the Town decided to keep the building without identifying a municipal use for it. Grant expressed that he would like to go to the public hearing with as much information as possible about the condition of the building, the septic system and other features. Holly suggested having a plot plan available as well as easements for the well, septic system, parking area and playground. In response to an inquiry from Tom about the feasibility of expanding the septic system, David explained that the septic system was on another property owner's lot and the easement only allows for maintaining, replacing or repairing it, adding that he doesn't know if the easement allows for enlarging it. Holly stated that the Selectboard should review all of this at its meeting on April 12, 2016 in preparation for the public hearing on April 26, 2016.

2. Review of proposed carry forward balances.

David Morton stated that the proposal is to carry forward \$175,400, adding that the unexpended balances are \$223,746. David stated that the approximate \$50,000 difference will go into the undesignated fund balance. David listed carry forward amounts as 1) money owed to Cumberland County for assessing services; 2) an employee benefit liability reserve; 3) self-insured unemployment reserves; 4) open space operations money; 5) building maintenance; 6) website funds; and 7) reduced dangerous building funds. In response to an inquiry from Holly Hancock, David explained that Town website maintenance costs are \$5,200 per year and a new Global Information System (GIS) to host mapping and assessing information will cost approximately \$1,800 per year to maintain, adding that \$4,500 will be needed up front to load the system. David stated that these costs are less than the former software used by the Town.

In response to an inquiry from Holly, David stated that several small building projects remain, including the exterior fire station stairway and work required to prepare the current Town Office building for return to the Fire Station.

In response to an inquiry from Mary Fernandes regarding a Tax Anticipation Note (TAN), David explained that some of the interest from the note had been carried over from the previous year, adding that the Town's tax commitment had been late that year.

In response to an inquiry from Grant Plummer, David stated that road accounts had been maxed out and there were no balances to carry forward. Grant questioned whether \$44,000 was actually needed for building maintenance. David stated that it was probably not needed, but the Town always carries a balance for unanticipated work, adding that additional building maintenance money is being requested in this year's budget. Mary Fernandes recalled that approximately \$60,000 may have been included in the budget for Town Office maintenance. David stated that buildings need to be maintained in a good and safe order and that it is difficult to anticipate building maintenance needs eighteen months out. David provided examples of such needs including floor tiles, ceilings, plumbing, mats, doors, windows, insurance deductibles and fencing.

The Selectboard moved (Peaslee), seconded (Fernandes) and voted to carry forward the balance in the amount of \$175,400: 5 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

3. Update and discussion regarding the Pleasant Lake/Parker Pond dam project.

Holly Hancock stated that the Selectboard held a joint meeting with the Otisfield Selectboard, adding that David had distributed a packet of materials. Holly noted that another meeting is scheduled for March 22, 2016 at the Casco Community Center at 7:00 p.m. to review the materials. David stated that bid documents from the engineer had been forwarded to legal counsel for review. Holly stated that the Selectboard needs to be prepared to present the project at the Town Meeting.

4. Discussion regarding the Crooked River School proposal.

Grant Plummer expressed that this is an important project for the Town of Casco and students of the Town. Grant stated that school consolidation resulted in two grade levels being moved to Songo Locks School, 6th grade being moved to the middle school, and the eight portable classrooms being added to Songo Locks School with only nine additional parking spaces and no additional bathrooms. Grant stated that although the consolidation worked well for Casco and resulted in some funding for the high school project, it was terrible for Songo Locks School and extremely short sighted, resulting in a school that is extremely overcrowded. Grant noted that a program about Songo Locks School is available on Lake Region TV. Grant commended the staff at Songo Locks School for their extraordinary efforts to make it work and essentially disguise the overcrowded conditions. Grant requested that the Selectboard discuss the Crooked River School proposal and hopefully come out in favor of it.

In response to an inquiry from Holly Hancock about the well at Songo Locks School, Grant explained that two wells struggle to keep two large water storage tanks full on a daily basis. Grant cited a substantial parking safety issue, the limited life span of portable classrooms, and a consultant's advice not to invest in Songo Locks School with Crooked River School available as additional concerns. Grant noted that the cost of reconfiguring the Songo Locks School parking lot alone was estimated at \$980,000, adding that if the Crooked River School proposal fails, then millions of dollars will need to be spent on Songo Locks School. Grant noted that the Crooked River School project could be completed over the summer without affecting students. David Morton noted that fifty percent of the students at Songo Locks School are housed in short term, temporary portable classrooms that have a limited life span. Citing student enrollment, Grant stated that he could not see a clear, long term solution without doing something substantial at Crooked River School, adding that there is no space for pre-kindergarten.

Tom Peaslee commended Grant for doing a good job in presenting the issues and inquired about the status of Sebago's efforts to withdraw from the school district. Grant stated it is a lengthy process that involves settling its existing agreement with the school district and negotiating terms of departure. Grant noted that after the first referendum failed, the cost of the project was reduced by approximately two million dollars by eliminating a few bells and whistles.

In response to an inquiry from Mary Fernandes regarding pre-kindergarten, Grant stated that newly constructed schools typically allocate about a third of the space to special needs, adding that the needs of the student body today are different than they were twenty-five years ago when the schools were built. Noting that the passing of time increases the need for investment, Grant called for a clear, long term solution that avoids costly investment in several schools all at once. Tom expressed that he doesn't want to see good money put into bad.

In response to an inquiry from Grant regarding use of the Town marquee, David explained that the marquee can be used to notify the Town of a vote, but that it is up to the Selectboard to decide whether or not a position can be advocated on the marquee.

The Selectboard moved (Plummer), seconded (Peaslee) for the Town of Casco to do anything it can to provide as much public notice as possible for the upcoming vote, and to support a "yes" vote for the Crooked River Elementary School project.

After a brief discussion, the Selectboard decided to include a mailing in the Town's efforts to support the Crooked River School project.

A vote was taken and the motion passed: 5 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

Mary Fernandes thanked Grant for his hard work on this over many years.

5. Auction of a tax acquired property located at tax map 5, lot 15-7.

Holly Hancock directed the Selectboard's attention to account 449 in its handouts. David Morton stated that the property is located on Timbuktu Drive off of Tenney Hill Road and currently has no structures, adding that it does contain junk and debris. David noted that the Selectboard approved a public auction for the sale of the property, adding that other properties will be sold via closed bids. Holly stated that the total valuation is \$30,100, noting that the Selectboard set forty percent of the valuation as an opening bid. Grant Plummer stated that forty percent is \$12,400. Grant inquired as to whether the timeframe of payment and clean-up needed to be considered. David suggested that the successful bidder be given five business days to pay for the property with a requirement that junk and debris be disposed of within sixty days, adding that he expects that seasonal postings prohibiting heavy loads on Town roads will be lifted in early April.

In response to an inquiry from Grant regarding opening bid concessions for the cost of removing junk and debris, Holly stated that the open bid should remain at forty percent and see what bidders offer.

Blaine Small of Casco stated that he wants the property to expand his work area, that he will remove the junk and debris, and pay for the property immediately or the next day. Blaine stated that there might be a small oil spill on the property that will require money to remove some soil, adding that he will also need a survey and would appreciate any kind of a break.

In response to an inquiry from Calvin Nutting as to why the Town would want to adjust the opening bid and take responsibility for cleaning-up the property, David stated that the Town doesn't necessarily want to make an adjustment, adding that the Selectboard may consider individual circumstances on a case by case basis. Tom Peaslee confirmed that the property will be sold for more than what the Town is owed.

Grant Plummer opened the auction for the property located at tax map 5, lot 15-7 setting the opening bid at forty percent, which amounts to \$12,400.

Blaine asked if he could offer less than the opening bid. Grant stated that he could do so if he is able to explain why. Blaine explained that the property is not worth \$30,000 because it is closed in, has no well, and has a bunch of junk on it, adding that he has to have the lot surveyed.

Blaine offered \$11,000 and the Selectboard accepted his offer.

Holly reminded everyone that a list of other Town owned properties for sale is available at the Town Office.

New Business:

6. Liquor license hearing (Migis Lodge). 7:00 p.m.

David Morton stated that Migis Lodge has applied for a renewal of its liquor license that it has held for several years, adding that it has been advertised and there are no objections and no reasons to reject it.

The Selectboard moved (Plummer), seconded (Fernandes) and voted to approve the liquor license for Migis Lodge: 5 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

7. Review and action on uncollectable real estate taxes on camper units removed illegally.

David Morton stated that property taxes had been assessed to five camper trailers that were illegally removed by the owners without the property taxes being paid, adding that the taxes are uncollectable because the owners cannot be located and therefore no way to force collections. David described the locations from which the trailers were illegally removed and the property taxes owed on each of them. Grant Plummer expressed his frustration with these recurring illegal removals and suggested that a mechanism be created to hold Point Sebago responsible for the tax bills because they know when the trailers are coming and going. In response to an inquiry from Holly Hancock regarding discussing the possibility of such a mechanism with legal counsel, David stated that legal counsel is not likely to have an answer different from previous answers, adding that 1) perhaps he could have legal counsel discuss the matter directly with the Selectboard; and 2) the issue involves collecting personal property taxes on property not owned by Point Sebago. Grant pointed out that Point Sebago must have had a lease agreement with the owners. In response to an inquiry from Calvin Nutting, David explained that writing off the taxes does not prevent the Town from pursuing collections later if the owners can be located.

The Selectboard moved (Hancock), seconded (Plummer) and voted to write off the taxes and forward the accounts to the Town's collection agency: 5 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

8. Discussion regarding the "Spirit of America" program.

David Morton explained that the program is designed to recognize individuals, groups, organizations, efforts or projects that promote or support communities, adding that there is no money, award or prize associated with it. David stated that it is designed to make communities aware of the good things that people are doing. David stated that several candidates for the program in Casco come to mind, including Casco Days, the Casco Fire Department, two food banks, and Casco Cares, adding that there are others as well. David stated that it is a nice opportunity to recognize something positive, which the Town can do every year. Holly Hancock

suggested that 1) Selectboard members look at the Spirit of America website; 2) prepare for a presentation at the Town Meeting; and 3) come back with suggestions for nominees. Holly added a discussion to the March 29, 2016 Selectboard meeting agenda.

9. Discussions regarding renewal of Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals appointments.

David Morton directed the Selectboard's attention to a list of Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals members who are due for reappointment this month, adding that the Planning Board and ZBA Assistant has confirmed that the members on the list would like to be reappointed.

The Selectboard moved (Plummer), seconded (Peaslee) and voted to appoint the list as provided to the Selectboard tonight for reappointments to the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals, which list includes Lynn Potter to Position #4, Bob Barnes to Alternate #2 and Stan Buchanon to Position #5 on the Planning Board, and Trevor Tidd to Position #5 and Terri Linnell to Position #4 on the Zoning Board of Appeals: 5 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

10. Review and approval of permits for catering services to serve alcohol at specific catered events.

David Morton explained that these are permits for specific upcoming events and not general liquor permits. David listed the events as 1) a wedding function at Point Sebago on May 21, 2016; 2) a private company gathering at Point Sebago on May 22, 2016; 3) a wedding at Point Sebago on June 4, 2016; 4) a wedding at Point Sebago on June 25, 2016; 5) a wedding at Point Sebago on August 27, 2016; 6) a wedding at Point Sebago on September 10, 2016; 7) a wedding at Point Sebago on September 17, 2016; 8) a Brewfest cruise at Point Sebago in September; and 9) a wedding at Point Sebago on October 1, 2016. David noted that the permits were submitted all at once this year instead of piece meal.

The Selectboard moved (Plummer), seconded (Peaslee) and voted to approve all liquor license requests for special events at Point Sebago: 5 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

In response to an inquiry from Grant Plummer, David explained that except for when advertising is required, no fees are charged by the Town for liquor permits.

Selectboard Comments

Holly Hancock noted that a joint meeting with the Otisfield Selectboard regarding the Pleasant Lake/Parker Pond dam will be held on March 22, 2016 at the Casco Community Center.

Holly Hancock noted that a discussion regarding possible "Spirit of America" program awards and a presentation by Al Smith, Superintendent of SAD 61, will take place at the March 29, 2016 Selectboard meeting.

In response to an inquiry from Tom Peaslee regarding ecomaine and the possibility of higher fees, David Morton explained that although a fee increase will not happen this year, several factors could affect fees in the future including a recent twenty percent decrease in recyclables

and a significant decrease in the sale price of power generated by ecomaine, which is a significant source of its revenue. David stated that if 1) recyclables do not increase; 2) the sale price of power does not increase; or 3) volume does not increase, then fees to towns will eventually be affected.

In response to an inquiry from Mary Fernandes, David stated that the Town's auditor has nearly completed his work and that he will make a presentation to the Selectboard after he complete his final report.

In response to an inquiry from Mary Fernandes, David explained that a letter from the Animal Refuge League was a legally required contract for animal shelter service, adding that the Town chose the Animal Refuge League for its required services because of its capacity to shelter cats.

In response to an inquiry from Tom Peaslee regarding a public works bond, David explained that the work it will cover remains uncertain, adding that it will certainly cover the Pleasant Lake/Parker Pond dam project, and the reconstruction of Johnson Hill Road and Edwards Road. David explained that if costs for those project come in under budget as anticipated, then he is fairly certain that the Town could include Cooks Mills Road, a portion or all of Tenney Hill Road and possibly a portion of Point Sebago Road. In response to an inquiry from Tom about how roads will be funded after the bond money has been spent and whether the Town would seek another bond or revert to the current method of funding, David stated that both approaches are possibilities and that it is something that needs to be planned for the future, adding that he thinks that capital improvement funds should be set aside if at all possible. David stated that the bond approach is less costly and allows the Town to do more work.

Grant Plummer requested an analysis of how much the bonds will cost, how they will affect the road budget and all the pieces and numbers necessary to understand in preparation for the Town Meeting. David noted that the information Grant requested is available but missing from the budget books. In response to an inquiry from Grant about what happens if the bond proposal fails to pass at the Town Meeting, David stated that the Finance Committee was considering appropriations similar to last year's budget. In response to an inquiry from Grant about how a "plan B" would be adopted if the bond proposal fails to pass, David explained that alternative articles for roads will be included in the warrant.

New Business (continued)

11. Review of a request for abatement of taxes due to poverty or infirmity (requires executive session subject to Title 1 M.R.S.A., subsection 405, paragraph 6, part F., and pursuant to Title 36 M.R.S.A. subsection 841 (2)).

The Selectboard moved (Fernandes), seconded (Plummer) and voted to enter into executive to review a request for abatement of taxes due to poverty or infirmity pursuant to Title 1 M.R.S.A., subsection 405, paragraph 6, part F., and pursuant to Title 36 M.R.S.A. subsection 841 (2): 5 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

The Selectboard entered into executive session at 8:18 p.m.

The Selectboard returned from executive session at 8:47 p.m.

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

ATTEST:

Robert Tooker
Administrative Secretary