

Town of Casco

Minutes of the June 23, 2015 Selectboard Meeting

Members Present:

Grant Plummer, Mary Fernandes, Holly Hancock and Tom Peaslee

Staff Present:

Town Manager David Morton, Assessor Gary James and Administrative Secretary Bob Tooker

Approval of Agenda:

The Selectboard moved (Fernandes), seconded (Peaslee) and voted to approve the agenda for the June 23, 2015 Selectboard meeting: 4 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

Approval of Warrants:

The Selectboard moved (Fernandes), seconded (Plummer) and voted to approve bills and signed warrants: 4 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

Approval of Minutes: (June 9, 2015)

The Selectboard moved (Hancock), seconded (Plummer) and voted to approve the minutes of the June 9, 2015 Selectboard meeting: 4 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

Town Manager's Update: (David Morton)

Town Meeting approved the construction and financing of a new Town Office building. The Town is in the process of final design and Planning Board review. Fire Department and Public Safety officers suggested that the best location would be the front of the Town owned property in alignment with Central Station along Route 121. Roadside mowing will take place in the next few weeks. Bids are due this week for the Libby Road construction project. Final Selectboard approval and authorization of the project will take place at the July 7, 2015 Selectboard meeting. Notice has been served by the Sherriff Department regarding the junkyard citation on Shore Road in Kettle Cove. The District Attorney's Office has yet to address barking dog complaints on Hellen Allen Drive. The Animal Control Officer will issue new summons based on ordinance changes made at Town Meeting. Casco Days is scheduled for July 23, 24 and 25.

Committee and Staff Reports:

Assessor Gary James summarized his attached annual report entitled “Assessor’s Annual Report to the Selectboard June 23, 2015.” Gary discussed assessment ratios, deviations and ratings, State assessing standards, State valuations for Casco, tax levys for Casco since 2012, tax rates and the effects of tax abatements on the municipal budget. Gary noted the completion of a comprehensive Point Sebago review, steady growth over the last few years, and stabilized values since revaluation. Gary stated that he was looking to commit his evaluation and tax assessments in early July which will trigger the 185 day abatement period. Gary commended Town staff members Joe Merry, Donald Murphy and Wendy Longley for their assistance.

In response to an inquiry from Grant Plummer regarding a special assessment to recover costs for the demolition of a dangerous building, Gary explained that it will be added as a cost that the Town incurred in a supplemental line on the property owner’s tax bill. In response to an inquiry from Holly Hancock, David Morton explained that this is an unusual cost recovery process required by State law for the demolition of dangerous structures.

Mary Fernandes thanked Gary and the Town staff members he mentioned for their efforts over the past two years and everything they’ve done for Casco assessing.

Selectboard Comments:

In response to an inquiry from Holly Hancock regarding a timeline for review of the Town’s Personnel Policy, David Morton expressed his hope to have it ready for the Selectboard to review in July.

Holly Hancock inquired about maintenance of the presidential direction sign in Casco Village. David Morton expressed that it has been a low priority road sign responsibility and that he will request that the sign be freshened-up early in the new budget period. Grant Plummer added that the Village Green sign is also in need of maintenance.

In consideration of Holly Hancock’s busy schedule surrounding Casco Days in late July, the Selectboard confirmed Selectboard meetings on July 7 and July 21, 2015.

Mary Fernandes read a public notice from the late Susannah Swihart’s daughter inviting everyone to a celebration service being held in honor of longtime resident, volunteer, Casco supporter and leader Susannah Swihart. “As most of you know, Susannah was a longtime leader and mentor for the Casco Public Library, an innovative and thoughtful member of the Casco Planning Board, and author of two Comprehensive Plans.” The celebration is scheduled for Sunday, July 12 at 1:00 p.m. at the Casco Village Church with a gathering and refreshments at Susannah’s home at 84 Mayberry Hill Road following the service at the church.

Grant Plummer commented on the need to clarify a procedure for how business will be conducted when Town Manager David Morton on vacation, and that it is important for the staff to understand the procedure.

Public Participation:

None.

Old Business:

1. Review of revised policies for committee operations and appointments.

David Morton explained that he made proposed changes to Town policies for committee appointments, and that 1) committee appointments are made by the Selectboard; 2) Recreation and Parks Committee members are appointed by the Recreation Director and approved by the Selectboard; 3) the Selectboard may create limited duration ad hoc committees for specific purposes; 4) the Selectboard may add or deduct committees from the list of Town committees; and 5) these are policies that can be changed by the Selectboard.

The Selectboard reviewed David's proposed changes to 1) Policies for Town Committees; 2) Standard Operating Procedures for Non-Elected Town Committees; 3) Appointment Policies for Non-Elected Town Committees; and 4) the Member Attendance Policy for Non-Elected Town Committees.

The Selectboard decided to lower the minimum number of members necessary to constitute a Town committee from five to three, adding that in the event of less than three members, the committee will be deemed inactive and members designated by the Selectboard may continue as advisors to the Selectboard.

Grant Plummer clarified that elected positions should not be covered in Town committee policies. Holly Hancock suggested that committee policies be specified as "non-elected."

The Selectboard reviewed and confirmed the list of Town committees.

With respect to the establishment of ad hoc committees, the Selectboard redefined the duration from a period of ninety days to "short duration as determined by the Selectboard."

David Morton stated that he would make the changes to the policies that the Selectboard identified, forward the revised policies to the Selectboard for final approval, distribute them to Town committees, and make them available to the public.

New Business:

2. Review of a games of Chance permit for the ATV club event in July.

David Morton explained that the Lakes Region ATV Club wants to do a "poker run" on July 19, 2015 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in Jugtown Forest.

The Selectboard moved (Hancock), seconded (Plummer) and voted to approve the games of chance permit for the Lakes Region ATV Club event in July: 4 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

3. Review of a request to redeem a tax foreclosed property.

David Morton explained that Kenneth and Maria Blasi requested an opportunity to redeem their property placed in foreclosure by the Town due to non-payment of property taxes, adding that he informed them that the Selectboard's policy in the past has been that all outstanding taxes needed to be paid within a certain period of time specified by the Selectboard in order to redeem their property. David stated that the Blasi's apologized for not being able to attend the meeting and offered to pay all outstanding taxes by August 15, 2015.

In response to an inquiry from Grant Plummer, David stated that in the past, the Selectboard has considered such requests on the basis of a relatively short payment period.

The Selectboard moved (Plummer), seconded (Fernandes) to approve the request to redeem a tax foreclosed property contingent upon all outstanding taxes being paid within fourteen business days of notification.

After further discussion, the Selectboard moved (Plummer), seconded (Hancock) to amend the motion to approve the request to redeem a tax foreclosed property to include the account detail of 3065 dated June 19, 2015.

The Selectboard moved, (Plummer), seconded (Fernandes) and voted to approve the request to redeem a tax foreclosed property contingent upon all outstanding taxes on account 3065 dated June 19, 2015 being paid within fourteen business days of notification: 4 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

4. Discussion regarding moving forward with the Town office project.

David Morton stated that he submitted an application to the Casco Planning Board to begin a conceptual review of the project and provide notice to the public that discussions are taking place. David stated that he is also in contact surveyors regarding the development of a site plan, as well as anticipating the need for architectural services. David commented that Fire Department and Public Safety officers suggested that the best location would be the front of the town owned property in alignment with Central Station along Route 121. David added that the project will also include an emergency helicopter pad.

In response to a suggestion from David Morton, the Selectboard agreed to move forward with a new Town Office sub-committee comprised of Grant Plummer, Tom Peaslee and David Morton, which will keep the Selectboard updated.

Tom Peaslee raised the possibility of acquiring adjacent land for a new Town Office building to allow more space for it in the front of the property. David Morton assured the Selectboard that it could be located on existing Town property, adding that such a land acquisition could benefit the Town in other ways. David expressed that although costs and public approval could be an issue, the public would gain more input as to how the land will be used. David reiterated that the new Town Office building can be located on existing Town property, but that the Selectboard may want to seriously consider bringing the possibility of a land acquisition to the attention of voters.

Tom Peaslee expressed that he wanted to be proactive in looking into the future needs of Central Station and the Town Office, and the potentially unfavorable consequences of the land that is now available being sold.

Grant Plummer thanked Tom for his clear thinking for the future, adding that it was absolutely worth having a conversation with the current landowner or real estate broker. David Morton expressed that it would be awkward to present the idea to voters as part of the new Town Office project, but that it would be prudent for the Selectboard to put the idea before voters in the context of other benefits. Grant suggested that the Selectboard do some homework in preparation for a conversation with the real estate broker.

In response to an inquiry from Holly Hancock, particularly with respect to bonding deadlines for financing the new Town Office building, David Morton clarified that the financial plan is to borrow for the project in anticipation of issuing bonds prior to the spring 2016 deadline for issuing bonds, and repaying the loan with proceeds from the bonds.

5. Review and approval of a special events liquor license for a catering service.

The liquor license was unavailable for review by the Selectboard. No action was taken.

Mary Fernandes expressed that from time to time there are comments or moments of silence at Selectboard meetings concerning horrific tragedies, whether they are local or national. Mary commented on a Portland Press Herald article in which a young woman of color expressed that she was tired of being judged based on the color of her skin. Mary added that she had personally been profiled while driving in a northern Maine town several years ago. She described feeling angry at first, but that her anger turned to a feeling of being tired. Mary expressed empathy for that young lady of nineteen years who felt so tired at such an early age.

Mary commented on the nine victims of Emanuel AME, the families, and the local and national communities who suffered on June 18, 2015 in Charleston, South Carolina who will continue to suffer, adding that two of the greatest gifts given to mankind are time and forgiveness.

There being no further business, the Selectboard moved (Peaslee), seconded (Plummer) and voted to adjourn: 4 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.

ATTEST:

Robert C. Tooker
Administrative Secretary