

Minutes of the Strafford Select Board  
January 10, 2018

Members present: John Freitag, Acting Chair, Toni Pippy, Brian Johnson, Stephen Marx, and Kate Siepmann.

Also in attendance were Lisa Bragg, Town Clerk and Treasurer and Jon MacKinnon, Road Foreman; Erik Goodling and Jeff Solsaa from the School Board, and Greg Bagnato, Principal of the Newton School. John called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

1. Citizens' Concerns

Members of the School Board raised concerns about the Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) and requested that the Select Board appeal the CLA figure for FY 2017 on the basis that properties used in the study did not fairly represent actual property values in Town. One property in particular sold for far more than its assessed value and skewed the entire assessment. As this was not on the agenda for this meeting, the Board agreed to warn a Special Meeting for Monday, January 15 at 6:00 in the Town Office. The agenda will be limited to the School Board's request for an appeal of the Common Level of Appraisal; a Budget work session; and scheduling future meetings to work on the budget.

There was also some discussion of whether to change the order of meetings on Town Meeting Day. A suggestion was made after the School Board meeting last year to begin with the School Meeting on alternate years. The Board agreed that a better sense of the Townspeople's feelings about this is important. A motion was made, seconded, and approved to put the question on the Warning for this year's Town Meeting.

2. Correspondence

The Board received correspondence from James Moses about sanding on Kibling Hill. The matter was passed to Brian, as liaison to the Highway Department.

The Town received a grant from the Division of Historic Preservation. John wants to postpone the signing of the agreement until he has consulted with Caitlin Corkins, from the Division, and with Rocky Fuller, from THAG.

There were no changes to the Certificate of Mileage. John will sign for the Board.

Jody Lowes communicated by email about forthcoming plans to work on the pre-school playground.

Blythe Davis wrote about coming to some decision about the roads and access to Whitcomb Hill. The Board agreed to schedule a meeting with the property owners, the Conservation Commission, and interested members of the community on February 14. Lisa felt we should not meet on Valentine's Day.

Board members grudgingly admitted that they had no conflicts on that day.

3. The minutes of the December 27 meeting were approved unanimously.

4. Town Highways

Jon reported that all the equipment is in good working order and that Truck #4 has been returned to service.

Six bids were opened for the reconstruction of Bridge #19 on Old City Falls Road. Bids ranged from \$340,000 to \$230,000. A motion was made and seconded to accept the low bid from Hook Construction.

The motion was unanimously approved.

The ongoing problem of frozen lines in the Town Office was addressed. Kate confirmed the layout of the pipes with Roger Carpenter, now retired. Both Steve and Brian volunteered to be present when a new plumber arrives tomorrow.

5. General

Alice Ely, of the Public Health Council of the Upper Valley made a case for requesting funding from the Town. The sense of the Board was to encourage her to petition for a spot on the Warning.

The Board appointed the following citizens to serve on the Historic Preservation Commission: Bob Johnston, Chair, Andersen Thorp, Silas Treadway, Tim Utt, and David Taplin. John Freitag's was the sole dissenting vote.

The Energy Committee is now a formal part of the Town's energy planning process. The Board appointed the following as members: Doc Bagley, Chair, Jim Schley, Secretary, Janet Cavanaugh, David Lutz, Jason Stableford, Gus Speth, Barbara Smith, and Kevin Grady. Initially, all are appointed to three-year terms; they will decide how to stagger the terms.

A motion was made, seconded and unanimously passed to sign an agreement with Thetford to split the tax revenue from the Elizabeth Mine Solar Project 50/50. Toni will follow up with the Thetford Select Board.

Toni presented a preliminary draft of the 2018 budget for members to study. The delinquent taxes are beginning to come in. She noted that, when the Town implemented a 7-day grace period at tax time, people are definitely using it, resulting in a cash flow that is either unpredictable or delayed. Provided we get a satisfactory rate of delinquent collections, Toni sees a positive outcome, so far.

Toni offered to be the author of the Select Board Report for the Town Report.

The next meeting will be a special meeting on January 15, followed by the regular meeting on January 24.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07.

Faithfully submitted,

Kate Siepmann, Recording Secretary