

SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 16, 2024, 5:30 p.m, Old Schoolhouse Common and Zoom

Present: Selectboard members Rich Baker, Justin Campbell and Michele Gonzales; Town Clerk Bobbi Brimblecombe; Brian Monaghan (Town Attorney); Susan Green (Library Director); Sasha McGarvey (Children’s Librarian) Sonia Carrasco, Cathy Chodorkoff, and Michelle Edelmann (Library Trustees); Erin Barry

At 5:40 p.m. the meeting was called to order by

Changes or additions to the agenda: Library Budget, Elevator, Alarm Company

Review and approval of minutes: Approved the minutes of January 2 and 9, 2024, with the notation that Rich was in attendance.

Legal Issue: Rich moved to find that premature public knowledge of the subject matter would place the town at a disadvantage. Justin seconded. All in favor. Rich moved to enter executive session. Michele seconded – all in favor. The Board entered executive session at 5:40 p.m. They returned to open session at _____. No action taken.

Elevator: The Onion River Foodshelf sent a letter asking for the elevator to be back in service. Rich gave a recap of where we are now. Water still comes into the bottom of the elevator shaft when it rains. Justin explained that it is a safety issue to run it with water in the elevator shaft, and if the elevator is in service, we won’t know if there is water in the bottom. The basement contractor is scheduled to come back on February 13. Susan explained that the Library is not eligible for some grants because the building is not accessible. The Food Shelf is suffering because they have to carry food up and down the stairs, both for clients and for deliveries. Sasha asked whether the elevator could be made to go just down to the second floor but not all the way to the basement level. Justin suggested that we need to check with the elevator company to see whether it would be safe to run with water in it, whether it could be stopped at the second floor, and how much it would cost to start and stop it. Justin noted that we do not have an unlimited budget. He noted that the State has several buildings that are still closed, and we are doing our best to not have to close the building. Susan stated that the building should be a priority. The Board stated that the delay isn’t because the building is not a priority – we are not a priority for the contractors. Justin moved to have the Property Manager contact the elevator company to ask the questions above and to make arrangements for one cycle of turning the elevator on and back off when needed. Rich seconded – all in favor.

Gym: The gym still has water leaking around the edges. The floor has not been replaced because we have to wait until the water issue is solved. The gym is closed because of the rough surface and the potential for mold. Susan said parents have asked if they could use the gym. Erin Barry stated that they had 17 kids at community supper last week. They would like to be able to use the gym for an hour on Wednesday night. The Board will keep the gym closed for now. Rich noted that

this is the worst flooding the town has had in a hundred years. He knows that the gym is a loss to the community but the community's safety is important. Susan asked if the building can be tested for mold at least monthly. Justin stated that the gym is not safe because of the uneven floor surface, lack of wall covering, and the equipment that is there. The Board will ask the property manager to get some home test kits for mold. In the meantime, the gym will remain closed until the water issue can be resolved and the floor replaced. The Town discussed options for Australian Ballot voting.

Budget: The Budget Committee recommended that the Selectboard hold the Library appropriation at 5%. The Library had asked for a 10.68% increase. Rich suggested having a second article to let the voters decide if they want to pay the extra. Rich feels that there are people who will have trouble paying their taxes. Bobbi explained that social security only goes up 3 or 4% per year, and the library appropriation went up 20% last year. Sasha explained that the going rate for library staff is much higher than what we pay, and their work is skilled labor. Rich noted that the Board is trying to keep the budget as a whole to around 5%. Justin noted that our library is open more hours than other libraries in our area. He noted that the road crew is underpaid but we can't afford to pay them more. He stated that he feels that the library staff are worth the hourly rate but we have to keep the taxes in mind. He has looked at the library budget as a percentage of the entire town budget; it is much higher than it is in Cabot and Plainfield. He noted that Cabot and Plainfield residents benefit from the Jaquith Library. He feels that taxpayers may be willing to spend more on the Jaquith but he feels that the voters need to make that decision; he doesn't feel right about putting that number out for the voters. Rich noted that the Board is putting most of the remaining ARPA money into the budget, to help keep the taxes down. He feels that the Library could spend some of their investment money to help lower the tax burden. Justin stated that the Board is making an effort to improve the building that the Library is housed in. Susan feels that the Library draws people to live in Marshfield. She stated that people move here because they love the library. Michele agrees that there should be a second article because the people deserve to have a say.

Rich moved to add another article to add a second article to make the appropriation what the library asked for. Michele seconded. Rich and Michele voted yes; Justin voted no. He clarified that this is not a lack of support for the library. He is looking at it as the percentage of the total budget and taking the advice of the Budget Committee to heart. He feels that it is up to the Trustees to decide how their percentage of the total town budget is spent. He doesn't think it is fair to put it on the Selectboard's shoulders to decide how much the library staff gets paid. He feels that there are many things he would like to do for the town but we have a limited amount of money to work with and we need to respect the recommendation of the Budget Committee. Michele stated that she really wants the voters to have a voice because there are people out there who are struggling to feed their children. Sasha stated that this is the reason why we need the library programs. She stated that she is paid \$6 less than the area average for a Children's Librarian, and she feels that it will be hard to retain staff if they don't get paid more. Rich agreed. Erin stated that the mental health of the community is important and that starts with the library. Justin feels that the Trustees will do the best they can with the funds they have to work with, and the Selectboard has to do the same. He noted that we have five bridges to replace, and there are other needs.

Executive Session: Rich moved to enter executive session to discuss a personnel matter at 7:45.

Justin seconded – all in favor. Returned to open session at 7:50.

Appropriations: Green Mountain Transit requested an appropriation for the mid-day commuter bus but they are not currently running the bus. The Selectboard decided not to include it on the warning.

Town Meeting: The Board discussed the warning and the order of the articles. There will be a discussion of the time and date of the meeting, after the election of officers. There is a group of people who want to have a presentation or discussion of the flood response. That will not be an article but will be before or after the meeting.

Special Meeting: The Board will meet next Tuesday, January 23rd at 4:00 p.m. to sign the warning.

Tax Anticipation Note: Rich move to borrow \$557,000 from Union Bank, in anticipation of taxes, at an interest rate of 4%, to be deposited with Union Bank at an interest rate of 4.35% in an Insured Cash Sweep Account until needed. Justin seconded. All in favor.

Generator Maintenance: Rich moved to approve maintenance contracts with Yankee Generator for the generators at the Old Schoolhouse Common, Town Garage and Fire Station, and authorize Bobbi to sign. Justin seconded – all in favor.

Grants: There is a grant program for timber bridges. The program requires a 50% match. Rich will ask whether they would allow us to have other government funds (FEMA) for our percentage. He is willing to explore the grant. Michele and Justin approved having Rich explore this option.

Picnic Shelter: The Board is not prepared to select a location at this time. Justin discussed the possibility of putting it close to the ball field. He wondered if the fence and/or dugouts could be removed. The Board will tell the contractor that it will likely be late summer before we are ready for installation.

Municipal Technical Assistance Program: Justin revised the agreement and sent it back to CVRPC for comments.

Alarm System: The Board authorized Bobbi to get quotes from other alarm companies.

Cemetery Deeds: The Board authorized sale of four cemetery lots to Doreen Gilmore and one lot to Donald Conn Sr.

Expenses, Permits & Payroll: Selectboard members read and approved reports for General Expenses and Payroll.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Bobbi Brimblecombe, Town Clerk

The foregoing is a true copy of the Minutes of the January 16, 2024 Selectboard Meeting.
A True Record. Attest, _____, Town Clerk
