Selectmen’s Meeting Minutes

June 21st, 2021

Roster: Selectmen: Raymond Poulin, Tina Poulin, Wayne Rundlett

Town Manager: Stacie Rundlett, Craig Lehigh, Garrett Oswald, Judi Wills, Brian Rundlett

1. Raymond called the meeting to order at 6:29pm

2. The Board reviewed the minutes from the previous meeting. Wayne motioned to accept the minutes as written, Tina 2nd and all were in favor.

3. Old Business- There was a very brief discussion regarding having a hard time finding an electrician to hardwire the overhead door at the sand/salt shed.

4. Items by the Public- Stacie shared with the Board that Joseph James had concerns about Wire Bridge area. He has been volunteering his time and equipment to mow the field area at the Wire Bridge along with clearing branches, etc. from the backstop area. He would like to see the town officials serve the public at a BBQ there on site this summer. He would also like to get people to play ball there again. Raymond asked if anyone told him about all the poison ivy that was there in that area. Stacie assured him that she had.

Before the meeting ended Craig Lehigh brought before the Board a matter he was concerned about regarding the square footage of his property and his valuation. He stated that he discussed the matter with Audra, the current assessor’s agent and she was to come look at his property this spring, and he had not heard from her as of yet. Raymond asked Stacie to bring this to Audra’s attention. Stacie took Craig’s number so she could have Audra contact him on or before Wednesday when she was due in next.

5. Department Heads-Brian discussed with the Board his concerns about residents building without obtaining a proper building permit. That there were at least 2 or more places that had built and not pulled a permit, and when the Code Enforcement Officer gave them a permit to fill out and return with an after the fact payment of $20, they still had not done that. He felt it was important that if the Board was going to enforce one ordinance such as the Junkyard Ordinance that the Board should enforce all ordinances when dealing with violations. The Board agreed, there was a discussion about the matter. Brian updated the Board on a new issue with the Fire Department pumper and that parts were finally being shipped for parts ordered quite some time ago for other necessary repairs on the trucks. Brian also updated the Board on a commercial project that went before the planning board last month and was approved. Benjamin West is building a storage facility at the end of Chick Rd.

6. Items by the Town Manager

a. The Board reviewed and signed payroll, A/P warrants

b. Stacie provided the Board with copies of all of the job descriptions, the employee evaluation, and the Labor Policy for them to have time to review the documents and update them at their leisure. Then at a later date review all if any changes and vote on the matter. Stacie relayed to the Board members that many of the job descriptions were done by the MAC committee back in 1998. Raymond agreed that even the employee evaluation should be revamped as some of the items on it did not really pertain to this size of a town and its employees.

c. Stacie discussed with the Board members her concerns on how they were handling complaints. Her concern is that if the complaints that are coming in about the town office or the staff there, and the name of the person who complained was not shared that it made it very difficult to thoroughly explain a particular situation. She was concerned that in a 4-month span that 4 complaints had come in regarding her or the office staff. And when these complaints got brought up at a public meeting without more details it was more one sided and unfair to the staff member involved. She reminded all Board members that there were cameras onsite at the town office inside and out and that there were cameras outside of Community Building and Fire Station, and that at any time footage could be reviewed to determine if there was in fact a legitimate complaint to discuss. Raymond and Tina stated that they understood where she was coming from but felt it was very important to keep a name confidential if that person asked for it to be as there may be some sort of retaliation if their name was given. Stacie felt that it was a violation of the Freedom of Information Act if a request was made to reveal the name of a complainant, but Tina did not feel that it was. Tina asked Stacie if she had the freedom of information act with her, Stacie did not but told Tina that she would make sure to get a copy of it to her tomorrow. There was some discussion about the matter and the public contributed to this topic, stating that they could see both sides, and that if a complaint was brought to a Board members attention that there should be some documentation and research done and then if it appeared to be an issue or an ongoing problem to address it publicly. Raymond stated that he would like to think about how they could handle complaints in the future and revisit the subject at a later time. Stacie also shared with the board that she had roughly 36 days of vacation coming to her as she did not take much time off last year. She would be taking the 6th, 7th and the 8th off and asked if the board wanted to reschedule the meeting, they were due to have on the 6th or just have their next scheduled meeting on July 19th. Raymond thought that unless something pressing came up, he felt that just having the meeting on the 19th was fine. The other Board members were in favor. The meeting for the 6th would be cancelled unless something pressing came up.

There was also a brief discussion about a matter at the Wire Bridge and serving a No Trespassing Order on someone who kept bothering people at the Town’s property at the Wire Bridge.

7. Items by the Board of Selectmen

a. Raymond opened the 1 winter sand bid that was received. It was Jordan’s excavation for 13.23 per yard making it a total of 34,398.00. There was a lengthy discussion on the matter, giving prices that were given at the last year’s winter sand bids and possible ways to get more contractors to participate with a multiyear contract to put up winter sand. Wayne motioned to accept the bid from Jordan Excavation at 13.23 per yard, Raymond 2nd and all were in favor.

b. Raymond discussed with the other Board members that he had spoken with a couple of other towns that use the rapid renewal online registration feature that the state offers and that they do not lose much revenue at all. Stacie updated the Board that she had already signed up for this additional feature and is just waiting to hear back from them to get things started so New Portland residents will be able to process their re-registrations online, for their convenience.

c. Tina share with all in attendance that Fine Line Paving had gotten back to her about a quote to do an overlay or topcoat on the parking lot at the community room. The amount quoted was $25,000.00 and there was no decision made.

d. The Board reviewed spreadsheets regarding additional essential worker pay amounts for the town’s employees who worked during all of the covid-19 issues and State of Emergency. All State of Maine Municipalities, along with other States, were due to receive funds from The American Rescue Plan Act. These funds could only be used for very specific covid related projects and/or expenses, and there was a very lengthy discussion about these funds and the options that we have. Raymond stated New Portland is limited on what they could use the funds for. The Board reviewed one option that is to retroactively pay all the town’s essential workers up to an additional $13 per hour. Stacie provided the Board members with detailed spreadsheets giving totals of hours worked and approximate amounts for a $3, $4 and an additional $5 per hour possibilities for each town employee who worked from March of 2020 through until the end of 2021. There were a couple of other things that these funds could be used for being Covid related. Cleaning and cleaning supplies, and a license needed to obtain to apply for federal funding or grants. Stacie shared with the Board and those in attendance that throughout many documents on possible projects or ways to utilize these funds allotted for municipalities it suggests many times to use some of the funding by offering premium pay to essential workers in recognition of their sacrifices over the last year. At this time New Portland is eligible for approximately $72,000.00 to use on Covid related projects or premium pay to essential workers. The Board asked what some other towns were proposing to spend their federal funds on, Stacie stated that the one town she did have an opportunity to talk to, they really hadn’t had a chance to have much discussion on it as they had their annual town meeting in early June. Raymond and Tina stated that they needed more time to review all of the information before making any decisions on how to spend any of the federal funding. The matter was tabled until the 19th.

The meeting adjourned at 7:53 pm

*These minutes were approved by the Board of Selectmen at the July 19th meeting. smr*