Selectmen’s Meeting

September 20, 2021

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

Town Manager: Stacie Rundlett, Brian Rundlett

1. Raymond called the meeting to order at 6:36 pm.

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

3. Old Business- Junkyard violation;

The Board discussed with Stacie their findings of the junkyard violation on the property at 48 River Rd. Raymond and Tina agreed that the property was still in violation. The owner has until September 22nd and Stacie will contact the town’s attorney to confirm enforcement procedures.

 ARPA funds;

Stacie discussed with the Board information about a new town sign with a digital board for messaging. She provided them with a few samples. There was a discussion regarding the different samples provided. Raymond just wanted to know if the town sign wooden portion was wrapped in vinyl or if it was just vinyl decals on the white portion of the sign. He was concerned about vinyl decals and how long they would last with the weather exposure. Stacie would reach out to the sign representative and update the Board with her findings. Stacie also discussed with the Board how the town border sign from Rte. 16 was being repaired by Jim Tindal, and it had been well over a year. Raymond suggested reaching out to Jim to check on the status. He suggested a couple of other local people who might be able to finish this work if Jim was not able to.

Stacie approached the Board for an update on their decision regarding additional essential worker pay. Raymond first stated that he was still not on board with issuing any essential worker pay yet. He stated we have time to use the funds the best way that we can. He wasn’t against doing it but wanted to wait to see if some other project would come up and didn’t want to have used the funds on essential worker pay when it could have been used on a project. He stated that was his opinion. Wayne felt that the essential workers should get something out of the ARPA funds as they worked all year during the pandemic when they could have stayed home and the town would have had to pay for unemployment. But that wasn’t the case, they worked. Tina questioned if anyone’s income got cut? She asked if everyone got paid whether they worked from home or not. Stacie reminded the Board that no employees worked from home, which meant that no one’s income got cut. Wayne shared with the Board that many of the surrounding towns were issuing additional essential workers’ pay out of the ARPA funding, even Embden is giving something to their employees who worked through the pandemic. Tina stated that we don’t always have to do things because other towns are doing it. Stacie reminded the Board that in a previous discussion Raymond did state that he felt the Fire Department deserved something and maybe the Town Manager, but not what figures were provided to the Board at that time. Stacie asked the Board if they were considering other figures? Or nothing at all? Stacie shared with the Board her feelings on the matter, that once the Board saw where the figures that were provided to them were going to what employees, they put a hault on considering essential worker pay. Tina asked Stacie where she got the figures that she provided them for the Fire Department? Stacie stated that the figures were from hours put in. Tina asked hours from what? Meetings or calls? Stacie stated both and Tina said it was not, that she had discussed the matter with Kip Poulin and Kip told her that Stacie only asked for particular hours. Stacie stated that all of the Fire Department member figures for additional essential worker pay was based off of incident reports and training meeting rosters that were provided to her from the chief. And she based an average from the end of the reports that were provided to her to the end of the year based off previous years reporting of hours, as the federal government says you can pay those essential workers through the year end of 2021. Tina stated she felt if anyone was going to get anything additional it would be the same amount whether the employee worked 2 hours or 40 hours, or the town do nothing. Stacie asked how she thought that was fair? Tina said if the town was going to pay essential workers for their work it should just be the same figure for everyone, because everyone is on the same level and should get the same amount of pay. She said she feels everyone should be treated equally. Stacie voiced that she didn’t see that as fair as some people only worked 2.5 hours and others worked 40 or more hours and that is why she felt it should be based off the employees’ hours put in. Tina stated in her opinion it was either the same amount for each employee or nothing at all, whether it was right or wrong of her, that was her thoughts on the matter. She stated that everyone has their own opinion. Stacie stated she hadn’t heard Raymond’s opinion on the matter other than he wants to wait. Stacie asked about at least giving a time frame. She reminded them that she has been asking the Board to think on this matter since May. Stacie inquired why Tina was smirking? Tina stated let’s be clear here, that she was not going to sit and have a pissing match with anyone about this. She has a right to grin just like Raymond and Wayne have a right to grin. Stacie stated that she was not trying to have a pissing match. Tina told Stacie that she was not going to sit and have her demand that they make a decision that night. That the town has all kinds of time to make a decision on the matter. Stacie discussed the matter of making the essential workers wait until 2023 or 2022 for the Board to make a decision on additional essential worker pay, and Stacie said yes you do. Tina stated that she felt they should do what’s in the best interest of the Town of New Portland and Raymond agreed with that. That the ARPA funds are to be used in the best interest of the town and at this time they did not feel issuing essential worker pay was in the best interest of the town. Raymond reiterated that he does not feel right issuing additional essential worker pay as he would be financially benefitting from that as a town employee. Stacie reminded them that they could donate their portion if they felt they shouldn’t benefit from the ARPA funding. Stacie stressed that she didn’t feel it was fair to those employees who continued working for the town during the pandemic instead of staying at home and collecting unemployment. That using some of the ARPA funds to pay the essential workers additional pay was a way to show those employees appreciation for continuing to keep the town running. She pointed out that even the ballot clerks took a risk from exposure for the Presidential election and managed to pull it off without a hiccup even though they had greater than 75% of the registered voters turn out, which was the biggest turn out New Portland has had. Tina stated that it wasn’t that they didn’t want to show appreciation, it was that they were trying to make a decision which was best for the town, not just for a few people. Stacie reminded them that it wasn’t just a few people that it was anyone who worked for the town of New Portland during the pandemic, from the ballot clerks to the people who worked the summer roads crew. Raymond reminded Stacie that he has felt from the start that he did not feel that any additional pay should be given to the ballot clerks or the road commissioner or his summer roads crew. Stacie inquired if the Board realized what each of those essential workers had to do to work during the pandemic? Raymond stated that he did, and that at this time to make things simple he is against issuing any additional pay to the essential workers. Brian Rundlett brought up that in the guidelines that the Federal Government issued of approved expenditures of ARPA money it states several times that additional funds to essential workers was an approved expenditure for employees who continued to work during the pandemic. And that a lot of towns, cities and even counties were giving their essential workers some additional pay for continuing to work during this terrible time. Raymond stated that he was sorry, but all of these employees made their money. Stacie reminded the board that she as well as others would have made more money sitting at home, but she never even considered it. Raymond said he has never been against it, but that he was not going to commit to it right now, and if someone didn’t like it, it was their problem because he was looking out for the Town of New Portland. He stated that was his opinion and he did feel bad as some of these employees could use the extra funds, but if it wasn’t there, their life wouldn’t be any different so until he can exhaust all other ways to spend the ARPA funds that’s the way he is going to proceed. He stated that the town has until 2024 to decide on how to spend the funds and there could be more changes coming from the Federal Government on ways to spend the funds once the Federal Government sees that a lot of the smaller communities do not have the infrastructure to spend the funds based on their guidelines. There was a discussion on funds being issued to the Library or the Fire Department and how if that is done it is the town’s responsibility to make sure that those entities spend the funds on approved expenditures based on the Federal Governments guidelines and that it would be Stacie’s responsibility to make sure that those entities do so, meaning more time spent and more focus for her. Raymond said it didn’t matter if it was doing additional paperwork for separate entities, or if they gave money to employees for additional essential worker pay, she had to do the paperwork either way. Brian Rundlett stated to the Board that he was concerned, and many people from the public have also expressed their concern to him, that since March when Tina had been voted in as selectmen, that it appears that Tina and Raymond have an agenda against Stacie. That since March, many complaints had come in to just Tina and or Raymond about Stacie or the office in general, which was not a regular occurrence prior to March. He felt it was 2 against 1 as far as the Board members. And that the Board didn’t seem to have any issues with issuing additional essential worker pay until they saw how many hours Stacie had put in during the pandemic and how much she would get if they approved that additional pay based on hours worked. Tina and Raymond denied having an issue with Stacie. Stacie asks for the chairman to bring the meeting to order. Raymond ends the discussion on this matter.

4. Items by the Public-There was None

5. Department Heads- There was None

6. Items by the Town Manager

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

7. Items by the Board of Selectmen

 a. The Board reviewed 2 abatement requests

 1. Raymond motioned to accept an abatement request from Howard Wulf in the amount of $4,449.57. Wayne 2nd and all were in favor.

 2. Raymond motioned to accept an abatement request from Jonathan & Fiona Clapp in the amount of $36.21. Wayne 2nd and all were in favor.

 b. The Board reviewed and signed a warrant for 2 Supplemental Taxes totaling $4,485.78.

 1. Howard Wulf- $112.89

 2. Jonathan & Fiona Clapp- $4,372.89

 Wayne motioned to adjourn the meeting. Raymond 2nd and all were in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:16 pm

*These minutes were approved by the Board at the October 5th meeting. smr*