

TOWN OF ACTON SELECT BOARD MEETING

December 20, 2023

6:00pm

MINUTES

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Winchell, Jr. called the meeting to order.

2. WARRANTS/BILLS

Signed

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Walsh made a motion to approve the agenda; seconded by Winchell, Jr. All in favor. Motion carried.

4. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Winchell, Jr. made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 13 meeting; seconded by Walsh. All in favor. Motion carried.

5. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR WEEKLY UPDATE

No update

6. DEPARTMENT HEAD / COMMITTEE CHAIR UPDATES

N/A

7. LIAISON UPDATES

McGurty: Municipal Management / Warrant & Finance, APAT, Cemetery

N/A

Walsh: Fire Department, Transfer Station

A donation was received for the Lincoln School rehabilitation project. Walsh indicated he will be reaching out to Tracy Levasseur regarding the next steps and requested a contact number. Roux provided.

Walsh advised we also need to contact the property owner for the tower to discuss the expiring contract. After the storm, there was no power: if the town takes over ownership, Walsh suggested putting a generator up at the tower. Roux questioned if this would fall under the Fire Chief or the town. Winchell, Jr. advised that the town pays the lease and therefore the town would provide the generator.

Due to the storm, the Transfer Station has been without power for two shifts. It was open with restrictions on Wednesday. Punskey was able to put out a dumpster. Winchell, Jr. suggested, should this happen again, we move a dumpster down below and add a gate to allow residents to throw household garbage over and down. Walsh continued, suggesting adding a slide gate to the fence.

Referencing the storm, McGurty indicated that there are 2,540 households that get power in the town; approximately 1322 were without power as of 5:45pm, this evening, approximately 50 percent of the town is without power. McGurty noted a message on social media advising any residents to reach out to Roux with any problems and/or concerns. McGurty questioned, as this is an emergency issue for the town, where does responsibility for this rest in the town. Roux advised the EMA Director for the town.

Roux advised Walsh was in the office earlier today and they spoke briefly about the power. Walsh was to reach out to the EMA Director to confirm if there was a plan in place for the current outage. The EMA Director then reached out to Roux to further discuss the situation, indicating that in the past, if the board gave approval, they would set something up (a warming center). McGurty questioned where this would be. Roux advised the last warming shelter was back in 1998 and was held at the school. The EMA Director indicated he hasn't heard much concern or a need for a warming center at this time.

Winchell, Jr. continued, the town needs a plan in place moving forward. The last large storm was back in 1998 and most of the town was without power for 12-14 days. Winchell, Jr. suggested putting a fund in place and setting up different scenarios with a response timeline.

Further discussion occurred regarding checking on neighbors and calling for assistance if needed.

Bakshi indicated that if the town were to declare a state of emergency that the Red Cross would come in and provide aid as necessary.

The Select Board announced that if help is needed, the town will make sure help is provided.

Norwood: School Department, Conservation / Forest, Mary Grant

N/A

Winchell: Roads & Road Committee, Recreation Committee

Winchell, Jr. spoke with Langley regarding the Road Budget and will be reaching out to Leslie Berlin, as the liaison to further discuss. Berlin confirmed.

8. OLD BUSINESS

A. Recreation Committee

Winchell, Jr. spoke with Singleton and Saulners from the Recreation Committee is present to discuss an application for the Recreation Committee to use.

Saulners provided a handout reviewing the app and addressed questions from the Board.

Walsh made a motion to accept the use of the Gamechanger application for the Recreation Department; seconded by McGurty. All in favor. Motion carried.

B. Sheriff Contract

Roux provided a copy of the Sheriff's contract to review: a few changes have been made to the contract. Shapleigh is fine with the proposed changes, and they have been forwarded to Sanford for final review.

McGurty made a motion to approve the contract with the York County Sheriff's Office effective January 1, 2024-December 31, 2024; seconded by Walsh. All in favor. Motion carried.

Signed

McGurty would like to start thinking now about the process to organize an effort for next December to confirm whether the town would like to renew this contract or move in another direction. This may be a committee that would need to be developed to consider all the options and assist with developing a proposal to address all options available to the town. Should this process include Shapleigh. Winchell, Jr. suggested that Acton do the legwork and determine what is required for the town and develop a plan. Winchell, Jr. and McGurty suggested looking for interest and adding this item to old business to keep top of mind.

9. NEW BUSINESS

A. Cash & Investment Update

McGurty reviewed the status of the town's investments. McGurty put together a schedule to share that summarizes month by month the beginning and ending cash and investment balances for the town. It also provides an indication of how much income the town has earned and the movement of money between the bank accounts and investment accounts.

The cash and investments balances at the beginning of the year were \$5.2 million. They are currently at \$6.1 million. They reached a high in October of \$6.88 million and a low in September of \$4.07 million. They fluctuate a lot, and the town has been effective in moving money between the cash accounts and investment accounts. The town has earned \$95,857 through November. In 12 months, this would be equivalent to \$230,000 in income. The town has budgeted for \$210,000. This will be updated monthly and posted on the website.

B. Old Fire Station Demolition RFP

Roux drafted an RFP for the Fire Station/Old Gym Demolition and read it to the Select Board.

Walsh questioned the start of the work, after the roads are unposted. Winchell, Jr. confirmed. Roads are unposted by the 2nd week in April and work should begin on or around April 15, 2024. Roux will update to include a start date, remove an end date, and begin advertising.

C. Meeting Hall & Kitchen Upgrade

As we begin to talk about budgets, Roux suggested discussing the meeting hall and kitchen upgrades as the Select Board has mentioned in prior Select Board meetings. McGurty continued, stating that there is a lot of interest in an upgrade and would like to move forward with a process to begin to generate some ideas for a scope of work, along with the potential cost, to decide if the town will move forward with a potential renovation.

Winchell, Jr. would like to create more efficiency for the building: heating, electrical, wiring, insulation, piping, plumbing, as well as upgrade the kitchen. Suggesting a request for a general contractor to draw up a plan.

McGurty agreed, focusing on interior finishes and the kitchen being upgraded for hosting larger events (such as Thanksgiving) and seeking a firm to draw up a plan to then use in an RFP. Roux advised of some local firms in Acton that the town can contact.

Bakshi indicated the church has a commercial kitchen, and the size is approximately the same: suggesting the church can be a good source for the remodel. McGurty suggested contacting Robator.

Roux will reach out to local contractors for a plan to move forward.

With regards to the budget process, McGurty advised the town is on an accelerated timeline: preliminary input from all the departments needs to be completed by the end of the calendar year. Roux, McGurty, and the Treasurer met today and reviewed the municipal management budget. All department budgets will be reviewed by the Select Board and Warrant & Finance will be invited to join the Select Board to assist with addressing any questions.

Roux continued, indicating last year's budget was reviewed to see what was spent versus what was budgeted to assist in tightening the budget to limit excess: as well as adding a two percent contingency line to each department. As an example, budgeting for worst case scenarios in life insurance: planning on every employee having a life change, to produce a better forecast. Roux also suggested if any department heads need assistance to plan to attend upcoming workshop hours with McGurty to review the budget and answer any questions. Walsh confirmed the contingency line is not part of the budget, it is a contingency plan: it does not roll over year after year to create excess. McGurty confirmed, stating each year it gets refreshed.

Winchell, Jr. referenced the Fire Department setting up an emergency fund. This would be different from the contingency fund.

McGurty confirmed that the contingency fund, if needed, would need to be presented to the Select Board for approval prior to use. If it is in the department's budget line, the department is authorized to spend it. This would apply to Capital Reserve money as well.

Walsh questioned if the \$15,000 reserve article would still be needed. Roux advised that each department would have their own reserve/contingency budget line, so it may not be needed moving forward. McGurty and Winchell, Jr. agreed it wouldn't be needed per this discussion.

Roux reviewed status of department budgets: Winchell, Jr. advised the Recreation is pending and he has spoken with Langley regarding the roads budget; Walsh has not spoken with Ham at the Transfer Station.

Winchell, Jr. questioned the liaison from the Warrant & Finance Committee for the Recreation Department. Leslie Berlin indicated John.

D. Executive Session 405 6.A – 1 Personnel Issue

Walsh made a motion to go into Executive Session 405 6.A.-1: Personnel Issue at 7:13pm; seconded by McGurty. All in favor. Motion carried.

Walsh made a motion to come out of Executive Session 405 6.A.-1: Personnel Issue at 7:58pm; seconded by McGurty. All in favor. Motion carried.

No decision was made.

10. PUBLIC COMMENT

Dennis Long addressed the protocol regarding the current weather and emergency process. The Select Board needs to declare the emergency, then the EMA Director contacts the county EMA, who then contacts the Red Cross. The school is already a designated Red Cross Shelter. The towns are reimbursed by FEMA for the costs. McGurty questioned if this required Select Board approval or a recommendation from a Select Board Member only. Roux believes this is something the EMA Director will do: make a recommendation to the Select Board to initiate. Roux will contact the EMA Director to further address.

Long announced that a break-in occurred on Flat Ground Road earlier this week. An older resident awoke to someone with a flashlight underneath their bed. The resident was uninjured, his back door was kicked in.

Long referenced the Select Board meeting last week and wanted to address how an employee was addressed during the public meeting: expressing to the employee that the town appreciates the work that the employee does and the way the employee treats the town residents. McGurty reaffirmed the nice job being done at the Transfer Station: but continued, indicating the employee addressed their supervisor in a manner that was inappropriate. McGurty reinforced the chain of command, addressing questions and issues properly to avoid such miscommunication in the future. Winchell, Jr. continued stating that the meeting did get out of hand. There was a miscommunication that is being dealt with.

Joe Ruma asked the status of the speed control issues addressed by the residents. McGurty confirmed the town approved three, four-hour blocks for the Sheriff's Department to focus on speed control. Roux has received results from the completed blocks.

Ruma continued, asking about the regular contract with the Sheriff's Department: does the town specify patrol times? Roux advised the shifts alternate per the contract with the union. The Sheriff's Department sets the schedule and notifies the town of when Deputy Sanborn is on shift. There is additional coverage when Deputy Sanborn is not working his 40 hours.

As the Sheriff uses the building next to the Fire Station, does the town receive payment for the use of the building. Winchell, Jr. advised the Fire Chief at the time allowed the building to be used as a control center, without prior discussion regarding the contract with the town. McGurty asked if Shapleigh provides support/rent for the use of the building as part of the contract. Roux advised there is no rent charged. McGurty advised per the budget for the Mousam Dam, Shapleigh charges taxes and Acton pays half the taxes for the property. Acton should assess rent for the use of the building and charge Shapleigh half the rent as part of the contract.

Ruma also questioned if Acton provided the vehicle and if there should be compensation for the vehicle as well under the contract with Shapleigh. Roux indicated Acton paid for the vehicle in full. Ruma asked about the use of the vehicle outside of the Acton/Shapleigh area. Roux advised it is used in York County. Winchell, Jr. stated that in the contract negotiations last year, Acton requested to be provided a list of dates/times when the Acton vehicle left the Acton/Shapleigh district. They declined to include this in the contract. McGurty continued, stating that Acton made a few requests for the contract negotiations, which were all declined. These reasons are why the town is looking at alternate options for law enforcement.

Ruma questioned the ability to trace back where money was originally designated to or for. McGurty confirmed the ability to trace the money per the annual audited financial report as well as the Warrants and Articles from Town Meetings. Roux advised the funds are carried forward until they are spent down.

Ruma wanted to confirm where the demo for the old gym is supposed to be hauled to. Winchell, Jr. advised to haul to a designated certified site and requested of Roux this be added to the RFP.

11. PENDING

- A. Speed Trailer
- B. Mooring Ordinance

Walsh made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by McGurty. All in favor. Motion carried.

12. ANNOUNCEMENTS

On Website

13. MEMBERS PRESENT: David Winchell, Jr., Tom McGurty, Ed Walsh, Daniel Norwood, Jennifer Roux

14. ATTENDANCE: Joyce Bakshi, Dennis Long, Joe Ruma, Ann Saulners, Leslie Berlin

