

TOWN OF ACTON SELECT BOARD MEETING

November 13, 2024

6:00pm

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. A MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR THE PASSING OF JIM DRISCOLL

3. WARRANTS/BILLS - Signed

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Walsh made a motion to approve the agenda for November 13, 2024; Norwood seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

5. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Norwood made a motion to approve the minutes for November 6, 2024; Walsh seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

6. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR WEEKLY UPDATE – No Update

7. LIASION UPDATE

McGurty: Municipal Finance, Warrant & Finance Committee, APAT

- Municipal Finance – McGurty met with Town Administrator and Treasurer and they developed the following timeline. The goal is to start as soon as possible and once the Select Board approves the timeline, it will be shared with the Warrant & Finance Committee.
 - December 20th – Department Head Budgets are due; Social Services requests are due.
 - January 22nd, 29th and Feb 5th – Have been set aside for Department Head budget presentations to the Select Board and Warrant & Finance. These may either be done as a workshop or during Select Board meetings depending on the amount of time to be extended. These presentations will allow the Select Board and Warrant & Finance an opportunity to ask questions of the Department Heads.
 - January 31st – Zoning articles are due.
 - March 4th – Final recommendations from Warrant & Finance are due.
 - March 9th – the Select Board will vote and state their recommendations.
 - April 12th – Budget meeting.
 - Copies will be distributed to the School Department, Warrant & Finance and the Department Heads.

McGurty noted that the fiscal year 2025 budget had a reduction over the prior year of 3.5% and generally the budget went up 6% due to salary increases, benefits, etc. Actually most lines went up, however, there were some areas found to be able to cut giving the reduction of 3.5%. This year the Select Board has received a preliminary set of financials from their financial advisor, Marc Roy and indicates a level of surplus in the prior fiscal year. McGurty has not spoken to the auditors directly, but understand they have done their field work and everyone is zeroing on the same number. What is being waited for is the school department

audit to be done as it is a consolidated audit. When the school audit is complete, the Select Board will be able to get the Town financial statements. But, from a municipal perspective, there was a surplus of \$800,000 last year. McGurty, Town Administrator and Treasurer have reviewed the report which shows where that surplus is coming from - some of it is revenue related that is sort of unpredictable (\$275,000) and then there \$536,000 in expense savings.

McGurty thinks there will be opportunities in this budget cycle to make further reductions in the municipal budget due to these findings. A discussion will be held at where those deductions can be.

What the Town Administrator and the Department Heads will be doing is to constructing a narrative that will come out with the financials to explain the variances and why (what caused the variances). There was no indication that the budget was initially prepared with excess in it; most have good explanations for the variances. A meeting will be set so that people can ask questions; the auditors will be invited to that meeting.

McGurty noted this was the status of the audit and it was a good thing. At the beginning of the year the finances started with \$2.4 million dollars in reserves. The year was ended with \$2.3 million in reserves. So they only went down a little over \$100,000 but was projected to go down \$950,000. The Town did not have to draw as much out of reserves and as was expected to do; hence the \$800,000 surplus.

McGurty commented that he had been on the Select Board for about three years and had an opportunity to work in many organizations and roles/positions and had been on a number of Boards which allowed him to see some of the best and some of the worst. That being said, McGurty was very pleased with the colleagues he has to work with here at the Town; this is a very dedicated, hardworking group of people. The expertise the group has is quite broad and when something comes up where they don't have direct knowledge of, they can figure it out. There are great people sitting on this Board and he was very pleased he had these colleagues to work with and that the Town was well served by them and in terms of level of expertise, experience and capability there isn't anything missing in this Board. It has what it needs to serve the Town and does a very good job of it. Thank you gentleman. On top of that the Board has a terrific Town Administrator who makes the Board's work possible; she is critical to the functioning of Town Government.

Walsh: Transfer Station, Mary Grant Committee, Animal Control Officer

- Mary Grant and Animal Control – no update.
- Transfer Station – Walsh was pleased to announce there was a new Transfer Station Superintendent, John Roulieau. Mr. Roulieau worked there in the summer as a temporary employee and comes with plenty of experience in a broad spectrum of business and will serve the Transfer Station well. He starts Monday, November 18, 2024.

Walsh thanked Bob Mann for stepping in during the interim period and handling things at the Transfer Station on a week to week basis.

- Skid Steer – Walsh updated that the new skid steer is in the MB Tractor facility for installation of tires and camera and is in hopes to see next week. Forks will come later.

Norwood: Fire Department, Recreation Committee, Conservation Forest Committee

- Fire Department – Norwood met with Chief Ham and the Fire fighter/ EMT position candidates and a recommendation was made to the Board last week. Norwood is happy to announce the position was given to Avery Mee.
- EMA Director – Norwood and the Town Administrator have started the first round of candidates for the EMA Director position and are still in that process. Hopefully in the next coming week there will be a candidate chosen.
- Recreation Committee – Norwood has established meetings with the Rec Director for updates and any information she has to provide; Norwood will support during the upcoming Basketball season. Norwood believes there is still a need for a coach and if anyone is interested to please reach out
- Conservation Forest Committee - Norwood reported that he attended the committee meeting the previous evening (November 12, 2024) and that the committee went through some items the Select Board asked about like the signage. The committee voted 6 – 0 on a recommendation to look into the next steps towards a management plan for redoing the Hebo Hybo lot which has suffered from ATV use, the April storm causing damage and some natural damage and will seek out the Board's input. Winchell advised the committee get a hold of the local ATV Club and work with them to make the area better. Norwood indicated the committee thought they had to come to the Board for approval.

The Town Administrator noted that not contacting the ATV Club, but any enforcement of the Management Plan was determined by legal and the Board may further need to consult legal.

Winchell reiterated it would be ok to see what could be done to bring to the Board but not do it until the Board voted on it.

Denekamp: School Department, Planning Board/Land Use, Cemetery Committee

- School Department – The School Department will be meeting on November 14, 2024; Denekamp will be attending.
- Under new business, Superintendent Johnathan Ross is here to introduce the new Principal, Mr. Ward and the School Committee Chair, Judith Shain.
- Planning Board – Last week the Planning Board had three new applications for various practical intent and granted one. Next Thursday afternoon, there will be two site walks scheduled: 3:30 pm on West Shore Drive and 4:00 pm on 13th street to overlook a possible teardown and rebuild. Next Thursday night the Planning Board will be giving final contingency approval to the Martel project on Youngs Ridge Road as long as it meets DEP guidelines.

- Cemetery Committee – the committee has a full Board and Denekamp will be meeting with the Chair on Thursday, November 14, 2024.

Winchell Jr.: Roads & Road Committee, Municipal Grounds

- Roads – no update
- Road Committee – no update
- Municipal Grounds – met with surveyor tonight and will have a conversation with the church regarding property lines.
- RT 109 – The State and Grodion (excavator on 109 project) would like to use a part of the lower rec fields for a staging area. They are also looking to put two trailers on the area at town hall where the building was removed. Winchell is working with both to determine what will be done, what we plan to have done in these areas and how we can help them and they can help us. Discussion ensued. Winchell believes the Town can benefit and is working on all the details to make it a win/win for the whole job.

Winchell made a motion to go forward with this project; Norwood seconded. Discussion, motion amended.

McGurty made a motion to authorize the Select Board Chair to go forward and negotiate upgrade details with the contractor and bring back to the Board for a final vote; Norwood seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

Town Administrator informed the Board that the CAD files has already been provided.

8. DEPARTMENT HEAD / COMMITTEE CHAIR UPDATES - None

9. OLD BUSINESS

A. Sherriff's Contract discussion – November 20, 2024 at 6pm

- The Town Administrator noted that based on discussion last week, she has arranged for Sherriff King to be present at the Select Board meeting on November 20, 2024 at 6 pm. A notice will be placed in the newspaper and on internet everywhere and reach out to those at Town Meeting who had questions or concerns on the Deputy's contract that now was the time to discuss. Hopefully the Select Board will revisit the contract concerns prior to. McGurty asked for a copy and another copy be sent to the Sherriff as a reminder.

10. NEW BUSINESS

A. School Department New Introductions

Denekamp introduced the new School Principal Brandon Ward.

Mr. Ward, Ms.Shain, School Committee Chair and Mr.Ross, Superintendent all approached the Board. Ms. Shain updated the Board that she was on the interview committee and the committee was pleased with their choice in Mr. Ward and the his ability to bring their transition plan to fruition when Mr. Ross retired.

Mr. Ross explained to the Board the transition plan to allow him to retire was to bring in someone with the experience, vision and energy. One of Mr. Ward's most impressive attributes is he had K-8th grade education background from Boothbay and was a Middle School Principal for nine years and was well equipped to take the helm of Acton Elementary School and new leadership direction.

Mr. Ward next approached the Board and spoke on his background in education; he resides in Shapleigh. He is thrilled with the work he has been doing with Mr. Ross so far and staff. And, he was very glad to hear they are also pleased. No questions were asked.

B. CRP Resolution

Denekamp has worked with local CRP representative and it does not cost the Town to get into this. A resolution was written indicating intentions. Denekamp asked for the Board to review and sign; then it will be uploaded to the website. A template for the grant was sent to be completed.

Denekamp made a motion to have the CRP Resolution sign by the Board and submit; Walsh seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

C. Freedom of Information Request

The Town Administrator told the Board that a Freedom of Information Request was received electronically from Katherie Koauffer of a law firm looking for information on 2886 Route 109.

D. Executive Session M.R.S.A. 405 6 A 1 – Personnel

Norwood made a motion to go into Executive Session M.R.S.A. 405 6 A 1 - Personnel at 6:340pm; Walsh seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

Norwood made a motion to come out of Executive Session M.R.S.A. 405 6 A 1 – Personnel at 7:01 pm; Walsh seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.

11. PENDING

12. PUBLIC COMMENT - None

13. MEMBERS PRESENT – David Winchell, Jr., Chair, Tom McGurty, Dan Norwood, Ed Walsh, Jon Denekamp and Jennifer Roux, Town Administrator.

14. ATTENDANCE – Joyce Bakshi, Joe Ruma, Lee Robator, Maryanne Robator, Jonathan Ross, Judy Shain, and Brandon Ward

Norwood made a motion to adjourn at 7:01 pm; Walsh seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.