

TOWN OF DIXFIELD
Minutes of Meeting
Board of Selectmen
Monday Feb. 10, 2014
5:30PM, Ludden Memorial Library

Board Members Present: Malcolm Gill, Dana Whittemore, Scott Belskis, Hart Daley, and Robert Withrow.

Administration Present: Linda Pagels-Wentworth

Town Employees Present: Chief Richard Pickett, Calvin Beaumier, Vickie Carrier, Jim White.

Citizens Present: Darlene Brann, Steve Ellis, Ken Ellis, Dan McKay, Samantha Hill, Norman Towle, one unidentified man, Norine Clarke (Recorder of Minutes)

Non-Residents Present: none

Press: M. Daigle Sun Journal, WVAC-TV.

1. Call Meeting to Order: Chairman Gill called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Agenda Adjustments: None.

3. Approval of Minutes: Hearing no objections or corrections, Chairman Gill declared the minutes accepted as presented.

4. Approval of Warrants and Payroll: Hearing no objections or corrections, Chairman Gill declared the Warrants and Payroll accepted as presented.

5. Department Head Reports:

a. Water Department—Jim White

The generator bids have gone out and are due back soon.

The SCADA system has been having trouble with the providers Time Warner and Fairpoint and it will be changed to a static IP address.

There was a curb box replacement which needed to be done and required digging through frozen ground.

Hydrants have been shoveled.

b. Police Department—Chief Pickett

The department will be taking delivery of the all-wheel drive cruiser next week and they have been promised a quick turn-around on moving necessary equipment from the old to the new cruiser.

Chief Pickett spoke to Norm Haggan at DOT who contacted Mr Uhard about the signage on the highway after Mountainview Campground going toward Carthage. The

speed limit will be changed from 50 to 40 mph and will be posted at both ends of the dangerous stretch. There will also be warning signs about recreational vehicles. Chief said that that, plus enforcement should help alleviate the danger.

The monthly report notes that there were 14 arrests and 19 criminal charges.

6. New Business:

a. The Dixfield Historical Society requested a sewer and water abatement due to a break in a water pipe in the basement. In January a cellar window blew in and the cold caused a pipe to freeze and break. A large amount of water went in to the basement but none of it went into the sewer. The Board discussed the matter and said that it was not past practice to abate water for issues such as damage. Mr. Whittemore made a motion to abate the sewer charges which was seconded by Mr. Daley. Vote: unanimous.

b. Temporary service variance: A sewer variance was requested at the last meeting by Mary Ann Hamilton for Rita Colburn who is now residing in Bangor in an Assisted Living Facility. The request was that it be abated until the house is sold. There was not enough information for the Board to make a decision so they agreed to table the item until Supt. White could give them more details. Following discussion about the concern about setting precedents and the house being in a “ready to serve” state, they asked when the water was shut off to the house. Mr. White said the water was shut down late last summer but there had been no usage of water since the winter of 2013. The bills have been paid and they are asking for a refund. Because the water costs cover the cost of treatment and delivery and because the sewer is connected there are fees, Mr. Belskis made a motion to deny the abatement. It was seconded by Mr. Daley and the vote was unanimous.

c. Legal Services: A spread sheet of legal fees was available to the Board and all agreed that the fees were too high. Mr. Belskis’ concern was the high cost of travel fees for a lawyer to get paid 3 hours travel time for an hour of legal time. So far, over \$25,000 has been spent on Union negotiations. The Board requested that the Town Manager contact some local attorneys to see what their expertise was and what their rates would be.

d. Sewer Budget: The Town Manager passed out the Preliminary Sewer Budget to the Board members. Of largest concern was the increased request from the Ted Berry contract which asked for an additional \$27,000 over last year. It was agreed that the Board needed to arrange to have a representative from Ted Berry to discuss requested increase explain and to identify capital improvements needed.

7. Old Business:

a. Town Budget Voting: The Selectmen’s packets contained copies of the old minutes when this was discussed before. Mr. Daley thought the intent was to have written ballots at Town Meeting followed by a referendum. Budget votes at Town Meeting require only a simple majority. Mr. Daley said that there needed to be a public hearing to explain the process. Mr. Gill stated that his preference was to have written ballots at Town Meeting but no referendum. Mr. Withrow agreed because if there was a referendum and the amounts did not pass, there would be no working budget. Mr. Whittemore asked for a meeting at the earliest convenient date for the hearing preferably at the High School Cafeteria where the public should be presented with a couple of

options. (1). A written ballot at Town Meeting where all would be finalized, and (2) A referendum at the polls following a “lively” discussion at Town Meeting where there would perhaps be a better turnout. Mr. Daley made a motion to hold the meeting on Feb. 26, 2014 at 6:00pm at the High School Cafeteria if it is available. It was seconded by Mr. Belskis and the vote was unanimous.

b. The Board reviewed the proposed meeting schedule for the budget and agreed to the list of dates with 5:30 meetings.(Motion made at end of meeting.)

c. Personal Use of Town Vehicles Policy: Page 31 in the Selectmen’s packet is a copy of the current Policy which covers use of town vehicles. Mr. Belskis suggested that future hiring practices be adjusted to not hire someone who does not have their own vehicle to get to work unless they are able to walk or get to work on time without one. Mr. Whittemore felt that the Public Works Director should be allowed to take a town vehicle home ONLY if a severe weather event is predicted. Mr. Daley asked for a couple of possible revisions to discuss to clarify the Policy’s intent.

d. MCOPA Report: Since the report had just arrived and was fairly lengthy the Board decided to take some time to study the content and have it on the next Agenda. The Town Manager has approached the Superintendent of RSU 10 and asked for the use of two rooms in the old elementary school which have separate entrances. He was very receptive but wants to wait until September. She stressed the need to relocate as quickly as possible and is waiting for a decision.

Chief Pickett wanted to note an error in the report. It states that there is no established policy for complaints against officers but there is and apparently was overlooked. Some issues are already being worked on which includes a temporary evidence locker that could be used when the evidence control officer was not available. When asked what would happen if something were too big for that space Chief noted that they would probably call him to come in to take care of it. Some of the suggestions were concerning the entrance to the building to make it easier for the public to identify the offices.

8. Public Comment / Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

Public comment:

Darlene Brann requested time when she could go in to the Town Office to check some public records at a time which would not inconvenience the office help.

Mr. McKay asked whether Union negotiations are over and was told no.

Mr. McKay asked whether there were still met towers in place and was told there had been two and one was up and one was down. He asked if they were being taxed.

Mr McKay asked if the Planning Board had completed their work on the Wind Ordinance and was told not yet but nearly so.

Mr. Ellis asked what benefit there was for bringing a town truck home. One use is checking road conditions. When an on duty police officer finds a travel issue, they call the Public Works Director who checks the conditions before the crew is called in.

Ms. Hill asked what the past practices were for taking home a town truck and Chief Pickett answered that the only one he knew of was Tim Hanson.

Mr. McKay requested that the schedule for Budget meetings be posted on the Town website

Mr. Beaumier stated that on occasion he had used the town truck to pick up parts which he does after hours in order to be available to the crew during their hours. Also, part of that time, the blue pick-up was out for repairs. The Town Manager noted that those things would be noted in the logbook.

A motion was made by Mr. Daley to accept the calendar of Budget meetings proposed by the Town Manager to start on March 17 and continue until the budget is complete. Second by Mr. Withrow, vote unanimous.

9. Board Questions and Comments:

Mr. Daley: none

Mr. Belskis: Mr. Belskis pointed out a concern he had with the Revenue Expenses report and wanted to know how the income of the sale of the tax acquired properties were handled. The Town Manager explained that income from properites would be moved from a temporary reserve account to the general funds after all sewer, sewer, and taxes were paid. That adjustment is due to happen immediately or may already have been made. Mr. Brlskies noted that the general ledger looked like it was out of balance by approximately \$80,000. The Town Manager said that there had been an error in the commitment due to the town meeting minutes list of expenditures not including funds appropriated for sidewalks and snowmobile fees. When the town manager compiled list of revenues she included those items for the commitment making the budget out of balance. They are aware of the situation and are waiting for the advice from the auditor as to how to account for it. In the meantime the monies are in the general ledger with no expenditure listed. Likely the most transparent method to correct the situation is to hold a special town meeting to.

Mr. Whittemore: Mr. Whittemore asked if the work that Mr. Skibitsky was doing for the town was completed and the Town Manager said yes, he is on an as needed basis which is mostly by phone.

Mr. Withrow: none

Chairman Gill: Mr. Gill reported that he had visited the Mexico Town Office and they were working on Dixfield's billing at that time. He has requested that the Town Manager plan a presentation by the Mexico billing ladies once they are comforable.

Mr. Gill requested Board approval of he and Mr. Withrow visiting Mr. Skibitsky to discuss the work he has done and the status of the town's finances. Mr. Belskis made the motion, Mr. Whittemore seconded it and the vote was unanimous.

10. Next Meeting:

The Board will meet on February 24 at 5:30 at the Ludden Library.

12. Adjournment: At 7:05 a motion was made by Mr. Daley, seconded by Mr. Withrow, to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Norine Clarke, recorder of minutes
nhc/