

TOWN OF DIXFIELD
Minutes of Meeting
Board of Selectmen
Monday Feb. 24, 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, Leo Jolin. Chief Scott Dennett, Paul (of Ted Berry)

Citizens Present: Darlene Brann, Mike Brann, Steve Ellis, Ken Ellis, Dan McKay, Norine Clarke (Recorder of Minutes)

Non-Residents Present: none

Press: M. Daigle Sun Journal, WVAC-TV, Cherri Crockett Times

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: An item 7 d, Committee Report, will be added to Old Business.

3. Approval of Minutes: Chairman Gill noted that he would like to make a correction to the minutes. He referred to item 9, Board Questions and Comments. It was his intent to invite the Dixfield office ladies to discuss how the transfer of Sewer and Water was going, not the Mexico ladies. The Town Manager said she had misunderstood also and that the Mexico ladies wanted to come. Hearing no other errors or omissions, 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. Public Works—Director Beaumier

The computer is running but still has some things to be added. He is setting up a new data base.

Park St. drainage near the trailer park is not working due to grade problems. It will be on the list to change this summer.

Due to the amount of storms, the snow dump got too full and Roland Tyler and his bulldozer have moved it back so that they will be able to add more snow.

There is a storm drain on Highland Ave. that freezes every year. Dir. Beaumier has arranged for Ted Berry to steam it open and believes the problem can be corrected by insulating with Styrofoam sheets.

Main Municipal is scheduled to make an inspection concerning safety standards . He is updating the Policy Manual.

There have been some postings about potholes.

Mr. Withrow asked how the stores of salt and sand were and was told that the sand was at about 100% and salt at about 110%. Salt prices will hold for up to 120% of the amount ordered.

Mr. Whittemore asked about the FEMA report needed for the ice storm. His concern is if the report is held, Dixfield may not get any money. The understanding is that not all of the damage is apparent yet because of snow cover.

Chair Gill asked how the plan for changing delivery of sand and salt to East Dixfield was working out and Dir. Beaumier and Leo Jolin explained that the delivery system on the truck will not allow both salt and sand to be carried and used independently. Currently they are sending two trucks.

6. New Business: None.

7. Old Business:

a. Sewer Budget Draft

Ted Berry representative Paul was present to explain items on their contract. There is money in the budget to clean the pump stations twice a year and money for replacement pumps if needed. The Hall Hill pump is over 30 years old and would be a major investment. Clay pipe has been found on Pine St and needs to be replaced. The town manager stated that the clay pipe is part of the upcoming infrastructure project approved by the voters.

The Financial Audit for year ending 2013 is currently underway and when complete should be able to confirm where some monies could be taken to start paying the Town for its debt.

The Town Manager said the current sewer rates are producing the projected income and that revenue should be increased by more “aggressive” billing. Mr. Withrow made a motion to approve the Budget as presented and Mr. Daley seconded the motion. All were in favor.

b. The policy concerning use of town owned vehicles by town employees is on page 6 of the Selectmen’s packet. A typo was corrected in the last paragraph on page 6 was corrected from “such” to “shall”. Mr Whittemore made a motion to accept the policy with the correction and Mr. Withrow seconded it. Vote was unanimous. There is currently no log book but one will be created in the office and will start being used.

c. Legal Survey Update---Selectmen’s Packet pages 9 through 12.

The Selectmen reviewed the items to check the expertise of the legal counsels contacted and a list of potential contacts. The Town Manager will proceed.

d. MCOPA Report Chief Pickett listed several items listed in the report and what was being done to address them. He stated he felt the report was quite thorough although there were some errors.

1. location concerns were that it was unsecure and there were exhaust fumes. These items have been a concern for some time and there have been ongoing efforts to re-locate.

2. It was stated there was no Operational Policy but there is and Chief had it with him.

3. The Policy also includes a procedure list in the event there is a complaint lodged about any one of the officers.

4. It was suggested that a clerk might be better than having officers cover administrative duties. Chief said that in a small department, this was not always practical.

5. MCOPA questioned if all training was documented and Chief said each officers training is listed in his file. He said that the current field training hours are shorter that the recommended amount of field training hours. However, increasing training hours would require extra salary costs.

6. The report said that Crime Analysis was good.

7. Shortage of evidence storage is being addressed by adding five lockers with controlled keys.

8. Community relations concerns were noted and the phone system was listed as not friendly and confusing. A new system is in the process of being introduced.

9. High praise was given for the handling of complaints.

Chairman Gill asked about mutual aid and Chief confirmed that there are signed (by the Selectmen) agreements with all of the area towns.

Selectmen Daley asked about the fact that community members do not recognize who the officers are other than the Chief. Chief said he would like to have some bios put in the newspaper and Matt Daigle of the Sun said he would like to do that.

The Selectmen agreed they would like to have the group that did the evaluation come and have a discussion about the results.

d. Committee report of Chairman Gill and Mr. Withrow's meeting with Eugene Skibitsky.

1. Angie has picked up well on Trio.

2. The books are complete through January 2014

3. The office personnel are working out the snags in the Water and Sewer billing.

4. The changeover lag time meant the bills did not get out on schedule so the books will not reflect correctly until 2014.

5. There is a concern for the large amount spent on legal fees.

6. The "on paper" shortfall due to incorrect posting can be handled by either a supplemental tax bill or by taking money from surplus before June 30. This could be done at a special town meeting the same way overruns on Public Works winter budgets are handled. The Town Manager said that all budgets will be checked to see if the \$85,000 can be covered by unused budget balances. Chairman Gill recommended that a freeze be put on any new purchases. Mr. Withrow added that discussion with Mr. Skibitsky indicated that training is going well, and is ongoing.

8. Public Comment / Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

The Town Manager requested time to pass along some information to the Board. She will be attending three workshops which will cost only the workshop fees as she will use vacation days to make long weekends in that direction so as not to require mileage reimbursement.

The Town has been invited to apply for CDBG monies and she is working with Mr. Hodsdon to prepare the grant in the next few days.

Union negotiations will be held Mar. 4, 2014

She passed out copies of the Sewer Abatement language.

Public comment:

Darlene Brann remarked on bookkeeping being the issue for the \$85,000 shortfall, and that a bookkeeper should be on hand.

Mr. McKay asked for the explanation for the \$85,000 to be repeated.

Darlene said the revenue side had not been added.

Mr. Ellis asked why the Town was going to Mr. Skibitsky instead of having the Town Manager handle it and the Chairman responded that he could not answer that question because it was a personnel issue.

9. Board Questions and Comments:

Mr. Daley: A citizen has asked Mr. Daley for an explanation for a request for burial expenses of a long time employee. It could not be discussed because those kinds of transactions are confidential.

Mr. Belskis: Mr. Belskis wanted to know how the Town ended up with the lawyer they have now. It was explained that they were in the middle of negotiations at the time a change was requested and it was felt they should not change representation until it was finished.

He asked for an update on the CDBG grant and the Town Manager said that was what she was working on it now with Mr. Hodsdon.

He asked how we will be able to justify to the PUC how many man hours we can account for in the Water Department. The town manager said that nothing was changed because they had been taking payments for some time. There will be 1-2 hours per month for bookkeeping and 1-2 hours a month for preparing the warrant.

He requested a list of how many sewer and water variances were currently in effect.

He voiced a concern about whether there was any money made from the sale of tax acquired property. There was money made in the first round of sales but with the low prices placed on the second round, there was no profit. The income made on the first round covered what was lost on the second by paying of taxes, sewer, and water to the town. Those payments will be credited to those funds and the taxes payment will be reflected in the general fund balance at the end of the year. The goal was to put and properties back on the tax rolls.

Mr. Whittemore asked for an explanation of the letters received by the Selectmen in their boxes. Several compared letters and there appeared to be three different ones. These involve personnel and will be followed up but must be handled in executive session.

10. Next Meeting:

The Board will meet on March 10, at 5:30 at the Ludden Library.
A Public Hearing on voting methods will be held on Feb. 26.
A CDBG public hearing will be held on March 3,
Budget meetings as scheduled

11. Adjournment: At 7:27 a motion was made by Mr. Belskis, seconded by Mr. Daley, to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Norine H. Clarke, recorder of minutes
nhc/