

**MINUTES
TOWN OF ST. ALBANS
SELECTMEN MEETING
MONDAY, DECEMBER 09, 2019**

6:00 P.M.

Present: Horam Weymouth, Chairman
Todd Brown, Vice Chairman
Peter Denbow
Richard Fisher, Town Manager

Call to Order

Pledge of Allegiance was Recited

Minutes for Selectmen's Meeting Held on December 9, 2019

Motion by Todd Brown to approve the minutes of the Selectmen's meeting held on Monday, December 9, 2019. Seconded by Peter Denbow Vote:3-0

Old Business

A. Paul & Sara Shepherd Delinquent Taxes– Quit Claim Deed – Taxes Now Paid in Full

Motion by Todd Brown to approve the quit claim deed and return the property to Paul and Sara Shepherd since they paid all their taxes in full. Seconded by Peter Denbow Vote: 3-0

B. Carroll Lane – Purchaser of Lots 25 & S5, Blackberry Lane

Motion by Todd Brown to approve signing the Quit Claim Deed for the sale of the lots on Blackberry Lane Seconded by Peter Denbow Vote: 3-0

C. Maddocks, Amanda & Craig - Mobile Home Foreclosure – 24 Dudley Road – Map/Lot 003-

022-ON Manager Fisher advised the Selectmen on the current status of the tax delinquency for the mobile home. It was originally on a rental lot at another location in St. Albans. The owners moved the home to Amanda's father's property. Our Assessor, having observed that it was moved, attached it to the property for tax purposes. While the lot owned by her father is one year delinquent, the mobile home is 3 years delinquent.

Upon learning of our foreclosure was on the entire property we notified Rob Duplisea and he adjusted by the tax rolls to separate her father's property from the mobile home –and to provide a valuation on the mobile home- which is damaged. Mr. Fisher explained that the value of the mobile home is \$900.00 and it appears damaged beyond repair. Manager Fisher asked the Code Officer to look at the mobile home and he confirmed serious structural damage is present at the center of the structure. Mr. Denbow asked if it was a double-wide. Mr. Fisher responded he believed it was a double wide.

Hiram Weymouth stated he remembered there was a policy on damaged mobile homes not to take them over due to the cost of removal. Manager Fisher replied that the foreclosure are on hold waiting for the Board to vote on the foreclosure. There was a short discussion on the value. Peter Denbow wanted to drive by and look at the home.

Motion by Todd Brown to table, seconded by Peter Denbow. All in Favor 3-0

D. School Sale Update - Manager Fisher advised the selectmen that final closing on the property is scheduled for Tuesday, December 10, 2019 at 9 a.m.

New Business

a. Old Wing Rd- Plowing Private Lane – Safety and Legal Concerns Versus Past Practice

Manager Fisher asked Mr. Archer to step forward and explain his concern. Mr. Archer explained that at some point in time the town re-constituted the road and gave it up but when his father bought it 40 years ago and they've enjoyed having the road plowed every year and now this year it is not being plowed. Mr. Archer didn't receive a notice from the town that they weren't plowing. Mr. Archer requested that the town take over the rest of the road and continue plowing. Mr. Archer stated that he remembered the town widening the road in front of John Brown's house.

Hiram Weymouth told Mr. Archer that this means he wanted two things, plowing and for the town to take over the roadway. There was a discussion about the location on the road where the town's right of way ends. Road Commissioner Snowman explained that the privately owned portion of the road (where it is paved) ends at John Brown's (neighbor) house. According to Mr. Snowman, the driveway is steep, the pavement is aging, and we have already buried a few town trucks on private property while trying to navigate Old Wing Road.

Manager Fisher cited the 1989 Supreme Court ruling that stated that towns are not permitted to place public equipment on private property- it is an unconstitutional use of tax dollars. The question he wanted to ask Maine Municipal legal would be – does private use preempt the law? And is it possible to do enter into a Hold Harmless Agreement with the property owners?

Dennis Smith was recognized by Chairman Weymouth and asked if there is a precedent that has been set? Hiram Weymouth replied the precedent is obvious, but we have to check with our attorneys, it is under their purview not the Selectmen. Peter Denbow offered that the first thing to do is determine accurately where the town's right of way ends.

Dennis Smith stated that if we turn around on other people's properties wouldn't that also be a violation? Road Commissioner Snowman explained that they have not in the past plowed that road prior to the hard freeze. That the freeze thaw makes the road nearly impossible to plow without taking extreme measures and that raises a safety issue.

There was a short discussion on the ownership of the properties. Peter Denbow asked about the length of the road that is not being plowed. Mr. Archer replied about 400 feet. Mr. Snowman explained that the plow trucks are actually too large to plow the turn around at the top of the driveway, it is better suited for a pick up truck/

Hiram Weymouth stated that the road would have to be widened if we took it over and the owners probably wouldn't want to pay for that cost. Hiram spoke to the issue, saying First we have to determine the extent of the precedent- then meeting the road standards and those costs. He instructed Manager Fisher to contact Maine Municipal on hold harmless, on the precedent before we get jammed back up with more snow.

Dennis Smith asked how the complaint came into being. Manager Fisher explained it began when an employee approached him expressing concern about safety when backing up the driveway while backing up a steep hill.

Road Commissioner Items

Dexter Road Condition -Road Commissioner Snowman wanted to express his concern that Dexter Road is in such poor condition that it is damaging our trucks, shaking our lights loose. The Board instructed Manager Fisher to contact MaineDOT and express the Selectmen's concern to those officials.

Committee Items

Fire Department

Assistant Fire Chief Wurster reported that there was a fire at the McNally house and the Pastor's woodshed burnt down. They reported to accident scenes. Hiram Weymouth asked about the insurance company the town contracted with to try to collect the money. It was stated that the name of the company is Cost Recovery Services. Manager Fisher was asked to report back at the next meeting.

Selectmen's Items

Peter Denbow and Manager Fisher updated the Board on the Christmas Tree lighting. There was a light-hearted discussion on the small turnout. Manager Fisher suggested having Santa ride around on the Fire Truck and deliver presents to those in need. It was agreed that next year we would do more.

Town Manager's Items

Treasurer's Report – Manager Fisher presented the report and advised on a change on the Revenue Section that now shows current total of interest earnings of our CD's. He also exported the Interest Income Report to Excel and redesigned it in excel. Manager Fisher has modified the report.

Assessor- Manager Fisher discussed the Assessor position from the previous meeting. Manager Fisher asked for that to be further discussed under budget.

Manager Fisher provide the MMSWA budget and our responsibility could increase by 10% according to their most recent budget. Hiram Weymouth pointed out that Dexter is only getting 9% increase while everyone else is getting 10% and there was a discussion about recycling running a deficit.

Manager Fisher provided a Memo from Char-lin about liquor on Sunday. There still aren't not enough signatures for the petition. Manager Fisher stated it could be done one more time but it is not likely we can be successful. Peter Denbow suggested writing a letter to both stores and calling the State about the extension.

There was a brief discussion of the Safety Report sent by the Risk Inspector for St. Albans.

Manager Fisher provided the list of 2020 Holidays for the Staff for next year.

Executive Session – 1 MRSA 405 6 a – Personnel – Salary Discussion

Todd Brown made a motion to move the Executive Session to the end of the meeting. Seconded by Hiram Weymouth. All in Favor 3-0

Budget Discussion

Also present for the budget discussion : Joyce Wymouth and James Thorne of the budget committee and Brady Snowman, Road Commissioner

Manager Fisher said he wanted to go over Fire Department, Public Works, Other Services

Manager Fisher stated that the highlights are the 10% increase in solid waste costs to the town. No change on ACO. Waiting to hear back from Humane Society. Assessor is an increase from 14k to over 16k. The majority of the total increase is the increase on solid waste.

Debt and Interest – new bond amounts are now in the spreadsheet. The new bond is higher this time because you borrowed more. Interest is higher because we are at the front end of the interest rate. Salt Shed will be paid off in 2024. The total debt and interest = \$123,000. The previous budget was \$101,877.00.

Public Service – We are proposing a small decrease from \$11,455.00 to \$11,375.00

Health and Human Services - We had a few late requests. Hartland Community Center made a late request and Manager Fisher couldn't find them previous in the budget. Peter Denbow replied that they are there in the budget. Hartland Community Center is asked \$3,500 for next year. Peter Denbow suggested Manager Fisher look in the Town Report. Budget Committee member Joyce Weymouth suggested it was in Recreation. They have requested an increase from \$2750.00 in 2019 to \$3500.00 in 2020.

Manager Fisher raised the issue of lowering the budget for General Assistance. He studied the past four years of expenses and they have not exceeded ten thousand dollars in any single fiscal year. Peter Denbow explained that the policy was to budget a thousand dollars a month for General Assistance. Manager Fisher asked if the State requires 12 thousand dollars in the budget? The expense never exceeds 8,000 dollars in a year. Hiram Weymouth replied no, there isn't a requirement but advised caution on cutting that budget. Both Peter Denbow and Hiram Weymouth recommended that Manager Fisher not reduce the budget below ten thousand dollars. Manager Fisher replied that he will lower it from twelve to ten thousand dollars

Manager Fisher read a list of public service organizations' requests for funding under "Community Services":

Summerfest - \$2,000
Historical Society \$500
Chamber of Commerce \$250.00
Hartland Library \$5000.00
Dexter Library \$600.00

Hiram Weymouth questioned the amount requested by Hartland Library as appearing excessive, a lot of money to request. He recalled that there was an understanding in prior years that a large increase was allowed on a temporary basis and now that has continued for several years. He also stated that he had requested the library's budget in past years and did not receive it. He would like to know how that money is being spent. Manager Fisher replied that their request included some membership numbers, 613 St. Albans card-carrying members, 48 persons enrolled in a summer reading program. Todd Brown suggested borrowing a Town Book for Hartland. Manager Fisher replied he would contact Hartland's manager and ask for a book.

Under Insurance Manager Fisher advised that health insurance will increase 7 percent. He will double check our numbers with the new employee (Road Commissioner). Manager Fisher is also planning on calling MMA about the liability insurance numbers.

Manager Fisher turned to Capital Reserves. He was looking in Trio and the transfers that the citizens voted upon have not been moved and if that is confirmed he will move the amounts approved for transfer to the appropriate accounts. Manager requested guidance from the Selectmen on Capital Reserves account. How much and where to assign the transfers to reserve.

Hiram Weymouth recommended that \$50,000 be placed in Fire Hall Reserve. Peter Denbow suggested holding on the Fire Hall reserve until the Fire Committee has completed their work and the Fire Department is rebuilt. Peter Denbow stated that he understands the history of the building and the estimated to repair the existing building, and now we have nine fire fighters and we can't build a new building for nine firefighters. We could sell a couple of trucks and have more room. He recalled the amount was around \$17,000 for repairs.

Hiram disagreed explaining that we need a fire hall that can serve the citizens, this building is in too poor a shape and doesn't meet code. Hiram reviewed the progress since the committee was formed- that we have hired a new Fire Chief and are moving forward with updating the SAR and studying our options for a new fire hall, which has the support of the citizens. Todd Brown questioned how the Fire Committee was formed, out of the blue with no input from the Selectmen that he can recall.

Brady Snowman questioned why the Fire Hall even requires replacement when the town garage is not adequate and not large enough, that it is already difficult working on the trucks and the crew works on trucks every day they aren't plowing or sanding.

Brady Snowman and Manager Fisher brought up the issue of our aging fleet and the need to establish a plan for replacing our single axle trucks. Manager Fisher advised the board that the trucks have cost the town over \$34,000 per year in parts and repairs and that does not include the work crew's daily labor costs on those repairs.

Brady Snowman and Manager Fisher agreed a new truck is needed, the newest truck is over 14 years old and the constant breakdowns could result in creating a serious safety issue should these trucks fail in a major storm.

James Thorne explained that the purpose of placing fifty thousand a year in the Fire Hall Reserve was to raise enough funds to apply for grants from a position of financial strength, to show that the town is serious about building a new fire hall. Manager Fisher advised that most grants require or suggest in order to be competitive for the grant a minimum of twenty percent of the grant amount requested.

Hiram Weymouth suggested that the monies saved could be reconstituted if the fire department hall does not get built.

Manager Fisher advised his concern that the village of St Albans will lose an important component when you remove the Fire department to a site on the main road outside the village. When the village is planned in the future, it might be important to look at what to bring in to enhance the village center and not to remove historical and aesthetic components that already are identified with the village itself. Even if the land is donated, if it is possible the citizens should consider keeping the fire hall on Water Street.

Manager Fisher made an impassioned plea for the to consider the aging fleet as a serious safety issue and that there needs to be a change of focus to improving our equipment, our vehicles and stated that the trucks are breaking down in every storm this year and it is possible that all trucks could break down in a single storm and the result of that would be a serious safety issue for the entire community.

Brady Snowman suggested either the community purchase pre-1995 trucks that are mechanical and have no electronics or purchase new trucks under warranty. Manager Fisher countered that even now Brady has pulled parts from a truck in his yard to keep one of our trucks running. We cannot be searching for parts and electronics are in every car we drive today, electronics are in everything. Todd Brown asked how much money is in the Capital Equipment Fund? Manager Fisher checked the records and confirmed that with the citizen approved transfer of \$35,000 and the CD's and funds in savings, there is \$60,000 in the capital equipment fund. There is \$326,000 in the Fire Hall Reserve Account.

Manager Fisher and Road Commissioner Snowman agreed that a new all-wheel drive truck will cost approximately \$175,000.00.

Todd Brown proposed a compromise of placing \$25,000 in Fire Hall Reserve and \$35,000 in the Capital Equipment Reserve in order to continue to fund the fire hall but also to prepare for the purchase of a new truck.

Manager Fisher advised that the backhoe will be paid off in 2020 and that if we make a large enough down payment on a truck, we could match the payments and not impact on the budget as far as payments are concerned.

Manager Fisher then reviewed the Road Department budget briefly with the Board but Brady Snowman felt the numbers were from an earlier draft before he reviewed the budget. Manager Fisher agreed it may be an earlier version of the road department budget. After a brief discussion, Manager Fisher and Road Commissioner Snowman agreed to review the numbers and address that at the next meeting.

Manager Fisher provided the Fire Department budget and advised the Board that the Fire Department reviewed their section of the budget and that he had yet to receive feedback from the incoming Fire Chief.

Peter Denbow made a motion to go into executive session under– 1 MRSA 405 6 a to discuss personnel at 8:35 pm Seconded by Todd Brown, All in Favor 3-0

Todd Brown Made a motion to end the executive session and to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 p.m. Seconded By Hiram Weymouth. All in Favor 3-0

Meeting Adjourned at 9:15 p.m. Minutes prepared by Richard D. Fisher

Hiram Weymouth, Chairman

Todd Brown, Vice Chairman

Peter Denbow, Selectman