

## **BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING**

**March 1, 2022**

### **MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Shawn Talbot, Chair; Bert Hamill and Jason Somero Selectmen  
Debbie Deaton, Town Administrator, Susan Mallett

**Open Meeting** in the Town Office with the Pledge of Allegiance at 5:00

#### **Non-Public Session 1:**

At 5:05 pm Shawn made a motion to go into non-public session under RSA 91-A:3, II (c), **SECONDED** by Bert, all in agreement.

At 5:08 pm Returned to public. Motion to seal by Shawn, **Seconded** by Bert, all in agreement. No decision was made.

#### **Old/New Business:**

##### **ARPA 5:10pm:**

Debbie said the minutes from the meeting on September 13, 2021 were vague as far as how much money was accepted. Bert and Jason recalled they accepted the whole amount with conditions. Debbie replied the minutes were vague and suggested they have another public hearing.

Debbie informed the Board she spoke to Christine Heck at NHMA regarding the ARPA funds. Christine said this has the least amount of rules they've ever seen in a Federal Grant. Christine said there were no permanent strings attached other than complying with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Constitution which are all things we have to abide by whether or not any money is accepted. Debbie explained we were having the department heads give the Board a "wish list" of items they need but keep putting Band-Aids on, for example: updating the 25+ year old Emergency Management system, new software for accounting purposes and the Police Department to communicate to the State, etc. She said that is exactly what it should be used for. Debbie also mentioned if the Board chooses to give bonuses to employees, Christine said no elected officials can receive a bonus, bonuses cannot be more than \$1,500 per person and if a bonus is given to one employee, it must be given to all employees. The Police Department is not eligible to receive a bonus because they were already given bonuses by the State. Jason doesn't think the Town should accept the money because he feels there are strings attached and who is going to pay for it. Debbie replied all United States citizens will be paying for it. Shawn stated if we don't use it, it will be given to other towns and regardless of who uses it, we'll still be paying for it and we should use it to our benefit.

All funds expended have to be submitted to the Treasury. The money must be allocated by December 2024 and expended by 2026.

Bert said we should put a sense of urgency on the department heads to get their prioritized lists to us. Shawn agreed and stated it's not like we're trying to find things to spend the money on, every department has definite needs that have been there for a long time.

Shawn suggested we could possibly use some money to finish restoring the old Town Hall. Jason stated the Heritage Commission is also looking to get grants for the project. Bert also suggested there are 2 antique fire engines that could be restored.

Jason stated there was one citizen that emailed him regarding accepting the ARPA funds. Jason would like to have another public hearing on it.

There will be a public meeting on April 5<sup>th</sup> to discuss all of the department heads' requests and prioritize the list as a whole.

**Pole Licensing 6:10pm:**

Debbie told the Board it has to be noticed in the local newspaper 14 days prior to the Public Hearing. The purpose of renewing the pole licenses is so we can collect taxes on the Right of Ways for all utility poles, which we have not been able to do for the past couple of years so we are losing tax revenue. Debbie will send notices by way of Certified Mail to the utility companies notifying them of the hearing.

Debbie said she is the petitioner (must be a Town resident). There is a script that needs to be followed at the public hearing.

There is a question of how poles are added to the license for new roads accepted by the Town. Debbie is still looking into the process and also how often the licenses have to be renewed.

The public hearing will be on March 29, 2022.

**Streetlights and Eversource Incentive for interior lighting:**

Debbie informed the Board on the status of the 9 lights that had not been replaced as of yet as a result of her meeting with Peter Goewey and Affinity lighting. Affinity will be getting pricing from Eversource to replace mast arms on the remaining poles so lights can be replaced with LED. They will also be getting pricing on the cost to add a light near the New Ipswich Market for the crosswalk.

The total for the replacing interior lighting to LED is \$44,773. Eversource is giving us \$5,862. The Town portion will be \$38,910. Affinity works with 2 companies that will make the project budget neutral. The electric savings at the end of the year will be your payment until the project is paid. Affinity will be getting a quote to replace the lighting at the Fire Department and see if we can get a grant for those. Debbie said they are not just replacing bulbs. The whole fixture is being replaced and will be "smart bulbs" (motion sensor).

Shawn asked if we had paid the bill for the street lighting. Debbie will check into that.

Debbie said the light on Page Hill Road will not be installed because there is really no need for it according to Peter Goewey and Affinity. The pole itself is set back from the road and the intersection is not too busy.

**Ballot testing:**

Town ballots were counted this morning but machine couldn't be tested because the cards hadn't come yet. It has been rescheduled to Thursday at 10am and counting of the school ballots.

**Rabies Clinic:**

There will be a Rabies Clinic on Saturday, April 2, 2022 from 8:30-10:30am. The Town Clerk's office will be open from 8:30-11am to register dogs receiving an updated rabies vaccine.

**Selectmen:**

Jason asked if the Board will be interviewing anyone for the Town Clerk/Tax Collector position. Bert stated the position needs to be posted and the person should be hired as the Deputy until Debbie can resign. At that point, the person hired will be appointed as the Town Clerk/Tax Collector and a Deputy will need to be hired. Both of these positions must be a town resident. Posting will be done as soon as possible. The deputy will be hired at \$15 per hour until Debbie's resignation. Candidate will be aware the Town Clerk/Tax Collector will need to run for election in March of 2023 if they choose to stay in the position.

Next, Jason mentioned the Employee Handbook. Shawn stated we need to revisit the whole thing where the employees spoke about. Jason stated they should remove the new sections and continue to use the current handbook. Shawn said that's what is happening now. Bert said he compared our handbook to other towns and said there is a lot of work to be done.

Shawn suggested the Board revisit the handbook on May 5<sup>th</sup> at 5:05 (workshop). Bert thinks we should then give the department heads and employees the suggested handbook, have a public meeting for everyone to attend and then make a final decision.

Shawn would like to revisit gifting time to other employees.

Jason said he would also like to adopt one of the fund balance policies they received. Bert and Shawn would like to wait until the new Board member settles in. Bert suggested they also hold off until they see what the financial situation of the Town is. Shawn said they would like to keep the amount at the 10% mark also stating it's not a slush fund and he is not in favor of inflating the fund balance. He would like the voters to have faith in the Selectmen to use the money correctly.

Next, Jason mentioned appointing new committees. Shawn said we should wait for the new board member.

Building #2 lease: Shawn asked Debbie to invite the owners of Warwick Mills to come in and discuss renewing the lease and what the terms will be. This should be done as soon as possible.

Jason mentioned he didn't want the tax lien discussion to fall off the radar. Debbie told the Board she will be sending out Delinquent Tax Notices this week and the lien notices will be going out on April 6<sup>th</sup>. Debbie also mentioned a resident would like to come in and discuss a payment arrangement on March 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Bert brought up the removal of the house on Greenville Road that was removed from the auction due to asbestos shingles. He asked if there was a fund for environmental resources to do some testing. Debbie asked if the Conservation Commission would fund that because the property goes down to the river. Bert thought it could be possible.

Jason thought live-streaming could potentially not be child friendly and also wonders if it would intimidate candidates from attending Candidate's Night.

Jason said he spoke to Josh Alix regarding his suggested mask policy and Mr. Alix misunderstood his intentions. Jason clarified to Mr. Alix he was not trying to suggest this is town wide, rather town related functions, meetings, etc. He just wants people to be able to make decisions for themselves regarding mask wearing and vaccination status.

Shawn doesn't want to put the kids in the middle of this using basketball as an example. We cannot make the school let people in with no mask if they have a mask mandate.

Bert thinks the Town should be following the recommendation of the New Hampshire Division of Public Health Services and thinks that should also be carried over to our Employee Handbook. Shawn doesn't want to erode the Town's ability to be flexible allowing a person choose for themselves. Jason said the whole point of his policy was to let each individual decide whether or not to wear a mask and not mandate that anyone has to wear a mask. Tina Hood, 578 Ashby Road, said she believes it's discrimination to not allow someone in a store, meeting, etc. if they don't wear a mask just like they won't serve someone because of the color of their skin and we cannot go back there. Jason said it's not freedom when we allow people to dictate to other people and this is why he thinks his policy is a good thing.

Jason's proposal states "We, the Selectboard of New Ipswich, do hereby affirm that no department, board or committee that falls under the authority and oversight of the Board of Selectmen shall implement a Covid-19 related health mandate on any resident or participant that would require a person to surrender the personal liberty outlined in the NH State Constitution. This specifically includes the mandating of mask wearing and/or vaccination in order to participate in any meeting or event that is sponsored or hosted by the Town of New Ipswich. Neither shall any department, board or committee forbid the wearing of masks. This policy is effective immediately and shall remain in place at the discretion of the Board of Selectmen."

Shawn made a motion to accept the proposal as written. Jason seconded the motion. Bert voted nay. The proposal was adopted.

At 6:50 pm Shawn made a motion to adjourn until 7:05 for Candidate's Night, it was seconded by Bert Hamill, all were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,  
Debbie Deaton  
Town Administrator

**Minutes approved by BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

Shawn Talbot, Chairman:

A black ink signature of Shawn Talbot, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' followed by a horizontal line.

Jason Somero:

A blue ink signature of Jason Somero, appearing as a cursive 'JS' followed by a horizontal line.

Bert Hamill:

A horizontal line for the signature of Bert Hamill.