

North Berwick Board of Selectmen Minutes February 16, 2021

**NORTH BERWICK BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES
FEBRUARY 16, 2021**

Present: Chairman Cowan, Selectman Hall, Selectman Galemmo, Selectman Johnson, Jr., Selectman Johnson, Sr.

Also Present: Dwayne Morin

Chairman Cowan called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Review and Approve Minutes of February 2, 2021

Selectman Galemmo motioned to approve the minutes of February 2, 2021 as written. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

3. Public Input

There was no public input at this time.

4. Unfinished Business:

A. COVID-19: Updates, Town Hall Entrance Canopy

Dwayne Morin stated that they are trying to get all of our employees vaccinated. They are on a list and we are waiting for the vaccines to become available. Our employees are in the next round of vaccinations.

Dwayne stated that the canopy has been installed. The curtains will be installed within the next week or so. The person installing wanted to wait until he had the exact measurements after the canopy was installed.

B. Linscott Road Intersection: Discussion on Progress

Dwayne stated that they did go in and clean up the trash out of the house so we wouldn't attract animals. He said that the house is in pretty bad shape, so they are just going to collapse it and haul it all away. Chairman Cowan asked if there was anything in the house that they could salvage. Dwayne said that there is nothing in the house that is of any value at all. They will now wait until spring to do any further work because of the weather. They are also going to have to find a new tree company. The owner of the company that we were using passed away last week. Dwayne said that the doesn't know if someone else will take over the company and keep it going or not. If not, we will have to find another company that is certified to work on roads. Dwayne

stated that he went in the house yesterday and drained all of the water out of the pipes. The oil is also out of the tank. The next thing to do is tear the house down and haul it away.

D. Land and Water Conservation: Discuss Application for Bauneg Beg Mountain

Dwayne stated that, at their last meeting, they had a discussion about the Land and Water Conservation. On page 72 of their packet is the Project Certification for the Board to sign. He stated that they are working on the application right now. The Great Works Regional Land Trust has done some work on the application. They asked Dwayne to send them some information that they needed to help complete the application. He completed it and sent it back to them last Thursday. One of the things that they will need for the application is the Project Certification.

Dwayne said that there is something that changed on the Certification since their last meeting. They changed the name. The previous document called it Bauneg Beg Mountain Hill #1. They are now calling it Bauneg Beg South project. Dwayne stated that the State has reviewed the Certification and they are fine with the format that we put together.

Selectman Galemno motioned to approve and sign the Project Certification. Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

E. Verizon: Review Amended Lease Space

Dwayne stated that Verizon want battery packs for battery backup. In order to have the backup they need to put big battery packs. Each battery pack weighs 4,500 pounds. When they started to perform the design, they wanted to hang the 9,000 pounds off of the structural steel on the third floor. Dwayne was not in favor of that. The structural steel that is on the 3rd floor is not meant to have stuff hanging from it. It is there to support the roof. Verizon said that their engineer looked at it and said that it would support what they need. Dwayne told them that we would have our engineers review it to make sure that it would be good. He did tell them that he would prefer for it not to be done here. They also want to have air conditioning just for that room and they want to have 2 of them. One of them would be to run and the other would be to kick in if the other one stops running. They need some outside space for that. They came out last week to do some measuring. Dwayne is recommending that, instead of hanging 9,000 pounds of batteries on our structured steel, that they put them in the basement. He said that we have our utility room down there. They are using the old chimney as a chase. They could put the batteries alongside the chimney. Then they would only have to worry about putting the right size wire. They came down to look at it and said that it was good with them. They just want to add the space to the lease. It would be 2 battery packs that would be caged in for protection. They want to put heat pumps outside for their air conditioners. Next to our 2 air conditioners they would put 2 heat pumps side by side and pipe everything in. They would use the center flue to get up to the 3rd floor.

Dwayne stated that, in order for them to do all of this, we need to amend the lease agreement. The original one didn't say that we would be providing them space in the basement. It did discuss that we would give them space outside, but we never defined the space. Verizon feels that it would be in the best interest for everyone if they define the space. He stated that the

lockbox that will be on the outside of the building will include a key to our mechanical room. He stated that CMP has also agreed to let them have their own meter on the side of the building.

Selectman Galemmo motioned to approve the amendment of the lease for Verizon. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

Reminders: Next Board of Selectmen's Meeting – March 2, 2021 – 6:30 pm

5. New Business:

A. Audit: Review FY2019 with Auditors (Postponed to March 2, 2021 Meeting)

Dwayne stated that they are postponing the audit because it is not done. The goal will be to bring the auditors to the March 2nd meeting.

B. Maple Street Forest: Request From Parkers on Signage

Dwayne said that he was approached by the Parker family. The Parker family would like some changes to be done on the Parker Trail. This trail is part of the Land Trust negotiations. Mrs. Parker was the one that negotiated the leases and she passed away a couple of years ago. Beth and Dave Parker bought the property from the Trust. As they have been working the property, there have been some concerns that they have come up with. The primary concern revolves around dogs and the use of dogs around their property. The lease allows them to control what happens on their property even though there is a trail that goes across their property.

Dwayne stated that they have been working with the Great Works Land Trust and have been creating some rules. They are going to post on their land that they do not want any dogs on their property. They have had some instances with dogs since the bridge has opened up. One of the big issues is that they are constantly having to pick up dog poop. The other issue is that most of the people walking with dogs do not have them on a leash. They are concerned because one of the neighbors is a young family with 2 young children. There is also a disabled person living in another neighboring home. The Parker's are working with the Land Trust to move the trail away from these houses. They are working on other things as well. The Land Trust doesn't have their trails posted as No Smoking. The Parker's do not want smoking on their trail, so they are working to have some signage put up on the trails.

The Parker's came to Dwayne to ask about adding signs on our kiosks that would notify people that the Parker Trail does not allow dogs. If people are planning on walking the town trail with their dog, they will not be able to go onto the part that is the Parker Trail. They asked if the Town would not allow dogs on our trails. Dwayne said that he would bring it to the Board for their consideration. Dwayne said that our trails are used by dog walkers a lot. He said that the only place that we don't allow dogs right now is at the Community Center. Selectman Galemmo stated that he thinks they may have some opposition if they don't allow dogs on the town trails.

The Board agreed to put informational signs at the kiosks notifying them of the rules on the Parker Trail. The Parker's will be putting up their own signs on the Parker Trail. Dwayne will let the Parker's know the Board's decision.

Dwayne stated that the Parker's are also working the forestry on the land so at times they will be closing down the trail if they are doing some cutting. He said that it is a safety issue. They don't want to drop some trees on people walking on the trail. When they do close the trail, it is not for a long time. It may just be for an hour or so.

4. Unfinished Business:

C. Budget FY22: Discussion on FY22 Budget Submissions, Town Meeting Dates

Dwayne stated that the first thing that they need to discuss is the issue with the Town Meeting. He stated that he has provided the Selectmen with 2 options. One is for an open Town Meeting on 6/12/21 and the other is for a Referendum on 6/8/21. He said that, as the Law stands now, we can't hold an open Town Meeting on 6/12/21. However, we have some time sensitive deadlines that need to happen soon. One of these is regarding caucuses. We have to open it up for so many days before the vote. From election day, they need to back track 45 days and then back track another 45 days. This would be the start of the nominating process. If we vote on June 8th, the nominating process will begin on March 1st and run through April 30th. If we do an open Town Meeting on June 12th, the nominating process will begin on March 4th and run through May 4th. He stated that March 1st is not far away, and the Selectmen don't meet again until March 2nd.

Dwayne states that everything else pretty much stays the same when you look at the 2 schedules side by side. The Budget Committee will still meet during the month of April. The biggest issue is that they need to open up the caucus in order to do the process. If they wait until May and say that they are going to vote in June, we will have missed the chance with the nominating process. Chairman Cowan stated that she does not see any way that they would be ready to do an open meeting. She said that we are doing better with vaccinations, but she would rather not take the chance. You never know how many people would show up and if we still have to provide specific spacing and limit the number of people, it will not work. Selectman Galemme agreed and believes that people will understand.

Dwayne stated that he has drafted 2 different Warrants dependent on what the Board decides to do for voting. One is for the Referendum Questions. He kept them the same as last year except that he did not include the Linscott Road and he added the Land and Conservation that the Board just signed off on. Also, they are considering some Capital Improvements at the Community Center and want to use the Impact Fee Fund, so this is separate from the Budget. He did keep the Budget as one lump sum like they did last year. He said that also provided a draft of the Warrant if they decided to do an open Town Meeting.

Selectman Hall motioned to do the Budget vote by Referendum on June 8, 2021. Selectman Galemme seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

Dwayne stated that they could now go over the Budget. He said that on page 28 of their packet would be a good place for them to start reviewing. On a whole, the Budget that he has prepared is a 3.76% reduction from last year. His goal was to keep it so there would be no increase in taxation. He was able to decrease it primarily due to Capital. This was a down Capital year anyway, but he was able to decrease it even more. We are not going to buy a Police cruiser because they don't need one. Because of COVID it extended the life of the last one until the end of the year. We have put hardly any miles on it and all of our cars are still in good shape, so we don't need another one right now. There are no other vehicles that we are buying this year.

Dwayne said that our Operating costs are up by about \$95,000. He said that half of that increase is due to the increase in the Water District rate. He said that \$48,000 of the \$95,000 is from the Water District increase. There is also about a \$33,000 increase in wages for our employees and \$12,000 increase for benefits and insurances.

Dwayne stated that under the General Government, the Town Office has the biggest increase of almost \$44,000 which is about 9.5%. The majority of that increase is due to insurances. We had a few employees who weren't previously taking insurances but have now chosen to take it and also hired new employees who are now taking the insurance. Selectman Johnson, Jr. asked if our insurance costs had gone up a lot. Dwayne said that the health insurance had not gone up at all. He said that our health insurance is self-insured. Through last year, in our organization, our self-insured pool spent less money on health care than in any year that we have had. He said that the hospitals were shut down and a lot of people were not getting anything done and not using their health insurance. He said that this is the first time that he can remember where the health insurance didn't go up. The other increase was in utility costs went up 7.6% which is not a lot when you look at the dollar amount which is about a \$2,500 increase.

Dwayne stated that the Selectmen stayed the same. Code Enforcement increased about 2.5% due mostly to wages. Town Manager up 2.5% because of wage and benefits. Planning Board and ZBA all stayed the same as last year. There is a 7.4% increase in our property insurances. Dwayne said that it is not our property insurances, but it is actually our Workers Comp insurance that is increasing by about \$12,000. The HRA went down. Dwayne said that he just replaces what was spent in the previous year. Last year, we put \$12,000 and spent \$10,000 so this year we are only putting in \$10,000. This pot stays at about \$100,000.

He is keeping General Assistance at \$5,000. He stated that, even through the pandemic, they have not spent much on General Assistance. They have had probably about 5 people in the past 3 months. Some of them have been coming in for heating oil. They have been giving money for this from the Heating fund that we have because there is still about \$20,000 in it.

Dwayne said that capital has decreased by about 40% from last year. We are not buying a Police vehicle. The Police Equipment is at -1.17% because those are our bonds. They decrease by 1% to 2% per year based on how our interest rates work. It is down about \$1,200 which is our Bond payments. We will keep the \$50,000 for the Fire Station building. Dwayne said that he will be bringing the Board the report on the Fire Station at the next meeting. There is no increase for Roads and there is nothing for Parks and Rec equipment. The ambulance is paid off, so we are not putting any money into Rescue Equipment. We have no ROW purchase. There is an

increase for the Transfer Station Building because we will be working on the parking lot. We will do it in a 3-year phase. This year we will do the main section. They will be ripping up all of the pavement and replacing it. This will be all around the buildings. In 2 years, they will do behind all of the buildings and in year 3 they will do the entrance to the station.

Under Public Works, he is keeping Winter at \$150,000. His goal is always to go into the year with about \$175,000. The Public Works went up about 3% which is due to salary and benefits. It is an increase of \$12,845. Under Health and Social Services, the Transfer Station is up about 4% which are all due to wages and benefit increases. Dwayne stated that when he mentions benefit increases, it is mostly due to our retirement system. Whenever salaries go up retirement costs go up. Retirement also had an increase based on what money is going in and what money is coming out. Every year they change the percentage, and it was changed again this year. Dwayne stated that Social Service Agencies is down \$1,200. This is primarily because of Visiting Nurse Services. They only bill us for what they didn't collect and because of COVID, no one was using visiting nurses as much. They are asking for \$1,200 less.

Dwayne stated that Police is up 6.19% which is all due to wages and health insurance except for an additional increase in the Equipment budget of \$5,000. One thing that they need and could have used last year is some riot gear. They are going to get helmets for all of the full-time officers and a shield to put in each car. He stated that we had a big increase in Maine PERS which was about \$20,000 but they had decreases to offset some of that. There was an increase in SRO of about \$500. There was some increase in Insurance because we hired new people and they opted to have the insurance coverage for the family plan. The overall increase in the Police budget was about \$59,000.

Dwayne said that they pretty much stayed the same as last year on Fire. The only thing was the retirement program went up about \$2,000. However, there were other cost savings, so the total increase is about \$1,000. Rescue is up \$16,000 which is an increase of about 6%. The only reason for the increase is due to the new mandated time off that you have to give to people. Whenever you work 40 hours you get 1 hour of time off. When you figure that out with all of our per diem people that adds up to a \$15,000 cost to the town to cover it. Streetlights are staying the same at \$12,500. Hydrants has an increase of \$48,600. We are at a continuous increase on Dispatch costs. This is year 3 of major increases. This means that we have 2 more years with \$14,000 increases and then it will settle down to just the regular increases. Animal Control stayed the same at \$20,000.

Dwayne said that Parks and Recreation is only up 1.16% which is due to the increase in wages. The Community Center is up \$75 which is due to the water rate increase. The Library came in at -.11% which is about \$300 less than last year. Historical Society is down about \$950 because we finished a project, and they are going to wait to start another project until after COVID. Outside Agencies, Cemetery, Mill Field Festival and Eastern Trail are staying flat. The TIF costs are flat as well. The Debt costs are also flat.

Dwayne stated that this was the budget for this year. The major increases are all due to wages, insurance, and Water District. Chairman Cowan asked how much longer we had to pay off the Town Hall building. We are at the halfway mark. Dwayne said that the Town Budget is at \$4.8

million which is down 3.56% from last year's budget. It will keep all of our services running. He stated that he is proposing \$137,000 for the Impact Fee budget. It would be \$100,000 for the Great Works Land Trust and \$37,000 would be for the Community Center. They have a couple of projects that they would like done at the Community Center. The primary project is to replace our picnic tables. We have been buying wood picnic tables and they last only about 2 years. Last year, he bought a rubberized metal picnic table and put it at Canal Street Park to see how it would hold up. It held up pretty well, so their goal is to replace all of the picnic tables at the Community Center, Canal Street Park, and the Boat Launch. They will buy some regular size one and some kid sized ones for the Summer Camp. They will also put in some bike racks at the Community Center and also fix up the front garden area. This is what the \$37,000 would pay for.

Dwayne stated that, starting on page 33, he has provided them with a Revenue Projections Summary. It is a 10-year running list of every single revenue that we get. He also includes what he thinks that we will get for the year and he is very conservative with the numbers. He did a 5 year and 10-year average and then listed the estimated. He did cut some of the estimates down quite a bit. He said that he knows that there are some numbers that they are not going to meet. Interest is down \$40,000. There are some positive sides on our Revenue amounts. He said that the Code Enforcement office continues to be very robust. The Transfer Station is relatively stagnant which he was pleasantly surprised about. He thought that we were going to see some decreases on that end, but we didn't. Our excise tax is running about \$10,000 ahead of last year. He stated that he is using some Excise Tax for the front office in this budget. He said that they are using it for the person who does most of the car registrations to cover her salary and then \$10,000 for each of the other employees. Dwayne stated that he is not using any taxation money to operate Public Works next year. Dwayne stated that we will clear \$1 million in revenue and he has only budgeted \$1 million. He stated that we are down in our Miscellaneous Fees from \$400,000 to \$315,000. Selectman Johnson, Jr. asked what was included in Miscellaneous Fees. Dwayne stated that it included Interest on taxes, Interest on Accounts, all our Town Fees, Code Enforcement and other things that are not included in the bigger Revenue items.

Dwayne stated that, starting on page 44 of their packet is a list of the salaries for all of the employees. He said that he has bumped the Highway employees up a little more than the others. Instead of a 3% increase he is giving a 6% increase. It will go from \$22.65 per hour up to \$24.00 per hour. He is doing this to try and generate more interest to hire new workers because he is having a hard time to find someone right now.

6. Other Business:

Dwayne stated that they are still looking at different grants. He said that last Fall there was some concern with pedestrian crosswalks on Route 4. There was a lady that has been almost hit a few times, and there was an accident where someone stopped to let the pedestrian cross and the car behind him rear ended him. They have talked about having flashing crosswalk signs. He said that the State has 40 units that they will give to towns. We are going to apply to get one. We will put it by the Library because that is where a lot of the crossing is other than where are crossing guards are. He said that we have some good accident data that will help us to prove our case. It is also right in the middle of all our other crosswalks. The State would supply us with 2

for each direction if we are successful with our application. It is due in by March 5th, but he should have it done by the end of this week or the beginning of next week. He stated that we do meet all of the requirements and have some good documentation.

Dwayne stated that we have some new stuff happening in town. There is a new Physical Therapy office that is going in where the York Hospital office was previously located. He said that there are also a couple of subdivisions that are going to be coming in. There are 6 lots that want to go in on Route 9. Someone wants to put 2 lots in where the old junkyard was located on Lebanon Road.

7. Review and Approve Warrants and Correspondence:

Warrant:	February 9, 2021	- \$	0.00
Warrant:	February 16, 2021	- \$	642,846.91

Selectman Galemme motioned to approve the Warrant of February 16, 2021 for the amount of \$642,846.91. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

8. Adjournment:

Selectman Glemmo motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 pm. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded. VOTE: 5-0

Respectively Submitted,
Susan Niehoff, Stenographer

Original to Town Clerk

Chairman: Wendy Cowan

Selectman: Jonathan Hall

Selectman: Michael Johnson, Jr.

Selectman: Charles Glemmo

Selectman: Michael Johnson, Sr.