

North Berwick Board of Selectmen Minutes April 6, 2021

NORTH BERWICK BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES APRIL 6, 2021

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

Absent: Selectman Galemmo

Also Present: Dwayne Morin

1. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Review and Approve Minutes of March 16, 2021

Selectman Hall motioned to approve the minutes of March 16, 2021. Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0

3. Public Input

There was no public input at this time.

4. Unfinished Business:

A. COVID-19: Updates, Planning board Meetings, Summer Camp, Festival, Sick Pay

Dwayne Morin stated that one of the employees tested positive for COVID-19 and she is out until April 20th. He stated that she could have come back on the 12th but her 2-year-old daughter has to stay out of day care for 10 days after the employee's quarantine is finished. She can not come back because she will not have any childcare. Selectman Johnson, Jr. asked if she was really sick. Dwayne said that she has symptoms of being tired and feverish, but it is not really bad. Her daughter has no symptoms at all.

Dwayne stated that this employee is one of our new employees and doesn't have any vacation or sick time. The Federal Law said that we had to extend sick time to people who were sick with COVID but that expired on December 31, 2020. He said that our sick bank policy states that it can only be used for catastrophic illness such as cancer. The employee will go without a paycheck for 2 weeks. Selectman Johnson, Jr. asked if they could use the funds that the town received for COVID relief. Dwayne said that they have not received any money yet and the strings attached to it are extreme. This scenario is not one of the situations that it covers.

Dwayne stated that the easiest thing that the Board could do is to allow him as Town Manager to use the sick bank to assist her. The other thing they can do is to extend the Federal COVID to a date that the Board would decide on. He believes that this would be a dangerous precedent. He thinks that allowing people who have no sick or vacation time on the books be allowed to apply

for use of the sick bank. Chairman Cowan feels that the pandemic can be considered a catastrophic illness. Selectman Johnson, Jr. agreed and stated that it is an illness that has government mandated policies in place that does not allow the employee to come to work. Selectman Hall asked if the time in the sick bank would cover all of the employee's time off that she will need. Dwayne stated that there was enough time in the sick bank to use for the time that she has exhausted. Dwayne also stated that she is one of the employees that had donated her time to another employee earlier.

Selectman Johnson, Jr. motioned to allow the use of the Sick Bank to pay the employee for her time off due to COVID. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0

Dwayne stated that he spoke with the Planning Board members about going back to live meetings. The only concern was from 1 person and they asked if it could only happen after April 6th because she is not fully vaccinated yet. Dwayne stated that the Planning Board meetings have been rough with the ZOOM process.

Selectman Johnson, Sr. motioned to have the Planning Board start meeting in person going forward starting with the April 26th meeting. Selectman Hall seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0

Dwayne stated that there is a proposal in their packet from Kristie regarding Summer Camp. After looking at the new guidance that the Maine CDC has put out, it appears that we could run a Summer Camp for about 25 to 30 kids. Kristie has checked around to other towns to see what they are doing with their camps. Dwayne stated that the CDC states that we can do 100% of our camp if it is outside as long as you social distance. If you have any indoor camp activities, it cannot be more than 75% of our capacity and still maintain at a 6-foot distance. Having the 6-foot distance is what limits us with the Community Center. On rainy days when we put the kids inside, we are limited to squeezing in about 25 to 30 kids. Some towns are saying that they are going to run camp but if it rains, there will be no camp on that day. Dwayne said that this would be difficult to do. He stated that Berwick is only allowing 35 kids on a rainy day and 75 kids on a sunny day.

Dwayne stated that they have reached out to SAD 60 and they are only allowing 25 kids on the buses. Unfortunately, this will make the cost of field trips skyrocket. Because of these limitations, Kristie is recommending that we run three 2-week camps so it will allow a maximum number of kids to participate. Dwayne stated that one of the things that will be costly for the camp is the cost of gloves. We will need to buy about 10 cases of gloves. By Law, they need to apply the sunscreen on the kids 3 times a day. Each kid has to get the sunscreen applied so it will require for the person putting on the sunscreen to change gloves for each kid every time.

The Board of Selectmen agreed with this proposal.

Dwayne talked to Kristie about the Mill Field Festival. He stated that a lot of the people who work the Festival are hesitant about holding the festival again this year. The Fire Department has said that they would most probably not participate. Dwayne said that our festival is primarily kid oriented and usually have rides and bounce houses. It would be difficult to try and keep these disinfected at all times. Dwayne said that they could see how things were more towards

the end of summer and possibly do some kind of Fall Festival if everything is going well. Dwayne did talk with some other towns to see what they were doing. Old Orchard Beach is going to have their weekly fireworks display but they have a whole beach for people to utilize. Sanford has said that they will do their 4th of July fireworks. None of the towns mentioned whether or not they will have any of their festivals.

The Board agreed to hold off on the Mill Field Festival this year.

Selectman Hall asked Dwayne if he had heard anything about Memorial Day. Dwayne said that he has not heard anything from the Legion about it. He will reach out to them to see what their thoughts are.

B. Linscott Road Intersection: Discussion on Progress

Dwayne stated that they have cut a lot of the trees down. He reached out to 3 companies to get some bids on tree cutting and he received prices from 2 of them. Oak Woods Lumber came back at \$18,000 and Abbott Hill came back at \$7,500. Dwayne said that they hired Abbott Hill and they started on it today. They are anticipating that they will be done in 3 days. The Fire Department is training the next 2 Saturdays at the house. Next Monday, the power will be disconnected, and the wires will be removed from the house. By the end of April, the engineers will establish our center line and our benchmark grades. Starting on April 19th, they will be removing the house which should take about a week. The plan is to start building the road sometime around May 1st.

Dwayne stated that they still have some small jobs to work on. They need to do add loam on the new property where they put the new house. They will also do the winter sand soon. He said that we only used about 1/3 of our building this winter. The place that we buy our sand will be out of business soon so we will put up our winter sand in the next couple of weeks. Dwayne stated that they will also start sweeping next week. He stated that they are also still looking for a Public Works employee.

C. Budget FY22: Continued Discussion on FY22 Budget

Dwayne stated that they will be starting the Budget Committee meetings tomorrow. He will see what the members want to do. He said that there are basically only 10 questions on the ballot and technically, they only have to act on each of the questions. He doesn't know to what extent they will want to go through the whole budget. He will find out what they want to do tomorrow night and they will move forward from there.

Dwayne stated that they are still waiting to hear what the COVID Relief Act is going to do. We are initially slated for over \$400,000. They still have not released guidance on what the funds can be used for. They have given some general guidance on what we can use it for. We can use it to replace lost revenue. Dwayne said that our lost revenue last year wasn't great. It was about \$75,000 to \$100,000. We are allowed to give hazard pay to the employees that worked during COVID. We are also able to give some money to non-profits. If we give it to a non-profit, they can use the money for whatever they wish. Dwayne stated that we can also use it for water,

sewer, and broadband internet infrastructure. Dwayne stated that the first payments are supposed to be received by May 15th so the guidance should be out before those payments are sent. Dwayne said that the biggest concern is that if you misspend the money, you have to pay it back.

Dwayne stated that we were successful in obtaining the grant for the lighted yield signs for our crosswalks. He stated that he has to get in contact with Eric Gray because on his side, we will need to trim some trees in order for the solar panels to work. The poles are 20 feet tall, and they are solar paneled. In order to get the panel to work well, some trees will need to be cut.

D. Land Trust: Update on Bauneg Beg Mountain Project

Dwayne said that he has been working on the application with the Land Trust. He stated that they had talked in past years, that if we ever had the opportunity to get access to this site, we would like to try to get a radio tower for our town. Dwayne said that, in order for us to apply for this grant, the land must be in the town's name. Currently, under our zoning, no towers are allowed above 700 feet. We had stated that, if we could ever get access to some land, we would try to put an Ordinance change through. Dwayne said that in order to do anything that is not recreation or conservation, the grant is nearly impossible to be approved.

Dwayne spoke with the grant administrator and explained the situation to him. The administrator told him to designate a section that we would use right now and cut it out of the parcel. The problem is that we have no idea where we would have to put it and we don't have the money to do the radio study that would tell us where we could put it. Dwayne stated that they don't want to put it on the top and have it visible. They would like to put it somewhere that they can keep the structure under the tree line and just have wisp antennas above the tree line.

Selectman Johnson, Sr. asked how much it would save us in communications. Dwayne stated that it would cost us money. It will give us better coverage because right now, the mountain causes an issue. Dwayne stated that they wanted to include the town's parcel of land in the boundary. He is wondering if we should look at utilizing part of our parcel but reserving part of our parcel and hope that we can get a tower within the confines that we suggest. Selectman Hall asked how big of a spot would they need to reserve. Dwayne stated that they would need a right of way and an area of about 100 x 100 for the tower section.

Selectman Johnson, Jr. asked if the tower would just be for North Berwick and Dwayne said that it would be. He said that if we put a Zoning change forward for this than it would stipulate that it would only be for North Berwick. Selectman Johnson, Sr. asked if this would eliminate the need for us to keep switching channels. Dwayne stated that there are a lot of dead spots in our town. He stated that we run 2 different communication systems. We have UHF Communication for Fire and Rescue and our VHF for Police Department. He said that when we signed our agreement with Sanford Dispatch, the Police are allowed to jump on their tower when we get on the back side of the hill and use their channel. Our channel covers the front side of the hill. Sanford's communication tower is right next to the Police Station in downtown Sanford. It looks at our hill, so we get pretty good coverage. Our channel is on the water tower, so it covers that end.

For Fire and Rescue, they utilize two towers. One is on Blueberry Ridge in Acton and the other is on top of the hill in Shapleigh. The mountain creates a shadow so no matter which way we shoot at it, there is a shadow. If Fire and Rescue is driving on Valley Road, they can't hear anything. They get around this by utilizing the Police Department.

The Board of Selectmen agreed that we should reserve a space for a possible communication tower in the future. Dwayne will discuss it with the Land Trust and with Jeff to try and figure out where the best spot might be.

Reminders: **Next Board of Selectmen's Meeting** – April 20, 2021 – 6:30 pm
 Budget Committee Meeting – April 7, 2021 – 6:30 pm – Comm. Center
 Budget Committee Meeting – April 14, 2021 – 6:30 pm – Comm. Center

5. New Business:

A. State Valuation: Review State Valuation for 2021/Effect on Town Valuations

Dwayne stated that we went up 5% on our State values and we lost 1% so we are certified this year at 90%. He stated that if we are 91% or higher, we can claim 100% valuation. At 90% we can claim 99% valuation. This means that our Homestead Exemptions would have to be reduced by 1%. We would only get 99% of our funding. Dwayne said that one of his biggest concerns was how it was going to affect BETE. He reread the Law and found that State valuation doesn't affect BETE. There used to be a section in the BETE Law that said that it did, but they removed that section back in 2014.

Dwayne stated that he and Craig believe that we need to do another valuation increase. He thinks that this will be the norm from now on. He said that prices went up in York County last year by 17.5%. He said that the prices that houses are selling for in town are phenomenal. Dwayne said that Craig will be running some numbers with a 10% increase across the board. This will include personal, commercial, land and buildings. In theory, Dwayne said that if they raise everyone 10%, the actual tax dollars that you pay should remain the same unless there is an increase in the budget. He still does not know what is going on with the School budget. The Superintendent will be at the May 4th meeting to discuss it.

Dwayne stated that the Town budget will not increase taxation. He said that the State passed their budget and they approved 3.75% on State Revenue Sharing. He budgeted \$174,000 and we will be getting about \$215,000.00. This is an additional \$40,000 buffer. He said that some Republicans and some Democrats agree that State Revenue Sharing needs to go to the State mandated 5% but they will not pass that. They agreed to the 3.75%. Dwayne stated that the State passed what they call a baseline Budget and adjourned. By adjourning, they don't need to get a 2/3 majority. They will come back into session in April for a Supplemental budget. This is where they will discuss how they will spend the money that they are getting from the Federal government. The Economic Forecast Team is supposed to meet either this week or next week to look at the Economic Forecast for the State. Dwayne said that it looks better than what they originally thought. This means that there is a possibility that the towns may get more money.

Dwayne stated that our Quality rating was at an 8 which is great news. Anything under 10 is fantastic. We have been hovering around 7 and 8 for a number of years. He said that for the past couple of years we have done bumps in our valuations. Usually when you do bumps without doing a full valuation your quality rating goes down significantly. What this shows him is that we have great information. We are doing mini bumps and our quality rating is staying the same and not being adjusted one way or another. This also means that we don't have to do a full valuation. Dwayne said that, at this point we would not because it seems like the information we have in our computer system is very good, so it is not necessary. It is easier to just do across the board types of valuations without having to go out and look at everybody's houses.

6. Other Business:

Dwayne showed them the dedication that he wrote for the Town Report. The Board approved it.

7. Review and Approve Warrants and Correspondence:

Warrant:	March 23, 2021	- \$ 17,274.39
Warrant:	March 30, 2021	- \$ 0.00
Warrant:	April 6, 2021	- \$ 126,147.09

Selectman Hall motioned to approve the Warrant of March 23, 2021 for the amount of \$17,274.39 and the Warrant of April 6, 2021 for the amount of \$126,147.09. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0

8. Adjournment:

Selectman Johnson, Sr. motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:58 pm. Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0

Respectively Submitted,
Susan Niehoff, Stenographer

Original to Town Clerk

Chairman: Wendy Cowan

Selectman: Jonathan Hall

Selectman: Michael Johnson, Jr.

Selectman: Charles Galemmo

Selectman: Michael Johnson, Sr.

