

North Berwick Board of Selectmen Minutes April 20, 2021

NORTH BERWICK BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES APRIL 20, 2021

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

Also Present: Dwayne Morin, Kelsey Bilodeau, Pam Brezak

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

1. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Review and Approve Minutes of April 6, 2021

Dwayne Morin stated that the only change he made was adding two 0's to a couple of numbers. Chairman Cowan stated that on page 5, the section that currently reads, "D. Land Trust: Update on Bauneg Bed Mountain Project". It should read, "D. Land Trust: Update on Bauneg Beg Mountain Project".

Selectman Hall motioned to approve the minutes of April 6, 2021 as amended. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

3. Public Input

Pam Brezak stepped forward and stated that she lives on Prospect Street. She is here to discuss some concerns about the canoe launch. She lives one property away from the canoe launch and she would like to talk about how it is being used. She stated that the amount of time that it is actually being used for what they thought it was going to be used for is very small. She stated that it really isn't a spot where they can go anywhere. You paddle about 15 minutes and that is about as far as you can go. She said that the majority of the time it is being used by a group of teenagers. Last year, her and her husband dealt with them by going down and talking to them about being a little bit more neighborly than they were being. They had to go multiple times and have the same conversation again.

Mrs. Brezak stated that this year, when we had the first nice weekend where it was 75 degrees, they were at the house and they could hear the noise starting again. She said that it is a lot of yelling and screaming with a lot of it being some really foul language. She said that it puts a damper on them being able to comfortably use their yard. She said that the teens are also swimming down there. She feels that this is an accident waiting to happen. The last time they were down there, they had a dog with them, and they were dragging it to make it go into the water because the dog didn't want to go in.

Mrs. Brezak stated that another problem is that the kids are leaving trash everywhere. There is a trash can there, but they are not using it. She said that the same day that they were having an

issue with the kids, another neighbor came to talk to them about the trash issue. He said that they were throwing their trash over the fence onto his property which is located along Prospect Street and the Pratt & Whitney driveway. He went down to talk to the kids about their language. He told them that there are young kids around and they shouldn't have to listen to that. He also discussed the trash issue and left the trash he had picked up in his yard with the kids. The kids just left the trash on the ground.

Mrs. Brezak stated that they really don't want to deal with this on a regular basis. She said that she went up to the Bauneg Beg landing to see what they have there regarding signage. There is no signage of any kind at the canoe launch by her property. She would like to have some signage added at the canoe launch and see if that would help a little bit. She stated that the kids are not neighbors, and she has no idea who they are so she can't go talk to their parents about it. Chairman Cowan asked her if she had ever called the local police. Mrs. Brezak said that they have but by the time the police get there, the kids are gone. She stated that she doesn't have a problem calling the police, but she feels if there was signage stating that there was no loitering, littering, or swimming allowed, it would make it a little bit more enforceable. She is hoping that it may stop some of the kids because it will hopefully make them more aware. She said that it is a very secluded area and a great place for kids to hang out and hide. Chairman Cowan said that she finds it disappointing that the space is not being utilized the way it should be. The organization that donated funds to the establishment would never have intended it to be used the way it is being currently used.

Selectman Galemмо asked Dwayne if they were allowed to put some signage up and Dwayne said that they could. He said that the signage that they have at the Bauneg Beg launch was approved by the Town Meeting. He stated that the Board can approve to have signage and the Police can enforce what is on the signs. He did state that if there was a legal battle it will give the Police a little bit more leverage. Dwayne stated that he has asked the Police to provide a little bit more of a presence in that area. He said that as soon as the nice weather started, the kids were all over the downtown area. We have had more vandalism this year than we have had in the last 5 years combined. At the Canal Street playground, they are down there pretty much every Monday cleaning up some paintings and graffiti. The young boys seem to like to draw the male anatomy on a lot of the places and there have been some racial slurs. Mike goes down with paint remover to clean it up. Chairman Cowan asked how long this has been going on. Dwayne said that they have been down there about 4 times in the past month and a half. Selectman Hall asked if there were cameras there. Dwayne said there were none and they couldn't have them there because there is no power.

Selectman Johnson, Sr. asked what the Police can do if they catch the kids doing anything. Dwayne said that they just send them away. If they are caught vandalizing something, then they would be charged. Selectman Johnson, Jr. asked what the fine was for littering. Dwayne said that there is a State fine, but the town does not have a fine for littering. They can put No Littering on a sign, but we have no Ordinance that says no littering. He said that they would be charged a State fine.

Selectman Galemмо motioned to add signs at the Canoe Launch that prohibits loitering, swimming, and littering. Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion.

Selectman Hall asked Mrs. Brezak if she was looking to close down the canoe launch. She said that she understands wanting to open up a canoe launch for people to use the river. However, she said that it has been used about 5 times in the summer. She said that the people who have used it do not usually come back a 2nd time because of things like a beaver dam on the river. She said that people can't go anywhere. Kelsey Bilodeau stated that she used to live on Prospect Street, and she used to walk her dog down there all of the time and it was really nice.

VOTE: 5-0

5. New Business:

A. Farmer's Market: Review Request for Lease Renewal

Dwayne stated that the Selectman have a copy of the lease for the Farmer's Market in their packet. He stated that they would like to utilize the Mill Field again this year. Kelsey Bilodeau stepped forward to discuss the Farmer's Market. She stated the using the Mill Field last year was great. It worked so much better than the setup they had in the parking lot. She stated that their numbers were so much higher than before. She said that they had no problems with any of the vendors with not being able to drive on the field. It has also drawn in more vendors for this year. They had 12 vendors last year and this year it looks like they will have about 17. She said that they had great support from the public as well. Ms. Bilodeau stated that they also had music at times and people would sit out on their blankets and listen to the music.

Selectman Galemme motioned to approve the lease for the Farmer's Market for 2021. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

Ms. Bilodeau stated that she is part of an organization called Tri Town Farmer's Markets. They will be taking over the committee aspect of the market. They have markets in Wells, South Berwick, and Berwick. They pull in a lot of vendors and handle all of the marketing.

4. Unfinished Business:

A. COVID-19:

Dwayne stated that he didn't have too much more to add on this subject. We still have one employee out. She was tested today so he is hoping that it came back negative. He stated that she was very appreciative for allowing the use of the Sick Bank.

B. Linscott Road Intersection: Discussion on Progress

Dwayne stated that all of the trees are cut. They were going to start taking the building down today, but the containers never made it. They are hoping to have the containers tomorrow so they can start taking the house down. They did go ahead and do some stumping where the road will be located. He said that they located the septic tank today so they can go ahead and collapse it then fill it in.

Dwayne stated that once the house is down, the surveyors will come in to set center lines and elevations. He said that right now, the base elevation is the top of the foundation of the house, but this will no longer be there once they are done taking the house down. He said that it will not be a long project in terms of actual number of days. They should be done the whole project by the end of May or beginning of June. He stated that the tree cutting went very well. They came in under budget for it.

C. Budget FY22: Continued discussion on FY22 Budget

Dwayne stated that he is in the middle of the budget with the Budget Committee. He has sped up the Budget process because they miscounted the days. He said that they have to have the absentee ballots done 30 days before. He miscounted by a week, so the Budget Committee has to move along a little quicker to get everything done and approved. The last Budget Committee meeting will be on 4/28. He said that they have been moving along pretty quickly so far. They should be done in 2 more meetings.

Dwayne stated that the budget has changed a little bit. They found a \$10,000 error that was to our credit. They have fixed this. There were a couple other things that bumped it up a little bit by about \$7,500. He said that they are getting into the big budgets tomorrow. They are reviewing Fire, Transfer Station and Public Works. Next week will be Police and Parks and Rec. Chairman Cowan asked how the process had been working out so far. Dwayne said that it was working out fine. He did say that it is a little bit harder because they are so spread out at the Community Center. He also stated that the acoustics are not great there so he has had to remove his mask to talk sometimes because he was told that they couldn't hear him. He said that it is also different because the budget is 1 question, so they have to move the question. Then they have to table the discussion every meeting because they are not making a final decision on it until the end. He stated that they will be done on the 28th because the ballots are going to be printed on the 29th because they need to be available on May 1st.

Dwayne stated that he included the School Budget questions in their packet. Their budget is up by about \$1,000,000. He said that the majority of that is the town money, so he is anticipating a large increase again this year. He has asked them for a breakdown of the assessments and also a copy of the budget, but he has not received them yet. The Superintendent will be at the next meeting to review the budget with the Board. He stated that the School Budget, Nutrition Budget, and Adult ED Budget are all up significantly. The overall budget is about \$905,000 over last year. We pay about a third of that so our portion would be about \$300,000 to the town.

Selectman Hall asked if any money would come from the Federal bill. Dwayne said that the school is supposed to be getting direct Federal money. He doesn't know what that is and how they can utilize it. He doesn't know if they will use it to help reduce the tax burden on the towns. He does not know how much they are getting and what they can use it for. Chairman Cowan said that this would be a good question to ask the Superintendent. Dwayne said that they still have not come out with the guidelines on how the town can spend their federal funds.

Dwayne stated that all of this would be an increase of about \$.36 to the mil rate. Dwayne said that they will be able to offset about \$50,000 so it would bring the increase to the mil rate to about \$.28.

D. Land Trust: Update on Bauneg Beg Mountain Project

Dwayne stated that the last time the Board talked about the Land Trust, there was some concern about communications and how we could handle communications. He did have the opportunity to have a very long meeting with our communication consultant. He told Dwayne that if we don't put a tower on the top of the mountain, we will be spending a lot of money and end up without the service that we are looking for. It would cost about a half million dollars and we would not be happy with the service we would get. He told Dwayne that the best thing to do is to have something on top of the mountain. Dwayne told him that there will never be a tower on the top of that mountain.

Dwayne asked him for some other options to improve our communications. He provided Dwayne with a short-term plan and a long-term plan. The short-term plan is to change the way that we are currently doing our dispatch for our Fire and Rescue in our town. It would be a project that would cost between \$12,000 to \$15,000 to complete. The consultant said that he would take one of the 7 frequencies that we have broadcasting off of the Fire Station and move it to the water tower. The only antenna that is currently on the water tower is for the Fire and Rescue's beepers. All it does is send out a tone. It doesn't really help for voice. Our voice is still coming from Acton and Shapleigh. This creates shadows in our town and has areas where there are no communications. By putting something on the water tower, we will have coverage from the front side of the mountain as well as the back side which will improve our communications. He said that we would see a noticeable difference in communications. The consultant told him that it would involve 2 antennas. One is a repeater antenna, and one is a direct antenna. The direct antenna would actually point right at Sanford.

The consultant stated that the better solution would be to put up a tower at the water tower. The top of the water tower does not have a lot of room right now for 4 antennas. By adding more antennas, they start to interfere with each other. Another medium-term goal would be to add a 100-foot tower adjacent to the water tower. They would just run a pipe up and put all of our antennas at the top of it. This would give us better coverage for our Police as well as for Fire and Rescue. Chairman Cowan asked if this would allow us to have coverage on both sides. Dwayne stated that we are always going to have issues because of the mountain. Unless we put something on top of the mountain, we will always have spots where we can't hear. The consultant told him that this option would give us a better communication system for not a lot of money. Chairman Cowan asked about how much this would cost. Dwayne said that they didn't discuss the cost, but he is guessing that a 100-foot tower would cost between \$150,000 to \$200,000.

Dwayne stated that we already have the communications building which we will hopefully be adding a generator to in the spring. He said that they need to get a specific switch for the generator. When the power goes off the generator gets a signal, and the generator has an automatic switch. We need to have something that states that the automatic switch is delayed for

a couple of seconds because when they have a shot of power, it will blow out the radios. The switch will gradually turn the power back on instead of a having an immediate quick turn on.

Dwayne said that the short-term option would be a 2-year process. We would have to get licensing to move our channel up to the water tower. This can sometimes be challenging with the government. He said that we are allowed to broadcast at 100 watts here. When we move it up to the water tower, they are not going to allow us to transfer at 100 watts because it will interfere with whoever else is sharing our channel. He said that the directional antenna is the key and is aimed directly at Sanford.

The long-term option that the consultant mentioned is to build an observation center on top of the mountain. The consultant said that it has been done before. There is one on Mt. Agamenticus. Because we are going after a Federal grant, the primary purpose is recreation. We would have an observation deck and put the batteries underneath the deck. We would put a roof on top of it and add 2 antennas on top of the roof. We would run everything on solar power with the solar panels located on the roof. It would address several purposes. It acts as a recreational purpose. It will act as a new communication base. Also, if we do it right, it can act as a handicapped accessibility issue. If we can fix the trail up so we can get vehicles that could get people close to the top of the mountain, it would give handicapped people more access. Dwayne said that this is a long-term solution because you have to get your materials to the top of the mountain. Chairman Cowan asked if there were grants available for a project like this. Dwayne said there might be, but he would have to check on that. The only thing that the consultant worried about with our communication equipment is vandalism. We would have to make sure that the antennas are high enough where nobody could vandalize them. The Board agreed that this sounds like it would be a great idea. Dwayne said that he mentioned it to the Land Trust today and they said it was an interesting idea.

Dwayne said that on page 10 of their packet is a draft MOU between the Land Trust and the Town on how we are going to handle this project for the Bauneg Beg Mountain Recreational Area. It describes that we are going to be partners in the acquisition and development of the south peak of Bauneg Beg Mountain. It describes where the south peak is, what we are looking to obtain and what we already own. It states that we are going to utilize the lands as conservation land and recreation and conservational purposes. It also states that the Land Trust will raise funds for the acquisition and development of the area. The Town will serve as applicant for funding mechanism through the LWCF Act Fund. We will fulfill all of the requirements that are required. We are going to vote on a \$100,000 allotment for the project. It also states that the Town will hold the title to the land and the Trust will assist us in the stewardship of the land. The Trust will forward expense invoices and funds to the Town and the Town will pay.

Selectman Galemme motioned to approve the MOU between the Town and Great Works Regional Land Trust. Selectman Hall seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

Reminders: **Next Board of Selectmen's Meeting** – May 4, 2021- 6:30 pm
Budget Committee Meeting – April 21, 2021 – 6:30 pm – Comm. Center
Budget Committee Meeting – April 28, 2021 – 6:30 pm – Comm. Center

5. New Business:

B. Election: Request to Purchase Absentee Ballot Box

Dwayne stated that Chris would like permission to purchase a new ballot box. They had started talking about this last year because they had to move the big wooden box a lot. The one that they are looking to purchase is a stand-alone box that is secure. They are looking at putting it in the old entry way that is right underneath the Police window. It would be bolted right to the granite and people could just drive up and put their ballots in. They are going to look into installing a camera in that area. He said that they currently have the money in the budget right now. We have just under \$5,000 in our election budget right now primarily because we got a grant at the last election which covered the majority of our costs for that election. The cost of the ballot box that they would like to purchase is \$2,354.95. He stated that we have one more election that will cost about \$1,500 to run. This will be shared by the school because we are voting on their budget too so we will split the cost. Our cost will be \$750. Dwayne stated that they can still use the wooden box for anyone that would like to walk in and deposit their ballot.

Selectman Galemмо motioned to approve the purchase of the M710 Ballot Box. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

C. Personnel Policy: Request to Bring Vacation Forward

Dwayne stated that because of COVID a lot of employees have not been taking their vacation. Per the policy, Dwayne can allow them to carry 1 week forward and the Board of Selectmen can allow them to bring a 2nd week forward. He said that he thinks that most of our employees will have additional vacation this year due to the pandemic. He is wondering if it would be a good idea to have a blanket approval to allow employees to bring 2 weeks forward. It would be for this year only.

Selectman Galemмо motioned to allow for employees to bring 2 weeks forward of vacation time as approved by the Town Manager for this year only due to the pandemic. Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

6. Other Business:

There was no other business at this time.

7. Review and Approve Warrants and Correspondence:

Warrant:	April 13, 2021	- \$ 13,817.31
Warrant:	April 20, 2021	- \$ 705,512.53

Selectman Galemмо motioned to approve the Warrant of April 13, 2021 for the amount of \$13,817.31 and the Warrant of April 20, 2021 for the amount of \$705,512.53. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

8. Adjournment:

Selectman Galemmo motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 pm. Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

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.