

North Berwick Board of Selectmen Minutes September 7, 2021

**NORTH BERWICK BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 7, 2021**

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

Also Present: Dwayne Morin, Trish Lara

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

1. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Review and Approve Minutes of August 17, 2021

Dwayne Morin stated that he changed the word “ARC” to “ARPA” throughout the minutes.

Selectman Cowan stated that on page 6, the 1st sentence in the last paragraph currently reads, “...they had any comments or suggests...”. It should read, “...they had any comments or suggestions...”. Selectman Johnson, Sr. stated that on page 7, the 1st sentence in the 2nd paragraph currently reads, “Selectman Hall asked Chief Peasley how much many of the 34 people...”. It should read, “Selectman Hall asked Chief Peasley how many of the 34 people...”. Selectman Hall stated that on page 6, the last sentence of the 2nd paragraph currently reads, “Selectman Hall thinks that they only way they can...”. It should read, “Selectman Hall thinks that the only way they can...”.

Selectman Hall motioned to approve the minutes of August 17, 2021 as amended. Selectman Cowan seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

3. Public Input

There was no public input at this time.

4. Unfinished Business:

A. COVID-19:

Dwayne stated that earlier this summer, the Board had said they would revisit a couple of things again in September. One is the rental of the Community Center and the other is the hours for the Town Hall. Selectman Hall asked if the staff in the office wanted to continue the hours they have now and not go back to night hours. Dwayne said that if they had a choice than that is what they would want. Selectman Johnson, Jr. asked if there had been any complaints about not having the evening hours. Dwayne said that he had only had 1 complaint. He said it was not a formal complaint. He had seen someone outside one Thursday night when he was leaving, and

they asked why the office wasn't open. Selectman Cowan said that just having that one complaint really doesn't justify reopening at night. She stated that it seems to be working well. Dwayne said that doing more online stuff has definitely helped. He said that our online auto registrations are about 500 times more now than they were at pre-COVID. We used to average about \$4,000 to \$6,000 a month on auto registrations. We are now averaging about \$30,000 per month.

Dwayne said that he is starting to look into being able to do online property tax payments. Our current credit card provider offers it, but it is very clunky. He said that more people would be frustrated if we used that program. He said that the State has one that they use that is almost like what we use for our car registrations. He is investigating this to find out what the costs of it are. He said that the costs are not borne by the town. They are borne by the people who are registering the car or pays the taxes. It is a 3% charge so it would be a pretty hefty payment for someone paying a large tax bill. He is looking to see what the State does because they offer it for water, utility billing and taxes.

Selectman Cowan asked if he knew how other towns handled their tax payments. Dwayne said that most small towns don't offer online payments, but most large towns do. Most of the towns are using the State program. Portland has their own, but they have their own IT Department. Selectman Cowan said that it is worth looking into so we can accommodate people especially during the COVID times. Dwayne said that they used to tell people to mail in their checks and we used the postmark for the date of payment. However, people are hardly using checks anymore.

Dwayne stated that he recently spoke with South Berwick about how it is working because they started using it a couple of years ago. He wanted to see what the burden was on the staff. He said that when he talked to our current card company, they indicated that it would be a significant burden because of the way their system works. When he asked South Berwick about it, they said that they go in every day and get a report. They treat it like they received a check that day and that is how they enter it in their computer. He said that TRIO doesn't tie to an online program. He said that the motor vehicle registration does because TRIO built the program for the State, so we just hit a button and it automatically dumps it into our system and does all of our accounting. With property taxes, it doesn't work that way because every town is different.

Dwayne said that, in terms of the Community Center, his recommendation would be to not start renting it out again because of the Delta variant. He thinks that they should revisit it again in a couple of months. The Board of Selectmen agreed with him.

Dwayne said that they have been working toward the ARPA funding. We are going to receive just under \$500,000. We need to look into how we are going to expend those funds. He is in the process of doing our first draw down and it is a long drawn-out process. He told the Board that starting on page 13 of their packet is a list of categories that we can spend the funds on. Most of it are things that we would not typically spend money on.

Dwayne said that they had spoken at previous meetings about hazard pay for employees. He found out that hazard pay is allowed but we are not allowed to give hazard pay out that is going

to increase anybody's salary above 150% of the median income of our County. The median income for us is about \$52,000 and most of our employees are making more than the median income. When you add on the percentage, it brings it up to \$72,000 and most of the employees are near that level. There will be some opportunities for some employees to receive the funds. His concern is if they do for some and not for all. He said that some Managers have put in a request to talk about this because it says that you can go over if you give a reason. However, they don't give what an acceptable reason would be. He is still looking into this and will let the Board know when he gets a little more clarity on it.

Dwayne stated that one project that he thought they may want to consider is something they had talked about a few times in the past. He said that we have a few dead spots in the town for communication. They had talked about a 2-prong approach to fixing the issue. The immediate one that we are going to start budgeting for next year was to do some improvements at the water tower. Instead of repeating a tone on the water tower we would actually repeat voices. This would be a process. We would have to get our license changed, change the antenna on the water tower and also add to our communications shed. This would be something that would fall under the ARPA funding. This would cost about \$12,000 to \$15,000. Selectman Johnson, Jr. asked about the antenna on Bauneg Beg Mountain. Dwayne said that we do not own Bauneg Beg Mountain yet and we don't know when we may own it, so he is thinking about a short term solution. By short term, he said that it would be a 5 to 10 year solution. Dwayne said that the other thing that they talked about doing was putting up some standby power up on our shed. They could roll it all together in one package so the numbers would be more around a \$25,000 project. He said that it is a small chunk of money from what we are getting but it would create coverage for our rescue responders who are the primary COVID responders within our community. It falls under the infrastructure for providing health care and emergency services.

He stated that there are a couple of antennas that are in very poor condition and the County will use some of their funds to fix it up. It actually solves a problem for them because they need to move one of their antennas. They are going to buy the Blueberry Ridge property and install a new antenna. They will move the Sheriff from Mt. Hope to Blueberry Ridge. The Sheriff is already on Hosac in Limerick, and they are going to fix that one up so they can get better coverage on Hosac as well. The County will designate a significant amount of money to do all of this. Selectman Cowan asked if it was going to free up some space for us. Dwayne said that it does, and it will actually enhance the communications itself. He said that it will save us a little bit of money in yearly costs because we currently maintain those. They will take over the costs of maintaining Blueberry Ridge which costs about \$4,000 per year which is shared amongst the 5 communities. We will end up sharing about \$750.00.

Dwayne stated that starting on page 13 in their packet, is a list of the different categories that they are allowing us to expend the money on. The concentration was on clean water, sewer and broadband. He said that broadband is not an issue here. He will reach out to the Water and Sewer Districts to see if we could partner with them on a project. Selectman Cowan said that society is trying to encourage more people to use electric vehicles and a lot of towns are starting to put in some electric charging stations. She asked if the funds could be used for putting some in town. Dwayne said that that does not fall under COVID so it would not be covered under the guidelines.

Selectman Johnson, Jr. asked if they could use it for the Food Pantry or Fuel Assistance fund. Dwayne said that it is an acceptable use to assist low and moderate income families. He said that he is not sure how it would work because our Fuel Fund is pretty well funded. He is not sure about the funding of Food Pantries, but he can look into it.

Dwayne said that he would like the Selectmen to review the list of categories and try to think of things that they might want to do with the funds. He said that by the end of this month or beginning of next month, we should have our first round of funding received. He said that he is setting up a separate bank account to put the funds in until they need to use it.

Selectman Hall said that under Category 3, it allows us to make direct payments to citizens. He stated that there were a lot of kids that didn't go to school and parents had to find childcare. He asked the Board if they might be interested in making payments to families that had to scramble and find childcare during this time. Selectman Johnson, Jr. said that they would have to have income requirements. Dwayne said that they can look at doing that. He said that they can also look at giving funds to other professions or businesses within our community that may have been affected. Selectman Hall asked if we had any licensed healthcare facilities within our community. Dwayne said that there currently are none. Selectman Hall asked if there were any early learning facilities other than the school. Dwayne said he didn't believe there were no big ones or preschool type of businesses. Dwayne stated that a lot of these categories are written for large governments. He said that it was really put together for County governments. Selectman Hall asked about the nursing home in town. Dwayne said that he is not sure how it works for Senior Housing. He said there is a lot of stress on Affordable Housing.

Dwayne said that if we do not use the money, it goes back to the State. He would rather use it for something instead of giving it back. Selectman Cowan asked what the time frame was to spend the money. Dwayne said that they have 4 years to expend it. He said that there is a national website that the CDC is doing. Every town that funds an idea has to state what they are spending the money on and enter it gets entered into the database. He said that he will check to see what other towns are doing for projects.

B. Linscott Road Intersection: Discussion on Progress

Dwayne said that they are 100% done with the project. He is just waiting for the final bills on all of the projects. He said that one thing that set them back a little bit was with the detectable warning pads. He said that when they installed them, they thought they had done it correctly, but they didn't. They had to redo all of those last week. There is a much larger area where the sidewalks meet the road. They thought that aligning the pads with the crosswalk would be the appropriate thing to do but that is not what the Law says. The Law states that the detectable warning system must be within 4 inches of the curbing and 4 inches on the outside of the sidewalk.

C. Town Signs: Discussion on Replacing Entrance Signs

Dwayne said that he received an estimate from Madhatter Graphics for the signs. He will do all 4 signs for \$800.00, and it includes installation and brackets. The granite posts are \$2,856.00, the cost for the Gold Finials are \$320.00 and Dwayne added a contingency fee of \$300.00. The total cost of the project would be \$4,276.00. Dwayne asked the Board if there was a final decision regarding the gold Finials because there had been some mixed discussion about it at the previous meeting. Selectman Cowan said that the current signs have them. She asked the other Selectman if they were just opposed to the gold color or were they opposed to having any Finials on the signs. Dwayne said that they could always get those at some other time if they still could not decide. Chairman Galemmo said that the gold one with the maroon posts looked okay, but he doesn't like the look of them on granite. Dwayne said that they can send him some ideas. He will at least authorize for the signs to be done and order the granite posts.

Selectman Hall motioned to approve the signs at a cost of \$800.00, granite posts at a cost of \$2,856.00 and a contingency cost of \$300.00 with a decision about the Gold Finials to be determined at a later date. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

D. MSAD 60: State Subsidy Increase – Building Projects

Dwayne said that he and Chairman Galemmo attended the meeting and gave the State Subsidy letter to the SAD 60 as the Board had previously discussed.

E. Downtown: Continued Discussion

Dwayne said that the Board had asked him to put together a rough estimate for the cost of a Teen Center. He did make some assumptions about some of the costs. Selectman Johnson, Jr. stated that he thinks the cost of \$1,000.00 was a little high. Dwayne said that he spoke with someone and asked what rents were going for in downtown and he was told that it was between \$750.00 to \$1,200.00. He also asked if there were any storefronts currently available and they told him that there were none.

Dwayne said that some of the other estimates were about \$500.00 a month for Utilities which includes heat and electricity and Wi-Fi for about \$150.00 per month. He came up with what it would cost to pay employees. He based it on 12 weeks for 8 hours per day with times of 10:00 am to 6:00 pm at a pay rate of \$20.00 per hour for a total of about \$11,520.00. The cost for Workers Compensation, FICA and Unemployment would add another \$1,500.00. He also did an estimate of what it might cost to keep it open for the rest of the year. He based it on 4 hours per day, Monday through Friday, and 8 hours on Saturday. It would add about another \$25,000.00 to the costs.

He put together a list of equipment and approximate costs. They would need a couple TV's, some Video Game Consoles, some game tables and some board games. This would cost about \$5,500.00 to \$6,000.00. They will also need some furniture such as couches, chairs, tables, and desks. The estimate for this is about \$4,000.00. The total yearly estimate for 12 weeks would be

about \$45,000.00 and it would be about \$70,400.00 for the whole year. Dwayne stated that this is about half of what our Parks and Rec budget is.

Dwayne said that since the last meeting about 3 weeks ago, things have been very quiet. The day after the last Board of Selectmen meeting, the Police arrested 2 additional people. They were charged with terrorizing. There were a total of 4 people arrested. Since that time, we have had no teenagers in town. Dwayne said that they were all from out of town. One was from Somersworth and the other 3 were from Berwick.

Selectman Cowan said that it does seem to be a cyclical problem. That is why she is concerned with the idea of the Teen Center. It is an altruistic idea, but she is concerned to committing to something on an annual basis at a cost of \$45,000 to \$70,000 especially with what the School is proposing. She is worried about the additional cost to the taxpayers. Dwayne said that he has had some conversations with some parents and some taxpayers, and some people think it would be a great idea. However, most people think that if we do it, nobody will come. This statement was made by a lot of people that are parents of teenagers. They said that they won't come because they don't want to be supervised.

Chairman Galemmo said that he thinks that it would be good if they did something for that age group. Dwayne said that he thinks that they should survey the kids and ask them what they would like to have. Selectman Hall said that he has a 12-year-old girl, and he doesn't believe that she would have an issue with the supervision because it wouldn't be her parents. However, he can easily see a 14 year old not wanting any supervision and not coming to the Center. He thinks that for some kids, it would be meaningful and impactful for them, but some kids are not going to use it. Selectman Hall said that he is fine with tabling this project for a couple of years or so until we grow a little bit more as a town. He doesn't think that we are at the point where we have enough kids to expend this amount of money as a town. He can see it happening in the next 5 years. He believes that this was an issue that primarily driven by COVID. They should wait until our population grows more and decide what to do then.

Chairman Galemmo said that it wouldn't hurt us to do some focus groups with some local kids and find out what interests them. He stated that they don't even know how many kids within the age group that they are talking about live in town. Dwayne said that they can get an idea from the school numbers, and he thinks that they could provide us with a breakdown. Selectman Cowan asked how they would go about doing focus groups. Dwayne said that they could have a Public Forum. Selectman Cowan still believes that they should try to include the school and maybe they can solicit some feedback. She asked Selectman Hall if they had advisory groups at the school. Selectman Hall said that they have team rooms or home rooms. Dwayne said that they don't need Juniors and Seniors. It would be mostly the 7th, 8th, and 9th grades. Chairman Galemmo said that they are looking to do something for the North Berwick kids, but he doesn't think it would be a problem to survey all of the kids from all 3 towns. He is sure that most of them probably want the same type of things. He believes that they could do a more general survey and hopefully the school would allow it. Selectman Hall said that he can do it for the kids on his team. There are about 80 of them so that would give them a pretty good idea of their interests.

Dwayne stated that he also has some information about the costs for skateboard parks. The cost is about \$45.00 per square foot. Selectman Cowan asked if they could use the funds towards this kind of project because it is providing something for the youth in the community. Dwayne said he doesn't know how they would tie it in to being COVID related. He said that he will look into it. Selectman Cowan stated that they should talk to the School and try and get some cooperation from them. She said that skateboarding is very popular and is even an Olympic sport. Maybe if there is enough interest, the schools could provide transportation for the kids to go to the park. Selectman Hall said that he thinks that it would be a good idea to have a tri-town meeting again. This is something they can discuss with them and see if they are willing to contribute some COVID funds if it is something that is allowed to use the funds on.

Selectman Hall stated that he would check with the principal in the morning and see if it would be okay for him to survey his team. If it is, he will put one together.

F. Liquor Laws: Updated Information from BABLO

Dwayne said that the State told him back in April that our Liquor Law were all wrong. There was a piece of legislation at the end of the last session that was introduced and passed. It stated that any vote that had been taken prior to 1977 would be honored in its entirety. That didn't help us because our vote was done in 1996 after that vote was taken and passed. Dwayne sent out an email about 4 months ago to the head of BABLO, which is the Bureau of Alcoholic and Lottery and he just heard back from him on Friday. They have decided that they are going to honor our 1996 vote as to the language of the question but not how we have been functioning.

In 1996, the question was brought before the town. Virginia Meehan bought the property where Johnson's Restaurant is currently located. She wanted to open a restaurant and she was able to sell hard liquor but not beer and wine. They went to the person that was in charge of the Bureau at the time and asked what they needed to do to allow her to sell beer. He provided them with a question that we needed to ask and that is what we presented to the voters. The question asked, "Shall restaurants, clubs and hotels be allowed to sell beer and wine for on premise consumption?". It was passed in 1996. Dwayne said that his understanding was that if you were a restaurant, then it would cover all restaurants. However, the State is saying "No" because there are 2 classifications of restaurants. There is Restaurants and there are Class A Restaurants. If it said Restaurants, it would apply only to Restaurants and if they are Class A Restaurants, they will apply only to Class A Restaurants. They will honor our vote, but they will only honor it for Restaurants. Selectman Johnson, Jr. asked what the difference was. Dwayne said that a Class A Restaurant is allowed to sell hard liquor, wine and beer and a Restaurant is only allowed to serve wine and beer. Selectman Johnson, Sr. asked what the difference was between classifying as a regular restaurant and a Class A restaurant. Dwayne said that a Class A Restaurant is basically where you go for a full course meal and a Restaurant is like a McDonalds.

Dwayne said that they have provided us 3 paths that can be taken to help resolve the issue to help Johnson's Restaurant out. The first one is that the Town does nothing and if we do nothing then Johnson's loses their liquor license. The second option is that the Town can revote on it, and we would need to do it prior to July 1, 2022 for Johnsons to continue to maintain their liquor license. The third option is that Johnsons can change their license from a Class A Restaurant to just a

Restaurant class which would mean that they couldn't serve hard liquor anymore. He had a very long conversation with the owners, and they are very concerned that the loss of their liquor license will mean the end of their business. The owners said that it is not a matter of people going to the restaurant just to get the alcohol, but people would just go and dine somewhere else. Chairman Galemmo stated that alcohol is a very high profit.

Selectman Cowan asked what the issue was with just revoting. Dwayne stated that prior to 1977, you were able to limit the Class in which you were going to allow alcohol to be served. There is no such thing anymore. You either allow alcohol to be served or you don't allow alcohol to be served. If we were to revote for this town, we would ask 2 questions. One would be, "Shall alcohol be served on premise?" and the other would be, "Shall alcohol be served on Sundays?". There would be no distinguishing between hard liquor, beer, or wine anymore. It would be all or none. If we vote to allow it, then it will allow for every type of establishment to open and sell liquor as long as we didn't restrict it zoning wise. The State just says to restrict it by zoning but that is easier said than done.

Dwayne stated that we have certain zoning in place right now that would prohibit bars in certain areas of our town. The downtown area does allow bars to be located there. Bars have been allowed in town according to our Zoning Ordinance, but they haven't been allowed according to our Liquor Ordinance. Chairman Galemmo asked what areas would bars be allowed in per our Zoning Ordinance? Dwayne said that Drinking Establishments are currently allowed in the Commercial and Industrial District. The Eating and Drinking Establishments are currently allowed in the Village Center and Commercial District. Dwayne pulled up the Zoning Districts on the computer to show the Selectmen what areas it would be allowed in. Selectman Cowan said that she was relieved to see that it was a much smaller area than she thought it might be. She is concerned about losing a place like Johnsons. Dwayne said that they are definitely an asset to the town.

Chairman Galemmo asked if we could add limits for things like the distance from a school or church. Dwayne said that they could add restrictions, but it would be a Zoning change. Dwayne said that they are currently restricting Medical Marijuana businesses right now for those type of limitations. Selectman Cowan stated that they have already set a precedent with this so it would be easy to do with liquor limitations. Selectman Cowan said that they should probably hold a Public Forum on this to get some feedback from the people. Chairman Galemmo said that if they put a question before the voters that limits drinking establishments so many feet away from a park or school, they are going to vote in favor of it.

Selectman Cowan motioned to do a revote with the following questions, "Shall alcohol be served on premise?" and "Shall alcohol be served on Sundays?". The motion also proposes to encourage the Planning Board to look into making a Zoning change. Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

Reminders: Next Board of Selectmen's Meeting – September 21, 2021 – 6:30 pm

5. New Business:

A. MSAD 60: Building Project Referendum

Dwayne said that he attended the Public Hearing that the School Board held, and he was quite dismayed. He was even more dismayed when he saw the question that is going before the voters of the 3 communities. He said that they are looking to do 3 building projects. They are looking to remove one school and create a new school in Lebanon which is estimated to cost about \$26 million. They are looking to do an addition to the Hussey School on Berwick at a cost of \$13 million and an addition to the North Berwick Elementary at a cost of \$17 million. The total project cost for the 3 is about \$57.5 million. There is also an estimate for the interest on the projects for an additional \$13 million for a grand total of \$70,675,000.

Dwayne said that when we do a bonding or when the State does a bonding, we have to state what the proposed interest is going to be. It is a matter of transparency that we need to bring to the voters. School departments do not have to do that. Dwayne said that the question before the voters will be, "Shall the School District raise \$57 million for the school project?". They need \$70 million not \$57 million. Selectman Cowan asked if he had brought it to their attention. Dwayne said that he brought it to the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and Business Director. They sent him their attorney's legal opinion and it says that they don't have to do that.

Dwayne said that this will be a completely locally funded project with no help from the State. This means that all 3 towns are on the hook for the \$70 million. On page 39 of their packet, Dwayne did a breakdown for the town of the affect on our tax bills. In year 1, if everything stays the same and we just add the school costs, it will add \$122.00 per year to the tax bill. In year 2, it will add \$475.00 to the tax bill. It will be about \$475.00 increase in the tax bill for the next 20 years. Chairman Galemмо asked why they are not doing a 30-year loan. Dwayne said that they can't because the statute limits them to 20 years.

Dwayne asked the Board if this is something that they want to be involved in? Do they want to take a stance on it? Selectman Hall stated that he will abstain from any position that the Board takes. Selectman Cowan said that, as a former educator, she has always supported school budgets and any proposal that will improve education or facilities. She stated that in looking at how this is being done, it puts her in a quandary because she feels that education is one of the best investments in society. She feels that this is very poorly done. She thinks it is deceptive to not tell taxpayers that they are in fact obligated to an additional amount. Looking at the impact on taxpayers during an already stressful period of time is unconscionable and it is very poorly done.

Chairman Galemмо said that Hanson Elementary definitely needs to be replaced. Dwayne said that as far as their plans for the sites, they are not extravagant, and he knows that building costs are high. There were 3 key things that they pointed to that are their selling points. The first one is that there are no ADA bathrooms. The other thing is that the State is going to require them to have Pre-K and none of the facilities can hold it. Dwayne's argument for that is if the State tells us that we have to have Pre-K then the State has to pay for it. The other thing was special places for the kids for additional learning opportunities and outdoor classroom opportunities.

Selectman Cowan stated that no one is philosophically opposed to those things. To her, that is not the issue. The issue is the impact on taxpayers by combining all of these projects which she doesn't feel that they need to be combined. She feels that Hussey and North Berwick Elementary Schools could probably be put off for a year or two.

Selectman Hall stated that, right now, we are debt free as a District. If we were to build the Hanson School, we wouldn't be debt free and then we would be eligible for State Funding for the other 2 projects. He feels that this would be the way that they should do it. Dwayne does agree and feels that more review has to be done on how to finance these projects.

Dwayne stated that the Board can do a few things. The Board can let the School Board know about their concerns. He stated that it is going to go to vote the way that they presented it to raise \$57 million and not the \$70 million. Selectman Johnson, Sr. said that they should at least let the North Berwick residents what is going on. Dwayne said that there were only 8 people at the Public Hearing that he attended. He said that they were appalled. They were not against the projects, but they were against the funding mechanism. Dwayne said that when he puts the Newsletter out, they can stress the Board's position. Chairman Galemme said that they should do a letter to the School Board stating their concern and that they feel that it might be wiser to break them up. Dwayne said that it can't be changed at this point. Chairman Galemme said that they don't need to take a position for or against, but they can make sure that everyone knows what the deal is. Selectman Cowan thinks that the best thing to do is for Dwayne to put out a newsletter devoted to this topic and just lay out the information for people to see. He could also incorporate into it that the Board has concerns but they do fully approve and agree that the Hanson project is the top priority.

B. General Assistance: Establish Public Hearing on Ordinance Updates

Dwayne said that they need to establish a Public Hearing date for the General Assistance. He is recommending that they do it the first meeting in October. This will allow him time to advertise it. He said that there have been some significant changes to General Assistance in terms of money. He said that the overall assistance for 1 person is going from \$918.00 to \$1016.00. There are also big increases in rents. A 1-bedroom unheated apartment is going from \$785.00 to \$863.00. A 1-bedroom heated apartment is going from \$897.00 to \$968.00. The other big increase was in food and went up about \$50.00 per month.

Selectman Hall motioned to hold a Public Hearing for General Assistance to establish Ordinance update to be held at 6:35 pm on October 5, 2021. Selectman Cowan seconded the motion.
VOTE: 5-0

C. Fuel Fund: Updated Income Levels

Dwayne said that they have updated the Fuel Fund. There was a change in the poverty levels, so we increased our Fuel Fund levels to reflect that increase. We allow up to 125% of poverty level hoping that people will take advantage of it. We have about \$25,000 in that account.

D. Maine PERS: Update on Rulemaking

Dwayne said that Maine PERS will be holding a meeting on Thursday night, and they will be making a significant change to the PLD Maine PERS. Maine PERS is the retirement plan for our employees. The way Maine PERS has functioned is that when you get hired into a position that offers Maine PERS, you have 30 days to make a decision if you want retirement or not. If you make a decision to not take it, you can never join Maine PERS at a later date. Dwayne says that it is foolish, and he has spoken to them about it. He said that their idea is that it is not fair to other employees. He said that it is a fixed finance retirement, so it doesn't make a difference if they join in year 1 or year 2, they still need to put in the money to get the retirement. It is self-funded. They are going to make change the ruling to allow an employee to have 5 years to make a decision. Every year, there will be an open enrollment to join. They will also a 1-time exception to join after 5 years and only 1 time.

Dwayne said that if they vote to do this, we have to vote to amend our PLD charter to allow that to happen. If they approve it this week, then the Board will have to vote at the subsequent meeting because the time frames are very short. They are only allowing it for the month of November.

E. Public Works: Wage Increase Discussions

Dwayne said that they found someone for Public Works and are going to be making him an offer tomorrow. During this interview process, he looked at what we are paying for our Public Works employees. We currently pay our Public Works employees \$24.00 per hour. Most people that he has talked to that work in the field have told him that they won't apply because we don't pay \$25.00 per hour. He said that the person that they are looking to hire wants \$25.00 per hour. Selectman Cowan said to give it to him. However, Dwayne said he can't do that when the other employees are not getting \$25.00 per hour.

Dwayne would like the Board to consider 2 things. If we increase the wages for our employees from \$24.00 to \$26.00, the total cost to the town this budget season would be \$3,940.00. If we increase it by \$1.00, we still have a surplus of money we would still have \$2,830.00 in surplus in the budget. He stated that if we do increase Highway then we also need to increase Transfer Station because they are tied together. It would be the Transfer Manager only. The other employees have already been increased. They would bring up the Highway Foreman from \$31.50 to \$32.50 and the Highway Department employees from \$24.00 to \$26.00. It would be an increase of \$3940.00 for Highway and \$4,160.00 for the Transfer Station.

Selectman Cowan motioned to increase the wages by \$2.00 per hour for Public Works and Transfer Station Supervisor.

Selectman Hall asked what the cost would be if they bumped everyone up \$2.00 in those departments. He feels that they have significantly increased the Police Department and have had a pretty good increase here, but these 2 departments have not had any significant wage increases in a while. Dwayne said that it would be about a \$6,000.00 increase for Highway, and it would be about a \$8,000.00 for a total of about \$14,000.00. Selectman Cowan stated that they could

give part timers a \$1.00 increase instead of a \$2.00 increase. Dwayne said that it would be about a cost of \$12,000.00.

Dwayne said that they also need to discuss the Winter Highway employees. We currently pay our plow truck drivers \$17.75 per hour. He would like to increase it to \$20.00 per hour.

Selectman Cowan amended her motioned to increase the full-time employees in the Public Works and Transfer Station by \$2.00 per hour, part time employees by \$1.00 per hour and increasing Winter Highway employees to \$20.00 per hour. Selectman Hall seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

6. Other Business:

Dwayne stated that the County budget was in their packet to review. The Board does have to sign the Assessor's Return for County Tax which is for \$389,002.58 this year.

Selectman Cowan motioned to sign the Assessors Return for \$389,002.58. Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

Dwayne said that there is also an invitation to attend a surprise celebration for Mary Craig on Sunday, September 19th at the New covenant Church. She is one of the founders of the North Berwick Food Pantry and she is retiring.

Dwayne said that they received the soccer jerseys. The first order was lost and was all wrong. The second order was also lost. He had a local person do some up. They have about 120 kids playing soccer this year.

7. Review and Approve Warrants and Correspondence:

Warrant:	August 18, 2021	- \$ 1,748.66
Warrant:	August 25, 2021	- \$ 12,172.99
Warrant:	September 7, 2021	- \$ 534,609.35

Selectman Hall motioned to approve the Warrant of August 18, 2021 for the amount of \$1,748.66, the Warrant of August 25, 2021 for the amount of \$12,172.99 and the Warrant of September 7, 2021 for the amount of \$534,609.35. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

8. Adjournment:

Selectman Cowan motioned to adjourn at 8:39 pm. Selectman Hall 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.