

**North Berwick Board of Selectmen Minutes October 5, 2021**

**NORTH BERWICK BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES  
OCTOBER 5, 2021**

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

**Absent:** Selectman Cowan

**Also Present:** Dwayne Morin, Trish, Lara

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

**1. Pledge of Allegiance**

**3. Review and Approve Minutes of September 21, 2021**

Selectman Johnson, Sr. motioned to approve the minutes of September 21, 2021 as written.  
Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0

**4. Public Input**

There was not public input at this time.

**5. Unfinished Business:**

**A. COVID-19: ARPA Funding**

Dwayne Morin wanted to know if the Selectmen had any thoughts on how to spend the funds. He has reached out to both the Water and Sewer Districts and is waiting for them to give him a list of some projects. He stated that he is also working on the telecommunications portion to see what that cost will be. Dwayne said that they are going to have to climb a tower. He stated that we need to get the antenna a little bit higher than what it is. They are looking to see if they can put a ring on the outside of the tower so we can put the antenna higher than on the pipe wire that is currently there.

**B. Town Signs: Discussion on Replacing Entrance Signs**

Dwayne said that all 4 signs were set up and he has received positive comments on them so far.

### **C. Downtown: Continued Discussion**

Selectman Hall stated that he prepared a 3 question survey and he sent it out to all of the 7<sup>th</sup> graders last Thursday. He has received 28 responses so far. Right now, it is about 50/50 as to whether they would attend supervised summertime activities. Selectman Hall stated that there were not a lot of ideas other than the examples that he had provided. Most of the suggestions were having a place with Wi-Fi, a quiet place to read, a place to game or a skateboard park. He hopes to have more information at the next Board meeting. Selectman Hall stated that he does feel that it is a little bit early for us, as a town, to invest a whole lot of money to take on a project like this.

### **2. Public Hearing – 6:35 pm - General Assistance Ordinance**

Chairman Galemme read the Legal Notice into the minutes:

Notice of Public Hearing  
General Assistance Ordinance and Appendices  
October 5, 2021 6:35 P.M.

The North Berwick Board of Selectmen will be holding a Public Hearing on Tuesday, October 5, 2021 at 6:35 p.m. in the Municipal Building Room 212. The purpose of the Public Hearing is to seek input on the revised General Assistance Ordinance and Appendices proposed to replace the existing Ordinance and Appendices. The proposed Ordinance and Appendices were prepared pursuant to the Maine General Assistance Law (22 MRSA § 4305(4)).

The North Berwick Board of Selectmen encourages all interested residents to attend this Public Hearing.

Dwayne stated that, every year, the Board has to act on the General Assistance Ordinance and Appendices that the State has presented to the town for consideration. We are required by law to hold a Public Hearing in order to adopt the changes. The changes this year were primarily on the maximum level of assistance. For a one person family, it goes from \$918.00 to \$1,016.00. This means that if you make \$1,016.00 per month, then you would not qualify for General Assistance. The other big change was on the Food section which was a Federal change. For 1 person, the monthly cost stipend goes from \$204.00 to \$250.00. It increased across the board based on the number of people in the family.

Dwayne stated that another change was for electricity without a hot water heater. There was a slight change so that they have just made the numbers all of the same. Another change was for both heated and unheated rents. An unheated studio went from \$764.00 to \$863.00. A 4 bedroom went from \$1354.00 to \$1,529.00. For the heated rent, a studio went from \$845.00 to \$963.00. All the other levels by bedroom went up as well.

Dwayne stated that the Town can opt to utilize the State's requirements. If we do opt to use it, then we get reimbursed and if we opt not to do it, we will get no reimbursement from the State.

Chairman Galemme closed the Public Hearing at 6:39 pm.

Selectman Hall motioned for the Town of North Berwick accept the recommendations for General Assistance from the State of Maine. Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0

**Reminders: Next Board of Selectmen's Meeting – October 19, 2021 – 6:30 pm**

**6. New Business:**

**A. FY22 Commitment: Abatement and Supplement**

Dwayne stated that there is an Abatement and Supplement that the Board needs to consider that the Assessor is requesting for them to look at. It relates to personal property for Account #193 for Great America Financial Services. The taxpayer brought the issue to the Town's attention. When they submitted their list for personal property, instead of using the original cost, Craig used the market cost, so they were under assessed. An abatement of \$100.28 would be in order for this account. Dwayne stated that a Supplemental Tax would also be in order for \$164.59.

Selectman Hall motioned to approve Abatement #1 for the Account #PP193 for the amount of \$100.28 and the Supplemental Tax Warrant for the amount of \$164.59. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0

**B. Railroad Crossing: Main Street Crossing Shutdown**

Dwayne said that he received an email from the Railroad company stating that they need to shut down the Main Street crossing in order to do some work. Dwayne said that he is not a fan of shutting a road down completely. The last time that the railroad did this, they asked for 2 days but it ended up taking 5 days. They have assured him that it will only be a 2 day shutdown. Dwayne said that he is currently working with Pan Am Airlines, Hussey Seating, and all of the Chiefs to get this accomplished. The target date is October 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> but Pan Am has not contacted him back yet. Dwayne said that they have been doing this all over Southern Maine. Today and tomorrow, they are doing Route 236.

Dwayne stated that the problem is that we don't have very good detours. For regular vehicle traffic it is not so bad, but it is more difficult for businesses like Hussey with their trucks. They have about 15 trucks a day going in and out of their plant. There is no way that they can use Linscott Road because they can't make the corner. The other thing is that both Wells and South Berwick prohibit truck traffic on their roads. Pan Am was going to work on getting approval from South Berwick and Wells to allow truck traffic to go across Boyd Road and then through Pike Industries.

Dwayne said that they told him it would take about 36 hours. The rails are built right there on site. The first day would be removal. While they are removing it, another team is actually building it. They then lower it in place, weld it in place, open it up the first night and send a train back and forth over the crossing to compact it. The second day will be mostly paving. Dwayne

has asked them to send out letters to all of the people on the other side of the railroad tracks so they are aware. They will also put up sign boards at least 1 week ahead of time. Dwayne will also put the information on our website.

Selectman Johnson, Sr. asked if they were working on the tracks because they were worn out. Dwayne said that they are deteriorated. He said that the railroad crossings are basically rubber. They don't have as heavy of a rock base in the road, and they use a rubber membrane. The rubber membrane breaks down over time. The rest of the rails are sitting on significant rock, so it is not as much of an issue. Dwayne did ask them if they could fix the crossing so it is not as jarring. They told him that it would still be jarring because it is super elevated. They will cut back the pavement a little bit further and try to get a smoother transition.

### **C.     **Newsletter:** Review Draft Election Newsletter**

Dwayne stated that the election is coming up, so he put together the Newsletter. He would like the Board to review it and let him know if they have any issues with it. He stated that the first page is just general information about voting. The next 2 pages are regarding absentee voting. He said that they have installed the absentee voting booth next to the Police Station. He is just waiting for the camera that will be installed next to it so they can keep an eye on it.

Dwayne said that the Election Guide starts on the next page. The first question is the MSAD 60 Referendum. He listed the question and then he wrote an article regarding the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen. Dwayne told Selectman Hall that he can include what the vote was if he would like him to. Selectman Hall said that he would like him to put that the vote was 4-0 with 1 Abstain. Dwayne said he would do that. Dwayne read his article into the minutes:

The Board of Selectmen are recommending a NO vote on the MSAD 60 proposal presented to the voters.

As presented to voters, the MSAD 60 Board is recommending the issuance of bonds in the amount of \$57,282,090.00. What is not mentioned in the referendum article is that the total cost of repayment of these bonds is estimated to be \$70,673,906.00 or interest payments in the amount of \$13,184,616.00. The debt service is not mentioned in the article presented to voters as the School District is not required by law to state the financial consequences of the bonding in the referendum question, as the Town and State must provide to voters in their bonding questions. According to the School District's calculations, this will increase taxes on the average taxpayer owning a \$300,000.00 house in North Berwick by \$122.04 in year 1 and \$473.82 in year 2 and beyond. This represents an increase in taxes of nearly 14.50% to the average taxpayer in North Berwick by year 2 of the 20 year bond. In the Towns of Berwick and Lebanon, the increases on a \$300,000.00 home will be \$177.33 and \$161.07 in year 1 and \$688.44 and \$625.29 in year 2 respectively.

Although the Board does not have any issue with the construction projects as presented, the fiscal impact to the three communities caused by the proposal will result in a significant tax increase to the residents of the three communities. The Board of Selectmen encourage the MSAD 60 Board to review the financial impact of the projects and prepare a plan that

accomplishes the proposal with a limited impact to the taxpayers. This may result in staggering the construction of the projects over a few years or seeking State of Maine assistance for the construction projects.

The Board of Selectmen believe that the Lebanon Elementary school project should be prioritized as the primary concern of the School Board with the Berwick and North Berwick projects as second and third priority. The Lebanon elementary School has not had significant improvements made for many years and the buildings are in dire need of improvements for the Lebanon children, while the Berwick and North Berwick schools have had improvements made more recently. The spreading out of the projects over a series of years would reduce the overall impact to taxpayers of the district while accomplishing the projects objectives.

One of the project's primary objectives is to provide space for the projected enrollment caused by the requirement to have a Public Preschool or Pre-K classrooms. Pursuant to the State of Maine Department of Education, "It is a local decision for a school district in Maine to develop a public preschool, also referred to as a Pre-K or 4-year old (4YO), program.". They further stated that "As a part of the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan, Governor Mills recently proposed a substantial investment of \$10 million dollars of federal American Rescue Plan Act funds for public Pre-K infrastructure to increase the number of 4-year old's enrolled in public Pre-K across the state. While we are currently awaiting final guidance from the US Treasury as well as approval of the Governor's plan by the Maine Legislature, the Maine Department of Education is beginning to plan for this incredible opportunity.". The Board of Selectmen would encourage the School Board to see financial assistance for the infrastructure required to develop a public preschool in MSAD 60 from the State of Maine.

Because of the financial impact to taxpayers, the Board of Selectmen are recommending a NO vote on the MSAD 60 referendum question.

Dwayne stated that he just found out within the past couple of days that the State will not be making Pre-K a requirement. Also, they will have money available to help schools fund the classrooms. We should be seeking these funds from the State. Dwayne went right to the State's Department of Education website to find the information and the information that he posted in the Newsletter is directly from the website. He said that when he attended the meeting about the projects, the driving factor for the Berwick and North Berwick schools was because of Pre-K. Selectman Hall stated that in Berwick they will put trailers up whether they do Pre-K or not because their student population has increased significantly. In North Berwick, it is more about Pre-K, office space and space for globals. He stated that the article that Dwayne wrote is done well and is fair to the school. Dwayne said that whenever the Board says no, we need to offer some information as to why they are voting that way and possibly provide other ideas. Chairman Galemme feels that Pre-K is a good thing, but if money can be had from elsewhere then they should be pursuing that. Dwayne said that once they have built the classrooms, they need to build a program which means hiring teachers, preparing curriculums and a lot of other costs that will go on top of the public preschool.

Dwayne stated that they are not in a fight with the School Board, but we just feel that there is more review that has to be done before we spend all of that money. Selectman Hall said that this

is the 2<sup>nd</sup> time that the Board has clearly expressed that the Town of North Berwick voters would be on board with doing something in Lebanon and splitting the rest up. Chairman Galemмо said that it would be better if they staggered the projects. They are not going to be working on all 3 projects at the same time. Dwayne stated that they did want to hire 1 contractor to do it all. Chairman Galemмо said that it would have to be a very large contractor so it will cost more.

Dwayne stated that the next 3 pages are about the State questions that are being presented for a vote. He also added information about having a Halloween Howler and Annual Tree Lighting this year. The next couple of pages are the results of our Town Meeting. One of the pages discusses the tax rate and how we were able to decrease it to \$10.90. The next couple of pages is information about some of our Capital Improvements updates. He said that the Linscott Road project came in under budget. We had budgeted \$430,000.00 and we came in at \$393,737.47. The last page is information about ARPA funding. If anyone has any suggested projects, they should let us know. He also added information about the Memorial Bricks and how to purchase one.

## **7. Other Business:**

Dwayne stated that our Police Department was approached by the Principal. They would like the Town of North Berwick to supply them with another School Resource Officer at the High School. Dwayne said that he and the Police Department are recommending is that if the school is requesting it then they would have to pay for it. He has a few concerns about this request. He has challenged the Police Chief to review some issues. He said that we would most likely move one of our Reserve Officers to full time status after filling the SRO spot because we have to offer it to inhouse personnel first. This will take a Reserve Officer out of our Reserve pool which is already down by 3 officers. He has asked the Chief to figure out how we will manage with a Reserve staff of 3 officers instead of 4 officers when we usually have 7 officers. The problem is that there are no officers out there to hire. He is concerned about scheduling because it could lead to overtime costs that are unbudgeted costs that could affect us greatly.

Dwayne said that he would also like to have a minimum 3 year commitment from the School. If we move an officer up to SRO and then the school decides they want to go back to 1 SRO, we now have an extra officer and he will need to lay someone off. He asked for a 3-5 year commitment and would like to have that in writing from the school before presenting it to the Board.

Selectman Hall asked what the justification was for having an additional SRO. Dwayne said that it was explained to him as a comparison to what happened in downtown this summer. He said that in the downtown area it was 40 kids but at the school it is 1,364 kids. Our current SRO is totally out straight. There have been more complaints and more problems this first month of the school year than we have ever had. One thing that is happening is because of a TikTok challenge. TikTok has put out a calendar that has a different activity for students to do every month. September was to steal something from the school. They took 48 soap dispensers, a bathroom stall, 4 mirrors and there is quite a bit of damage to the school. This month is to slap a teacher. Next month is to kiss a girl in front of her boyfriend. January is poke a girl's breast. The school is feeling the same pressure as the SRO so they would like to see an additional officer

to assist. Chairman Galemmo asked about TikTok allowing this. Dwayne said that anybody can post on it. He said that they also get points. They will get more points for slapping the Superintendent then if they slap a teacher. Selectman Johnson, Jr. said that these are assault or harassment charges and Dwayne agreed.

Chairman Galemmo stated that they have to get rid of the Article that says that you can't sue Facebook and other social media like it because they are not responsible for the content on their platforms. Dwayne said that every student should have to put their cell phone in some kind of locker whenever they get into the school. Dwayne said that they have had many more complaints this year. He said that it used to be more drug issues than anything else. Now they are talking more about complaints of assault, sexual assault, hate crimes, people threatening to shoot each other, and other serious issues. Every time something happens there are all kinds of pictures and videos that are posted. Selectman Johnson, Sr. asked if there was a reason for the kids to have cellphones in school. Selectman Hall said that they do not have to have a cellphone at all. He said that there are grades at the High School where they have to put them in a sleeve on the door. He said that parents are the ones that complain if the school tries to take their phones away for the day. He said that while this is social media driven, the kids are also watching what adults are doing all across the country.

Dwayne said that our country and society has changed. If 2 people disagree, they are sworn enemies now. There is no such thing as mutual respect where we can agree to disagree, and you are not a bad person, and the other person is not a bad person. It is just our perspective. We have gotten so far away from that in society that even small trivial disagreements become massive arguments when it shouldn't get to that point. Selectman Hall said that if you were in a room with somebody, it would most likely get to that point.

Dwayne said that the calls to the school have greatly increased. They have had to send other officers to the school to assist the SRO in some of the things. He said that these issues are not unique to our school. It is happening all over the country.

Dwayne stated that his concern is to protect our taxpayers and our staff. He does not want to hire someone and then have to lay them off a year later. He wants some sort of security from the School District to prevent this. He said that they have funding to pay for this through ARPA funding and other funding. He said that we currently do a cost share with them for our current SRO, but we do not have the funds to cost share another SRO. He said that the School does pay for the Berwick SRO in full. Dwayne said that the School wants someone ASAP. He stated that he has talked to other schools, and it is not unusual for 2 SROs in the High Schools. He said that some places like Kennebunk have 1 SRO in each Elementary School and 2 SROs in the High School. Selectman Hall said that he is not against doing this for them, but he feels that it is not a problem that we are going to solve by policing or by suing which is how we are trying to solve all of the problems. It needs to come down to having conversations, having parents talking and communities talking to come up with some ideas on how to solve some of these problems.

Chairman Galemmo agreed with Dwayne about the School committing to a few years and to pay for it 100%. Dwayne said that the cost for this Officer would be about \$111,500.00. Selectman Hall asked if there was an Officer on our force that has expressed an interest in taking on this

position. Dwayne said that Chief Peasley believes that we have somebody in house that would be able to take on the position and also that we have a Reserve Officer that we could move up rather quickly. Selectman Hall asked if it is within the Board's authority to make a decision like this without going before the Town. Dwayne said they could as long as it stays within the budget.

Dwayne said that the Chief will be at the next meeting to discuss this situation.

Dwayne stated that they started the Transfer Station project yesterday and he said that we are going to go over budget on it. When they started removing the pavement, they found that in some sections where they were not going to remove it, it crumbled so they had to remove it. They will need more pavement than what they had anticipated. They were planning on having it removed and paved in 2 days, but it looks like it will be at least a week in dirt. They should be paving it on Monday. He is going to treat as a 3-year project so that at the end of the 3 years it will be good but at the end of this year, it will not be good.

#### **8. Review and Approve Warrants and Correspondence**

Warrant:	September 28, 2021	- \$	0.00
Warrant:	October 5, 2021	- \$	112,974.74

Selectman Hall motioned to approve the Warrant of October 5, 2021 for the amount of \$112,974.74. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0



## **9. Adjournment**

Selectman Hall motioned to go into Executive Session at 7:45 pm and come out of Executive Session at 8:00 pm. Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0

Selectman Hall motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 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.

