

North Berwick Board of Selectmen Minutes January 4, 2022

**NORTH BERWICK BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES
January 4, 2022**

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

Absent: Chairman Galemme, Selectman Johnson, Sr.

Also Present: Dwayne Morin, Tom Komola, Lore Burbank

Dwayne Morin opened the meeting at 6:34 pm.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Review and Approve Minutes of December 21, 2021

Selectman Cowan motioned to approve the minutes of December 21, 2021 as amended.
Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 3-0

3. PUBLIC INPUT:

Tom Komola stated that last Tuesday he went to the transfer station and it was very busy and chaotic due to the holiday. He said it was a very smooth process and wanted employees to get recognition as to how great a job they did. He referred to them as unsung heroes and wanted to pass that on.

Lore Burbank from the North Berwick Sanitary District was present and the Trustees met in December and wanted to make sure the most current information they had was brought to the Board in terms of their priorities and the costs. Pete Gagnon, Sanitary District Superintendent, prepared a new letter with a list and she presented that in regards to ARPA funds being used for water and sewer. Lore said she has been able to now provide better prices and priorities since the last time it was discussed.

Lore stated that there was reference to the pump station being replaced and that is not the case. There is a top portion that needs replacing. It is the concrete top of the station which includes wiring. She stated she has done a lot of research on ARPA and she believes the list provides all projects outside of their budget. The Sanitary District runs very tight in regards to their budget and have to really scrape when things need to be done. She indicated how important the membrane replacement is. She also mentioned the town storm drain repair and replacement to secure support of cross-country line. The next important project would be the Muffin Monster Cutter Replacement. That cost came in less than they thought it would and it is the last step in the stations flow. The Muffin Monster shreds anything that is left in the water and then goes into the first lagoon to be aerated. Lore relayed that Pete was not able to attend this particular meeting but

he would gladly attend a meeting when needed. She wanted to attend to let the Board know that they are very interested in cooperating in any way they can and are hoping to be granted some of the ARPA money available.

Lore also wanted to relay that she also was at the Transfer Station and found it to be running very smoothly.

Selectman Hall then made an inquiry about the cost of the storm drain repair/cross country fix. Dwayne said that would take some time to determine. One of the biggest problems is knowing where the pipes come from to begin with and how they are undermining one of the columns that the pipes sit on. The concerns are that the cement and cement columns could be fixed but they do not know the pipeline issue. It appears there are broken pipes in that area and it is very wet. It is going to be more involved than just fixing the concrete and not happening again in the future. It is older pipe. Lore thinks it is coming off Madison Street and is part of an old storm drain. Dwayne said they've found fragments of pipe but it is going to be more involved and wait until the spring to see what they are up against. Dwayne stated they have only received a portion of the ARPA money and they have until 2024 to spend it. He is anticipating that may be in the second round.

Selectman Cowan inquired about the aerator being the most important piece. Lore explained that it is in the first biggest lagoon and over the years it has started to deteriorate and the membrane needs to be replaced so the bubbles come up evenly and process everything evenly. Right now, a lot of the bubbles are too large. Selectman Cowan asked where all the lagoons are located. Dwayne said they are on Eastern Avenue and referred to a map to point out where on Eastern Avenue they are located and explained the flow including Canal Street, Madison Street and Eastern Avenue. Dwayne stated how when it was all constructed it was constructed as above-ground and Lore indicated that it was one of the oldest systems around. Dwayne stated it was constructed in the 1980's. Maybe 1982 or 1983. It was constructed above-ground and under-ground. Dwayne indicated that the big pond is 5.67 acres and is all fenced in with two gates.

Selectman Hall inquired what time of year that the aerator membrane replacement would take place. Lore indicated that it would have to be done in the spring. The one thing about that, is that they will have to book someone to complete that project ahead of time. They would shut the flow down to the first lagoon and it would go into the second or third.

Lore inquired if the State had anything going on in North Berwick this year. Dwayne stated there will be paving on Route 4 from the Hurd School to the Sanford Rotary.

Dwayne did state that all ARPA money will have to go to town meeting for approval.

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

A. COVID-19: ARPA Funding

Communications Project:

Dwayne stated that he has been working on the communications project to see how they can best fix their communications. Specifically, to repeat our voice off from the water tower. He thought they had a plan by installing additional antennas onto the tank but what is allowed will not solve the issue. The primary reason is that is not structurally sound to hold the amount and weight of the antennas that are needed. We can continue to run the way we have but the downside is there are significant dead spots and that needs to be fixed. The only way it can be fixed if we put a tower on the property. In talking with the communications company, a 100-foot tower would be what is needed. Selectman Johnson, Jr. referenced the tower that was just put up in Wells. Dwayne stated ours would be 15 feet taller. Dwayne said it would go up right next to our water tower but we would need permission from the water district in order to do so and we will need some additional things. Dwayne brought up the map for the Board to look at and made reference to where they are thinking. The location would be along the side of the town's communication shed. The problem is that the tower will need fall-down zones. He explained the protected right-of-way that already exists and how a fall-down easement from the landowners may need to be obtained. The towers are actually designed to collapse on top of themselves and not tip over. They are rated for significant natural disasters and the tower that is being discussed is a solid tower that goes straight up. They recommend a 100-foot tower with four antennas off from that.

Dwayne said that the new tower would be 100 feet and the antennas would be another 20 feet 7 inches tall. That would make it above tree line and gives enough height above tree line to not knock down communications. We currently have two antennas. We need three and then we need to look at the highway department getting a higher band. Refurbished radios cost more than new ones but they have stopped making radios that we currently use. There are no more new ones available. Currently our Police band is on the water tower and then we have one that is for beepers for rescue and fire. We would like to keep that antenna and add a secondary antenna that would be for voice for rescue and fire. Right now, our Rescue and Fire is on UHF and Police is on VHF. They could put a repeater so they do not need to switch channels and that requires equipment in the shed. Communications Company would like to see a joint repeater should be a long-term goal but at least if we had four antenna locations, that would help down the road. The pager antenna would stay on the water tower and the new antennas would go onto a new communications tower. Dwayne stated that the new tower would most likely cost \$250,000.00. The tower is about \$75,000.00. The equipment will most likely be another \$25,000.00. Engineering would be in the \$25,000.00 range. Dwayne said we would have to buy easements and then the back up generator would be \$25,000.00. That is predicated on the Water District allowing us to install it on their property.

Selectman Hall asked how old the current tank was. Dwayne said it was installed in 1997 and then re-done in 2000. Dwayne indicated that the ideal spot for the communications tower would be on top of Bauneg Beg Mountain but that is not possible. He said that all of the town's radio equipment is sitting in the communications shed and all the licensing is for that site. So, moving it to another location would not be cost effective and a larger undertaking. Dwayne explained that there has to be line of sight with communication. The Sanford tower has antennas that can see our antennas and that is how we communicate.

Selectman Cowan inquired about putting the tower behind the communications shed or perhaps moving the shed. Dwayne explained that all the wires are buried in the ground and go up the side of the water tower. The further we put the shed from the tower, it is more wire and will add more costs.

Dwayne stated that it was today when he found out the water tower would not work for this project so there is still a lot more time needed to process. Dwayne stated that a free-standing tower next to the water tower would be our only other option since we cannot use the water tower now. The free-standing tower would be 40 feet higher than the water tower. Selectman Cowan inquired about the visibility of the tower from the road and would like to look into options for placement to make it less visible.

Dwayne stated that the only way we could get 100% coverage would be to have a tower on Bauneg Beg Mountain but that is not feasible. The new communications tower would give us extremely better coverage than we have.

Selectman Cowan inquired about the size of the water tower. Dwayne indicated it was 36 feet around and 65 feet tall.

Selectman Hall mentioned the \$500,000 in the ARPA funds. Dwayne stated there is more coming. The communications project would be the biggest project the town would have.

Selectman Hall asked Dwayne what the Water District's projects were and costs. Dwayne stated that those were Brewer Street and Lower Main Street/Hussey Connection. Dwayne stated Brewer Street was \$36,000.00 but that does not include the road reconstruction which would probably be another \$20,000.00 or \$30,000.00 on top of that. Dwayne said he would need to find out what the total cost would be. The Lower Main Street project is actually \$178,000.00 to do the entire Lower Main Street. We could just do a smaller project which would just get us past Hussey to fix that Hussey connection problem which would be cheaper.

Premium Pay:

Dwayne stated that some of the ARPA funds should be used for premium pay for town employees who worked during COVID. He said that full-time employees would get \$2,000.00, part-time employees with a set schedule would get \$1,000.00 and part-time employees that do not have a set schedule would get \$500.00. He stated that about 55 employees would be affected by this for a total of about \$53,500.00. There are 3 employees would do not fall under this

category and the town would have to kick in \$6,000.00. Dwayne said that for Rescue, he is talking about utilizing some ARPA money for the increase in pay. The town would use \$3.00 through ARPA which would equal \$26,500 so the total cost of all of that comes out to be \$80,000.00 in ARPA money and \$6,000.00 in town money to complete that proposal.

Selectman Cowan motioned to approve the premium pay through ARPA using ARPA funds to pay \$80,032.00 and then using town funds for an additional \$6,000.00 to make up the additional funding for staff. Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 3-0

B. FY23 BUDGET: Review Budget Submissions

Dwayne indicated that every budget came in on time and wanted to provide highlights regarding the budget. He stated that submissions came in about 15% higher than last year. Operations are up 9.86%, capital is up 49%. Dwayne indicated that he knew capital was going to be up because we have purchases that they are looking into this year. The good news is that we have that money already so it does not have an effect on taxes. He referenced a plow truck that they plan on replacing this year and due to the costs out there, plow trucks are at a premium. What they thought would cost \$150,000 is now pricing out at \$250,000. He stated they have been promised a truck but they cannot guarantee one. He stated that they would be utilizing what they have been putting away. Unfortunately, things have gotten much more expensive.

In terms of operating expenses, Dwayne stated the majority of their increase in costs is with labor costs. He mentioned adding another police officer which would be \$140,000 per year. They are looking at an increase in wages for employees. Specifically at the Rescue Squad, they are looking at a \$4.00/\$5.00 increase which was a \$70,000.00 hit to the budget. The water district has the second year of the increase on water district hydro-metals which is another \$35,000.00. The communications contract with Sanford is a set \$14,000.00 increase every year. Dwayne stated that health insurance only went up 2½% this year and did not go up at all last year.

He said in the budget, he has a 3% increase for all other employees. 3% on COLA. He did state COLA is coming in higher than 3%. He held it there mainly because the police contract is a 3% increase. The last two years, they gave higher than what the COLA was. Dwayne indicated that last year, it was 2.5% and we gave a 3% increase.

Dwayne said that the good news is that we have increased revenues which is always nice to offset some of those costs. Primarily in our excise tax, we are going to see a significant increase. He stated that we are fully able to fund our highway department and this was the first year we were able to do that on purely excise tax.

Dwayne said another increase is in state revenue sharing. He stated the amount of \$290,000 for state revenue sharing which is an increase of about \$60,000.00 and he will know better in March when he has all the numbers.

Regarding the Code Enforcement office, he is looking at an increase of about \$30,000.00 in revenue on a yearly basis. Dwayne said right now at a half of year, they've already met their

budget and we still have a half a year to go. He said they've already collected the fees to cover the entire budget through six months.

Dwayne said that the increased revenue should offset our increased costs which is a good thing. He stated that as of today, he is working on the budget and he is at 5.37 cent increase. That is off a budget increase of about 13%.

Dwayne provided a draft copy of the proposed budget and stated that he would go over it more in detail at the next meeting. He stated that he will utilize some of the reserve money to offset costs. He also indicated that he is debating pulling some money out of surplus for the firetruck but still has to look into that. He stated there have been significant cost increases on the basic commodities that we are buying, along with labor cost increases.

Dwayne also talked about leasing equipment versus bonding. Bonding includes lawyer fees. Leasing does not. Selectman Johnson, Jr. discussed the disadvantages to leasing costs and Dwayne explained municipal leases versus commercial leases. Leasing is typically higher than bonding but in the current climate, they are coming closer together.

Dwayne stated again that the bad news is that the costs are up but the good news is that we have significant increases in excise tax and state revenue sharing to offset.

Reminders: Next Board of Selectmen's Meeting – January 18, 2022 – 6:30 pm

5. NEW BUSINESS:

A. LICENSING APPLICATION: Review Piecuch Medical Marijuana Counseling Application

Dwayne indicated that Chris Piecuch has been approved by the Planning Board for a medical marijuana counseling office on Market Street next to Town Pizza. The Planning Board approved that on September 9, 2021. Dwayne did review all the applications and all requirements were met. A site inspection has been done by everyone and they meet all licensing requirements as well. Dwayne stated that this is a counseling office so they bring product in in the morning and they take it out at night. Selectman Cowan inquired about odor and Dwayne stated that they are not growing there so there would be very minimal odor. No product or money is allowed to stay on-site. Dwayne indicated that they were very cooperative and did everything asked of them.

Selectman Johnson, Jr. motioned to put the Piecuch Medical Marijuana Licensing Application on at the Public Hearing on February 1, 2022; Selectman Cowan seconded the motion. VOTE: 3-0

B. PERSONNEL POLICY: Update to Add Juneteenth as a Recognized Holiday

Dwayne stated that one thing that happened this past year was that the federal government approved a new federal holiday which is June 19. The Town does not currently recognize that holiday and he is looking to add June 19 to the personnel policy. He provided a memo which would be sent out to all employees indicating that Juneteenth (June 19) be recognized as a holiday.

Selectman Cowan motioned that Juneteenth (June 19) be recognized as a holiday under the Town's personnel policy; Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 3-0

6. OTHER BUSINESS:N/A

7. Review and Approve Warrants and Correspondence:

Warrant:	December 28, 2021	- \$ 8,294.87
Warrant:	January 4, 2022	- \$ 95,702.86

Selectman Johnson, Jr. motioned to approve the Warrant of December 28, 2021 for the amount of \$8,294.87 and the Warrant of January 4, 2022 for the amount of \$95,702.86. Selectman Cowan seconded the motion. VOTE: 3-0

8. Adjournment:

Selectman Cowan motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m. Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 3-0

Respectively Submitted,
Jennifer Berard, Stenographer

Original to Town Clerk

Chairman: Charles Galemmo

Selectman: Jonathan Hall

Selectman: Michael Johnson, Jr.

Selectman: Wendy Cowan

Selectman: Michael Johnson, Sr.