

North Berwick Board of Selectmen Minutes April 5, 2022

**NORTH BERWICK BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES
April 5, 2022**

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

Absent: Selectman Johnson, Jr.

Also Present: Dwayne Morin

Chairman Galemmo opened the meeting at 6:30 pm.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES OF MARCH 15, 2022

Selectman Cowan motioned to approve the minutes of March 15, 2022 as amended.
Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 3-0-1

4. PUBLIC INPUT

N/A

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

A. COVID-19: Community Center Rentals

Dwayne indicated that he has had many inquires in regards to the Community Center and whether rentals were being allowed again since it was shut down due to COVID-19. He stated that he will be allowing rentals to be permitted going forward. Selectman Johnson, Sr. indicated he thinks that would be a good thing. Selectman Cowan stated she heard on the news that there may be an uptick of COVID cases and she would like that to be looked at. Dwayne stated that most businesses were being cautious but open and he thinks allowing rentals at the Community Center would be acceptable.

Selectman Hall motioned to re-open the Community Center at this time. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0

B. FY23 BUDGET: Budget Committee Review Update

Dwayne stated that the Town Meeting is Saturday and he has been trying to line up a few things moving forward with the budget. Specifically, as it relates to vehicles, the Town would

like to order a new police cruiser. As of last week, they were going to wait a whole year for a plow truck, but now they have been able to get a build date for this year which is good news. The price of the truck did go up by about \$20,000.00 however. Dwayne did budget that originally so it will not be a problem. It is coming in about \$17,000.00 so there is still \$3,000.00 in reserve. North Berwick has been assigned a build date this year and it is a new truck.

Dwayne stated the next thing he has been working on is a firetruck. They have a quote for a firetruck and the quote is good until the end of April. In May, there will be another price hike. If we prepay for the truck (they provide a performance guarantee so the town does not lose any money), we can get a \$15,000.00 reduction in the cost of the truck. In order for us to prepay, the best financing vehicle would be to go with a leasing company. Dwayne has been in contact with them and rates are currently in the 3.5% range and looking at the last bonding rate of the bond bank the rates for 10-year bonds were in the 1.5% range but that was before the increase in interest rates. In order to go with the bond bank, we would need to hire bond counsel (around \$7,500.00) and we would have to have use reserves, have prepayment resolution and then pay ourselves back with the proceeds. What the feds are saying that before the end of the summer, there are going to be at least two more rate increases, one sometime in May and one sometime in July. Dwayne indicated that if the town does a lease, it is easy, it is a one-page document, they have already been approved, he submits the financials, he signs, they cut the money and it would be a 3.1% interest rate. They would only borrow \$375,000.00 so out of the \$665,000.00, we currently have \$85,000.00 in the bank, they raising an additional \$40,000.00 this year and moving \$200,000.00 so basically there is \$320,000.00 to play with so instead of borrowing \$665,000.00, we borrow \$375,000.00 and then make a payment of \$275,000.00 towards the truck, holding \$45,000.00 back because that will be our payment next April. In order to get the good leasing rate, you have to borrow more than a half of a million dollars. We are going to borrow \$625,000.00 and then make a payment on signing of \$250,000.00. Mike Johnson, Sr. asked if they would let us do that and Dwayne stated they would. He stated we have approval on that today. If they go the bonding route, they cannot bond until the fall and have no idea what those rates are going to be which he feels are going to be high and we would have to hire an attorney as well.

Selectman Cowan likes the fact that the lease is a known entity, we have all the figures, we know what we are dealing with and have everything in place to do it and will not have to go through an attorney which comes at a cost. She thinks the bonding route does not make sense and the fact that we can save \$15,000.00 makes a lot of sense to her. She stated her preference was to go the leasing route. Chairman Galemme agrees with Wendy also.

Selectman Hall motioned to allow the Town Manager to enter into a lease to purchase a new firetruck. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0

C. ROADS: Nowell Street Turn Around

Dwayne stated there is nothing new to report on Nowell Street

D. 130TH LEGISLATURE: Discuss LD 2003 and Potential Effect on Town

Dwayne stated he had an email already to go regarding this and since out last meeting, LD 2003 has been amended by the committee and we are awaiting the amended language. One of the items that has been dropped from our understanding is the removal of growth caps. The Town have been waiting on the revised language so that we can contact our reps with an appropriate request to vote against the legislation. It was three weeks ago and no one has seen the amendment yet. He stated the amendment did a few things. The good thing is that they are going to allow towns to continue to have growth caps but the bad thing is that they are still pushing the four units and the ADU's and everything else will stay the same.

Dwayne stated the governor stated that she won't probably veto the bill but she probably will not sign the bill either which means it will just go into effect and come into play sometime in August. It is three months after she does not sign it that it goes into law.

Selectman Hall inquired about the original bill and wondered if it mattered if you had a conforming lot or not. Dwayne stated no and that if you have a lot and can put a house on it, you can put up to four units on it. It is basically one of the biggest home rule violations they have ever seen and undoes fifty years of planning across the State of Maine and treats every town the exact same. It is not an affordable housing bill anymore, it is a housing bill. Chairman Galemme stated there really is no point other than to make developers wealthy. Dwayne stated it is a political bill for the mid-terms. Dwayne is being told the Democrats see this as bolstering their numbers at the mid term which he does not believe because he knows Democrats who are completely against it. The developers love this bill. Selectman Hall stated this does not make sense and Dwayne stated nothing makes sense regarding this bill.

Dwayne stated most of the law does not take effect until April of 2023 so there is some time to change it before it takes effect and the legislature can always change the law. Dwayne has prepared an email and is sending that from the Town. There is a holding pattern but feels they will find out very quickly when it happens and will put it on the website. Selectman Cowan stated she is anxious to get this on the Town's website as a citizen action alert.

E. BAUNEG BEG MOUNTAIN: Update on Bauneg Beg Mountain Project

Dwayne stated that the great Works Land Trust and the town have applied to the Land for Maine Future for an additional grant to assist in the purchase of the property. The federal grant paperwork on the original grant request and approval goes to the Federal Parks division for final approval in April. He stated we had asked for a waiver to enter into that contract because by law, you can't enter into a contract until approved and they granted that waiver in less than two days.

Dwayne stated the Thompsons are now interested in selling all of the land and not retaining any land for themselves. The Land for Maine Future grant reflects the purchase of an additional 5 acres of land that the Thompsons originally wanted to retain. The federal government has approved our waiver request to allow us to enter into a purchase and sales agreement with the Thompsons prior to the federal approval. Dwayne stated it is great for this project and they have

amended the Land for Maine's future application to include that additional 12 acres of land. The grant was submitted on March 30th and the Federal grant goes to the Feds in the April round and will include our proposal. They should know sometime late summer or early fall. Dwayne stated that is good news.

F. FORECLOSURES: Sign Release Deed to Wilscott Realty Trust

Dwayne stated he sent out redemption letter to Wilscott Realty Trust and they paid the taxes and has redeemed the foreclosed property located off Wilmer Chase Road. The Board will need to sign the release deed for the property

Selectman Hall motioned that the Board sign the Release Deed to Wilscott Realty Trust. Selectman Cowan seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0

Reminders: Next Board of Selectmen's Meeting – April 19, 2022 – 6:30 pm

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

A. TOWN MEETING: Discuss Town Meeting on April 9, 2022

Dwayne reminded the Board that Town Meeting is this Saturday, April 9, 2022 at the Elementary School. Voting begins at 8am and open town meeting at 1:30pm. Voting is in the cafeteria and the Town Meeting is in the gym.

Selectman Hall stated a few people have expressed an interest in wanting to know what happens to the money that the school did not charge us and wondered if we should share the letter, we sent to the school board. Dwayne stated it reduced taxes and Selectman Hall would like to share that letter or mention it at Town Meeting.

Dwayne asked the Board if they wanted anything specific for Town Meeting and advised that the school put in a new sound system so we can use that. Selectman Cowan mentioned table coverings and Dwayne indicated that Chris has already taken care of that. Dwayne stated they would put 50 chairs on the gym floor and open up the bleachers.

Selectman Hall mentioned COVID money and how it may be redistributed in other ways. Dwayne stated the rental relief program really did not go the way they thought it would go and not a lot of people applied for it. Cities had a good response but rural areas did not use much of that. By law, that program ended April 1 and all the states have to give the rental assistance money they did not use back to the Feds and it is a significant amount of money. It is state money that has not been allocated and now they have to submit it back. Dwayne stated to his knowledge, he has not heard what they are going to do with that.

B. FARMER'S MARKET: Enter into Usage Agreement for 2022

Dwayne stated Kelsey Bilodeau's mom is in the hospital so unfortunately, she could not attend the meeting tonight and will attend at the next meeting.

C. COMCAST FRANCHISE AGREEMENT: Sign Franchise Agreement Extension

Dwayne stated that the town entered into a franchise agreement with comcast for a property on Diamond Hill Road since Spectrum did not cover that area. The franchise agreement has expired and they want to renew for another 10 years and need the Town to re-sign the franchise agreement for that one house located at 264 Diamond Hill Road.

Selectman Cowan motioned that the Board authorize the Town Manager to sign the Comcast Franchise Agreement Extension for 264 Diamond Hill Road. Selectman Hall seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0

D. TRANSFER STATION: Bulky Waste Fee Schedule Review

Dwayne stated he had mentioned a few meetings back that the Bulky Waste Fee schedule needed to be updated due to increase costs to the Town for certain products. The schedule has not been increased since 2010. He stated that Richard and him have reviewed the fee schedule and the following need to be updated: Tires from \$2.00 to \$3.00, add Carpet Padding at half of rug pricing \$2.50/\$5.00, Shingles from \$10.00 a square to \$15.00 a square. Dwayne stated the Board will need to hold a public hearing on the fee schedule increase prior to it becoming effective. Dwayne did state that these fees have not been changed since 2010.

Selectman Cowan motioned that a public hearing be scheduled to address the bulky waste fee schedule. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0

E. TOWN OFFICE: Discuss Town Office Hours

Dwayne stated that the towns surrounding North Berwick have recently begun to be closed on Fridays and would like to talk to the Board about that for North Berwick. He stated that Eliot is the latest to do it but Eliot, South Berwick, Berwick, Arundel and Kittery are all closing their offices on Fridays. They did a study to see how many transactions take place on Fridays and it is by far their slowest day and they are open until 1:00 p.m. currently. Dwayne stated they are averaging about 8 transactions on a Friday and what we are seeing is that some of them are from out of town for IFW (fishing licenses, boats, trailers, etc.) One idea that I would like to float is if we close on Friday's that we change our other hours to Mondays and Wednesdays 8:00 a.m. – 5:30pm and Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. This keeps the office the same number of hours and provides for some later days for citizens. Dwayne stated they have seen a very large increase in the use of our online service for car registrations, boats, and IFW transactions which has lessened the foot traffic to the Town office. This has increased desk work time to process the online transactions. He also stated that he would like to also add online tax payments for those interested in this service even though it does come with a fee for those using the service. Selectman Johnson, Sr. stated he thought it was a good idea but wondered how the ladies in the Town Office felt about it and Dwayne stated they were for these hours. Selectman

Hall asked how many hours would that be total and Dwayne stated 37 hours. Selectman Cowan stated she was in favor of these hours.

Dwayne did state that the Code Enforcement Officer is already not here for two Fridays due to Planning Board meetings on Thursday evenings. Dwayne stated that Matt LeConte, the Code Enforcement Officer would like to come into the office at 7:00 a.m. and leave at 5:00 p.m. Mondays through Thursday and they are still in discussion about that. Selectman Johnson, Sr. stated that would be great for contractors so they could come in and get their permits early before going to a job.

Dwayne would like to start these hours as soon as possible and the Board agreed to that. Selectman Hall suggested maybe reviewing this in August to see how it is going. Dwayne agreed to that.

F. MILL FIELD: Continued Vandalism and Proposal for WIFI cameras

Dwayne stated that over the past month, the Town has again begun to see vandalism to the gazebo and has also seen an increase in kids using the gazebo. Selectman Cowan stated she was very disappointed to hear this news. Dwayne stated that this year alone, he has personally replaced the electrical covers at the gazebo three times. He stated that the camera system currently in place is not recording properly so they have not been able to catch the vandals. The camera system is also not easy to utilize as it is in the attic of the gazebo and we have to drag a ladder over to the gazebo, unscrew the trap door and then work off the ladder to retrieve any video. Dwayne stated that he contacted our IT vendor and he suggested sending a Wi-Fi signal from the Town hall over to the gazebo and installing wifi cameras that could capture video and send the information directly to the police cell phones so we could catch and/or have video of any vandalism. Dwayne stated he has received a quote of about \$1,700.00 to get wifi to the gazebo and the camera system would be about another \$100.00 – \$150.00. He stated that the cameras are inexpensive and have great clarity. Dwayne stated that there are funds in the Parks and Recreation budget to cover any costs.

Dwayne stated there will now be wifi in the Mill Field and the radius he believes will be a 500-foot radius and it will be the same wifi that is currently in the Town Hall.

Selectman Johnson, Sr. motioned that the Town install camera system for the gazebo for a total of \$2,000.00 maximum. Selectman Cowan seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0

G. PARKS & REC COMMITTEE: Application of Adam Sapienza

Dwayne has received an Application from Adam Sapienza to join the Parks and Rec Committee. He stated he has corresponded with him because he was one of our coaches for soccer last year. He actually attended the last Parks and Rec meeting. They did lose a committee member, so they are down a person and Adam thinks he would like to get involved. Dwayne received his application and told him that the Board will have him at the next meeting so the Board can meet him and ask him any questions that you have.

H. MEMORIAL DAY PARADE:

Dwayne stated the Memorial Day parade is on for this year and there is a new parade route. The parade will not be going to the cemetery any longer and the people at Varney Crossing like the parade so they would like to bring the parade route by them so they can see. The parade will start at 8:30 a.m.

7. REVIEW AND APPROVE WARRANTS AND CORRESPONDENCE:

Warrant:	March 22, 2022	- \$ 32,428.97
Warrant:	March 29, 2022	- \$ 14,460.29
Warrant:	April 5, 2022	- \$ 84,486.46

Selectman Hall motioned to approve the Warrant of March 22, 2022 in the amount of \$32,428.97, the Warrant of March 29, 2022 in the amount of \$14,460.29 and the Warrant of April 5, 2022 in the amount of \$84,486.46. Selectman Cowan seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0

9. Adjournment:

Selectman Johnson, Sr. motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 p.m. Selectman Cowan seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0

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.