

# **NORTH BERWICK BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES**

## **JULY 26, 2022**

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

**Absent:** Chairman Galemmo

**Also Present:** Dwayne Morin

Chairman Galemmo opened the meeting at 7:09 pm.

### **1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

### **2. REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES OF JULY 12, 2022**

Selectman Hall motioned to approve the minutes of July 12, 2022 as amended. Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0

### **3. PUBLIC INPUT N/A**

### **4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

#### **A. COMMUNICATION TOWER: Update on Plans**

Dwayne indicated that the conditional use permit application has been submitted and the first meeting is scheduled for this Thursday, July 28, 2022. He stated that the Public Hearing will most likely be held on August 25, 2022 and then final approvals.

#### **B. ROAD PROJECTS: Update**

Dwayne stated that Ford Quint Road was paved two weeks ago and it came in around \$17,000.00 over budget because of paving costs. He stated they did anticipate that when the budget was prepared due to the increase in the price of pavement. He indicated that \$48,000.00 was brought over from last year and the overrun will come from that contingency. He advised that the next project we will look to complete is Madison Street from Route 9/4 to the bridge. He stated they are waiting for pavement costs to lower. He stated it was \$105.00 per ton and the budget was \$85.00 per ton.

Selectman Cowan stated that Randall Road was very narrow and inquired if there was any plan to widen it in the future. Dwayne stated they are working on their 10-year plan as far as roads go and Randall Road is on that plan but he is unsure where it falls.

**C. BERWICK RANGE: Updates on Communications with Berwick Town Manager**

Dwayne stated that he has been in contact with the Berwick Town Manager regarding the Range. He stated that Berwick has also received some complaints from their citizens and there was a meeting scheduled with the range operators this past Wednesday night. Dwayne stated he has yet to hear how that meeting went but as soon as he does, he will let the Board know. Dwayne did advise that he met with our Police Department and asked if there had been any complaints about gunshots and they advised they have had zero complaints that their house had been hit until last Thursday. Apparently last Thursday, the Chief was over at the horse farm and was told that morning a bullet was found near one of the horse stalls. Dwayne stated that prompted the Chief to go over and look at the Range and he was impressed with the way it is laid out. The Chief advised Dwayne that the likelihood of someone firing at the Berwick Range and hitting a house on Randall Road is near impossible because of the way their range is constructed. He stated that all shooting is inside. The Chief believes someone may have been loading their rifle before they went into the building and perhaps misfired. Dwayne stated the Chief advised that there would be no possible way for a bullet to make it through the trees and the only way would be if someone shot it up in the air.

Selectman Johnson, Sr. inquired about times that the range was in operation. Dwayne indicated that it appears that Berwick's range was created prior to any noise ordinance and pursuant to the state Law, they cannot enforce noise ordinance requirements or limitation unless activity has changed at the range, which they are exploring. The Berwick manager has indicated that the range operators were amenable to working with the Town regarding the complaints.

**Reminders: Next Board of Selectman's Meeting – August 2, 2022 – 6:30 pm**

**A. FIRE ASSOCIATION: Acceptance of Gift Equipment**

Dwayne stated that The William Hill Fire Association is gifting equipment purchased by the Association to the Town. There is a total of \$9,390 worth of equipment purchased by the Association for the Fiore Department. They are a FLIR Thermal Image Camera, Batteries and Charger with a value of \$6,605; a Propane Gas Meter with a value of \$555 and an AED with a value of \$2,230

Selectman Cowan motioned to happily and thankfully accept the gifts from the Fire Association. Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0

**B. COMPUTER: Approve Increase in Backup Costs**

Dwayne stated that in not so good financial news, our computer IT company has contacted us to inform us that our backup system cost is increasing effective immediately from \$80.00 a month to \$390.00 a month. Dwayne stated that our contract on the system expired and they should have increased the amount last year and it was overlooked on their part. He stated that when he contacted them during this budget season as to changes to the budget, it was not caught until this month. Dwayne indicated that the backup system is the best on the market and has protected the Town for the 8 plus years that we have been under contract since our ransomware hack. He said that he had budgeted an increase in the budget, however, he only included a \$2,000.00 budget figure in the budget but the new cost will be \$4,680.00. Dwayne indicated that this cost would be locked in for 2 years once contract is signed and that we would receive a new, upgraded device that typically costs \$1,854.00. Dwayne would like the Board's permission to utilize the emergency funds to cover the cost overrun of this backup issue. He did state that he will properly budget the correct amount for this very important aspect of our data and computer system next year.

Selectman Cowan motioned to authorize Dwayne to enter into a new contract with the IT company for the increased rate. Selectman Hall seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0

**C. COMMITMENT FY23: Update on Assessments**

Dwayne stated Verna is finalizing the assessment numbers and has some preliminary numbers. She should have the final numbers tomorrow but wanted the Board to have something to review at tonight's meeting. Dwayne indicated that the municipal valuation, which includes tonight's vote on the Rescue, would bring the town's budget up by \$197,000.00, and the majority of that was Rescue. He stated the real estate value increased about \$37,659,400.00. He stated we lost about \$13,000,000.00 in personal property and that was primarily because Pratt & Whitney bought new equipment. We gained on homestead exemption value about \$1.2 million. Dwayne stated that the rate that can be set will be somewhere between 10.85 and 11.35. Selectman Hall asked what we were currently at and Dwayne indicated that we were at 10.90.

Dwayne stated that with an 11.2 rate, the average increase in taxes for just residential would be \$217 per year and with the 11.15 rate, the average increase in taxes for residential would be \$205. Dwayne indicated that the average home value is \$308,000.00. Dwayne said these figures will give the Board about a month to mull over what tax rate will be established for the FY23 year.

Selectman Cowan stated she would like to keep in mind the challenging economic climate when setting the new tax rate. He stated that the numbers are not as bad as he thought they would be

and thought they would be much worse. Dwayne did indicate that if we look at all the towns around us, we are definitely on the lower end which is good.

**6. OTHER BUSINESS:**

**Property Tax Stabilization Program:** Selectman Hall inquired of Dwayne if he had heard anything on the property tax stabilization program. Dwayne indicated he had gotten some information from the State who released some guidance. He stated that he read an article indicating that the State realized they have not raised enough money and only put \$325,000.00 in the budget this year for it. Dwayne stated that this year, people 65 years and older just sign their application and it freezes the tax rate. The freeze doesn't really happen until next year. Dwayne stated the state budgeted \$9 million for year 2 and he believes it will be at least \$14 million. Dwayne stated this goes into effect on August 8<sup>th</sup>. The guidance stated that you have to apply every year but you will be frozen at your original year and it is transferrable from town to town. An applicant will have to be able to have claimed homestead exemption for 10 consecutive years and there is no exception to that.

**7. REVIEW AND APPROVE WARRANTS AND CORRESPONDENCE:**

Warrant:	July 19, 2022	- \$ 544,929.39
Warrant:	June 26, 2022	- \$ 347,676.46

Selectman Hall motioned to approve the Warrant of July 19, 2022 for the amount of \$544,929.39 and the Warrant of July 26, 2022 for the amount of \$347,676.46. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 4-0

**8. Adjournment:**

Selectman Cowan motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:24 pm. Selectman Johnson, Jr. 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.