

NORTH BERWICK BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES

FEBRUARY 21, 2023

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

Also Present: Dwayne Morin

Chairman Galemmo opened the meeting at 6:30 pm.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 7, 2023

Selectman Johnson, Jr. motioned to approve the Minutes of February 7, 2023 as written.
Selectman Johnson, Sr. VOTE: 4-0-1

3. PUBLIC INPUT N/A

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

A. BERWICK GUN RANGE: Discussion on Meeting with Board of Selectman

Dwayne indicated that Selectman Cowan and Selectman Johnson, Jr. attended the meeting with Berwick Gun Range on February 9, 2023, and asked them to talk about how they felt the meeting went as he was not present at that meeting. Selectman Cowan indicated that it was very cordial and stated that the members of the Berwick Board of Selectman, Town Manager, Code Enforcement Officer, President and Vice-President of the Gun Range and others attended the meeting. She stated that the meeting was mainly focused on looking at the property and hearing from the Gun Range President and Vice-President and will wait until the next meeting to get into the issues raised. Selectman Cowan stated it was good to see the layout of the area and see the several berms that have been established. She thought maybe the 50 yard range berm had somewhat of a potential for shots to go elsewhere but thought someone would have to use a 45 degree angle to do so. Selectman Johnson, Jr. agreed. Selectman Cowan asked about access to the gun range itself and was told that entry was now set to 7:45 a.m. which was just established. Selectman Johnson, Jr. stated there is a pin-pad code now but are looking to a key card like is used in North Berwick so they could monitor who enters and details of that. Selectman Cowan asked them how many people could access the gun range and was told there could be upwards of 750 people. Selectman Cowan stated there is not someone consistently on-

site monitoring what goes on there. They were given assurances that no one was there doing anything against the rules and if someone was, they were automatically removed. Selectman Johnson, Jr. stated there were no explosives allowed there and the gun range representatives did not believe anyone was using fully automatic AR-15's due to the cost of those weapons. They were told that the loud sound may be when several people are shooting at the same time which may sound like a repeating weapon. Selectman Cowan felt the meeting was overall good, people were able to ask questions and felt that their questions were answered and she appreciated the opportunity to meet. Selectman Johnson, Jr. stated it definitely seemed safe. He stated they were hesitant to put cameras up but thought maybe they should like North Berwick has.

B. BUDGET: AMBULANCE, SCHOOL SUBSIDY REDUCTION, COMMUNITY CENTER

Dwayne stated the first topic regarding budget is the ambulance. He indicated that in anticipation of ordering an Ambulance in FY25, Mike Barker has been talking with the ambulance manufacturers and it appears that build dates are taking up to two years to build so if we wait until FY25 to order, we would not receive the ambulance for another two years. Mike would like to propose that we order the Ambulance this year and we would not take possession for two years. Dwayne stated that we do not have to pay for the Ambulance until we take possession of the Ambulance. He indicated that the other big item is that the Ambulance is pricing out at \$100,000.00+ more than we originally estimated due to price of materials. They have had three price hikes already this year. Mike is also concerned that if we do not order until next year, the price may continue to increase significantly. As it is, the yearly payment will be nearly 1.5 times what he had estimated in the CIP back in the fall.

Dwayne stated that Mike wrote to the Board as follows:

Selectboard,

The reason for asking that the ambulance purchase agreement be added to the warrant for this upcoming FY is to lock in a price for a new ambulance that will not arrive for 18-24 months from the time that we sign the agreement. It is expected that the manufacturer will not even receive the chassis for a full year from signing, and then begin the build on the ambulance. We can expect to see the delivery of the ambulance in late CY 2024 (after July 1 2024) to early CY 2025 and payment will not due until we take delivery of the ambulance.

The costs associated with everything as we know continues to go up and up, so by us looking to lock in a quote at this time will ultimately be a savings in the long run as we do not know what the cost will be if we start this process again next year . It is very likely from speaking with the manufacturer that the same delays in time will also be present which will further delay the arrival of a new ambulance that we need to replace Ambulance 1. In other communications have highlighted the soaring maintenance costs associated with keeping Ambulance 1 on the road and my fear is that instead of having it for 2 more years that will grow to 4 years or more and continue to cost more money to repair.

My thinking is long term thinking and trying to save money while doing it, especially since we do not need to pay for the new ambulance until we take delivery. Since our last ambulance purchase the cost has gone up 110 thousand dollars and in my opinion it would behoove the town to lock in now so the chassis can be ordered along with all the other parts that go into the truck at today's prices rather than waiting another year and potentially spending thousands more.

Again I am sorry that I am unable to be there in person, but I had to work at my full time job but I am available on my cell phone if there are any other questions

Thank you

v/r

Michael Barker

Dwayne indicated that could propose separate warrant articles for transparency purposes as to separate the purchase of the ambulance and the cost from each other. He believes two warrant articles would be best.

Selectman Hall motioned that a warrant article be added in regards to the Board entering into a contract for the purchase of an ambulance that we will not be putting money towards until FY24. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded. VOTE: 5-0

Selectman Johnson, Sr. inquired if these questions would be sent out with an explanation in the newsletter so the public can understand. Dwayne indicated that they would be with a detailed explanation.

Dwayne stated the second item relating to the budget was the school subsidy. He stated last week he met with the School Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent and the Budget Director. They informed him that the District will be receiving \$1.4 million less in school aid next year and all totaled, there is a \$2 million reduction in revenue due to fund balance and federal aid. They are concerned that even with a flat budget, there will be a significant increase in the cost to the towns. Dwayne stated they told him they would keep us informed through the budget process. They would like to schedule a joint meeting between all three towns (Berwick, North Berwick and Lebanon) in April to discuss the budget and its implications. Dwayne stated they most likely will not have their draft budget until the end of March. Dwayne also stated that it appears the bill we sponsored will be approved by the legislature and indicated they received good feedback from the Education committee and there was no opposition at all.

Dwayne also stated that after meeting with the Budget Committee and reviewing the lease options in regards to road improvements and SEVA's, he does not believe they are realistic. Bonding would give us a potentially lower rate than paying a leased rate and feels Articles 12 and 22 right now should be eliminated from the warrant. He feels going with the bond option instead of the lease option is the better way to go.

Selectman Hall motioned that the current Articles 12 and 22 be eliminated from the warrant. Selectman Cowan seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

Dwayne stated that he is proposing adding a warrant article in regard to undesignated funds.

Selectman Hall motioned to add an unnumbered article at this time to the warrant that states: "To authorize the Board of Selectman to utilize up to \$150,000.00 of additional undesigned fund balance not already specified in this years warrant articles to offset taxes for the FY24". Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

C. ZONING: FINAL ZONING AND SUBDIVISION CHANGES FOR TOWN MEETING.

Dwayne stated the Planning Board has held its Public Hearing and the only change to come out of the hearing was an addition to the Solar Panel standards to require soil samples on a yearly basis for commercial and utility fields to look for heavy metal leaching which was mentioned as a concern during the public hearing. The Town's attorney has finalized the questions and Chris has ordered the ballots.

Dwayne stated there will be a Public Hearing at the last meeting in March and then everything will be signed by the Board in March.

Selectman Hall motioned that we put before the voters at Town Meeting, Questions #1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 as written. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

Chairman Galemme inquired about the littering ordinance which was discussed and written. Dwayne stated the ballots were ordered but he would check to see if it can be added or if not, we would order new ballots which would be a \$500 extra cost. He stated it will be done, even it requires ordering new ballots.

Selectman Hall motioned that if at all possible, the Town Manager has the authority to add a Question #6 in regards to an ordinance change on littering. Selectman Cowan seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

D. LD2003: FINAL GUIDANCE

Dwayne indicated that this week we received the final guidance from the State on the Housing Bill. The good news is that road frontage is included in the definition of dimensional requirements, so the impact is not as bad as we thought. There are still several bills before the legislature this year on the topic, so we will take a wait and see position and worst case is that we vote on changes at the school election in June. Dwayne also indicated if the State does not change anything, we have to bring these changes to the June primary.

Reminders: **Next Board of Selectman's Meeting – February 23, 2023 – Berwick Town Hall**
 Next Board of Selectman's Meeting – March 7 - 6:30 P.M. – Room 212 Town Hall
 Budget Committee – February 22 – 6:30 P.M. - Room 212 Town Hall
 Budget Committee – March 1 – 6:30 P.M. – Room 212 Town Hall

5. NEW BUSINESS:

A. TAX ACQUIRED PROPERTY: SIGN DEED ON HOULE PROPERTY

Dwayne indicated that Mr. Houle has successfully paid off his agreement with the Town on past due taxes as well as paid off the current lien on his property. The Board will need to sign the deed releasing these liens.

Selectman Cowan motioned that the Town sign a Deed to release the Town's tax ownership to the property. Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

B. HOULE: REVIEW CONSENT AGREEMENT ON JUNKYARD

Dwayne stated he met with Mr. Houle, and he is amenable to entering into a consent agreement that we would have a judge review and sign that would allow the Town to step in and clean up the illegal junkyard. Dwayne indicated that the Town's attorney is drafting the consent agreement and it will be available for Tuesday night's meeting. He and Matt will meet with Mr. Houle and Chandler Towing regarding the vehicles to be removed from the property in the next couple weeks and the Board will need to hold a public hearing on March 7, 2023 to enter into the consent agreement and send it to the court through the 80k proceeding. Dwayne stated he was thankful that Mr. Houle was able to meet and we could come to an understanding and agreement and hopes that this continues as the consent agreement and legal proceedings continue through the spring.

C. TAX ACQUIRED PROPERTY: REVIEW TAX ACQUIRED PROPERTY LIST

Dwayne stated that as of 5:00 this afternoon, the Town foreclosed on two pieces of property for non-payment of taxes. Dwayne indicated that he was told that the taxes will not be paid due to a legal issue surrounding the 120-acre Abbott property which is on Boyle Road.

Selectman Cowan motioned to table the decision whether to hold or sell the Abbott property until a later date. Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

Dwayne stated the other property they foreclosed on was the property owned by Joseph Morin on Morrill's Mills Road. Dwayne indicated that since Mr. Morin purchased the property, he has not paid any taxes on the property. He stated they have tried to reach him and sent certified letters and the mail comes back undelivered and they have had zero contact with him. Dwayne stated we need to make contact with him and felt maybe the North Berwick Police Department should go and make a visit to try and make contact.

Selectman Hall motioned to allow 30 days for Mr. Morin to redeem the property. Selectman Cowan seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

6. OTHER BUSINESS – EXECUTIVE SESSION - LEGAL

Selectman Cowan motioned to enter into Executive Session at 8:40 p.m. and close the Executive Session at 9:00 p.m. Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

7. REVIEW AND APPROVE WARRANTS AND CORRESPONDENCE:

Warrant:	February 14, 2023	- \$ 11,157.22
Warrant:	February 21, 2023	- \$657,737.46

Selectman Hall motioned to approve the warrant for February 14, 2023, in the amount of \$11,157.22 and the warrant for February 21, 2023, in the amount of \$657,737.46. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

8. ADJOURNMENT:

Selectman Cowan motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 pm. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

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.