

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes October 19, 2020

7:00 PM Meeting called to order by Selectboard Chairman, John Esposito. Also in attendance were Selectmen Kim Roberge and Tim Berry.

Esposito led the meeting in a moment of silence.

David Brooks let the Board know that the new streetlights would be dropped off tomorrow and will be installed within the next two weeks. They will be temporarily stored at the DPW.

Board reviewed the minutes of October 5, 2020. Berry motioned, seconded by Roberge to accept the minutes of October 5, 2020 as amended. Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes.

Esposito stated that the Town Clerk needed access to the Supervisors of the Checklist files. She now has a key to the Town Hall and the issue has been resolved.

Roberge said that this wouldn't be clear to anyone else.

Esposito explained that the Town Clerk has to have access to all of the voting records. She now has a key and it is no longer an issue.

Esposito lead the quarterly budget to actual review. He stated that there are no red flags; the line items should be about 75% used up. Public Works is getting close, but they have been quite a bit of work lately.

Berry asked if the money from selling the old truck has to go back into the general fund or can it be applied to a line item in the DPW budget. He was told that it must go into the general fund.

Roberge stated that she has concern over the DPW budget and hopes that the director is watching over his numbers.

Esposito said that the side door to the Town Hall was replaced, and in the process, it was noted that there is a lot of rot around it. Lucien Soucy, who did the work, is very concerned that the structure around the door be inspected thoroughly. He asked Roberge if DEW had shown concern over the boards under the clapboards.

Roberge said that they did find issues around the door.

Berry said that he repairs old buildings for a living. Whenever you have a hole in the side of a building – doors and windows – the concern isn't just below the hole, it is all around. I am not surprised he found rot there. I trust that DEW was well aware of the pitfalls of working on an old building. That is why you don't lock yourself into a contracted price; you will always be fighting these extra charges. That is why there are contingencies in the contract. The middle of the wall will show no rot whatsoever. I don't think we need to be overly concerned; anyone that will work on the building will be well aware of the circumstances.

Esposito let the Board know that COLA came in at 1.3% this year. He asked what the Board figures to give the employees for a budgeted raise this year.

Berry said that he thinks at least 2% since, in reality, inflation is much higher than the Social Security increase.

Esposito agreed and said that they cut the numbers off in August, and things have changed a lot since then.

Roberge said she was good with the 2%. The teachers are in negotiations and the tuition to the middle school is also in negotiation.

Esposito asked if it is enough?

Roberge said that the Board hasn't done any studies as to where we stand compared to other towns.

Berry stated that COLA was 1.7% last year, and we gave 2% increases.

Esposito offered that MACC is budgeting for 2.25% this year.

Berry motioned to budget a 2% pay increase for all of our employees.

Roberge said that she would second the motion, but asked why they need a motion at all.

Esposito said that this is the way we are going to do it this year. Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes.

Esposito would like to update the employee handbook at Roberge's suggestion. It hasn't been updated since 2010, and we need to add working from home and Zoom meetings.

Berry would like to have a work session to go through it section by section.

Roberge said that we are coming into the holidays and she is busy. Maybe we could choose a few sections to do at a time. Do we want to do the 100 sections now?

Berry suggested not limiting ourselves to sections – just a period of time. Let's get together for an hour and see how far we can get.

Esposito suggested Monday night at 6:00 pm over Zoom.

Roberge agreed to Monday the 26th.

Roberge wanted to discuss Communication / Correspondence. She would like to do better at communicating as a Board. We all try to stay on top of things, but I feel we are not doing the best that we can. Roberge gave a couple of examples and also said that she would have liked Esposito to say that he shouldn't have directed Mrs. Luter to the Building Inspector.

Esposito asked her what specifically she wanted to change and asked her not to make it more difficult than it already is.

Roberge said that we got a letter from a citizen concerned with the conduct of the Board. After last week's meeting, I began to agree with it. We will be meeting via Zoom for a while; we need to be more efficient. She said that she sent an email and got a response that didn't

make sense. The correspondence from the Town Clerk went back and forth. When we first got the email, the files were going to be moved back to the Town Clerk's office – then something different happened.

Esposito asked the Town Clerk if she is OK with having the key to the Supervisors of the Checklist's files.

Yeaton said, yes – the State files must remain in a municipal office under the direction of the Town Clerk.

Roberge enumerated: October 5 we got the information from Yeaton and the Secretary of State, on the 8th we were told that the files were being moved then on the 9th it was: could Yeaton having a key be ok. We, as a Selectboard are not communicating.

Esposito said that she was the only one with a problem.

Berry wanted to address the communication problem. We haven't been communicating the same as before March. There has been some shoddy communication. The nature of Zoom meetings is different than in person. The first year I was a Selectman it was rare to have any visitors at the Selectmen's meetings. We would send a letter to someone we needed to speak with. We should be following up with the owner of 66 Old Milford Road. We only suggested that he go to the ZBA for a variance. We need to further refine our meeting technology and have more communication between the 3 of us so that we can have these discussions through Laurie and not have to hash it out in a public meeting. We are trying.

Esposito said it is difficult through Zoom and email. I think we've been doing our best and have solved all the problems that have come up to us.

Roberge said that she thought when we got the October 5th email that you were telling me that the files were being moved. It's not really fine. Did we get back to the gentleman at 8 Kittredge Rd?

Esposito said yes, that Crosby went up to look at the damage. It is a civil matter.

Berry added: in a drainage easement.

Roberge asked if we, as a Board of Selectmen respond to them? It is in the Town's Right-of-Way. The email came to us; we should respond.

Esposito feels that until we find out what needs to be done, we won't send a response.

Roberge asked if we will respond when we hear back from Crosby. Did 29 Old Amherst reach out or send a letter?

Esposito said that Crosby is looking into a guardrail and will get back to us with the best solution.

Roberge asked if large boulders could be placed there.

Esposito said that Crosby is evaluating that too.

Berry said that Advanced Paving will be in Town doing Riley Road and a patch on Frankestown Turnpike; can we do the new walkway at the McCollom Building?

Brown said that there should be enough money left in the Block Grant warrant article to cover the walkway.

Berry wanted to discuss the quote turned in by Crosby to move the diesel tank down to the highway garage so that it could be run by generator in the event of a power outage.

Esposito said he didn't think there was any money left to do it this year.

Berry suggested putting it in the 2021 budget.

Roberge remarked that the State shed is not that far away; we should prioritize things in his budget.

Esposito referenced an email he received about changing the time of Trick or Treat. Board were all in agreement to keep it set at 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm.

Roberge feels that "On Main Street" should have been left off the Library's Halloween flier. We had multiple meetings and many suggestions.

Berry explained that the Board went out of their way to say that we don't sanction Main Street Trick or Treat. It gives the impression that we are ok with Trick or Treat on Main Street where we clearly are not.

JoAnn Kitchel said that Bonnie Angulas did wonder about that post and will remove it from the flier. The majority of the houses don't like the 3 – 5 time frame. They think that your intention was misplaced. The Village people and lots of other neighborhoods are doing their own things and not paying any attention to your 3 – 5. The Main Street homes will be open from 3 – 8.

Roberge said that the Board is not looking to burden the townspeople monetarily or time-wise. I think our feedback from EMG MGT and the Health Officer was sound, and made our decision. People need to choose for themselves. Everything is fluctuating.

Cindy Raspiller said that what the Town posted was confusing. It said we are not sanctioning Halloween, but here are all the rules. You should clarify.

Howard Brown feels we are promoting kids coming from other towns.

Berry explained that we are relying on our Police Chief to keep us and our kids safe. He suggested strongly that we have Trick or Treat in the daylight. We made that decision in the interest of the Town. Not sanctioning of Halloween is in the interest of the safety of the taxpayers. I am sorry the kids can't Trick or Treat in the dark. We are in the middle of a pandemic.

Roberge asked if we could be done with this discussion. This is the 4th week we have discussed this. I don't think we are going to change anything – can we move on?

Esposito said that he agrees with what we've done, but everyone has the right to have a say.

Howard Brown asked if the Chief asked around to other towns to see what they were doing.

Berry said that he didn't know about that.

Roberge said that the Chief said that Trick or Treat was in the highest risk category.

Esposito stated that what we recommended was not a back-door approval of Trick or Treat.

Berry reminded everyone that the first discussion about Halloween, Heather Kennedy brought forth many options for celebrating Halloween. We decided to step back and not sponsor Halloween at all. We decided to listen to our Police Chief and our Health Officer. If I

had kids, I would be thinking twice about them being out there or being transported from town to town.

Kennedy said that one thing that is confusing is that there are now people leading candy collections. The Selectmen put out guidelines as to what to follow should they choose to. People are trying to collect candy for an event where there isn't one.

Roberge asked the Board if they want to address MACC.

Esposito explained that the Board got an email from Wilton today, but we haven't heard from Milford at all.

Roberge said that Wilton is checking with their Counsel. What kind of predicament does it put us in that we wouldn't sign the 2013 extension, but have signed the 2018 IMA? I would be happier signing the 2018 IMA with adjustments than an extension of the 2013 IMA. The director of MACC was asked to come up with annual changes to be made.

Esposito stated that Milford stagnated all infrastructure upgrades for many years.

Berry told the Board that the Heritage Commission got sworn in the Saturday before last and there are papers that need to be signed by Esposito and Roberge in the office.

Yeaton said that the front light on the porch of the McCollom building is out.

Esposito asked if the increase in absentee voters will make it easier for the in-person voters.

Yeaton said that there are approximately 2200 registered voters and there have been 500 requests for absentee ballots. So far, we have received 250 back.

Esposito asked what happens to the absentee ballots between when you get them and election day.

Yeaton said that the ballots don't get opened until Tuesday, and until then they are locked in the safe.

Kennedy asked if the exercise group could use the Town Zoom subscription, or should they get their own.

Brown said that she would probably be able to give them the password for the Town account.

Kitchel asked about her paper doll project. It's a community art project and she needs them colored in and passed in to her.

8:35 PM As there was no further business before the Board, Berry motioned seconded by Roberge to adjourn. All in favor. Berry; yes, Roberge; yes, Esposito; yes.

Respectfully submitted,
Laurie Brown