

**BUCKFIELD SELECT BOARD
TUESDAY, MARCH 15, 2022
MEETING MINUTES**

In Person and Remote Participation via ZOOM / 6:30 PM

CALL REGULAR MEETING TO ORDER AND DECLARE QUORUM

Roll Call / Declare Quorum start 6:31pm

Present: Selectboard Chair Cheryl Coffman, Vice Chair Cameron Hinkley, Selectperson Janet Iveson, Selectman Mike Iveson, Selectman Robert Hand, Town Manager Lorna Nichols, Penny Horsfall, Sun Journal Steve Sherlock, Charles, and Judy Berg, Cindy, Michelle, Eva, Katie Clukey, Cory Nicholson, Brax, Equity Buckfield, Allison Long.

Remote Meeting Participation Protocol

Public Comment Period (*the Board sets up to 15 minutes aside as a public comment period at the beginning of every meeting*). - None

OLD BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT. Town Manager Lorna Nichols gave an overview of the report, see attached.

RESCUE CHIEF. Chief Chip Richardson and the Town Manager provided information on a search for a replacement ambulance (used), which is gas and not diesel. The current ambulance has had over \$27,000 of work done to keep it operable and at this point needs to be replaced. The Town Manager sent information to the Board on the used ambulance available. Chip (and Selectman Robert Hand) explained that a new ambulance is projected to take 12-18 months after ordered. There are currently funds in the Reserve account for the purchase.

Selectman Hand made a motion to designate up to \$47,675 out of the Rescue Reserve Account to purchase and letter this ambulance, Selectman Mike Iveson second – vote – all in favor.

LAKE AUBURN WATERSHED COMMISSION Appointment (Action) Glen Holmes has put his name forward to be appointed to the commission.

Vice Chair Cameron Hinkley made a motion to appoint Glen Holmes to the Lake Auburn Watershed Commission for a term of one year, Chair Cheryl Coffman second – vote – four in favor, Selectman Mike Iveson abstained.

MINUTES of 3/1/2022.

Vice Chair Cameron Hinkley made a motion to approve the minutes of March 1, 2022, as written, Selectperson Janet Iveson second – vote – all in favor.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS: (Moved from other business)

Chair Cameron Hinkley discussed that there has been concerns expressed to him regarding the swearing in of citizens on the various committees. Lengthy discussion ensued whether it was necessary or not if they are volunteers?

Vice Chair Cameron Hinkley made a motion that any person appointed to a committee by the Select Board does not have to be sworn into office unless governed by law, Cheryl Coffman second – vote – all in favor.

WARRANTS: AP 36 (approved electronically)
AP 37 (approved electronically)

Payroll 3/2/2022, 3/9/2022 (approved electronically)

Vice Chair Cameron Hinkley made a motion to approve Payroll Warrant 3/2/2022 in the amount of \$9,290.51, Selectman Robert Hand second – vote – all in favor.

Chair Cheryl Coffman made a motion to approve Payroll Warrant 3/9/2022 in the amount of \$8,130.72, Vice Chair Cameron Hinkley second – vote – all in favor.

Selectman Robert Hand made a motion to approve AP Warrant #36 in the amount of \$26,602.98, Selectperson Janet Iveson second – vote – all in favor.

Selectman Mike Iveson made a motion to approve AP Warrant #37 in the amount of \$180,228.12, Vice Chair Cameron Hinkley second – vote – all in favor.

OTHER BUSINESS

COMMITTEES – Discussion, see above.

Judy Berg had a question if there had been any additional information or contact from the State Police on the missing Volume 1 of historical documents - there has not been any information.

The Town Manager discussed with the Board the June 14 or June 28 date for Annual Town Meeting timeline which had been distributed to the Board. The timeline that was distributed does not work in her opinion because of tight timelines and the work that still needs to be completed. Chair Cheryl Coffman asked if she had a recommendation, the Town Manager stated she felt more time was needed to get the numbers in order, the audit done (for FY 20-21 and FY 21-22) along with a Town Report for FY 20-21 and FY 21-22. She wanted to review the timeline with current staff to come up with recommendations. Lengthy discussion ensued.

Vice Chair Cameron Hinkley made a motion to rescind the original vote of June 14 for Annual Town Meeting, Chair Cheryl Coffman second – vote – all in favor.

Vice Chair Cameron Hinkley made a motion to push the date out to July 26, Chair Cheryl Coffman second – vote – vote failed.

Additional discussion.

Vice Chair Cameron Hinkley made a motion to push out the date to August 16, Chair Cheryl Coffman second – vote – all in favor.

ADJOURN

Selectman Mike Iveson made a motion to adjourn at 8:06 p.m. – Selectman Robert Hand second – vote – all in favor.

Upcoming Meetings: PB site visit Old Sumner Road subdivision March 30, 5:30 p.m.
PB Meeting March 30, 6:30 p.m.
Regular BOS Meeting Tuesday, April 5, 2022, 6:30 p.m.
Regular BOS Meeting Tuesday, April 19, 2022, 6:30 p.m.



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Town Manager's Report

March 15 Select Board Meeting

Financials

Fire/Rescue Building Refinance

I spoke with Lee Bragg who provided some insight and advice on the bond with Norway Savings. Norway is willing to reduce the rate from 4% to 3.5% which both Lee and I agreed was not in the best interest of the town. He indicated our regular banking partner Northeast Bank does not usually do this type of municipal financing and the institution who is most often the lowest and therefore processing the most of these is Androscoggin Bank. Lee sent me over some information about the financing with Norway and I have reached out to Androscoggin Bank to see what they may be able to do.

The following is from John at Androscoggin, 3/9/2022:

We've looked at this GO Bond and the pricing you have negotiated with Norway – 3.50% - is probably the best you are going to get in this market at this time for a 12-year note. I assume when you say they are willing to reduce the rate to 3.50% it is a fixed rate for the remaining term of the note. If it is other than that, then perhaps we can be competitive. I don't think we could beat that at 12 years.

We could do this, though. If we re-financed this for 12 or 10 years, we would look to convert the payment structure to annual payments commencing October 15, 2023 (assuming your tax bills go out in the fall). If this closed in March, it would mean you don't have to make a debt service payment in FY2022-2023 but would have an annual payment in FY2023-2024.

Another consideration is closing costs. If Norway can adjust this rate through allonge, the cost to the Town (legal work) should be slight (I would guess around \$1,500). But if you require a whole new note, the legal work would likely be twice that (maybe a little less because you already have authorization).

If you have interest in a proposal from us for 10 or 12 years structured as I describe here, please let me know. I cannot commit to a rate right now – the market is changing rapidly but we would do our best once you say go.

I hope this information is useful to you, and we completely understand if you stay with Norway at 3.50%.

Technology

TRIO – Discovery meeting held Friday, March 4 with me, IT Chris Sanborn and Colleen Halse in attendance, along with TRIO staff. We should have a 'play' environment up and running so that we have an online environment to begin testing/learning.

We have a new counter PC coming in which will free up that older PC to the Assessing Office.

The library had internet and PC issues March 5 which Chris and Colleen addressed with an on-site visit Monday, March 7. The main office had issues connecting with the server on one PC which Chris addressed and re-mapped remotely. Fire and Rescue are awaiting a site visit evaluation of their PCs for budgeting and planned upgrades for the town office are running as scheduled.

Boards/Committees

PLANNING BOARD: Meeting and Work Session held March 9. Minutes and other documents attached for your review. Site visit for Old Sumner Road is scheduled for March 30 at 6:30 p.m.

COMMUNITY DAY COMMITTEE: Janet Iveson and I have had discussions on bringing back Community Day. Maybe October (Columbus Day weekend). We will update the Board as we move along with any plans/feasibility.

Departments

Main Office

Our contractors (Candy and Cindy) will be with us until May 31 although Cindy has agreed to get us through end-of-year with NDS as a volunteer after May 31. With a planned go live date of June 1 (moved to June 15) for TRIO, the plan to run both NDS and TRIO simultaneously is still a go. We will close out the FY with NDS and begin work in TRIO only July 1. Colleen and I have been working on the necessary data and reports. RHR Smith has provided us with a list of reports and documents needed for end of year and Auditing.

It may be a good idea for the Board to explore a sharing of staff with other small town(s) to provide coverage for our Town Office a minimum of two days per week. The labor market is still very small, working with another town provides someone experienced. We should seek out at least one more person to serve as Deputy Town Clerk to provide the best coverage/service to residents.

Budget: I have received budget requests from both Public Works and Rescue. Penny Horsfall has graciously agreed to help on this to get information ready for the budget committee. Some things to keep in mind: fuel, electricity, solid waste costs are all increasing. Our comprehensive plan includes vehicle replacement which has never been implemented. You should see this included when we have data ready for budget/Select Board this year for Public Works/Fire/Rescue.

Assessing

Clint and assistant Colleen were in Saturday, March 5 to work on tax files – resolving some issues for residents, meeting with one resident, tree growth abatements are nearly complete. They will continue with deed work and getting information ready for Mike Hennessey.

Reval:

I explored billing options with KRT Appraisal with regard to their proposal for a full reval for us. They could potentially bill 1/3 now, 1/3 after July 1 and the remaining 1/3 after July 1, 2023, if voters approved. In addition, KRT has agreed to reduce the initial quote of \$150,000 for the full revaluation – started in 2022 and completed in 2023 by \$5,000.

We do have a reserve amount set up by voters in 2014 with approximately \$50,000+. I did pull and check with MMA Legal on the warrant article from 2014 which does not specify the funds being used for either a 'mini' or 'full' revaluation, so we are compliant in using the funds for this purpose.

In addition, I've begun working on information for residents about a reval, what it is, what Maine law says, etc. that I will send out to the Select Board and our current contracted assessor/assistant for review.

A discussion of using 'factoring' came up, this is NOT an option – although it is my understanding this has been used previously in Buckfield. Here is some information on that:

Factoring

Some assessors adjust the assessed values of all property in the municipality by a certain percentage (or certain percentages relative to certain types of property) in order to bring the municipality's assessment ratio into compliance with State assessment standards—a method known as “factoring.” For example, assume that a town did a full revaluation in 2010. The assessors have continued to assess new and existing properties according to the schedule of values used during the 2010 revaluation. In 2016, the assessors determine that the town's assessment ratio is approaching the 70% minimum assessment ratio required by § 327. The assessors determine that if an increase (a “factor”) of 30% were applied to both the real and personal property, the town's overall municipal valuation would more accurately reflect the 2016 market value of all taxable property in the town. Therefore, for the 2016 tax year, the assessors increase all assessments by an across-the-board factor of 1.3. The problem is that while the assessors have avoided dropping below the minimum assessment ratio by using this across-the-board method, they have not addressed and, in fact, may have compounded, any underlying inequities in the assessment scheme that might have existed. For Maine court cases discussing the use of a factor to adjust values on a neighborhood basis, see *City of Biddeford v. Adams*, 1999 ME 49, 727 A.2d 346; *Goldstein v. Town of Georgetown*, 1998 ME 261, 721 A.2d 180; *Town of Bristol Taxpayers' Assn. v. Town of Bristol*, 2008 ME 159, 957 A.2d. 977; *Stephenson v. Inhabitants of Town of Bristol*, AP-04-003 (Me. Super. Ct., Linc. Cty., Dec. 8, 2004).

Public Works

As of Feb. 28, 2022:

We have been out on 9 winter weather events.

Employees have kept busy between storms with shop and truck maintenance.

Sand: is holding well at this point unless March is a big snow month. We have roughly 800 yards left on hand.

Equipment: the 2009 International has been taken to P&A Mechanics of Hebron for repairs. Again, I want to thank the Board and the TM for assisting in the update of the 2007 International. It was a much-needed update. I have used the 2014 Freightliner – everything works well. I am hoping that going forward, we can work on a replacement plan for older trucks and equipment, so we do not have these kinds of issues mid-winter.

Summer Roads: We are looking forward to starting summer road work. We will have about 600 feet of road to repair on Jordan Road before paving can begin.

Weldon Lucas, PW Foreman/Road Commissioner

Library

Monthly update – N/A

Fire

Monthly update – N/A

Rescue

Monthly update – N/A

Our Rescue Chief has located a used ambulance that will serve the department and could be purchased with funds from the Rescue Reserve account. Chip will be on the agenda for the March 15 meeting to give additional information/discussion. I am including that information in your Board Packet for review.

Misc.

Connect ME Grant – attached for your review. I met with Mia from Community Concepts and one item of interest is the Broadband initiative we have all heard so much about. It is my understanding a committee existed but due to Covid, lost steam. The committee has now been resurrected and we have received an initial grant offer of \$4,000 to help with mailers, surveys, postage, etc. to explore the interest/feasibility of this project in our community.

Drew Brook Grant – award announcement letter attached for your review. We received word that we have been awarded \$120,000 in grant money for the Drew Book stream crossing project. I have reached out to Dirigo Engineering for plans as recommended by Alex Abbott. Weldon is reviewing the project budget to see if Public Works might be able to do this project to keep it at or under budget, so the Town does not incur any out-of-pocket expenses.



Respectfully submitted,
Lorna Dee Nichols