

**TOWN OF NEWFIELDS SELECT BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY JUNE 30, 2020**

Select Board Present: *Chris Hutchins, Michael Sununu & Jamie Thompson*
Others Include: *Ray Buxton, Colleen Durkin-Blackburn, Bobby Kelly, Jason & Nicole Michelson, Cathy Nelson & Nancy Taylor*

Call to order at 7:02 pm.

The Select Board reviewed and approved the following items:

Checks Dated	06/26/20:	Accounts Payable Manifest	\$15,559.80
Checks Dated	06/26/20:	Payroll Manifest	\$26,770.17
Checks Dated	06/29/20:	Accounts Payable Manifest	\$10,575.34
Checks Dated	07/03/20:	Accounts Payable Manifest	\$ 2,102.04

Ray Buxton and Cathy Nelson attended the meeting to discuss the Town Water Districts' interest in renting the Main Street Art Building once the space is vacated September 1st. Ray's intention is to move their equipment into the building and to utilize the space for monthly meetings. They will not need to use the garage space. Ray feels they only need half of the building, leaving the other half available for the Town to rent to another. Michael asked if they would be interested in purchasing the property if the Town decides to sell it. Cathy replied that it would have to be put in front of their constituents to vote on. After some discussion on the future possibility of selling the property to another individual, they all agreed a year to year lease would be the most appropriate option. The Board will write up a formal lease in July, but advised Ray and Cathy that they may have to wait until October 1st to move in.

Chris informed the Board of his discussion with Fire and Spice Bistro. The restaurant no longer needs anything from the Board. Their liquor license should be received by July 3rd.

The Board was informed of some wood rot on the Main Street Arts' garage door casings by Peggy Arend of Granite State Home Improvements when she was previously on site. She supplied the Town with an estimate of \$1,330-\$1,398 (wood or Azek). Michael felt the Town should get additional quotes to be fiduciary responsible. Jamie mentioned that if may not be cost effective as a formal notice is \$250. Michael suggested Sue getting verbal quotes instead. Jason Michelson mentioned a pro-referral program at Home Depot that connects outside contractors with individuals needing projects completed. Michael offered to go to Home Depot to put the Town project on the list.

The Board, who approved a reimbursement payment during the 6/16 meeting for Josh Lent's CCAC expense, was informed that the payment should have been for \$134.61 instead of \$118.44. Michael motioned, seconded by Jamie, to approve the payment of \$134.61. All were in favor and the motion carried.

The Board received a resignation letter from CCAC member, James Valentine. The Board will appoint a replacement at the next meeting.

Michael motioned, seconded by Jamie, to approve the purchase of partition panels for additional Covid-19 protection for the Building Inspector's desk at the Town Office. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Michael motioned, seconded by Jamie, to accept the language for the purchasing policy as written for both the verbal and written quotation, and be incorporated into the Town Purchasing policy. All were in favor and the motion carried. They also decided to have Brian, the Road Agent, come in to discuss the bid process and possibility of having a template written up that Brian can use on a regular basis to acquire bids for paving. This template may be changed, as needed. Michael mentioned the Town's 25yr paving plan which entails paving one mile of Town a year. Brian has been using Bell & Flynn for paving but the Board now feels they should send it out to bid each year in response to the Auditor's suggestions.

Michael advised the Board that the Town's insurance policy does include a \$10,000 coverage for volunteers. The insurance representative asks the Cemetery Committee to maintain a record of the individuals volunteering, including the date and tasks being performed.

Michael also advised the Board of his confirmation with Tom Rogers that the Select Board were made agents of the Sidewalk Trust Fund in 2003. This will allow the funds to be dispersed in accordance with the Select Board's vote at the last meeting.

Michael then informed the Board of his discussion with the Brian who authorized usage of Town shed for storage of the bridge's light posts. Brian suggested finding an alternative storage place as the salt might cause damage to the light posts. The Board will discuss alternate possibilities with Brian at the next meeting.

The Board reviewed the Covid-19 expenses incurred to date by the Town which will be offset against the State's \$40,000 CARES Act grant given to the Town for Covid-19 related expenses. Jamie asked if the Board would pay for a computer for Brittany, the Supervisor of the Checklist, to continue on-line training due to Covid-19. Michael was okay with it, and suggested Brittany price out items needed and bring it before the Board. Jamie asked Bobby to email the Board with any expenses he incurs.

The Board acknowledged the Lamprey Regional Cooperative Financial System Statement.

The Board reviewed the June expenditures. Michael believes the State's Rooms & Meal Tax revenue for the Town will be only half of the usual amount resulting in an approximate \$40,000 shortfall.

The Board discussed the recent email from Attorney Derek Durbin regarding Winkler Way. Michael will reach out to Derek on July 1st to remove the \$2,000 for cistern, but will leave the \$5,000 in penalties.

Colleen asked if the Board intended to make an anti-racism statement.

Jason spoke of his belief that some residents may not approve of the Board making a statement on behalf of the Town without a vote from residents to ensure it was reflective of the Town as a whole.

Chris explained to those present that each of the Board members made statements during the last meeting which are publicized in the minutes. He went on to say that while the Town of Exeter has made statements they were made by individuals of the Board, not as an official town statement.

Jamie read the following statement:

Whereas, racism and death continue to plague our country despite many pleas for change;
and
Whereas, we were deeply saddened and alarmed by the recent killings of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, and express our sincere condolences to their families.
Whereas, “Equal Justice Under the Law” is a phrase engraved on a pediment in front of the United States Supreme Court; and
Therefore, as public servants, we wish to affirm our commitment to the values of equality, justice, and inclusion for all residents in our community, regardless of race, creed, religion or ethnicity.
We also acknowledge that the creation of a safe and welcoming community is a collective effort and we encourage all residents to participate fully in town proceedings and elections to ensure all voices are heard.
We know that as we come together, we can create a stronger community built on trust, safety, and inclusion for all.

Chris read the following statement:

In the US, in the Pledge of Allegiance we commit our lives to the pursuit of liberty and justice for all. The phrase, “for all,” is inclusive, non-discriminatory. “For all” means we aim to provide and protect liberty and justice for all individuals, regardless of gender, race, economic status, political ideology or religious background. To preserve liberty and justice for the privileged few is indicative of shallow theology and uninformed patriotism. While we are blessed to enjoy the privileges of freedom, many around the world still live under tyranny and can only dream of liberty and justice. These past few weeks should serve as a reminder that we must pledge ourselves to continue to work for liberty and justice for all persons in the future.

Jason was concerned that some people in Town may read Jamie’s statement and believe the Town is taking a position, whereas, Chris’ statement is more constitutional.

Bobby and Colleen conveyed their appreciation for both statements.

Chris continued, stating the Board previously expressed support of Chief Liebenow's statement and added that discussions with the Chief regarding police policies, procedures and training that have taken place.

Michael reaffirmed his position regarding this issue. He does not believe it's appropriate for any Board Member to make a formal statement on behalf of the Town. Their job, as non-partisan officials, is to run the Town. Making statements for the Town is not part of the job. There are numerous political issues that he could find universal consent in Town – pedophiles in the church, human trafficking or the sex/drug trade which certainly impacts the State in various ways and forms, but does not believe a board member should make a statement individually, nor as a whole board, on behalf of the Town. If one wishes to speak on behalf of this issue, there are numerous ways to engage the community to talk about this issue or any other issue. They are more than welcome to have a public forum in Town Hall.

Michael went on to say, the loudest voice is the voices of the citizens, not the government. When the voice of the government is loud, the citizens have no rights. It's in places like North Korea, Venezuela and Cuba, where the government will tell you how to think and has positions about political issues. While he was not disagreeing with the statements read by Jamie and Chris, he does not feel it's appropriate as an elected official, and therefore, will not support them.

Colleen went on to express her opinion that by the Board not making a statement, they were in fact making a statement. She cautioned the Board that not making a statement would carry more risk politically, and make it more of an issue than making a statement.

Michael countered that she was making his point. If the interpretation of him not making a statement is perceived as a political statement by someone in the public, then clearly something is wrong with the idea of the Board making, or not making, statements about what he perceives to her point, as political issues.

Nichole asked Colleen what the risk is for the Board to remain neutral and went on to say this issue is very polarized; a lot of it is far to one side. It is a very fine line from where the Board needs to stand so what is the risk of not saying anything?

Colleen said there could be a perception that the Board does not support the anti-racism efforts so the opposite is to support.

Jason asked Colleen, if the Town says something, we're not racists, but if they don't we are racists? In a town forum, to make a statement turns it into a political thing.

Colleen replied that it is a community representation. Our members of the Board are elected to represent our community so it is not speaking for individuals, it is speaking to the mission of the Town which is to foster a positive community.

Jason agreed with fostering a positive community, but believes pulling racism into it adds negativity. One should not have to say they are not racist to prove they are not racist.

Chris informed those present of some very rude and insensitive comments made by people who joined via the WebEx platform during the last meeting. He was not appreciative of the comments – no one knows anything about his background. He has two Jamaican/African American nieces. The comments received were unacceptable but he has made his personal statement and is comfortable with it.

Michael stated that if anyone in Town thinks his reluctance to say anything about this issue has anything to do with, outside of the principals that he has expounded, not only in the last two meetings, but over his 20 years in this Town then, in his opinion, shame on them. Obviously, they have not engaged him about this issue, not spoken to him, or listened to the way he has addressed this issue consistently throughout his time in this Town. If Donna believes there is a political risk because he is reluctant to make a statement, he thinks it says more about her, than him. He's been very clear and consistent in the way he approaches not only this issue, but dozens of other issues like this that has come before this Town; whether a conservative, or liberal issue, he does not find it appropriate. It is not what the Town body should be doing. It opens up a world of mischief and one may end up with someone on the Board, with whom they vehemently disagree; one who will feel cavalier about making statements of which many people disagree.

Michael does not want to speak for the Town. He speaks for himself. It is not appropriate for him to make what he perceives as political, social statements or any subject of the day. His job is to manage what goes on in this Town. He cannot effectively do his job if, at the end of the day, people are viewing him through a political prism. It will make not only his job harder, but the next person.

Michael is willing to bear the political risks, but the problem is not on him, it is on those who do not care to listen to what he has said about this, and dozens of issues like this, throughout the last ten years.

Bobby, Jamie and Chris continued to reiterate their views. Then the Board moved on to discuss the Covid-19 grant application. Michael offered to review the application within the next few days.

The Select Board decided on the following dates for upcoming meetings:

July 14th

At 8:19 pm, Chris motioned, seconded by Michael, to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Kisha Therrien