

TOWN OF DIXFIELD
Minutes of Meeting
Board of Selectmen
Monday, July 15, 2013
5:00PM, Ludden Memorial Library

Board Members Present: Malcolm Gill, Robert Withrow, Scott Belskis, and Dana Whittemore. Absent: Hart Daley.

Administration Present: Linda Pagels-Wentworth (Town Manager), Richard Pickett (Police Chief), Craig Woods, Public Works

Citizens Present: Walter Newman, Dan McKay, Norine Clarke (Recorder of Minutes).

Non-Citizens Present: Representative from H. P. Fairfield, and Richard Morrison from Morrison-Sylvester.

Press: WVAC tv 7, Matthew Daigle, Lewiston Sun

1. Call Meeting to Order: Chairman Gill called the meeting to order at 5PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance

2. Chairman Gill asked the Board to consider taking item 7. a of the agenda out of order as a courtesy to the representatives of Morrison-Sylvester and H.P. Fairfield. Mr. Withrow made a motion to move item 7 a up in the agenda, seconded by Mr. Belskis, all in favor.

Discussion about the purchase of the new snow plow followed. TM Pagels-Wentworth said that all bids that came in were similar but Morrison-Sylvester has a truck ready to be fitted with plow and body. Other bidders would be 3 months from an order now which would put it into the season for the need of the truck. In that case, about \$6000 worth of repairs would need to be done to the old truck. The HP Fairfield representative said that this truck can be fully outfitted in 45-60 days. Mr. Morrison said that the available truck is similar to the one the town purchased five years ago. Mr. Woods reported that he recommended that they sell the old truck except for the rear tires and radio.

Town meeting vote was that no more than \$150,000 be borrowed. With the use of reserve funds, the total cost of \$158,772 can be met.

Motion by Mr. Withrow to purchase the truck from Morrison-Sylvester and the stainless steel body from HP Sylvester, seconded by Mr. Whittemore, vote 3 to 1 with Mr. Belskis abstaining.

The representatives left with a verbal agreement.

3. Approval of Minutes

Chairman Gill hearing no errors or omissions declared the minutes accepted as presented.

4. Approval of Warrants and Payroll

Hearing no objections, Chairman Gill announced that they would be accepted as read.

5. Department Head Reports

a. Police Report Richard Pickett, Chief

1. There was a recent burglary in East Dixfield. Copper and tools were taken from an unoccupied home which in the process of being renovated. Value of the loss is \$60-70 thousand. Police do have a suspect.
2. Cost of ammunition used for qualification is high. Chief Pickett was able to purchase enough to last for at least 2 years and possibly part of the 3rd for just about \$200-300 more than last year's cost.
3. Officer Anne Edmunds contacted the Operation Sunshine citizens and made absentee ballots available to them for the last election.
4. The downtown highway repairs project is underway and efforts are being made to keep traffic moving as efficiently as possible.
5. The Special Olympics policeman's run was held recently. Participants were Chief Pickett and his wife, Officer Howe, Darlene Brann. Donations to the Special Olympics are the only charity that police officers can solicit for and donations are welcome and encouraged.

Mr. Belskis questioned Chief Pickett about agency assists. A Mexico Officer may see an infraction in Mexico and follow the perpetrator into Dixfield to stop them. Mr. Belskis said people were asking him if Mexico and Dixfield were already sharing services. Chief Pickett said nothing has changed and that the two departments have always backed each other up especially in domestic cases.

b. Town Manager's Report

1. Mr Withrow has already started to survey citizens living in the CDBG grant area on North and High streets. He went on a Saturday morning and had good response. Mr. Gill will be doing Pine St. and Mr. Whittemore said he could do Coburn Ave. in an evening.
2. On the list of older tax acquired properties there are two who are making payments. With the passage of time, the minimum bid to cover the town's cost is probably to high on some of the properties. There are some of the properties that require some safety attention which is the responsibility of the town and should be attended to. Rules for acquiring and disposing of tax lien property is well spelled out by the state.

3. Secure mailboxes for the Selectmen are now available at the Town Office.
4. The Auditor will be back on September 20, 2013.
5. Angela Varnum started work at the Town Office Monday, July 15, 2013.
James Scott started as a seasonal worker for Public Works during the week of July 8, 2013.
6. Dates for RSU 10 School Budget meetings are included in the selectmen's packets.
7. Three thank you notes have been received from Scholarship recipients.

6. New Business

a. Farmington Maine is a sister city of Lac Megantic scene of a terrible explosion. A request was made for donation of funds. The town has no budget for items of that type and the Town Manager suggested maybe the Economic Council might be approached.

b. Consideration of placing an item on the Special Town Meeting Warrant to see if the town will vote to offer a "Tax Club Plan". The plan consists of a coupon book which works similarly to a Christmas Club. The taxpayer makes monthly payments based on the year's tax bill. This plan must be agreed to annually at a Town Meeting. Because this year has already begun, the taxes will be divided into 10 payments instead of 12. Payments may be made by check or cash at anytime whether a taxpayer has signed up for the "Club" or not by participating in the tax club. No interest payments are assessed in either direction. There was general agreement by the Selectmen present that this was a good plan for citizens who would like to budget. Mr. Belskis suggested that people might ask to pay water and sewer in a similar fashion and that maybe it should be researched. The Town Manager said that there might be PUC regulations involved. The Town Manager noted that citizens can make payments of any amount at any time toward sewer and water bills. Mr. Withrow asked how citizens would be notified about the club plan. The Town Manager suggested that perhaps a letter accompany the tax bill, newspaper items and WVAC- TV 7 among other ideas. Mr. Gill mentioned that cash flow improves with money coming in monthly.

Mr. Belskis made a motion to put the item on the Special Meeting Town Warrant as written on page 15 of the Selectmen's packet. Seconded by Mr. Whittemore. All in favor.

c. The "Pace" Ordinance as spelled out on pages 24-28 in the Selectmen's packet was discussed as a good opportunity for Dixfield citizens to be able to borrow money for making their homes more energy efficient at low interest

rates. In order for citizens to be eligible, the town must accept the ordinance. There is no cost to the town.

Mr. Withrow made a motion to put the ordinance on the warrant for the people to decide. Mr. Whittemore seconded. All in favor.

d. Four positions in the Town Office require bonding. Three of them are held by the Town Manager. Theresa Hemingway holds the fourth because her title is Welfare Director with the Town Manager having the title of Deputy. If the Town Manager and Mrs. Hemingway swap titles, then only one person needs to be bonded and \$240 would be saved on insurance.

Mr. Whittemore made a motion to reverse the titles and cancel the bond on Mrs. Hemingway the motion was seconded by Mr. Withrow. All in favor. The selectmen then signed the appointment paper for Linda Pagels-Wentworth as Welfare Director. She will appoint Mrs. Hemingway as Deputy.

e. A General Assistance Hearing must be held annually. Prior to the first meeting in October was suggested by the Town Manager. Mr. Withrow made a motion to hold the hearing then and it was seconded by Mr. Whittemore. All in favor.

f. The group studying the possibility of having an outside source do an inventory of the three towns for the purpose of seeing what Municipal resources could be shared has met once and had one conference call. The cost for the source to do the full assessment would be a total of \$24,000 for the three towns. The question is whether the towns can do some of the assessment themselves and/or whether the cost could be pro-rated.

Mr. Belskis asked about the AVCOG "LEAN" program and whether some of the needed information could come from them. The Town Manager said that she will contact AVCOG and Maine Municipal Association.

h. Notification of the new hires was done under the Town Manager's report.

7. Old Business

a. Moved to beginning of meeting.

b. Corrections to the Warrant were noted by the Town Manager. Mr. Withrow made a motion to accept the Warrant as corrected and it was seconded by Mr. Belskis. All in favor.

The Warrants were signed.

c. The Safety and Return to Work Policy that was tabled at the last meeting was brought up and discussed. This Policy will be good for the Employer and the Employees. There was an earlier Policy but this version changes the make up of the committee and adds two employees to the list. Mr. Belskis volunteered to be on the committee.

Mr. Withrow made a motion to accept the policy and it was seconded by Mr. Belskis. All in favor.

8. Correspondence and Public Comment

- The Sewer Treatment received a notice from DEP about I/I issues and contacted Dixfield for a report on their status. Ted Berry will respond to the inquiry.
- A Friday in August will be the meeting with the Police Union Unit so that the town attorney can be present.
- The letter to the State which allows the Town to receive road assistance funds was signed.
- Black Mountain has sent a letter requesting funding. It was suggested that it be referred to the Economic Council.

Public Comment: Dan McKay

On last June's ballot, there was a straw poll about changing from a town meeting format to a referendum. Mr. McKay asked if it would be addressed and was told that the Selectmen will address it and an ordinance will have to be written. He also asked if it would be on an agenda. The Town Manager replied that Mr. Belskis had just brought it to her attention that morning. However, the board would need to vote to proceed and to begin drafting the required ordinance for town meeting consideration.

Mr. McKay also said he would like to be an advocate for the local taxpayers and requested that consideration be given to some form of local "homestead exemption" for long-term residents.

The town manager said there may be legal implications because all taxpayer must be treated equally and the state laws will need to be checked. She will investigate.

9. Board Questions/Comments

Mr. Belskis said that he had talked to the Town Manager that morning about calculating the tax rate. She reported that the Town would receive 65% of the expected revenue sharing and that the school budget will be less, not more so things look more optimistic than they have. This also allows the overlay to go to \$34,000. It appears that the tax rate will decrease slightly.

Mr. Whittemore commented that people would like to see the rate stay the same or go down. He also questioned if the Selectmen were meeting often enough. The Town Manager noted that there will be meetings other than the regularly scheduled ones. They should meet on July 29, 2013 at 5:00 about the tax commitment and there is a workshop coming up.

Mr. Belskis made a motion to meet on July 29 and it was seconded by Mr. Whittemore. All in favor.

10. Next Meeting

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 12, 2013 at 5:00 PM.

11. Executive Session

At 6:20 PM, Mr. Whittmore made a motion to go into executive section to discuss Labor Relations under 1 M.R.S.A. §405 (6)(D). Seconded by Mr. Belskis. All in favor.

At 6:45 PM, Mr. Belskis made a motion to reconvene the regular session. All in favor.

At 6:55 PM Mr. Belskis made a motion to adjourn. All in favor.

Norine H. Clarke
Recorder of Minutes

/nhc

Attachments