

**Town of Boscawen
Select Board
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, October 19, 2023 at 6:00 PM**

In Attendance: Matt Burdick, Lorrie Carey, Bill Bevans, Katie Phelps, Kate Merrill, Kellee Easler, Alan Hardy & Jason Killary

Roll Call: completed and guests introduced.

Chairman Matt Burdick called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Consent Agenda Items:

- P&L, Balance Sheet, Check Manifest & Payroll
- Public Minutes for Approval—10/12/23
- September Treasurer's Reports
- Public Safety Advisory Committee Statement
- Conservation Appointments—Cousens and Carrier

Selectwoman Lorrie Carey noted grammatical changes to the 10.12.23 public minutes.

Selectman Bill Bevans motioned to approve the Consent Agenda as amended. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. All in favor. None opposed.

Scheduled Guests & Hearings: Town Administrator Katie Phelps presented the first order of business: a nonpublic session under RSA 91-A:3 II (a) for an employee exit interview.

Selectwoman Carey motioned to enter a nonpublic session at 6:02 PM under RSA 91-A:3 II(a). Seconded by Selectman Bevans. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Selectman Bevans motioned to exit a nonpublic session under RSA 91-A:3 II (a) at 6:13PM. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Selectman Bevans motioned to seal the nonpublic minutes under RSA 91-A:3 II (a) as it could affect adversely the reputation of any person other than a member of the board. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Mr. Alan Hardy, Chair of the Conservation Commission, spoke to the Board about Walker Pond. He asked the Select Board if they would be willing to include a warrant article to designate the Walker Pond land as a Town Forest. Selectwoman Carey inquired about the benefits of making Walker Pond land a Town Forest. Mr. Hardy said it would be a managed town forest that provides them with another layer of protection. Selectwoman Carey referred to past discussions about securing Walker Pond as a public resource when it was owned by the Penacook-Boscawen Water Precinct. There were concerns that the town might acquire Walker Pond, only to have

future Select Board's attempt to sell the land for housing. Selectwoman Carey asked if the current proposal would address those concerns. Mr. Hardy noted that conveying a town forest at the Select Board level would be much harder. Chairman Burdick mentioned that this has been an ongoing, in-depth conversation for several months in the Conservation Commission meetings. Most of the Commission members were in favor of the proposal because it would secure the property and make it more difficult to sell off in the future. Mr. Hardy said that the reason the discussion took longer within the Conservation Commission was because some members would like to involve a third party. Mr. Hardy suggested holding a public hearing before the Town Meeting to discuss the proposal. The Conservation Commission would be willing to provide support throughout the hearing process. Selectwoman Carey clarified that Walker Pond, as a town forest, would be managed by the town Conservation Commission rather than Fish and Game or a third party. Mr. Hardy added that it would no longer be directly managed by the town. Selectwoman Carey suggested that designating Walker Pond as a town forest at this point would make sense. If the voters decide they want a third party to manage it, that decision could be made at Town Meeting. Planning and Community Development Director Kellee Easler pointed out that the town has a Town Forester that helps manage other properties as well. Mr. Hardy noted that the Conservation Commission heavily relies on Town Forester Charlie Niebling's expertise and recommendations for their projects. He considered Mr. Niebling a valuable asset and mentioned that the original recommendation came from him. Mr. Hardy also pointed out that, as a town forest, it would not only serve as a conservation resource but would also be eligible for funding through the Town Forest Fund. Mr. Hardy noted that the resources mentioned in earlier discussions about it becoming a town forest last year are now unavailable due to the ongoing discussion. Chairman Burdick asked if it would open up more resources to move forward with the pump house which is associated on the land. Mr. Hardy stated that the pump house was the Conservation Commission's top priority. He emphasized the importance of obtaining the land beneath the pump house. One of their major concerns is parking space, which needs to accommodate both vehicles and vehicles with trailers. The second major issue was that the pump house did not have a roof. The roof was located in the basement. When it rains, the area becomes flooded. Mr. Hardy said the Conservation Commission would like to continue to work on the project to remove the pump house and determine the necessary steps. Selectwoman Carey asked if the Commission would be doing any trail development. Mr. Hardy mentioned their plans to work on trail development over the winter. They intend to bring in some experts to use their knowledge and suggestions. Chairman Burdick asked what would happen with the fire tower. Mr. Hardy said it was a Fire Department resource. It was done with the permission of the Precinct at the time. There has been no discussion on it and to Mr. Hardy's knowledge, it was not being utilized. He noted if it wasn't there, it could allow another parking spot. Chairman Burdick suggested it could also be a view spot if there was a way to secure the upper level.

Mr. Hardy noted the Commission has not been able to move forward on the dam issue because Surveyor Web Stout said they would like to do the shooting when there will be no leaves on the trees. Mr. Hardy said he will be back to discuss a plan on how to move forward with the Courser family in Webster.

Chairman Burdick motioned to approve adding a warrant article to designate the Walker Pond land as a Town Forest. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Department Head Updates: At the last meeting, Finance Director Kate Merrill spoke about applying for another tax anticipation note. She received information that last year, the town did a \$4 million tax anticipation note. FD Merrill spoke with Treasurer Tama Tillman, and they agreed there was no reason to increase it. The tax anticipation note would be a one-year fixed note, the fees would be waived, and it would be 5.25% on advancements. FD Merrill noted it was high because Franklin Savings Bank was paying the town a higher interest rate, so it has to be above what they're paying the town. Chairman Burdick agreed with a \$4 million tax anticipation note. He clarified for the public that the money was a safety net. FD Merrill noted it was for cash flow. She said you cannot spend more money; it is used to spend the money that was appropriated prior to tax revenue coming in. No further discussion.

FD Merrill gave an update on tax rate setting. She reached out to the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) and asked where they were in the process. The DRA representative said that Merrimack Valley School District has not entered any information into the portal. She suggested that FD Merrill reach out to the MV Business Administrator, Hilary Denoncourt. FD Merrill emailed Ms. Denoncourt on Tuesday but has not heard back yet. She noted that this happened last year and was the reason they were late setting the tax rate. FD Merrill hoped that if it continued to get deferred, that MV would allow them to push payments back until they can set a tax rate like they did in 2022.

Last week, FD Merrill received the 2024 Social Security Cost of Living release and notified the Select Board. She was looking for a decision from the Board on what action to take. Chairman Burdick suggested deferring the decision until next week's meeting since they just approved the wage schedule and need time to review it. Selectwoman Carey noted the COLA provided pertained to Social Security. Chairman Burdick mentioned that last year's Social Security COLA was added and then removed. FD Merrill said there has been a lot of discussion on the NH Government Finance Officers Listserv. Someone had asked for a COLA measurement and what was sent around was Social Security. FD Merrill noted there was no other metric to use mentioned in the Listserv. Selectwoman Carey mentioned that cost-of-living-adjustments are typically different in different areas of the country. She stated that New Hampshire had an extremely high cost of living increase compared to its neighbors (VT, MA, and ME). She suggested researching local metrics as opposed to the Social Security Administration. Discussion ensued. Selectwoman Carey suggested researching into Merrimack County's cost-of-living increase. FD Merrill will ask the NH Municipal Association for their data. Chairman Burdick mentioned per Salary.com at 1.4% increase from a year ago. The Board deferred the COLA decision to next meeting.

FD Merrill presented the 2024 Primex Renewal information. She noted that the numbers may not be the final numbers. Primex has offered payment holidays. As of now, the information pertains to what Primex plans to bill. FD Merrill reviewed the increases. For 2023, Workers

Compensation was \$18,429 and for 2024 it will be \$21,872. Unemployment was \$821 and for 2024 it will be \$1,301. FD Merrill pointed out that the unemployment cost looked like it decreased from last year because they compared the prepayment holiday. Property and liability costs are going from \$50,706 to \$58,863 in 2024. The total increase was \$12,080. Chairman Burdick asked what the effect would be if they sold some town owned properties. FD Merrill said there would be no effect until they update their exposures prior to doing the calculations. Selectwoman Carey asked if the increases were based on experience. FD Merrill will research further.

FD Merrill presented ARPA and Capital Reserves transfers for approval.

Selectwoman Carey motioned to approve the Trustees of the Trust Funds to transfer \$1,500 from the Parks and Recreation Building Capital Reserve Fund to the General Fund to reimburse for the following expenditures: Dempro Construction, Invoice # 5358 for Asbestos testing. Seconded by Selectman Bevans. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Selectwoman Carey motioned to approve the Trustees of the Trust Funds to transfer \$45,845.95 from the Police Cruiser Capital Reserve Fund to the General Fund to reimburse for the following expenditures: MHQ, Invoice # 1204114 for the purchase of the new cruiser. Seconded by Selectman Bevans. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairman Burdick motioned to approve the Trustees of the Trust Funds to transfer \$592 from the Town-Wide Safety Capital Reserve Fund to the General Fund to reimburse for the following expenditures: Electronic Security Protection, Invoice # 5118 for the wireless power dual motion detectors. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. All in favor. None opposed.

Selectman Bevans motioned to transfer \$4,800 from the ARPA Fund to the General Operating Account to reimburse expenditures previously approved to support upgrading the existing HVAC systems. Seconded by Chairman Burdick. All in favor. None opposed.

Selectwoman Carey motioned to transfer \$1,040.21 from the ARPA Fund to the General Operating Account to reimburse expenditures previously approved to support Human Services (Backpack Program). Seconded by Selectman Bevans. All in favor. None opposed.

PCD Director Easler gave a Board of Health update. She spoke with a liaison from the State of NH about the limited amount of free COVID-19 tests. She ordered 25 of them to distribute to Department Heads for their staff to take home. PCD Director Easler noted there will be a limited amount allowed from the State so people may have to buy them. Chairman Burdick noted that the Federal Government announced a few weeks ago that they would allow up to 4 tests per household. Police Chief Jason Killary confirmed the tests were available for free through the government but was not sure on the limit.

PCD Director Easler noted they need to make decisions on 20 High Street moving forward. She has been working on a new Order to Vacate. Tomorrow she will add and remove conditions as well as review building inspection items. Selectwoman Carey questioned the progress of 20 High Street. PCD Director Easler said there was progress, but it was time to update it. She noted they can discuss further details in a nonpublic session, if necessary.

Selectwoman Carey asked for an update on the other health matter with the freon. PCD Director Easler said they have not received any further complaints. Police Chief Killary noted the individuals have been separated for a while, so the issue diffused itself. He stated the clean-up process has not started.

PCD Director Easler and PCD Clerk Kara Gallagher will be attending the NH Economic Forum on Wednesday, November 1 from 8AM to 2PM. The Planning & Community Development office will be closed while they attend training, but they will open at 3PM when they return.

TA Phelps gave an update on the outstanding Perambulations. Mr. Charlie Niebling was waiting to hear from Concord City Surveyor Paul Gendron to schedule the perambulation between Boscawen and Concord. TA Phelps is waiting for an update regarding Webster's perambulation. Selectman Bevans noted he was working on it. No further discussion.

TA Phelps presented the 4th quarter sewer warrant for approval and signature.

Selectwoman Carey motioned to authorize Town Clerk Nicole Hoyt to collect the charges in the list committed to her, amounting in the sum of \$57,828.90 with interest at 8% per annum from November 29, 2023, thereafter on all sums not paid on or before that date. Further ordered to remit all monies collected to the Town Treasurer or the Town Treasurer's designee as provided by RSA 41:29-6, at least on a biweekly basis or daily whenever tax receipts total \$1,500 or more. Seconded by Selectman Bevans. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

TA Phelps gave a quick update on Commercial Street. She met with EPA Representative Dorrie Paar last week virtually, and they are moving forward with the archaeological survey for the site. It appears that the Archaeologist has time this November to complete the survey. TA Phelps said they should be receiving paperwork shortly to start the process.

TA Phelps brought up the week of Thanksgiving for discussion. There is a Select Board meeting scheduled for Thursday. The office is closed that day for Thanksgiving. She asked if the Board would like to move the meeting to Wednesday, November 22nd or cancel it for the week. Chairman Burdick suggested cancelling the meeting the week of Thanksgiving.

Chairman Burdick motioned to approve cancelling the November 23rd Select Board meeting. Seconded by Selectman Bevans. Roll Call Vote. Two in favor. One opposed. The motion passed.

TA Phelps presented another Tree Stand request for the Boscawen Town Forest. She presented the release form signed by the individual and dated with an expiration of December 31, 2023.

Chairman Burdick motioned to approve permission for Riley T. Linehan to post a tree stand in the Boscawen Town Forest, with an expiration of December 31, 2023. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

It was also agreed that the tree stand would be removed by the expiration date.

Selectman Bevans questioned a septic lien at 435 High Street. He asked if the property owners had paid for it yet. PCD Director Easler deferred it to Town Clerk Hoyt or the tax kiosk.

Chairman Burdick opened public comment at 6:50 PM.

FD Merrill spoke about Thanksgiving Week. She said historically the Board has closed the Town Municipal Office at noon on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving.

Chairman Burdick motioned to approve closing the Town Municipal Office at noon on Wednesday, November 22nd. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairman Burdick closed public comment at 6:51 PM.

Non-Public Sessions:

Chairman Burdick motioned to enter a nonpublic session at 6:53 PM under RSA 91-A:3 II(c). Seconded by Selectman Bevans. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Selectwoman Carey motioned to exit a nonpublic session under RSA 91-A:3 II (c) at 7:00PM. Seconded by Selectman Bevans. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Selectman Bevans made a motion to seal the nonpublic session under RSA 91-A:3 II (c) as it would affect adversely the reputation of any person other than a member of this board. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Selectman Bevans motioned to allow PCD Director Easler to draft and send out a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Municipal Assessing Services. Seconded by Chairman Burdick. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Selectwoman Carey motioned to enter a nonpublic session at 7:00PM under RSA 91-A:3 II(c). Seconded by Chairman Burdick. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairman Burdick motioned to exit a nonpublic session under RSA 91-A:3 II (c) at 7:11PM. Seconded by Selectwoman Carey. Roll Call Vote. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairman Burdick mentioned to Police Chief Killary that there was a pick-up truck with a canopy tent posted up on the corner of Commercial Street for months. It was also previously parked at the Park and Ride for an extended period of time. He asked what the pick-up truck was and how long they should anticipate it staying. Police Chief Killary said the individual has been displaced from their home due to legal issues. The individual has been very respectful and cooperative. Police Chief Killary said the last information he had was that the individual was hoping to have the legal situation resolved. He did not know the timeline of it. He predicted the individual would be gone before the winter months. Discussion ensued. Police Chief Killary noted he has not received complaints from any property owners. He only received one complaint about the general appearance of the truck. Police Chief Killary mentioned there were laws protecting homelessness, but he will look into it and get an update.

Next Meeting: Thursday, October 26, 2023, at 6:00 PM.

Selectman Bevans motioned to adjourn at 7:20PM. Seconded by Chairman Burdick. All in favor. None Opposed.

Respectfully submitted by Hannah Gardner