

MINUTES

**SELECTMEN'S MEETING
TOWN HALL**

**July 17, 2023
6:30 PM**

ATTENDEES:

Selectman Troy Merner Selectman Leon Rideout Selectman Shane Beattie
Town Manager Benjamin Gaetjens-Oleson Charity Baker Michael Nadeau
Department Heads Members of the Public Phlume Media

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Selectman Troy Merner.

DEPARTMENT HEAD UPDATES –

Police Chief Tim Charbonneau reported Kyler Kenison gave his notice and has worked out that notice. They are looking for another employee. The block party is coming up and they are very busy. The department is down 2 full-time employees at this time.

Fire Chief Randy Flynn mentioned they took delivery of the new ambulance and are in the process of putting it together for the State transport inspection. The department responded to 143 transfers, 55 911 calls and a half dozen fire calls. The equipment and trucks have been tested and inspected with no major issues.

Librarian Barbara Roberts reported the summer programs are underway. The exterior window sills are rotting and Commonwealth has been hired to replace them. She also mentioned they will need parts of the roof replaced.

Recreation Director Eli Vincent reported they are busy with their summer programs. They have opened Safe Haven sign-ups back up. Swimming lessons filled up fast. He thanked the highway department for the work they have done prepping the ground work for the new playground. They are waiting for the equipment installers to complete the project. They have been working with the trails group to get the trails at community camp cleaned up and the group has some grant money to assist with that project.

APPOINTMENTS:

Dan Benoit didn't make the meeting. Ben mentioned he wanted to come and discuss the violation letter that was sent which addressed land use and State level violations.

Kevin Davis and Jeff Martin of Norwich Solar are proposing to put up a commercial solar array on (North) Main Street and wanted to discuss the possibility of a payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) agreement to stabilize the taxes on the project. The plan is to build a one-megawatt solar farm. Mr. Davis mentioned other communities have approved PILOTs. They would like to request \$3,500 a year in tax treatment for a 20-year period.

Leon mentioned he would like more research done before a decision is made.

Rob Christie asked what would the assessed value of the facility be. Mr. Davis mentioned it will cost around \$3,000,000 to build a one-megawatt array.

Ben mentioned they can enter into a PILOT agreement however there needs to be a public hearing before there is an approval. He thinks there is an opportunity for more discussion between the developer, Norwich Solar and the board. He asked the board if one of them wanted to take part in the discussion or do they want to drop the subject all together. Leon would like to take part in further discussion. Mr. Davis and Mr. Martin were in favor of meeting in the next couple weeks to go over the process and answer any questions the board may have and possibly draft a PILOT agreement to present to the public. Troy asked if there was a timeline for the project. Mr. Davis mentioned ideally, they would begin building next spring.

Ben asked for their input on the Community Power discussion and if there was any way for the town to buy power directly from their facility. Mr. Davis did mention it possibly could be done through a power purchase agreement and they are certainly interested in talking more about that.

Alan Savage was present to discuss the transfer station fees. He asked the board if they were going to consider opening the transfer station back up on Tuesday nights until to 7 p.m. for the summer months. Ben mentioned, he has not heard any concerns from the public regarding the new hours and he feels a more set schedule is better for the town and causes less confusion.

Alan asked why they stopped taking non-town bags at the transfer station. He doesn’t understand why they need to stop taking them all together when a penalty is being assessed when someone dumps a non-town bag. Leon explained, taking non-town bags was in violation of the town ordinance. Alan asks the board to look at the ordinance and update it to allow people to bring non-town bags and charge them an additional charge. There was discussion regarding the disposal of C&D, town bag program and recycling.

OLD BUSINESS:

- Review and approval of the July 3, 2023 meeting minutes.

Motion made by Leon and seconded by Shane to accept the July 3, 2023 meeting minutes. All in favor. Motion carried.

- Sign paperwork –
 - The board signed the PA28 Inventory of Taxable Property form indicating if the Town will not be utilizing the form for 2024.
 - Intent to Cut – Valerie Griswold, Tax Map R23, Lots 18-3 & 18-4. Acres of lots – 54. Acres to be cut 30.
 - Fireworks permit was signed for Patricia Steady and William Buck at 35 Winter Street.
- Rules of Procedure – Ben created a draft Rules and Procedure for board meetings and reviewed some of the highlights. He mentioned if the Board would like to look it over and make a final decision at the next meeting. The board had a couple change recommendations which Ben will update for the next meeting.

- Community Power – At the last meeting Leon asked to table in order to obtain more information. Ben suggested creating a Community Power committee (Energy Committee) which will create a community power ordinance to be approved by the Board of Selectmen and the PUC before presenting it to the public at town meeting. Ben has already had individuals approach him expressing interest in becoming a member of the committee.

There was discussion on whether or not the Community Power program should be an opt-in or opt-out program. It was mentioned the recommended method is an opt-out program. Leon stated he has never been in favor of an opt-out program and would really like to see an opt-in one.

Ben mentioned Lee Ann Potter is interested in serving on the energy committee and also the Planning Board.

Leon asked how many members are required for the energy committee. Ben believes when he started with the town the existing committee had only 4 members. He feels there should be an odd number.

Motion made by Leon and seconded by Troy to formulate an energy committee composed of 5 members, one of which will be a board of selectmen member. All in favor. Motion carried.

- Ben reported that Lancaster is doing well as far as any storm damage. The only substantial issue was that a couple beaver dams broke and flooding occurred in Indian Brook and some of the mobile homes in the park had no power as Eversource felt it needed to be shut down. The culverts on Depot Street and Country Village Road handled the flooding well.
- 44 & 50 Depot Street – The land once belonged to the railroad and was sold off separately from the existing buildings. The land is currently owned by BP Realty and the buildings are now owned by town through a tax collectors deed issued in August 2022. The previous owner, Paul Richardson, has passed away and his widow has expressed no interest in the property. Ben recommends reaching out to the land owner to see if they are interested in purchasing. He would like to confirm that is the direction the board wishes to proceed. Shane mentioned he would like to participate in the discussions regarding the change in ownership. Ben mentioned he did find out that the board has the authority sell the property without going to public bid.
- Ben mentioned that the tax deeding date is August 18th and if they have any questions regarding any of the parcels to be deeded, please reach out for the answers. At the next meeting they will need to decide whether to sign a deed waiver or not on each of the parcels.
- Acceptance of Unanticipated Revenue – The police department was awarded an Office of Highway Safety grant for DUI and text & drive details in the amount of \$6,600. It will only cover overtime.

Motion made by Leon to accept the unanticipated revenue from an Office of Highway Safety grant in the amount of \$6,600.00 and to authorize Town Manager Benjamin Gaetjens-Oleson to sign any and all documents with regards to the grant. All in favor. Motion carried.

- Permit Study – John Garrison and Kathy Jean Lavoie have been working on a study to determine if the fees being charged for permits is covering the cost of issuing them. John reviewed the study which included a chart showing how Lancaster compares to surrounding communities. Copy of the study attached. There were no decisions by the board at this time.

INFORMATION:

- Zoning Board monthly meeting notice for July 26, 2023 @ 6:30 p.m.
- Land Use permits –
 - Lancaster Historical Society, 226 Main Street – replace wall-sills along south face and a section of the north face
 - Joseph & Patricia Larsen, 94 Elm Street – Construct metal 3-car carport over existing parking area
 - James & Lisa Hampton, 8 Rowell Road – Interior renovations of existing 16’x20’ kitchen
 - Thompson Mill Properties LLC, 40 Canal Street – Demolish water damaged bathrooms and reconstruct two ADA bathrooms with toilet and sink, installation of floodplain-compliant delivery/loading ramp, exterior brick replacement, installation of hard-wired kitchen exhaust fan, smoke & CO detectors, installation of 2-hour fire rated walls in kitchen
 - John & Deborah Garrison, 194 Elm Street – Demolish and replace with PVC in same FP existing 8’6”x30’ & 9’x36’ wide deck(s) & railings; addition of 2’x10’ bumpout to accommodate a grill, all on wooden supports/pylons
 - Nicolas Ferrante, 93 Stebbins Hill Road – construct wood-framed poly-covered greenhouse on sonatubes, no utilities.
 - Sharen Robertson, 55 Buffalo Road – Construct stick-built 12’x20’ deck/platform on blocks situated on gravel pad
- Zoning Board Notice of Decision – Variance approved with conditions for Gregory and Lynette Westcott, Tax Map P05, Lots 67 & 69.

Public input – Rob Christie recommended the board open discussions that would end with a decision by making a motion at the beginning of the discussion in order to allow for open discussion before a decision.

He would like to have a chance to review the draft rules and procedure and wondering if it can be posted on the website for review. He appreciates that the agenda will be available ahead of time.

As far as the energy committee, he is happy to hear they are favoring the opt-in option instead of the opt-out. He was concerned that a specific company would become the default provider.

Rachel asked what happens next with the permit fees study. Leon mentioned the board will take a close look at the presentation and will make a decision at a future meeting.

Motion made by Leon and seconded by Shane. All in favor. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted, Board of Selectmen Date: _____

Charity M. Baker

Troy Merner

Leon Rideout

Shane Beattie