

Approved

Town of New Boston Selectmen's Meeting April 4, 2022

<u>PRESENT:</u>	Donna Mombourquette	Selectman
	David Litwinovich	Selectman
	Jennifer Brown	Selectman
	Paul Branscombe	Town Administrator

Assistant to the Town Administrator Laura Bernard, Bruce McKim, Jared Keyes, Road Committee Chairman Mark Debowski, Road Committee member George St. John, Conservation Commission member Barbara Thomson, Karen Scott, Kaleb Jacob, Bill McFadden, Roger and Lori Noonan and one or more additional members of the public were present for all or part of the meeting.

A. CALL TO ORDER: A regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order by Donna Mombourquette at 6:00PM beginning with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Select Board recognized former New Boston Bulletin Editor Brandy Mitroff with a moment of silence after her recent passing. Brandy and her late husband Jack published the New Boston Bulletin and were active in the Fourth of July Association. Brandy was also very active in the Finance and CIP Committees, often bringing a very keen eye to line items. She was also affectionately known as the “fourth Selectman.” The Select Board wish Brandy and Jack to rest in peace.

Consent Agenda- The Selectmen reviewed the April 4, 2022 consent agenda. David moved to approve the April 4, 2022 consent agenda items including payroll, Accounts Payable and other signed official documents including appointment of Robin Winslow as an Alternate Library Trustee and Jared Keyes to the Open Space Committee, and reappointment of Matthew Beaulieu to the CIP Committee, David Woodbury to the Open Space Committee, David Kent, Willard Dodge and Thomas Miller to the Forestry Committee, Christopher Hall and Helen Fanning to the Recreation Commission and George St. John to the Road Committee. Jennifer seconded the motion. All were in favor. 3-0

Jared Keyes introduced himself and his interest in the Open Space Committee noting he grew up in VT where he helped preserve town gardens. He moved to New Boston four years ago and is interested in joining the Open Space Committee to help preserve New Boston’s open land and rural character which attracts many residents to the town. The Select Board thanked him for his interest.

B. PUBLIC FORUM:

Donna noted the Board always welcomes public comment and feedback. There are two opportunities for public comment, one at the beginning of the meeting and then another at the end. Comments will be confined to issues on the agenda only. The Board asks that if you have issues or questions that need to be brought before the Board, please fill out a request to appear form and send it to the Town Administrator beforehand. Upon review of the request, you may be placed on a future meeting agenda. Anyone with a comment is asked to comment as per the rules for live meetings and state your name and address for the record and that comments be respectful and thoughtful. The Board will listen, but public comment is typically not back and forth. Seeing none, Donna closed the first session of public comment.

C. NEW BUSINESS:

Item 1: Discussion Regarding The Road Committee: The Select Board reviewed the status and purpose of the Road Committee. Jennifer and David noted it and its members are valuable. David would like improved communication between the Select Board and the Road Committee with specific outlined expectations and noted it may be valuable to the Planning Board as well. The Select Board considered if the Road Committee should be a subcommittee of the Planning Board and will ask the Planning Board about this. The Select Board does not want the Road Committee to repeat the relationship issues that occurred last year. The previous Road Committee also had issues and was discontinued. Surrounding towns do not have Road Committees. Expertise is available to the town when needed from NH DOT, elected representatives, SNHPC and the town engineer but more may be needed in the form of a Road Committee. The Select Board will continue to consider this item. George St. John was reappointed to the Committee under Consent Agenda in error as the agenda had been changed prior to the meeting. His appointment will be tabled. The Planning Board is meeting April 12, 2022 and may be able consider the Select Board's request then.

Item 2: Roger Noonan-Abutting Easement: Roger and Lori Noonan were present to meet with the Select Board to discuss concerns with a proposed subdivision at map 1 lot 50 as outlined in their March 30, 2022 letter to the Planning Department. The Noonans farm the property with an encumbrance as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm and Ranch Preservation Program and there is a Conservation Easement on the property. The federal government and the Conservation Commission paid for the land to allow farming to continue there. Roger reviewed the deed registered at the Hillsborough County Registry of Deeds at Book 8234 Page 2074. Originally, three building lots were planned to be allowed, but this was reduced to one building lot when the Russell Foundation became involved with the transaction, creating the Conservation Easement and causing the appraisal to be based upon that determination which calculated the amount the town Conservation Commission/Open Space Committee (\$100,000) and federal government/ U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm and Ranch Preservation Program (\$164,500) paid for the easement. The appraisal would have been lower if three house lots had been allowed. He noted the currently proposed subdivision is an issue for his family that they are working to resolve with the Planning Board and the Trust proposing the subdivision, and that it may also be an issue for the town and federal government as they paid more for the land due to only one allowed building lot. The Select Board requested this be reviewed by town counsel.

Item 3: Resident Request To Purchase Town-Owned Land: The Select Board considered a resident request to purchase town-owned land. They requested an opinion from the Planning Board and will consider the request further.

D. OLD BUSINESS:

Item 4: Approval of Public Minutes of March 21, 2022: The Select Board reviewed the Public minutes of March 21, 2022. Jennifer moved the Public minutes of March 21, 2022 be accepted as amended. David seconded the motion. The motion carried. 3-0

E. OTHER BUSINESS:

Item 5: Town Administrator Report: Paul reported the following:

- This is the beginning of Paul's fourth week as Town Administrator. He has almost completed meeting one-on-one with employees, has traveled the roads with the Highway Crew, and visited the Transfer Station and Fire Station. He plans to visit the Police Station Wednesday and met the newly hired officers who the Chief is excited about.
- Primex (Workers' Compensation & Property/Liability Insurance):
 - PRIME: The completion of this formerly ten-step, now six-step program enables the Town to obtain an annual discount (usually 5%) on insurance premiums. In 2017 New Boston completed nine of the ten steps but did not comply with Temporary Alternative Duty (TAD). This exercise will be revisited and it will be discussed at the next Department Manager meeting as the program will now begin. This has caused the town to lose almost \$14,000 in insurance premium discounts over the years. TAD is the Law for employers with five or more employees. The nature of TAD is that it is temporary and transitional and intended to return the employee to work.
 - Risk Management review of the Fire Department: Paul visited the Fire Station and immediately became concerned noting violations such as uniforms stored too close to apparatus. He has asked Primex to carry out a Risk Management study of the Fire Department in May so the town can use this report to demonstrate the need for the desperately needed new building including overnight quarters and a Chief's office that the current station does not have.
- Step & Grade scale: Paul noted the Police Department wage scale should be separate from the rest of the town Departments due to the potentially dangerous nature of the job requirements. Promotions and increased rankings are also available in the Police Department. The Police Chief presented a good plan to the Select Board when presenting the recent new hires. Paul recommends removing the Step and Grade Plan for all other Departments and replace it with an Entry level/Minimum and a Maximum wage for each employee position, and pay rate increases based on achieving goals set during the review process as he is concerned that there currently is no incentive to reach goals or increase work effort if an employee knows that he or she will get a wage increase based on the Steps each year. The Select Board requested more information after the Department Manager meeting April 19, 2022. Paul has begun preparing a wage scale compared with local towns to be presented at the Department Manager meeting for input. The Select

Board is looking forward to reviewing what he has prepared before approving this proposal.

- Performance Evaluations: Human Resources Director Laura Bernard and Paul have reviewed the current performance evaluation forms and agreed to continue using them. This will be reviewed at the Department Managers meeting scheduled for April 19, 2022 where Department Managers will be asked to set goals for themselves and their staff from that date through the Fall performance evaluation. Going forward, pay rate increases will be based on evaluations/performance and not on steps. Laura reviewed the history of the pay increase and evaluation process as, prior to nine years ago, there was an entry level wage for each position and two evaluations were held each year to review employee progress and determine pay increases based on performance. Training for Department Managers to review how to perform effective evaluations is planned.
- Merit Pools: Paul requested the Select Board consider approving Merit Pools for each Department which would enable the Department Head to give to deserving employees. The Select Board looks forward to more information on this proposal.
- Personnel Action Form: A new all-encompassing form will be introduced to keep personnel changes simple for all interested parties, replacing forms previously used.
- Howe Bridge Project: The Road Agent plans to begin this project in late April early May with Continental Paving handling the paving as approved by the Select Board when they agreed to a three-year involvement for the Town with this vendor. He did contact Shattuck Paving regarding the membrane, and they said NICOM (formerly A. D. Rossi Co.) would be the specialists to handle this part of the project. The Finance Director confirmed funds for this project would come from Warrant Article #14 for \$106,000.
- Dougherty Lane Bridge: The Highway Department is surveying homeowners on the road to learn if they would like the Bridge re-opened. The Select Board noted the Fire Department may have some concerns accessing the area if the bridge is not reopened.
- Local Bridge Funding: Paul contacted Municipal Highways Engineer C.R. Willeke at NH DOT to discuss engineering needed for the Tucker Mill and Gregg Mill bridges that are on the NH DOT list for funding as part of President Biden's Build Back Better program.
- SAU 19: Paul met with Superintendent Brian Balke and Business Administrator Scott Gross to discuss the relationship between the Town and School District. All hope to work together closely going forward.
- Resignation of Eric Dubowik: Paul met with Fire Inspector Eric Dubowik recently and learned Eric was planning to send his resignation, but Paul met with him again and he plans to only resign from the Building Inspector position he was handling. Paul will meet with him again this week to confirm this encouraging news.
- Job Posting: The Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer/Health Officer position is posted. Town officials are considering hours for this position and the Finance Director confirmed funds are available.
- Town Office Phones: Twin Bridge Services will install the new townwide phone system in the Town Hall tomorrow beginning at 3:00 pm. The phone system has been switched over in all other town departments.
- Energy Committee meeting: Paul will participate in the Committee's monthly virtual meeting April 5, 2022 at 6:30 pm.

- Middle Branch Road: Paul recommends the Select Board instruct him to respond to the resident of Middle Branch Road who requested the road be paved.
- Public acknowledgement to Steve Sears: New Boston resident Steve Sears was concerned as the Town Administrator Hiring Committee did not review Paul's resume. Therefore, Steve contacted a Wilton business owner to confirm Paul's credentials and subsequently posted the flattering reply on social media.
- Paul discussed open legal matters with town counsel and no concerns were noted.
- The Planning Board sent a memorandum regarding an error on the Lyndeborough Road Bridge project. Paul will meet with Town Engineer Kevin Leonard Friday and Kevin plans to prepare a lengthy explanation of what happened, the reason it occurred and the cost it caused the town.

Item 6: Select Board Reports:

David reported the following:

- Planning Board meeting of March 22, 2022:
 - The Board conducted a successful site walk April 2, 2022 for a proposed 3-lot subdivision at Colburn and Francetown Roads.
 - The Board approved a lot line adjustment on Weare Rd.
 - The Board continues to review an application for an outdoor event venue at Byam and River Roads.
 - Next Planning Board meeting April 12th.
- Fire Station/Safety Complex Committee: After the vote, the Committee sent out a survey to get voter feedback on why they voted in favor or against the safety complex. The Committee is planning to meet next week to review the results and determine a path forward.

Donna reported the following:

- Solid Waste Advisory Committee: The committee's new Select Board Ex-Officio member is Jennifer Brown.
- Broadband Committee: The committee has not met for some time as it is awaiting Consolidated Communications to discuss its plan for fiber for New Boston. This presentation to the Select Board and is anticipated during the April 18, 2022 meeting. A recent satisfaction survey was posted on Facebook to which 75 people responded.
- Donna proposes to change from a calendar year to a fiscal year which would begin annually in July. There are many benefits to this proposal that will be discussed at an upcoming Select Board meeting. This is done in many towns.
- Other Activities/NHMA: Donna is a member of the NHMA General Administration and Governance Committee which met on April 1. This committee discusses and plans for potential legislation to assist municipalities. She will attend the NHMA Local Officials Workshop tomorrow.
- She requested changing the June 6, 2022 Select Board meeting to June 1, 2022. This will be considered at the next Board meeting.

F. PUBLIC FORUM:

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Karen Scott of Dane Road asked the status of her Application for Appointment to the Road Committee. The Board noted they are in receipt of the application but are not making nominations to the Road Committee pending further consideration as noted above. Karen also noted Paul noticed concerns with the current Fire Station including the lack of overnight quarters. Karen noted surprise as she has not heard that the Fire Department was changing to full time status. The Select Board thanked her for her comment.

George St. John of Butterfield Mill Road was present to discuss the following:

- He has been involved with the Road Committee periodically over the past forty-five years. He noted a long-term road maintenance plan is needed to add to the CIP Schedule to repair neglected roads. There is also a concern that there are many subdivisions in town with roads that were never planned for continued road maintenance. This was a major goal of the Road Committee along with determining other areas of continued road maintenance and possibly road construction by the Highway Department. He recommends a group involved effort to be successful. The former group made recommendations to the Select Board that may or may not have been implemented. The current Committee members put in a lot of time that seems to be disregarded, the determinations affect the tax rate and all parties need to be involved including the Road Agent/Highway Department.
- He noted the Dougherty Lane bridge is important to the town as a second egress in case of flooding blocking other roads in the area. The footings are stored at the Highway Department. George recommends reinstalling the bridge.
- The Board thanked him for his comments.

Kaleb Jacob of Fraser Drive was present and noted he was present when the Road Committee disbanded a few years ago, when the Chairman noted it was being disbanded as the town had acquired a professional Road Agent and the Committee was no longer needed. Kaleb noted the situation with that Road Agent did not end well and he recommends the Road Committee continue to exist. He feels the current issue is clashing personalities and the Road Committee does not get along with the current Road Agent. Kaleb does not attend Road Committee meetings but hears about them, he has seen the Road Agent present at Select Board meetings several times and believes the problem is the two entities do not get along. He recommends the Select Board work this out. The Select Board thanked him for his comment.

Seeing no further Public Comment, Donna closed the second session.

ADJOURNMENT: Jennifer moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:13 PM. David seconded the motion. All were in favor. 3-0

Prepared by Maralyn Segien

**Next Scheduled Meeting: Town Hall Conference Room April 18, 2022 (6:00 PM)
7 Meetinghouse Hill Road- New Boston, NH 03070
Phone: (603) 487-2500-www.newbostonnh.gov
Handicap Access available**