

North Berwick Board of Selectmen Minutes June 16, 2020

NORTH BERWICK BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES JUNE 16, 2020

Present: Chairman Cowan, Selectman Galemmo, Selectman Johnson, Sr.,
Selectman Johnson, Jr., Selectman Hall

Also Present: Dwayne Morin

Chairman Cowan opened the meeting at 6:30 pm.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Review and Approve Minutes of June 2, 2020

Selectman Hall stated that the sentence at the top of page 4, the sentence currently reads, “They need a qualified staff person teaching certification and they need an educational technician.”. It should read, “They need a certified teacher and they need an educational technician.”.

Selectman Galemmo motioned to approve the minutes of June 2, 2020 as amended. Selectman Johnson, Jr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

3. Public Input

There was no public input at this time.

4. Unfinished Business:

A. Budget FY21: Discuss Budget for FY21, Town Meeting Discussions

Dwayne Morin stated that our Zoom Public Hearing will be held next week regarding discussion of the budget. All of the newsletters have gone out and he has not heard any comments or received any questions about the budget.

Dwayne stated that we made the budget with our excise tax and have surpassed what we needed. In terms of taxation collection, we are running about \$20,000 behind last year’s numbers. He stated that this is still pretty good. We are currently at \$239,000 and at this time last year, we were at \$210,000. He believes that we will be in good shape by the end of the year. Dwayne stated that, on our revenues, we have met every budget except for Transfer Station. He stated that the Transfer Station met the budget on a whole but there are a few things that we were a little under. We stopped taking returnables, so we have lost some revenue in that area. Selectmen Galemmo asked if they had started taking the returnables again and Dwayne said that they had not. Dwayne stated that they are not taking anything that our staff has to play with, so they are not taking any clothes and have closed the Free House. Chairman Cowan asked when they anticipated opening the Free House again. Dwayne stated that they are just waiting to see

how much longer the pandemic lasts. The house is so small, and they don't want too many people in there at once. Dwayne stated that if people drop off some clothes, Richard keeps them outside for a couple of days and then he brings them in. The lady that usually picks them up is not doing that right now. They are deciding on what they are going to do with them.

Dwayne said that usually when we start our year, we have the budget in place including putting our salaries in place. He stated that he is still going to move forward with the salary increases that the Board approved back in January. He said that, one of the things that they were going to do with this year's budget was to move our insurance from a 75/25 split to an 80/20 split. He needs to know if the Board would still like to move forward with that at this point. He has included a copy of a letter in their packet for what he will send out to the employees. He stated that it is only about \$1,000 difference. The Board agreed to move forward.

Selectman Hall motioned to move forward with the new insurance split and approved the letter to be sent to the employees. Selectman Galemno seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

B. GWRLT: Discussion on Negutaquet Conservation Area Parking Lot

Dwayne stated that he is still waiting on Great Works. They sent him an email stating that have determined what they need. They have received their DEP permit. However, they are now trying to figure out if they have enough money to complete the project.

C. Assessing: Discuss Value Adjustments for FY21

Dwayne stated that, at the last meeting, they talked about raising our values up by 10% of what they are. When they did that exercise, the results were not very good. He stated that they did not account for the shift. As our value grows, our BETE percentage goes down. The shift was so bad that, out of our 2,500 properties, only about 5% of them would have seen a tax decrease. Everyone else would have seen a tax increase and a lot of them would have been significant increases.

Dwayne said that they went back to the original plan to raise it 5% on land and 5% on buildings. When they did this, we gained \$14.2 million in new value from the valuation and we gained \$9.18 million of actual new value that includes new houses, new buildings and so forth. He stated that they already knew our personal property number. It decreased about \$1.3 million. Our Homestead Exemption is going up to \$25,000. Our BETE went up significantly because of Pratt. Dwayne stated that in looking at all of these figures, it looks like we can lower the tax rate to \$11.90. We can actually be anywhere between from \$11.50 to \$12.05. If we pick \$11.90 it will give us about a \$350,000 overlay.

Dwayne said that by choosing the \$11.90 rate, of the 2,471 properties 82% will see a decrease or no more that a \$25.00 increase in their taxes. He said that 326 homeowners or about 13% will see an increase between \$25.01 to \$100.00. Also 120 homeowners or about 5% will see an increase of over \$100.00. Dwayne said that all of the 120 were new building permits. It means that they added something to the property so they should anticipate that they will have an increase in taxes anyway. He said that the majority of them are on the lower side of \$100.00.

Dwayne said that last year's numbers were actually worse than these. For a decrease to \$0 there was 1,282 properties or 59% and for \$.01 to \$25.00 was 16.35%. This made for a total of 75% that were \$25.00 and lower, and this year's numbers show a total of 82%. For the \$25.01 to \$100.00 we were at 17.7% and this year we are at 13%. Last year, at the \$100.00 and over we were at 7% and this year we are at 5%. Dwayne stated that they did some tests on 5 random accounts to see what would happen. Of those 5 accounts, all of them decreased. He stated that the ones that are increasing the most are the ones with a lot of land.

D. COVID-19: Town Reopening Plan, Utilization of Parks for Organized Sports

Dwayne stated that things are going pretty well. They do want to change a few things in the front. They are looking to put up a new sign in the front that will be more permanent. He showed the Selectmen a picture of what the new sign will look like. He said that it will basically be a 4 x 6 banner that will be mounted on plywood. There is a place on the sign that states to push the doorbell for service. They will put in a wireless doorbell and add a Google Assistant in the office so they can interact with people as they sit outside. It will have the information regarding social distancing and face masks. It will also have all of the necessary information that people need to know about registering vehicles, boats, ATV's and trailers. He will install it on the little island out front. Selectman Johnson, Sr. asked if there was going to be some kind of cover over it so that when the snow comes down, it won't do anything to it. Dwayne stated that it will be a vinyl sign and if it gets ripped or torn, he can just get another one. He doesn't want to spend a lot of money on a more permanent one.

Dwayne stated that there have people who have asked if they can use our fields for active sports. A college would like to use the fields to practice soccer and lacrosse on our fields. Noble Travel Soccer has also asked to rent our fields. He would like to know if the Selectmen would allow this. Selectman Johnson, Jr. asked if they would have to sign some sort of liability form in case any of them get sick. Dwayne said that they would have to sign some sort of liability contract. Chairman Cowan asked if this would require additional maintenance by us. Dwayne stated that they would not use any of the facilities. They are only going to use the grass fields. Selectman Johnson, Jr. stated that Noble Soccer usually has to have their own port-a-potty. Dwayne said that they would be allowed to use the port-a-potty that is out there now. We clean those weekly. Chairman Cowan asked if we would have to increase the frequency of the cleaning if more people would be using them. Dwayne stated that they were just using the field for practices and not for games so there shouldn't be any big crowds.

Chairman Cowan asked if we were going to charge a fee for the use of the fields. Dwayne stated that we do not charge fees for the use of our outdoor facilities. Selectman Johnson, Jr. stated that they should consider charging a fee for the college to use it. Chairman Cowan agreed. She feels that college students may use the port-a-potty's and we may need to clean more often. She doesn't want us to incur more costs. Dwayne stated that he does not anticipate incurring additional costs if we did it. Selectman Hall stated that if it is a private college that wants to use the fields than we should charge them a fee. Selectman Johnson, Jr. said that if they use fields anywhere else, he is sure that they will have to pay a fee. Chairman Cowan stated that she does not want the general feeling to be that anyone can come and use the fields for nothing. Selectman Galemme said that there is also the chance that they could tear up the fields.

Selectman Hall stated that he doesn't want to start charging any youth leagues, but he sees no issue with charging a private college.

Selectman Galemmo motioned to allow the use of the fields at the Community Center under the proviso that none of our facilities are used, they are responsible for the striping and lining of the fields, that private non-youth organizations will pay \$1,500.00 per season and the town will have no liability. Selectman Hall seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

Dwayne brought up the Transfer Station again. He asked the Board if they had any desire to open the Free House or start anything else up at this time. The Board all agreed that they could hold off.

Dwayne said that people have been wondering what the State is going to do with the \$1.25 billion that they received from the Federal Government. The State is allowing municipalities to go out and apply for grants for some money from it. The unfortunate part is that it has to be for costs incurred after June 6th. The applications need to be in by next Monday, so it doesn't give us much time. He stated that it will be more for towns that have large business in it which we don't have. It is to get money for local business assistance, physical distance and public health support and for public education activities. Dwayne stated that he will be able to get money back for the sign that he is doing out front. He stated that he will get more money from FEMA because we can collect for things like PPE supplies. We will probably get a couple thousand dollars from that grant.

Reminders: Next Board of Selectmen's Meeting – July 7, 2020 – 6:30 pm
Town Meeting Public Hearing – June 23, 2020 – 6:30 pm Zoom Meeting

5. New Business:

A. Public Works: Award Pavement Bid for 2020-21

Dwayne stated that he went out and got pricing for our paving for next year. He got a bid from Libby Scott and one from All States formerly known as JP Carroll. He stated that Libby Scott was by far the lowest bid. Their prices ranged from \$74.90 to \$76.90. All States pricing was \$86.50. He is recommending that we award Libby Scott with our paving bid.

Selectman Johnson, Jr. motioned to approve the bid from Libby Scott for next year's paving. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

Dwayne stated that they are going to start the Dennett Road project next week. After the budget passes, they will move on to the other projects.

B. Surplus Equipment: Establish Pricing on Used Equipment for Bid

Dwayne stated that they have received their new plow truck so they can put the old truck out to bid. He has had some people show some interest in it. He spoke with Mike to ask about pricing. The last truck that we put out for bid in 2010 at an amount of \$5,000. It had a sander and we sold that separately for \$3,500. Mike told him that the value was probably between \$7,500 to \$10,000. Mike told him that he would recommend starting at \$7,500. Dwayne said that it had 250,000 miles on it, and it does have a front and side plow with it.

Selectman Galemмо motioned to put the truck out to bid for \$8,500. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

C. Planning Board: Request to go Back to ZOOM Meetings.

Dwayne stated that the Planning Board would like to go to ZOOM meetings only starting in July until they feel comfortable having in person meetings. He stated that he has had 3 Planning Board members express concern. He stated that 2 of them said they would definitely not come and 1 said they would come if they had to but would prefer not to. Dwayne said that 2 of them are because of family health reasons. He told them that ZOOM meetings are kind of a way around the law but with being in a pandemic now it is accepted for now. He said that he will not run their meetings. They will have to have one of their members set it up and run it. Chairman Aleva said that he would run it.

Dwayne said that it will not be easy for the Planning Board. We have just received applications for 5 major projects that will be reviewed by the Planning Board this summer. Selectman Johnson, Sr. asked if the members are able to get copies of the plans. Dwayne said that they can pick it up at our drop box. He stated that it will be a learning curve for the Board because most people when they are Zooming, they are looking at their computer and their plans are on the computer. Roger told him that he will make copies and drive them around to all of the members if needed. Selectman Hall stated that this is a volunteer Board and we have a hard time filling these positions. He would hate for someone to leave the Board because of this. He stated that if they want to do ZOOM and the Planning Board Chairman is comfortable running the meeting, he has no problems with allowing this. Chairman Cowan said that she just wants to make sure that they can manage it and give the projects the proper attention that they need. Dwayne said that these projects also need to go through Underwood Engineering and Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission for review so there will be extra eyes reviewing them. SMPDC will also be part of the ZOOM meetings.

Chairman Cowan asked if they had mentioned how long they wanted to do this. Dwayne said that they did not.

Selectman Hall motioned to allow the Planning Board ZOOM meetings for 3 months and revisit it again at that time. Selectman Galemмо seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

6. Other Business:

Selectman Hall asked if our Police Officers carry both a side arm and a taser. Dwayne said that they did. Selectman Hall also asked if they had a shotgun in the cruiser. Dwayne said that they have a shotgun in the cage and an assault rifle in the trunk. Selectman Hall asked what other weapons they had access to. Dwayne said that is everything as far as weapons. They also have body cameras. We were one of the first Police Departments in the State of Maine to have their officers wear body cameras. Chairman Cowan asked if we require it for all of the officers. Dwayne stated that it is mandatory. Selectman Johnson, Jr. asked if they just turn it on when they go out on a call. Dwayne stated that it is on the entire time that they are on shift. Selectman Hall asked how long the body camera footage is stored for. Dwayne said that they just got a new computer with a huge hard drive and he believes that they save it for a year. At the end of every shift, they download the data into the server downstairs.

Dwayne did tell the Selectmen that our officers do not do choke holds. It is not taught at the Academy. Our officers are trained to diffuse the situation and not encourage the situation. He stated that all of the officers that he knows are appalled at what has happened nationally. Dwayne said that the tasers are always first and weapons last. Selectman Hall asked if the assault rifles were purchased through a grant. Dwayne said that we have had them for a long time, and he is not sure. He believes that it was a grant or something like that and that the taxpayers did not pay for them. He stated that the assault rifles have never been used except for target practice. He said that in all of the years that he has been here, he can probably count on both hands the number of times that they have discharged their firearm. They have used them more to kill deer along the road. The tasers have been a godsend. They have had 3 people attempt suicide by cop. All 3 times we tasered them and all 3 are still alive today. Dwayne said that, with this next budget, all the officers will have a taser and the reserve officers will share. Right now, there are 2 of them and we rotate them. Selectman Johnson, Jr. asked about the charging and other costs associated with them. Dwayne said that they are square packets that they plug in to recharge. They also have extra supply of them downstairs.

Chairman Cowan asked about the COVID cases and if we were now allowed to know how many cases were in our town. Dwayne said that they list it by zip code. We have had 6 cases and have had no new cases since the numbers came out a couple of weeks ago.

7. Review and Approve Warrants and Correspondence

Warrant:	June 9, 2020	- \$	0.00
Warrant:	June 16, 2020	- \$	586,364.78

Selectman Galemmo motioned to approve the Warrant of June 16, 2020 for the amount of \$586,364.78. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

8. Adjournment:

Selectman Glemmo motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:51 pm. Selectman Johnson, Sr. seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0

Respectively Submitted,
Susan Niehoff, Stenographer

Original to Town Clerk

Chairman: Wendy Cowan

Selectman: Jonathan Hall

Selectman: Michael Johnson, Jr.

Selectman: Charles Glemmo

Selectman: Michael Johnson, Sr.