

*Office of the Select Board
Town of Orange, New Hampshire
Select Board Minutes of February 6, 2024*

Present: Tamara Fairbank, chair, Betsy Coble, Aaron Allen Catherine Souza (clerical)

Others: Gulley Dunlap, Anita Garland, Alex Smith, Marcello Shelzi, Kathy & Dave Stacy, Trish Weekes

Guest: Michael Powers and Bob Hardy from NH Division of Forest and Lands, Craig Sanborn of the Cardigan Highlanders

Meeting opened at 6:00 p.m. Attendance taken by the secretary.

Pledge of Allegiance

Minutes:

Betsy Coble motioned to approve the minutes of the public meeting of January 16, 2024, seconded by Tamara Fairbank. Motion passed 2/0/1 (Aaron Allen abstained because he was absent from the January 16 meeting).

Aaron Allen motioned to approve the minutes of the public meeting of January 23, 2024, seconded by Tamara Fairbank. Motion passed 3/0/0.

Michael Powers, Regional Forester (NH Division of Forest and Lands): Discussion class VI road:

Discussion around the request from the NH Division of Forest and Lands concerning temporarily shutting down the class VI portion of the New Colony/Old Colony Road from mid-December to mid-May (mud season), to avoid unnecessary damage to the road, which is the Forest and Lands main access point to the western side of Cardigan Mt State Forest. The road also provides access to hikers, nature watchers and the Cardigan Mt Highlanders to maintain hiking trails on the west side of the mountain.

Craig Sanborn from the Cardigan Highlanders shared details of what the group of volunteers does to maintain hiking trails.

Motion made by Aaron Allen to close the gate but not lock the gate at the town line. Additionally, request the NH Division of Forest and Lands to post the road as limited access or closed for the season. Second by Tamara Fairbank. Motion passed 3/0/0.

Abatement:

Abatement request from a resident for \$35.50 was reviewed and approved by the Select Board. Abatement is for interest accrued due to a delay of tax payment which was caused by the US Post Office.

Motion Tamara Fairbank, second Betsy Coble. Motion passed 3/0/0.

Town House Painters Contract:

The Town House Restoration Committee has approved a painting contract with BM Painters of Enfield NH. The painting is to begin in the spring. Tamara Fairbank as Select Board Chair signed the contract.

Driveway Permit:

An approved State Driveway Permit was reviewed by the Select Board. Permit is for Map 1 lot 47 on Rt 4 owned by the Mildred Davis Irrevocable Trust. No action required.

FEMA anticipation loan & new debt options:

Discussion continued from the January 16, 2024 meeting when Trish Weekes, Treasurer, presented status of the FEMA Anticipation Loan. The original amount of the loan was \$980,356.00. FEMA has made payments of \$745,024.14. Moving forward the town would need to incur new debt for a total of \$151,945.43. The loan is to be taken out on April 4, 2024, at an interest rate of 6% from Mascoma Bank.

Trish Weekes presented a warrant article: To see if the town will authorize use of \$84,000 from the town's Unassigned Fund Balance for the purpose of reducing taxes that will otherwise have to be increased in order to finance the town's obligation for unanticipated (and unreimbursed by FEMA) road repairs due to the extreme weather event of July 2019.

After discussion, a motion was made by Betsy Coble to approve option #1; Amount: \$151,945.43 less \$84,000 applied to principal from Unassigned Fund Balance with an effective principal of \$67,945.4; regardless if the Town approves the Unassigned Fund Warrant Article. Second by Tamara Fairbank. Motion passed 3/0/0.

2024 Warrant Article discussion and final decisions

The revised draft of the 2024 Warrant Articles was reviewed by the Select Board. After a few changes, the Select Board approved for the Warrant Articles to be reviewed by the Town lawyer and the DRA.

Once the DRA and Town lawyer have made their correction or changes, the Select Board will meet to formally accept the Warrant Articles.

Other:

Tabled until the next meeting

- Recent Resignations
- Heater 2nd floor request
- Policy on town warming center
- 2024 Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS)
- Action Item list review

Secretary's Report:

- State of NH electronic payments received:
 - \$3300 for the reimbursement of the cost to prepare the Hazard Mitigation Update Plan
 - \$8,978.27 for the January installment of the Highway Block Grant
- Next Federal Holiday is Monday Feb 19 (President's Day) – I will close the office officially but be on site for the Fiber Install
- Follow up on Town House Use request for Saturday February 3 submitted by Tamara Fairbank: The request was approved by the Select Board on January 17, 2024. Due to the absence of Aaron Allen at the January 16, 2024 Select Board meeting the approval was made the following day.

Reports from Boards and Committees:

- *Cemetery trustees:* A large pine tree fell at the Church Cemetery which was cleaned up by Aaron Poland. He will finalize in the spring to ensure no markers are damaged.
- *Road Agent (Marcello Shelzi):*
 - Updates were sent via email on January 9 to inform residents of the road conditions during and after the recent storm.
 - Tonight a Winter Storm warning will be in effect. Expect 5-8 inches of snow, followed by rain. Please use extreme caution when driving, and please do not be on the roads unless it is absolutely necessary as conditions will be poor. Tomorrow morning please exercise the same amount of caution. We will be plowing early morning but please stay alert. Due to the heavy and wet snow, as well as the high wind gusts, expect trees and branches to be down. If you see a tree on a power line, please alert the utility company and then myself. For trees and branches on the road please contact me and I will address it. Stay safe.
 - Road Agent report:
 - Random residents have complained to Marcello about Post Office deliveries. Marcello has spoken to the Post Office who replied that the roads are not accessible which Marcello refutes. Mail service generally resumes.
- *Historical Commission:* none
- *Planning Board:* Tuesday January 23 meeting approved a boundary line adjustment request for Eastman Rd Map1 lots 4&5.
- *Conservation Commission:* none

Public comment:

- Two questions on the Road Agent Warrant Article: Aaron explained the Warrant Article is intended to allow the Select Board to hire a Road Agent who would not be a resident if a resident is not elected as a Road Agent.
- A question was raised concerning why the list of registered voters and their data is posted on the Town House outer bulletin board. The Select Board asked Catherine to inquire where Canaan keeps the information and if it is posted. Catherine to share the information with the Select Board and the Supervisors of the Checklist.

Bills and vouchers were reviewed and signed.

Next Select Board meeting date confirmation: Tuesday February 20, 2024 at 6pm.

Meeting adjourned at 7:22 pm.

Tamara Fairbank, Chair

Aaron Allen

Betsy Coble