

*Office of the Select Board
Town of Orange, New Hampshire
Minutes of October 27, 2020*

Present: Dorothy Heinrichs, Chair; Tamara Fairbank, Aaron Allen, and Sandi Pierson (clerical).

Other: Doug Weekes, Chris Hausfeld, and Daniel Hazelton

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

Minutes: The minutes of October 13, 2020 were approved.

November 3rd election update from Moderator Danny Hazelton:

- The Moderator, Supervisors, and Town Clerk will meet at the Town House on Thursday, October 29, at 7 p.m. for the partial processing of absentee ballots per NH Election Laws 2020, Chapter 14. At this time they can check for accuracies in submission paperwork and contact voters if there is an error. Danny said that so far the town clerk has received about 35 absentee ballots.
- Town Clerk Michelle Gofredda will be in her office on Monday, November 2 from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. to collect any remaining absentee ballots. She will appoint former Town Clerk Amy Tirpaeck as town clerk pro tem for voting day assistance.
- If a voter refuses to wear a mask in the Town House as required, a place will be provided outside of the building for them to vote.
- Danny said David Wilson is available to volunteer during voting day. Chris Hausfeld offered to volunteer as well. Gary Hamel and Anita Garland will assume the positions as ballot clerks.
- Dorothy said Sargent Victor Muzzey from the State Police will be present at voting (if no other officer volunteers for the duty).
- Danny requests that all election officials report to the Town House at 9:30 a.m. on the day of voting.
- The counting of ballots usually concludes about 9:30 p.m. They are then turned over to the officials in Canaan.

Assessing Contract: The Board reviewed a five-year contract for assessing services from Avitar Associates of New England. The contract included completing the 2020 town-wide revaluation in 2021 (the onsite measure and list was postponed until 2021 due to the pandemic), routine assessing work in 2022, 2023 and 2024, and a 2025 town-wide reval. The contract listed only a statistical reval for 2025 at a cost of \$13,600. Avitar's estimation is that because they are doing a full measure and list in 2022, it would not be necessary for the town-wide 2025 reval. The Board considered that this would mean nine years would elapse before the next town-wide measure and list. After discussion, the Board concurred to have Tamara discuss the contract with Avitar in more detail before finalizing it.

2020 property tax rate: The Board reviewed the preliminary tax rate set by the Department of Revenue Administration. Using last year's \$2000 overlay (revenue set aside in the event of abatements), the DRA set the rate at \$24.78 per thousand dollars of valuation. Based on last year's property values, the town, county, and state education taxes decreased but the Mascoma School District appropriation increased by \$1.52. After discussing the 2021 abatement possibilities, Aaron motioned to set the overlay at \$3,000 (increasing the preliminary tax rate by three cents). Tamara seconded. Motion passed unanimously in favor.

Tax rate proposed by the Board: \$24.81 per thousand dollars of valuation. Breakdown: Town: \$3.38; Grafton County: \$1.55; Mascoma School District: \$18.03; State Education tax: \$1.85.

Sandi will enter the data into the web portal for the DRA's approval. The Board will meet on November 3rd at 9 a.m. to process the warrant for the tax collector.

Tax-deeded property: The Board signed a listing agreement with Vanessa Stone Real Estate to sell the town-owned property at 200 Tuttle Hill Road at an asking price of \$33,000. Scott Sanborn has completed the marking of survey lines and boundaries. Doug Weekes said he still plans on having some brush removed from the property as well as an obsolete septic tank which was not NHDES-approved.

MS-60 (Financial Audit) and MS-535 (Financial Report of the Town): The Board signed a proposal to have Cohos Advisors prepare the town's 2020 MS-60 and MS-535 at a cost of \$2,500 as approved at the October 13 meeting.

2020 Equalization Rate: The Board reviewed and signed the Municipal Assessment Data Certificate as prepared by Avitar. Sandi will upload it to the NH Equalization Bureau web portal.

School residency list: The Board reviewed the Mascoma School District Residency of Orange Students from SAU 62. Based on an earlier review, the Superintendent removed one student from the list and added another. Aaron believed the student they added had moved out of Orange. Dorothy signed the residency list contingent that Sandi will ask the Superintendent to follow up on the residency of the student they added.

Building permit: The Board reviewed and approved a building permit application for electrical renovations for Louis and Mary Ellen Shelzi/67 Tuttle Hill Road/Map 3, Lot 61A. The application was reviewed and signed by the building inspector.

Other:

- The Board was in receipt of a driveway permit approved by Road Agent Scott Sanborn: Alan Kharsyntiew and Susanna Rymbai/Tuttle Hill Road/Map 4, Lot 14F.
- A letter was received from the Visiting Nurse and Hospice of NH and VT requesting a 2021 donation of \$1,300.00. This is the same as 2020. The request will be forwarded to the Budget Committee
- Sandi distributed the municipal budget report ending October 13, 2020. Dorothy said she felt the budget was in good shape, with 36% not yet expended.

- The Board received an invitation from the Grafton County Regional Development Corporation to attend their annual [zoom] meeting on November 13 at 9 a.m.

Other Select Board business:

- Dorothy said she spoke with Paul Hatch regarding the 5-year update of the Hazard Mitigation Plan. She has contacted a contractor recommended by Paul. She said that FEMA pays 75% and the 25% cost to the town will be paid for by in-kind hours put in by volunteers. It usually takes six or seven meetings to complete the project.
- Scott Sanborn will be on a conference call with Paul Hatch regarding the FEMA approval of the streambed debris removal work.

Secretary's report:

- Following up from the October 13 meeting regarding the 0.65-acre town-owned lot that the Board would like to offer to an abutter, Sandi said that Mark Stetson (Avitar) advised selling it for around \$2,000. Chris Hausfeld asked why the asking price would be considerably lower than the \$29,000 assessed value. Aaron explained that the \$29,000 is the assessment for a building lot and that the Board is stipulating that the land is being offered as a merger only thus adding to the abutter's property as "backland." After discussion, Dorothy motioned to offer the 0.65-acre lot to the abutter as merged land at a cost of \$2,500 plus deed preparation and recordation fees. Aaron seconded. Motion passed unanimously in favor.
- Tabled from the last meeting, Sandi distributed a schematic of two properties where the owner is listed as unknown. The properties are 1.4 elongated acres laying between Orange Brook and Williams Road and 2.9 elongated, land-locked acres along Orange Brook between Cardigan Mountain Road and Eastman Road. At the last meeting, Aaron had suggested the town take possession and retain the parcel on Williams Road. Sandi explained the process of conveying the parcels to the town: certified letters would be sent to abutters asking if anyone has any evidence of ownership and, if no one does, having the assessor assign a map and lot number and value to the properties. After three years of nonpayment of taxes, the tax collector can transfer the "Owner Unknown" parcels to the town with a tax deed. After discussion, the Board concurred to have Sandi begin the process with certified letters to abutters.
- Sandi distributed a schematic of the small, privately-owned parking area on the corner of Cardigan Mountain and New Colony roads. The Board had previously discussed asking the property owner if they might be interested in selling it to town. It is a separate tract (an old mill site) in their deed. Aaron talked about the reasons the town may wish to acquire it, including if people needed a place to park during a storm that may prevent them from getting up New Colony or Tug Mountain roads. Sandi said there is \$8,779 in the Land and Conservation Capital Reserve Fund and that the voters are the agents to expend from that CRF in accordance with RSA 41:14-a. After discussion, the Board tabled the discussion and Aaron will talk to the owner of the mill site.
- The above led to a discussion about the Land and Conservation CRF. Sandi distributed copies of the 2007 town report which has the minutes of the town meeting that created the CRF. It was started with \$7,844 from land use change taxes. In those minutes there is also a warrant article (with amendments) that was passed by 2/3 paper ballot vote that appears to designate all land use change taxes to go into a CRF. The DRA does not

recognized this in their records, so it's a bit confusing. Sandi asked that the Board members review the 2007 town meeting minutes and she will asked the DRA what their estimation is.

- 2021 Budget process: At the next meeting, Sandi will submit a timeline that will provide ample time for the Select Board's office to have the final warrant reviewed by the DRA and for the town report to be in the hands of the voter per State statute.

Reports from Boards and Committees:

- Health Officer Doug Weekes said he is following up on the disposal of the two cars abandoned at 200 Tuttle Hill by the former owner. They are presently at the highway storage area.
- Doug stated that the matching LCHIP grant request for Town House improvements was denied. Doug said the situation is that there were five million dollars' worth of grant applications vying for the three million dollars available. He will continue to follow up with the Moose Plate grant application.

Public comment: n/a

Bills and vouchers were reviewed and signed.

Meeting adjourned 7:00 p.m.

Dorothy Behlen Heinrichs

Tamara Fairbank

Aaron Allen