TOWN OF WENTWORTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
March 26, 2019

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Morgan Currier called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Select Board Members Present: Morgan Currier, Omer C. Ahern, Jr., and Francis Muzzey.

Staff/Officials Present: Administrative Assistant - Tanya Houseknecht Vela, Chief of Police – Wallace Trott, Transfer Station Attendant – Randy Ruger, Road Agent – Kevin Gilbert

Public Present: Carol Young, Janice Thompson, Jared King, Joshua Leiter, Kaye Bailey, Sharon Sanborn

O. Ahern, Jr. asked Chair to make a point of order and then asked the public if during the course of the meeting, members of the public could please identify themselves before speaking to help him as the new Selectperson. T.H. Vela said it would help her as well.

F. Muzzey added that he would like to request a sign-in sheet so that all could indicate their presence at the meeting and to assist the Administrative Assistant taking notes.

Select Board reviewed Agenda, made format recommendations for the Agenda and discussed their intent to conduct weekly meetings until further notice.

Jared King and discussed which roads were Class VI roads. J. King expressed concern about setting up a barrier on certain roads vulnerable to damage from individuals off-roading for fun during mud season. Select Board acknowledged J. King’s concerns and discussed what would be most beneficial to the nearby residents and the town. After coming to an agreement, the Chair, on behalf of the Board, gave permission at this point for him to block specific roads to avoid damage that would cost the town money to repair due to off-roading, adding that it would be helpful to obtain a list from him of the roads he mentioned. J. King also offered to show the roads he referenced to anyone interested.

Chief of Police Report:
Assisted a Wentworth resident with a background investigation; Assisted State Police with a motor vehicle accident on Route 25; Conducted a pro-active motor vehicle enforcement detail on Route 25 after receiving a number of complaints, made a number of stops and gave a number of warnings and issued some citations; Assisted NH State Police and U.S. Fire Marshals with an arrest without incident and the individual was bailed later; Arrested a Wentworth resident on an active Arrest Warrant that Chief obtained through the Court and the individual
also later released on bail; Attended three different trainings over the course of the last three weeks which included Training of the Sheriff’s Dept., Human Trafficking Course in Wakefield sponsored by the NH Human Trafficking Collaborative Task Force and a Course on Trauma Informed Care sponsored by the NH Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. These are trainings that are at no cost to the Town. Chief capitalizes on the opportunity to attend these types of trainings when possible, stating that it’s great training for him and his Officers. It has proven very beneficial in a number of different ways.

O. Ahern, Jr. referenced a meeting he attended last week with the NH Municipal Association the week about Cyber Security and asked Chief Trott if he had all he needed to ensure regarding Cyber Security. Chief said he had what he needed but added that these are genuine concerns that the Select Board should consider regarding the Municipal Office where Tanya works, adding that his office has the necessary firewalls in place because of the sensitive information that Chief handles not available to the public, even under the Right to Know law, so the Police Dept is mandated to have this security in place. Chief emphasized again that he recommends that the Board looks into the firewalls in place regarding the Town Office. O. Ahern, Jr. discussed the risks to the compromise of residents’ personal identifiable information (PII), as well as the process and costs associated with implementing higher Cyber Security measures for the Town. Chief stated that there are Municipalities in other parts of the U.S. that have been hacked and ‘held hostage’ and had to pay a ransom to get their computers unlocked again adding that there are people out there with the technology to do this and that it’s something worth looking into.

The Administrative Assistant added that given the high cost of implementing these type of security measures, she wanted just state for the record that she takes this issue seriously, has had training in this type of security from the military and is committed to protecting everyone’s PII as much as possible by not asking for sensitive information via email and shredding documents as necessary. J. King offered to provide the contact information of an individual in a neighboring town who does a lot of computer work and can check for firewalls, etc.

F. Muzzey referenced a new Town employee who emailed the copies official documents (i.e. Driver License, Social Security Card, etc.) and asked if the Town was supposed to discard our copy once the information was verified. Chief replied that the Town can keep that information because they will need it for tax purposes, but cannot retain information regarding a background investigation. Any information regarding a criminal record or motor vehicle record cannot be kept on file. All agreed that the information must and will be kept safe. The Road Agent added that he feels the Town should keep copies of those documents because he was questioned several times whether he had a Commercial Driver’s License (CDL). Chief added that personnel files are not subject to Right-to-Know. The Administrative Assistant added that the personnel files are kept in a secure location. M. Currier stated that Certified Computer requires the Town to maintain some type of firewall due to the job of the Town Clerk and Tax Collector. She mentioned that the previous Select Board had discussed these types of upgrades and asked the Administrative Assistant to look up the emails pertaining to Certified Computer’s recommendations so we can see how we can satisfy those requirements. Discussion continued
about the Town’s server and M. Currier added that a lady from Certified Computer offered to come speak before the Select Board to inform us further. M. Currier said she thoroughly understands and agrees with this concern because she previously worked in Cyber Security for five years.

Highway Department Report:
K. Gilbert informed the Town that the roads are still frozen, so is the gravel that they have at the Town shed. They will be dispersing some over the rougher areas, mainly when you leave the asphalt and hit the gravel road. They will try to smooth out the lumps as best as they can, but it’s not going to last, but when the thaw does come up, they will do some Spring grading and will fix it. They will spend the rest of the week smoothing out what they can.

Transfer Station Report:
R. Ruger was not present but the Administrative Assistant spoke on his behalf to say that Randy found a place that will accept the aluminum cans he’s accumulated and pay 25 cents/pound rather than 15 cents/pound, so that’s more money for the Town. M. Currier added that the Transfer Station is closed on holidays and wants to remind everyone that it will be closed on Easter Sunday and it will be advertised to give people plenty of time to prepare.

Sharon Sanborn announced that an ex-Trustee invited Carol Young to come to the library as an alternate and she agreed to be a Trustee since they had two Trustees resigned. So, she requested that the Select Board appoint her as a Trustee until next year and that they’ll look for someone else. Carol Young is introduced. F. Muzzey stated that he checked with the RSA to make sure of what the appointment laws were and basically, with some exceptions, the Select Board are authorized to appoint fill-ins.

F. Muzzey made a motion to grant Sharon’s request to appoint Carol Young as an interim Trustee. M. Currier seconded the motion. Voting in favor of the motion were Muzzey-yes, Currier-yes and O. Ahern Jr.-yes. The motion passed 3-0-0.

F. Muzzey asked S. Sanborn about who’s paying the bill for cable TV and internet at the library. Discussion followed about the internet at the school, library fire department and highway department. What remains is an outstanding question about how the library is getting their free internet. Chair as Administrative Assistant to look into the contract for the library.

Select Board continued business in the appointment of new Trustees by administering the oaths to Carol P. Young, as interim Library Trustee (temporary election official) for a term ending upon finalization of this election and Linda Franz as Trustee of the Trust Fund to serve until the next annual meeting. Board signed pertinent forms making the appointments official.

Josh Leiter brought up concerns with his tax bill from 2018 and the grading of timber regarding his timber cut. He acknowledged that it over 90 days for him to legally prompt the Town to give him anything, but says we can still do it anyway. He stated that they told the Town it was a
number 1 (referencing numbers 1-6 in terms of quality and access), but that it was explained to him that pretty much everyone in Wentworth pays a 3 because they average it out.

J. Leiter explained that the lot had been cut once or twice since the 1990s (before Jared King got there), since it’s a big area with different lots and that the wood is all scarred. He said it’s over a mile from Beech Hill Rd to get to the wood and the cut took place in the middle of a storm. He mentioned a house floating down the river. J. Leiter says the Town is effectively charging him close to 20% when they averaged it, so if someone cuts Veneer, the Town is charging him about the same price on that bill.

J. Leiter said that it’s the only bill he’s never paid the Town because he came in about a month after he got the tax bill and the Town didn’t give him a satisfactory answer, so he put it off and forgot about it, but emphasized that if the Town goes through all the numbers and don’t even deduct for all the road and access, it’s still a 2 or a 1 with wood anyway.

O. Ahern, Jr. said that he’d like to see a copy of his Timber Tax application and M. Currier said she could see if she could find one. F. Muzzey asked why it was over 90 days and J. Leitner acknowledged that since it’s over 90 days, he may have to go to the State or something of that nature, but that the Town should look at what he’s giving us and do the right thing.

F. Muzzey said he knew absolutely nothing about wood or taxing it or anything, but knows the Town usually goes by a form. J. Leitner said it was a grade and Jared King explained that it’s a State matrix form. F. Muzzey said he thinks it would be best to listen to any advice that the Board can get from somebody that’s more qualified. A member of the public offered

J. Leitner said the bottom line is that he put down a 1 and the Town charged him a 3 and that they average it for everybody, so even if he’s cutting great wood, it would be a 3!

M. Currier said she completely understood what he was saying and added that the Board needs to look into why it’s automatically put as a 3, an average and not done based on the wood.

Jared King added that what usually happens in his experience is that usually it’s charged somewhere between 8% and 10% of the value of what he would pay a landowner for their stumpage (their trees). He said a normal rate is usually around 10 percent and that usually for fairly easy access – reasonable for thousands and thousands of dollars-worth of work. He said that something like Leiter’s property took upwards of $8000 – $10,000 just to access the property. They end up paying more than 25% of what they actually got paid for the whole detail in just road costs – getting the wood chipper into the woods also.

J. Leiter emphasized that not only was his access bad, but the wood’s been logged and that it’s scarred wood and crap, so he’s chipped much of it. It’s not a good tinder lot.
F. Muzzey asked J. Leiter if he has the report that shows the amount he received from the different lumber places to see what the value is for the total amount he received from all of that harvesting based on the experts. He guessed 10% would be fair to give the Town. J. Leiter responded saying that it doesn’t account for all the work he has to pay for in order to get to the timber. O. Ahern, Jr. opined that 10% seemed reasonable.

Jared King said his opinion is that 8% is probably better. He stated that his objective is to inform the Town that we need to have somebody keep an eye on how these tax bills are sent out. He said it ends up making the timber industry look really poorly and that there’s been several occasions and not just recently, but over the years there have been lots of mistakes made on these Timber Tax bills and that he doesn’t mind talking about it in order to help somebody fix them.

M. Currier responded by saying that she’s mentioned it before, but that the Board members are not experts by any means and that everybody has a different expertise. O. Ahern, Jr. said he has a certified tree farm in Plymouth, so he has a lot of questions going forward. M. Currier agreed that O. Ahern, Jr. is probably more educated on the topic than Francis or she, but that she knows from working in the Admin office and seeing the applications come through and handling the paperwork that even those who end up processing a lot of them might not really understand it and what the Board needs to do is investigate this situation specifically. She added that after the Board gets some information from the State of what needs to be done and how the Towns are supposed to complete the paperwork, they will be able to understand the process better in order to make sure the Town is not making mistakes.

F. Muzzey added that he doesn’t know if the Board’s hands are tied since more than a year has passed and J. Leiter responded by asking the Town to just look at it and realize that they aren’t just cutting wood right at the road where trucks are moving in, adding that he put money towards bridge work and the road which got washed out. He said that was supposed to be considered, but the Town didn’t consider any abatement and just gave him a higher grade of wood and charged him for it.

Conversation continued and Jared King suggested the Board get in touch with Rick Evans from the State, who handles all the Timber Tax. He said that Rick is willing to donate whatever time is needed to educate anybody who wants to be educated on how the sliding scale works. Jared also offered to take anyone willing to go on a ride up any of these roads and that he is more than willing to contact him at any time. O. Ahern, Jr. expressed interest in taking a ride, along with M. Currier.

J. Leiter said that he came into the office when Arlene (Patten) was working as the Administrative Assistant, soon after he received his bill, but before the new year. F. Muzzey asked what the tax bill amount was and he said $3,099.69.
The Board agreed that they would update J. Leiter by May 14th.

O. Ahern, Jr. discussed IT/Cyber concerns and the Police Chief and said he feels it’s a critical concern and worth looking into further and conducting a risk assessment. M. Currier suggested we reach out to Primex. A discussion followed about protecting the Town’s private information when working with outside companies and the Police Chief added that those companies are bound by privacy agreements.

O. Ahern suggested the Board take part in a tour of the Board of Corrections and explained his reasoning for this. He said he would try to arrange it. M. Currier added that she felt it was equally important to set up a meeting with the Welfare Officer, who is extremely knowledgeable on the process.

A discussion followed regarding the contract for the Town’s leased printer and since the change-over for the Select Board and Administrative Assistant took place at the same time a bill from W.B. Mason arrived, the Board asked T. Vela to call the company and obtain an update on the contract.

A member of the public asked how often the Town’s website is updated because she hadn’t seen any updates since 2016 on foreclosures, specifically land. A discussion ensued on foreclosed land from the past.

At 8:22 pm O Ahern, Jr. made a motion to go into a non-public meeting, per RSA 91-A:3, II (a) to discuss the compensation for a public Town employee.

M. Currier voted-Yes and F. Muzzey voted-Yes.

Meeting adjourned.