

## Minutes of the Selectmen's Meeting October 6, 2020

Members present: Scott Young, Chairman and Bryant Scott, Brian Monahan

Appointments: 6:00 – Judy Dupré

6:15 – Fire Chief Scott Whitehouse

The business portion of the Selectmen's Meeting was called to order at 5:25PM.

Payroll and bills were reviewed and approved for payment. Minutes from the September 22nd Selectmen's Meeting were read and approved. Two Land Use Change Taxes and two Yield Tax Warrants were signed.

### **Appointments**

6:00 – Tax Collector Judy Dupré was in attendance to speak with the Board members about several items pertaining to the collection of taxes. They discussed the use of certified mail for all notifications of imminent liens. State Statute requires certified mailings for 2 of the notifications, and the Selectmen decided not to exceed the State Statute. Other notifications will be mailed by regular mail. Two properties were discussed; one is in danger of tax deeding and the other soon to be in foreclosure. With proper notifications having been made, the Selectmen directed Ms. Dupré to move forward with the tax deeding. With Ms. Dupré, the Selectmen reviewed the current list of properties with 2019 and 2020 liens.

6:15 – Chief Scott Whitehouse was in attendance to discuss several matters with the Board. Among his many duties, is the position of health officer. He explained to Board members that, with other increasing responsibilities, he is no longer able to do fill that position; he will continue to serve until the Board can find a replacement. His deputy health officer was suggested, but his work responsibilities have also increased, and he is also not able to fill the position.

Beginning in January 2021, Chief Whitehouse will be working with a committee to put an Emergency Operations plan in place. He anticipates 4-5 meetings of a committee comprised of the Town Administrator, the Town Clerk, a Selectmen's representative, department heads, and 2-3 residents. The cost of putting together this plan will be 100% covered by a grant from Homeland Security.

Chief Whitehouse, along with others, is concerned about fire due to drought conditions. A proclamation from the governor's office states that there are to be no open fires or smoking in public woodlands. Chief Whitehouse stated that this will likely be in effect until we receive significant rainfall or maybe even snowfall. Recently there was a brush fire on top of Parker Mountain which started because of a campfire; earlier in the spring a similar event occurred on Evans Mountain. Chief Whitehouse stated that he will exercise his authority to shut down the Town Forest or Parker Mountain trail, if necessary. Mr. Scott shared that Strafford County is willing to share its drone which is able to detect hot spots and this might assist him in locating potential problems. The Selectmen expressed their full support.

## **New Business**

The Selectmen heard some updates from the Town Clerk's Office. Her new deputy is working out well, and she is thankful for the assistance of Alex Stover and Judy Dupré in preparing absentee ballots for mailing. Preparations for the November General Election are underway with many volunteers already enlisted. She is planning to use 4 check-in tables to keep the flow of voters moving efficiently and quickly through the building. To date she has mailed out 588 absentee ballots, with that number increasing daily.

The Selectmen reviewed correspondence from Philip Lovejoy, Barn Door Gap Road, who expressed concern about the poor internet service in his area of Town. Barn Door Gap is served by TDS while the rest of Town is served by Atlantic Broadband. In accordance with our contract, Atlantic Broadband is not able to provide service to that area because the housing/population does not meet the density requirement. The Selectmen suggested that Mr. Lovejoy contact the Governor's Office about this situation. With more people working from home and children studying from home, the State may have funds available to assist with bringing adequate internet to areas with poor service, especially if children are involved with remote learning. The Selectmen's Office will contact Mr. Lovejoy with this suggestion and copy Representative Mike Harrington as well.

Budgeting for 2021 will soon begin. 3 budgeting items were noted to keep in mind. The Town's contribution to PD retirement will see a 5% increase and Fire a 2% increase. There is not yet information on a health insurance increase. In 2021, there will be a State mandated revaluation, and funds will need to be allocated for that. Sick time benefits for full time employees will be reviewed.

The Selectmen granted permission for a 3x6 Christmas in Strafford banner to be displayed at the Town Hall on the General Election day and for a few days before the Election. Christmas in Strafford is virtual this year and they want get the word out about that.

The Report of Revised Revenue is complete and submitted to the State. The Town received less State Municipal Aid. Auto registrations continue to increase.

The Board discussed the tentative settlement agreement in a pending legal matter before, noting one change they would request in the pending agreement. The Town attorney will be notified. The status of a second legal matter was briefly discussed as well.

The Selectmen reviewed and approved the revised advertisement for the Land Use Clerk/Secretary with increased responsibilities and hours over the previous advertised position.

The Selectmen addressed a concern about fences that have been put up along Water Street in violation of a local ordinance. Owners of the properties will be notified and asked to remove the fences.

There being no further business to address, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 7:09PM.