

## Minutes of Selectmen's Meeting

April 6, 2010

Members present: Lynn Sweet, Chairman, Stephanie Gray and R. Stephen Leighton.

Meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M.

Irving Johnson, Charles Burnham, Paul Eaton, Brian Monahan, Harmony Anderson, Lucinda and James Kerivan, Michael McConchie, Marge Estey, Clarinda Donle, Gwen and Frank Wilson, Charlie Moreno, Bob Perry, Don Clifford, Dan Phelan, Alan Frizzell, Bruce Smith, Lorraine Gaire, Cheryl Sanborn, Carolyn and Phil Auger, Kenneth Berry, Bill Vance, Peter Wensberg, Mary Dempsey, Jim Stevens and John Nolan (Foster's and Rochester Times) attended.

Paul Eaton attended to address the Board and to read a statement. His current term as a member of the Planning Board recently expired. He provided background on his service to the Planning Board, serving one term as an alternate and two terms as a regular member. He noted his involvement in the process of considering applications, stressing that "concerns of the applicant, neighborhood and town were always taken into account". His concern was not with whether he "was chosen to serve, but relates to the handling of the process". Mr. Eaton's statement is attached as an addendum to these minutes.

Phil Auger questioned the brevity of the minutes and suggested audio or digital recording. Clarification was requested on how the Board made their decision.

In response to Mr. Auger's question, Ms. Sweet answered that Mark Witcher showed interest and that she had suggested Mr. Witcher to the Board. Mr. Leighton also agreed Mr. Witcher would be a good choice, being a long time resident of the town. Ms. Gray was not familiar with Mr. Witcher at the time. Board referenced the authority granted by the RSA to appoint. They stressed there was no vendetta. Paul's appointment came up at a time when they had others interested and under the authority granted by the RSA's, the Board appointed a new member to the Planning Board. Mr. Auger asked if Board Members would reverse their vote. The Board Members indicated that they were not going to reverse their vote.

Harmony Anderson noted that all who serve give their time and "should feel honored, not hurt".

Irving Johnson acknowledged the differences in opinions and suggested "going forward", "get better".

The learning curve to understand and serve on the different boards was noted by many attendees. Some asked why the alternate was not moved up to the position. It was the decision of the Board to appoint a new voting member.

Minutes of Selectmen's Meeting  
6 April 2010

Page 2.

Mr. Moreno, Chairman of the Planning Board, praised Mr. Eaton's lack of agenda, being well spoken, fairness, and willingness to serve. He, among others, requested Mr. Eaton be restored and that Mr. Witcher serve as an alternate. He stressed that he more than welcomed Mr. Witcher to work with the board, and his ideas would be part of the process when developing any regulations.

Mr. Moreno also recognized the authority of the RSA, however he suggested that there be discussion with the boards prior to the expiration of existing appointments in the future.

Consensus from many was concern over the willingness of people to serve in the future.

No further action was taken.

Paul Stover(Fire Chief), Scott Whitehouse (Deputy Fire Chief) and Glenn Davis (Lakes Region Fire Apparatus) presented information, pictures and the contract for lease purchase of the Forestry Truck approved at this year's Town Meeting. Financing and time frame for payment and delivery were discussed. Contract was signed.

Rochester District VNA is requesting the appointment of a representative to replace Ms. Tasker who has recently moved. The public was asked to advise if they knew of anyone.

Due to the passing of Iva Stiles, Strafford is now looking for its oldest citizen to become the honorary recipient of the Boston Post Cane. The public was asked for input. A few names were discussed, but ages would have to be verified. Enquiry will be put in the Town Calendar and posted.

Ms. Gray noted that some of the areas being looked at for possible future savings to the town are cruiser purchases (not current year), health insurance and electricity. Being a member of SVRTA and being included as part of a larger pool, makes this possible.

There was a short discussion regarding the location of where the Town Meeting was held this year. Board noted that the Army National Guard needs to be recognized with a letter extending our thanks and appreciation.

A motion was made, seconded and voted to accept the minutes taken at the February 23, 2010 meeting.

A letter from Harold & Marci Richardson was read concerning abutting property on Barn Door Gap Road and water on the property. Pictures were provided. Board provided some background on the history of the lot. At one time the lot was assessed as

Minutes of Selectmen's Meeting  
6 April 2010

Page 3.

unbuildable, however it now has a State approved septic design. Assessment will be corrected this year to reflect the existence of the septic design. Pictures and correspondence will be kept on file, however, Board explained their limitations if the lot meets setback requirements for building purposes.

Don Clifford had some questions pertaining to the posting of the roads and 10 wheelers using Tasker Hill Road. Enforcement of these postings, placement of signs and the need for additional signs was discussed.

A motion was made, seconded and voted to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:26 P.M. After adjournment, the Board reconvened to hold the annual election for Chairman which was overlooked in error. The meeting was called to order at 7:27 P.M.

After a short discussion, Mr. Leighton nominated Stephanie Gray for Chairman. Ms. Sweet seconded the nomination. The Board voted to elect Ms. Gray as the Chairman.

At this time, the Board noted that work is continuing on the Standard Operation Procedures for Personnel and Administration. Examples from other towns are being reviewed.

There being no further business before the Board, a motion was made, seconded and voted to adjourn. The Board adjourned at 7:35 P.M.

April 6, 2010

To: Strafford Board of Selectmen

March 1st, I received written notice of your intent not to renew my appointment to the Strafford Planning Board, and of your decision to appoint another individual in my place.

Planning Board members are appointed to three-year terms, and I had completed one term as an alternate and two terms as a full member. Historically, members have served numerous terms. However, appointment to any board is a political appointment, serving at the will of the selectmen.

Long-serving members accrue institutional knowledge of policies and procedures, although they could also perpetuate inflexible processes and opinions. This was not a problem in my experience on the board. Applications were thoughtfully discussed, with reasonable and balanced outcomes. The concerns of the applicant, neighborhood and town were always taken into account.

During my tenure on the board I am proud to have supported conservation initiatives, commercial applications to enhance our tax base, respect for private property rights, and a common sense approach to board business.

The concern is not whether I was chosen to serve, but relates to the handling of the process by the selectmen. After nine years of public service, I unexpectedly received a letter stating that I would not be reappointed. Mistakenly, I expected prior notification if my reappointment were in question, with the opportunity to publicly discuss the issue. Not one member of the board reached out to notify me in person, or even with a phone call. I have been personally acquainted with each of the selectmen for 5-10 years. Is this how town business is conducted in Strafford? Is this how we can expect future board appointments to transpire?

Without a clear public discourse, this approach to town business casts a shadow on the action of the selectmen. This is unfortunate for the Board of Selectmen, and the residents of Strafford. The minutes from your February 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting only mention the appointment of my replacement, with no apparent discussion regarding my removal. I expect our governing body to make every effort to create an open decision making process.

The selectmen have subsequently stated this was "a tough decision", "a business decision", "the Planning Board was out of balance" and they wish to have a "native" on the board. Obviously, this wasn't simply about giving another resident an opportunity to serve, as stated in my dismissal letter. What changes are desired in planning board policy?

For a town government that ran for office on transparency and change, the voters need to understand how this action fits those criteria, and how it serves the interests of all the residents of Strafford.

Respectfully,



Paul D. Eaton