

TOWN OF ORFORD

Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes

April 27, 2022

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Adams, Jen Carter Chase Kling

OTHERS PRESENT: Esther Dobbins-Marsh, Todd Haywood, Abby Pelletier, Terry Straight, Jason Bachus, Chris Crowley

Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Adams, seconded by Kling to accept the minutes of 04/13/2022 (as amended)

Motion Passed 3/0

Reports

- A. **Assessor**-Todd Haywood reported the data received from the inventory forms has been reviewed and entered into Avitar. Haywood reviewed the 2021 Equalization Ratio Study with the Selectboard. Property sales from October 2020 thru September 2021 are used to compared to the assessed values which generates the ratio. As sale prices increase, the ratio lowers, and the median for Orford is currently at 80.6%, which is used for abatements and equalization of current use calculations. (During this time period, Orford only had 22 qualified sales). Because the ratio is low, Haywood will keep an eye on it over the next year. The coefficient of dispersion (COD) is currently at 29.4 and it's best to be under 20.0 – if this number doesn't decrease next year, Orford may want to consider an off-cycle revaluation (Haywood doesn't recommend). It would be costly but that would bring all properties back in line. The next scheduled revaluation would be in 2025.

Haywood discussed 2 abatement received prior to March 1, 2022

- 56 Creamery Road, Map & Lot #008-091-032 – the abatement application asked for a reduction of the tax basis for 2021, but Haywood had lowered the assessed value prior to the last tax bill processed in December 2021. Therefore, Haywood recommended the abatement be denied.

Motion made by Adams, seconded by Kling to deny the abatement request for property at 56 Creamery Road, Orford. Motion passed 3/0

- 582 Route 10, Map & Lot #008-108R-021 – the abatement application asked for a reduction of the tax basis for 2021. The request is based on the purchase price and the amount of work the house needs for major repairs such as a new roof and lead paint abatement. Haywood assessed the value to be \$692,700 (original assessed value was \$800,600) which is higher than what was paid for the property, but feels it's reasonable. As the property owner makes improvements, the assessed value will increase. The assessed value for the land is still a concern, however, Haywood said state law bases the abatement on the total property value. The Selectboard has until July 1, 2022 to decide – if no decision is made by then, the application is automatically denied.

Motion made by Adams, seconded by Kling to table the discussion for a future meeting. Motion passed 3/0

B. **“Conflict at Public Meetings” presentation** – Abby Pelletier gave a brief overview of her capstone project “Conflict at Public Meetings”. She selected this topic based on an increase of conflict at public meetings, and narrowed her focus on Upper Valley meetings. While not all conflict is bad, solutions vs. finger pointing is the best way to have a constructive discussion. Suggestions on how to keep a meeting from getting out of control are to post when a meeting is being recorded, move controversial topics to the beginning of the agenda, have the Chair make an opening statement on rules of the meeting, listen and repeat what you’ve heard, and watch for body language indicating frustration. Pelletier suggested adding a mission statement to the Selectboard webpage, along with a civility statement and rules for board meetings. One printed copy of the presentation was left for the Selectboard to read over - Pelletier will email the power point presentation to the Selectboard office.

C. **Highway Department** – Terry Straight discussed the condition of the Archertown Road/Jacobs Brook bridge. He met with a State inspector that was in the area – the inspector looked at the underside of the bridge deck and the guardrails and suggested that the Town either close the bridge or restrict to a 10’-11’ wide section for passenger vehicles only, lower the weight limit and lower the speed limit. Adams suggested contacting DuBois & King to review the bridge and offer suggestions as to actions the Town should take on a temporary basis. To restrict access to the bridge, additional stop signs and “stop ahead” signs will need to be installed. Bachus said the speed limit can only be reduced to 25 mph, but will confirm with the RSA regulation. Kling will research the cost to lease a Bailey Bridge with a 60’ span.

Motion made by Adams, seconded by Kling to post weight limit of the Archertown Road Jacobs Brook bridge to 3-tons, reduce the bridge width to 11’ using concrete jersey barriers at the entrances to the bridge, place stop signs at the entrances to the bridge, and “stop ahead” signs on Archertown Road by Highbridge road and Townshed road. Motion passed 3/0

D. **Police Department** – Chief Bachus presented his March statistics to the Selectboard. There was a total of 80 calls for service (NHPD had 4 for service). Bachus’ calls included 3 accidents, 5 citizen assists, 15 mental health concerns, 3 suspicious activities, and the incident at Rivendell School. Motor vehicle enforcement included 17 stops in which 2 summonses were issued. Hanover dispatch went live with their new records management software. As it’s utilized more it will become more efficient.

- New Cruiser update – Orford is still on the “ordered and to be built” list for the F150 Responder, however, we are still waiting for the announced date from Ford. If no announcement from Ford is received by the end of May, Bachus will look to purchase a hybrid interceptor similar to the one currently used by the Police Department.
- Speed Cart Grant – Bachus has applied for a grant to cover 90% of the speed cart costs. The Warrant Article approved at the annual meeting allows the spending of \$7,000 towards the Speed Cart – the grant funds will be reflected as income to the Town. The Selectboard signed the letter to the State authorizing Bachus to apply for this grant.

- There was an article in the Journal Opinion regarding the lack of indictment for the murder in Orford that occurred in November 2021. The NH senior prosecutor told a Grafton County judge that he expects to seek a Grand Jury indictment in June. Kling expressed his concern on the length of time this has taken, as charges should be filed sooner than 6 months following the incident. However, it's no reflection on the action taken by Orford Police department, or State police but the prosecutor himself.

E. **Trust Funds** – Chris Crowley addressed changes the Trustees would like to make to the Police Department Cruiser CRF and the PD Major Equipment and Software CRF. During the budget season in 2021, there was much discussion on what qualifies as a cruiser and major equipment. The Trustees agree that both the titles and purpose of the CRF's need to be amended. Crowley is only providing information at this time to the Selectboard, as any changes to the Capital Reserve fund accounts will need to be voted on at the annual meeting. The Trustees will submit CRF name changes, and changes to the purpose of these two CRF's for discussion prior to budget season this year. These changes will be included as a warrant article for the 2023 annual meeting. Crowley also said the Parks & Playgrounds CRF will need some clarification vs their operating budget expense line items, similar to the discussion he had with the Cemetery Commission.

Bids:

A. **Clough Brook Culvert** – bids were received as follows:

- Paige Excavating in the amount of \$54,000
- Hall's Excavation in the amount of \$80,195

Motion made by Carter, seconded by Adams to accept the bid for the Clough Brook culvert replacement in the amount of \$54,000. Motion Passed 3/0

This project will be paid from the Road Improvement CRF

B. **Fire Engine #3 Electrical System update** – bids were received as follows:

- Reed's Truck in the amount of \$14,661
- Jay Whitcomb dba At Your House Apparatus Service in the amount of \$14,265.08

Adams said when the Town seeks bids, they must go with the lowest bid unless there are valid reasons not to, usually based on past poor performance. There was also concern that the bid from Whitcomb was labeled "estimate" and dated in March 2022 – is this a firm bid price, and does is the bid still accurate?

Motion made by Kling, seconded by Adams to accept the bid for the Fire Engine #3 electrical system update to LED from Jay Whitcomb for the amount of \$14,265.08 contingent on the review of the bids by the Fire Chief, and confirmation the estimate from Whitcomb is a firm bid. Motion Passed 3/0

Old Business

A. **Update of Outstanding Projects**

- **Mousley Brook Culvert FEMA Project** – Dobbins-marsh attended a webinar with FEMA reviewing all open projects for the Town of Orford. FEMA will be setting up the Mousley Brook culvert as a major project and FEMA would like a cost estimate for the project. The Selectboard feel the next step to take is a hydraulic study and applying for a wetland permit. The hydraulic study will let DuBois & King know what type of project to suggest to the Town. Dobbins-Marsh will contact Bob Durfee & D&K to ask if an estimate at this time is a reasonable request. A survey of the area around the culvert will also be needed

- **Surveys** – The Selectboard agreed to also have a survey completed of the Community Field's east boundary line, and the common corner between the Congregational Church, the Town's West Common and the property where the Post Office building is located. Dobbins-Marsh will contact Pioneer Surveyors to start this work.
- **Safety Hazard (RSA 155-B) Properties** – no action to be taken at this time
- **Diesel Spill Claim** – The Town received notification from the State that we qualified for State reimbursement for some of this claim. Dobbins-Marsh will follow up with Jennifer Stonecipher regarding information needed to move forward.
- **Mountain View Hideaway's Application status** – At the Planning Board meeting on May 10th they will discuss the engineering review for this street plat. Carter will contact the Town Attorney to verify if the Selectboard can refuse a Planning Board requirement and if not, who pays the engineering fee. Kling is concerned about the length of time this process has taken. Once this application is resolved, the Selectboard need to look into a clear procedure to follow in the future.
- **Discussion of potential Property Purchase** – the current property owners can meet on May 18th but want to know if the Selectboard wants to meet at the property or the Town Office. It was agreed to meet at the Town Office – Dobbins-Marsh will confirm the date, time and location of the meeting with the property owners.
- **McGoff Salvage** – Carter met with the McGoff's – vehicles are being crushed and moved, and the fence is being repaired. They are making progress on the requirements from the Selectboard.

B. Employee Handbook-Review and Adoption of Sections I, II, III, V and VI – after a brief discussion and a few minor changes, a *motion made by Kling, seconded by Adams to approve the Employee Handbook, Sections I, II, III, V and VI. Motion passed 3/0*

New Business

- A. Complaints** – a complaint was filed by a resident against Selectboard Member Chase Kling due to an interaction between the two. Because Kling identified himself as a Selectboard member, it elevates the complaint to a meeting discussion. Kling feels the complaint is untruthful as the resident had his dogs off their leash, and were not under the residents' control. He identified himself as a Selectboard member as this has been an ongoing issue with this person for many years. Kling knows of other residents that are uncomfortable near these dogs, and Kling wants to make sure other feel safe when walking on Town roads. Kling asked the resident to put the dogs on a leash as the dogs were coming at him. King will make every attempt not provoke or engage with this resident in the future.
- B. Review of received "Notice of Intent to Cut Wood"** – none received
- C. Contract** – *Motion made by Adams, seconded by Carter to accept the Circuit Rider Planner Service Agreement between UVLSRPC and the Town of Orford for the term of 7/1/22-6/30/23 at a monthly retainer charge of \$700 per month. Motion Passed 3/0*

Manifests, Payroll and Accounts Payable folders

The manifest, payroll and accounts payable folders were reviewed and signed where necessary

Adjourn

Motion made by Adams, seconded by Carter to adjourn the meeting. Motion Passed. 3/0

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Esther Dobbins-Marsh