

TOWN OF ORFORD

Board of Selectmen

Meeting Minutes

January 16, 2024

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Adams, Kevin Follensbee, Chase Kling
BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE PRESENT: Bob Palifka, Bill Paxton
OTHERS PRESENT: Esther Dobbins-Marsh, Chief Straight

Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm

Adams asked Chief Straight to join the discussion as it pertains to the Fire Department. Straight proceeded to turn in Personnel Files, the December Fire Department report, and his and 14 other Fire Department member resignations. Straight told the Selectboard you no longer have a Fire Department before leaving the meeting. Adams read Straight's resignation:

Effective today's date, Tuesday, January 16, 2024, I Terrence Straight officially resign my position as the Chief of the Orford Fire Department. I have served this community for over ten years, and when I took the position, I had over forty years in the fire service.

When I accepted the position of Fire Chief, the department was in disarray, and I worked with the other members of the fire department to try to professionalize it. I was hoping to continue to professionalize it with the Selectboard by developing departmental policies and procedures. However, I feel that I can no longer effectively work in this position due to what is an apparent conflict of personalities between myself and a couple members of the Orford Selectboard. It appears that these personality conflicts, and what I feel are personal attacks on my character, are interfering with my ability to manage the Orford Fire Department and its many wonderful members.

I have completed the tasks that the Selectboard requested at the last Town meeting, because I care for this Town and its wellbeing. However, I will not subject myself to any further abuse by members of the Selectboard. It is my sincere hope that the citizens of the Town of Orford make their voices heard this March when it is time to vote for certain positions on the Selectboard. Orford is a great community, but it deserves better leadership.

The Selectboard also acknowledged resignation letters delivered by Chief Straight from Connor Daniels, Zach Ferro, Zachery Wood, James D'Amico, Sam Bemer, Tim Hebb, Molly Bondurant, Jonathan Rodgers-Gochicoa, Ryan Pero, Faith Knapp, Jo Anne Fratus, Shawn Garran, Cooper Hebb, and Joe Musone. Several of these letters did not have a signature, and some were not dated.

The Selectboard will address these resignations later in the meeting.

2024 Proposed Budget

The Selectboard and Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) reviewed the current proposed 2024 budget and made the following changes:

- **Fire Department Wages** – Follensbee suggested lowering the current amount of \$28,000 to \$23,000. This is based on changes to be made to how the fire department members will be compensated in 2024
- **Cemetery** – Kling said the Cemetery Commission want to add a line item for temporary Salary for \$5,000. This line item will be used only if necessary, but it may be necessary to hire on additional help due to a medical situation with our current maintenance member for the Cemeteries.

2024 Proposed Warrant Articles

- **Capitol Reserve Funding** – Palifka reviewed the cost of the trucks the Town will need to make payments for in 2024 vs the Highway Trucks CRF balance and anticipated future costs. He suggested changing the funding to \$130,000, making the total CRF funding for all accounts to \$490,223. When the old 6-Wheeler and F-550 are sold, the proceeds will be added back to the Highway Truck CRF at the 2025 annual meeting, which will reduce the additional amount needed for funding.
- **Archertown Road Phase II** – A better description of the project was added to this warrant article – no change in the funding amount
- **Indian Pond Culvert Project** - A better description of the project was added to this warrant article – no change in the funding amount
- **Quinttown Road Apron extension** – Follensbee obtain estimates to extend the apron to just before the small bridge (240'), and to the mailboxes by Connecticut Valley Trucking (450'). The group agreed extending the apron 240' is the best option, and the cost is lower as well (\$25,000 vs \$35,000). The article was amended to extend the apron 240' at a cost of \$25,000 and will include paving and shouldering.

Dobbins-Marsh will update the documents, and post on the Webpage. Mailers will be sent to all boxholders, and notices posted regarding the scheduled Public Hearing to be held on January 30, 2024 at 7:00 pm at the Rivendell Multi-Purpose Room.

The Selectboard took a short recess @ 6:48 pm

The meeting resumed at 6:53 pm

Other Business:

- Dobbins-Marsh reviewed two invoices with the Selectboard
 - **Right Angle final invoice** for Archertown Road Phase I – The Town received the final invoice for the Archertown Road Phase I work. The total invoice is for \$8,569. This will need to be paid out of the 2023 operating budget. Because the Town has spent almost all of the 2023 budget, Dobbins-Marsh wanted the Selectboard to know she will be having a conversation with the Town auditor to see what options the Town has. There are a few highway projects that may qualify for the Road Improvement CRF, and if they can be flagged as a receivable from the CRF, she will adjust. Kling felt the Board should meet with Darrow to get her input on the invoice, but Dobbins-Marsh reminded him of the cost associated with these meetings. (travel time, hourly rate and mileage to come to Orford).

- **R&D Paving** for the overlay between the start of the Archertown Road Phase I project and the Dublin Road extension. The original estimate received and accepted was for \$38,400, however the invoice came in at \$47,162. The additional cost included \$512 of additional overlay costs, and \$8,250 for shoulder gravel. The Selectboard had asked Erin Darrow, Engineer to review the bid spec against what was received and speak with R&D about the total charge vs estimate submitted. After not receiving this information from Darrow, Dobbins-Marsh contacted R&D. They provided their estimate based on the bid spec. When paving, the paving rep contacted Darrow to ask about the shouldering, and she approved the additional work. The Selectboard agreed that shouldering is necessary, it should have been part of the bid spec, and agreed that Darrow didn't not have the authority to add the additional cost to the project. The Selectboard agreed to pay the invoice, and to send a letter of reprimand to Darrow.
- **APRA Funds** – Dobbins-marsh asked if any of the ARPA funds earmarked for Broadband costs could be used for any of the warrant article costs related to road projects. Adams said he will contact NH Broadband as there are sections in Town not covered by the internet companies, and possibly the Town can pay NH Broadband to cover those areas.

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Fire Department Resignations – Currently there are 6 members left on the Fire Department (Carl Johnson, Jim Hook, Jim Carter, Steve Sanborn, Emily Moore and Eric Gilbert). Follensbee will reach out to the members that resigned to have them return keys, radios and all other Town provided equipment. He will also notify Hanover dispatch and put Lyme on automatic to respond to calls in Orford. Dobbins-Marsh will contact the Town's IT company to change the password to the FireChief@orfordnh.us email address.

Motion made by Adams, seconded by Kling to appoint Kevin Follensbee as the acting Fire Chief for the remainder of the current appointment term, due to the resignation of Terrance Straight.

Motion Passed 2/0 (Follensbee abstained)

The landlord of the Fire House will change the lock on the entrance door, and the codes to open the fire station overhead doors. Follensbee will post Straight's resignation on ListServ and announce he'll be the acting Fire Chief for the term of the current appointment (The Fire Chief is appointed annually following the March annual meeting).

The Selectboard will meet on the 22nd of January to set up for Presidential Primary Election. Voting will be held at the Town Office building.

Adjourn

Motion made by Kling, seconded by Follensbee to adjourn the meeting. Motion Passed 3/0

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Esther Dobbins-Marsh
Administrative Assistant