

Special Selectboard Meeting
February 15, 2024
Town Office, 227 Justin Morrill Hwy, Strafford, 05072

Selectboard participants- John Freitag, Brian Johnson, Hannah Levinger, David Paganelli, Jeff Solsaa

Other participants in person- Curt Albee, Bonnie Bergeron, Lisa Bragg, Lori Mikusa, Toni Pippy, Martha Walke

Participants via Zoom- Rebecca and Meredith Kendall, Ben Matthews, Bill Thompson, Simon Willbanks, Steve Willbanks

Meeting called to order 6:03 pm

Guidelines for Selectboard conduct read

1. Public concerns-

Lori Mikusa discussed Freman Bridge and its history of flooding in both Irene and July 2023. This will be discussed further in the highway section of the meeting.

2. Review of Minutes

Jan 24th minutes- approved

Jan 29th minutes- approved

Jan 31st minutes- approved with the edit of Freeman Bridge proposal being between 1.2 and 1.4 (not 1.6) million dollars

3. Timeline of Meetings

Selectboard informational session on March 17th at the Newton School starting around 11:30.

Candidates in contested races will have an opportunity to discuss their candidacy. Andrew Silovich has rescinded his candidacy.

March 2nd official meeting will be at 10 at the Town House with Zoom capabilities. David Grant will moderate. Ballots can be filled out in person on March 5th from 7am-7pm or mailed in as long as they arrive at the Town Office by March 5th.

4. Highway Updates

The road crew would like to move forward with a trade-in of the old truck for a newer one which could be in hand at the end of April. Jeff moves to approve the purchase, David seconds, all in favor.

Jeff moves that the selectboard sign the certificate of compliance for the state road and bridge standards- all in favor.

Freeman Bridge Updates

Ben Matthews is the river management engineer and spoke about the flood resistance of both proposed locations. H and H study by VTrans did not actually visit the site and their findings needed to be verified. Jeff met with FEMA and VTrans about the two options for how to move forward- engineer design or build design. No matter which one, the Town will be required to pay 12.5%. Due to the objections against moving the bridge to a new location, Freeman Bridge will be rebuilt on the current location. Jeff moves to hire an engineer to take over the Freeman Bridge project- all in favor.

Posting of roads will be postponed until February 28th.

5. Grant Updates

Emerald Ash Borer is potentially a real problem.

The Municipal Energy Resilience Project is moving forward with a blower test for the Town Garage.

6. Dog Licenses due April 1st

7. Town Office Update

5 proposals were submitted, and the Town Office Committee will be reaching out to the two firms with the strongest proposals. Curt is planning on scheduling interviews with both Merrimack Design Architects and Guillot Vivian Viehmann next week.

Board went into Executive Session from 7:34- 7:57. The Board moves to have Jeff contact PD Hardy regarding gathering additional information on a medical situation that may impact a road crew member's ability to work. John will be in contact with the road crew member with more information.

Board went into Executive Session from 8:25- 9:12.

Directed by the Town's attorney, the Board will work towards a negotiated settlement regarding the recent DRB appeal. David Mears will stay on as counsel for the DRB as necessary.

Meeting adjourned 9:14

Respectfully submitted,

Hannah Levinger