

Minutes of the Strafford Select Board
January 24, 2018

Members present: John Freitag, Acting Chair, Toni Pippy, Brian Johnson, Stephen Marx, and Kate Siepmann.

Also in attendance were Lisa Bragg, Town Clerk and Treasurer, Jon MacKinnon, Road Foreman, and Jennifer Brown, Member of the Fourth Estate

Members of the Public: Anne Peyton, Kip Lindsay, Paul Baldwin

1. Citizens' Concerns

Kip Lindsay and Anne Peyton came to clear up misconceptions about the Petition for Redetermination of value. John explained that the Select Board approved an appeal of the Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) because two properties included in the State's evaluation were not representative of property values in general. The appeal does not mean that anyone's property values change, nor will they be reappraised. If the appeal is upheld, the only effect would be a change in the Grand List, which would have a favorable effect on the tax rate. Paul Baldwin, representing the Masonic Lodge, reported that the Masons had missed a petition deadline for an article in the Town Warning. He asked that the Board approve a warned article requesting a 50% relief in taxes (about \$3,000) on the Masonic Hall in South Strafford. The final Warning has to be posted by February 4. The Board decided to postpone a decision on the matter until our Special Meeting on January 31, provided the Masons provide the text for the article at the time,

2. Town Highways

Jon MacKinnon reported that the road equipment is in generally good shape. There followed a lengthy discussion about establishing a system for rotating older equipment out of the fleet. Such a system has been previously established, but was not complete. The equipment is not going to last as long as the data shows in the "Town Equipment Replacement Schedules in Years," provided by the Vermont Local Roads, compiled by Eric Wells, Vermont Local Roads Communications & Research Manager. The relative benefits of leasing versus purchasing equipment in the future were also discussed. Newer equipment is highly dependent on computer-driven devices, that lead to costly repairs and maintenance that cannot be taken care of by the Town Crew. Toni asked for a complete accounting of repair bills from Sabil & Sons and JB International this year. Jon will provide.

3. Correspondence

The State Department of Taxes wrote to acknowledge our petition for a redetermination of values, promising a hearing with a District Advisor.

4. The minutes of the January 15 and 18 meetings were approved unanimously. No vote was taken on the January 10 minutes until Kate could determine if the proper draft was posted. [It was.]

5. General

The Board voted unanimously to approve the Liquor License from Coburn's Store.

Stephen Marx and Brian Johnson will represent our Board at the Thetford Select Board meeting on Monday, January 29 to settle the agreement about dividing the tax revenue from the Elizabeth Mine Solar Project.

It was moved, seconded, and approved to appoint Rocky Fuller to be the Administrator of the State Historic Preservation Grants for the Town House steeple project.

Toni led another thorough guided tour of the 2017 and 2018 budgets, ever more complete as final numbers keep coming in. We will adopt the Final Budget at our Special Meeting on January 31.

As Town Health Officer, Stephen Marx is planning to recruit volunteers, donations of money, labor, and equipment to clean up the former Coutermarsh property by June!

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15.

Faithfully submitted,
Kate Siepmann, Recording Secretary