

WISCASSET BOARD OF SELECTMEN,  
BOARD OF ASSESSORS, OVERSEERS OF THE POOR  
MARCH 18, 2014

Preliminary Minutes

Tape recorded meeting

Present: Vice Chair Judy Colby, Pam Dunning, Tim Merry, Chair Ed Polewarczyk, Jeff Slack and Interim Town Manager Don Gerrish

6:45 p.m.

**Pam Dunning moved to go into executive session regarding poverty abatement requests pursuant to the provisions of Title 36, §841(2) MRSA. Vote 5-0-0. Pam Dunning moved to come out of executive session at 6:50 p.m. Vote 5-0-0**

1. Call to Order

Chairman Ed Polewarczyk called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America

3. Approval of Treasurer's Warrant: March 11 and March 18, 2014

**Pam Dunning moved to approve the Treasurer's Warrant of March 11, 2014. Vote 5-0-0. Judy Colby moved to approve the Treasurer's Warrant of March 18, 2014. Vote 5-0-0.**

4. Approval of Minutes: March 4, 2014

**Judy Colby moved to approve the minutes of March 4, 2014. Vote 5-0-0.**

5. Special Presentations or Awards

A. Business Recognition Award for the Chewonki Foundation: Ed Polewarczyk presented the Business Recognition Award to the Chewonki Foundation, which he cited as a significant asset in the community, a major employer and a major taxpayer. He commented on the spirit in the classes and projects at Chewonki that attract families from across the country. Chewonki President Willard Morgan thanked the board for the award. He introduced his staff and noted that 2014 is the 100<sup>th</sup> summer the camp has been in operation. Chewonki hosts 1000 visits from families each year.

6. Public Comment

Bill Barnes expressed appreciation to the town for the support of the store he and his son operate, which he said is doing well. He said he was misquoted in the paper several weeks ago and did not support the open town meeting; he felt it was a slap in the face to the townspeople.

Ben Rines, Jr. asked how the selectmen could defy the townspeople by holding an open town meeting and not giving them an opportunity to vote by secret ballot on the annual town warrant. He said the open town meeting was a hardship for the elderly, veterans and working men and women. Tim Merry responded that the open town meeting was the purest form of democracy and gave the voters an

opportunity to debate the issues and ask questions. He said people felt uninformed when not being able to discuss items on the warrant.

In response to Constance Schumann's question, the chairman said that the legality of using paper ballots at an open town meeting would be confirmed; absentee ballots would be used only for the school and election of town officers.

Steve Mehrl said he was surprised to learn from the MMA memo that the method of voting could be determined any year by the selectmen. He asked if the vote could be postponed by a month in order to allow a longer timeline for budget discussions before a vote by secret ballot. Don Gerrish said if the date for the secret ballot were advanced a month, there would be no budget to operate the town beyond the June 30<sup>th</sup> deadline.

George Green, Norman Guidoboni, Jim Munson, Dan Sortwell and Bob Blagden also spoke in opposition to the open town meeting, citing lack of privacy, the inability of some townspeople to attend, historically a larger vote with absentee and secret ballots, and the fact that the people had voted in the past for a secret ballot.

Ed Polewarczyk said he voted in favor of the open town meeting because he has wondered if people understood what is being voted on. The selectmen have held public meetings to discuss the ballot, but attendance is sparse; only two people showed up for the last one. He said the open town meeting gives voters an opportunity to discuss and participate in decisions. Unless Wiscasset had a town charter, the decision on whether or not to hold an open town meeting rests with the selectmen.

## 7. Department Head or Committee Chair Report

A. Application for grant for Gardiner Pond project: Director of Parks and Recreation Todd Souza said the state has approved the \$5 million funding for the "Land for Maine's Future" grant. Applications are due March 28 and Souza asked the selectmen for approval to apply for the grant to purchase property for sale by the Nesbitt family. The 360-acre parcel in Wiscasset (162 acres) and Dresden (198 acres) would provide a public waterfront access to Gardiner Pond and recreational opportunities. The Kennebec Estuary Land Trust (KELT) is a potential partner for the Dresden portion and would support the project monetarily. Souza said his research shows that the parcel could produce more revenue for the town than the present tax revenue of \$3,676 being collected. The grant will be awarded mid-July and if the town receives the one-to-one matching grant, a town vote would be necessary to proceed with the project. KELT would assist in writing the grant and would contribute half the match. Restrooms, showers and a rental property are on the parcel. The grant includes protection of wetlands and wildlife habitat.

Don Gerrish explained that Land for Maine's Future is funded through a citizen-approved bond issue. If Wiscasset were approved for the grant, it would not have to pay back to LFMF the 50% of the cost of the property. He said although there may be concerns about the cost to the town, the opportunity to submit an application should not be ignored. There will be no obligation to accept the grant if it is awarded to the town.

There were comments from the public both in favor of and against the application although it was the consensus of the board that the application should be submitted. **Jeff Slack moved to authorize the**

**submittal of an application to the State of Maine Land for Maine's Future for the Gardiner Pond project. Vote 5-0-0.**

#### 8. Unfinished Business

A. American Legion Flag Project: Don Gerrish reported that CMP and Fairpoint had approved the American Legion's plan for installation of flags on 100 poles in town. The board had authorized \$500 for the increase in insurance from \$1 million to \$5 million. The flag holders and flags will be installed by the Fire Department, and a CMP representative will meet with Wiscasset to determine locations. The American Legion will raise funds for the flags (\$45 each) which will be flown from Memorial Day to Veteran's Day. Flag etiquette rules have been changed so that there will be no need to light the flags at night. **Judy Colby moved to authorize the Town Manager to sign the Pole Attachment Agreement for Miscellaneous Attachments. Vote 5-0-0.**

B. Budget Schedule: Don Gerrish proposed a schedule for budget review beginning with a draft budget to the selectmen at its April 15 meeting and workshops on April 19, 22, 24, and 29. Preliminary recommendations for each warrant article will be discussed on May 6 with additional workshops held if necessary. The budget warrants will be finalized on May 20 with recommendations from the selectmen and Budget Committee for each article. The Budget Committee is invited to all meetings, and meetings will be televised.

C. Set date for Open Town Meeting: **Pam Dunning moved to set May 31 as the date for the Open Town Meeting. Vote 4-1-0. Jeff Slack moved to hold the Open Town Meeting at the Community Center. Vote 4-1-0.** The meeting will begin at 9 a.m.

D. Voting Methodology at Open Town Meeting: Gerrish said voting with electronic devices, a method which has been used by Damariscotta and Newcastle, would be possible at town meeting for a cost of \$1020 for 300 devices. If more voters than devices are present, they would not be used. According to the Town Clerk the cost of the electronic devices would be less than the cost of paper ballots. A demonstration of the system will be given at the next meeting.

#### 9. New Business

A. Approval of policy for accepting payment for lien notices and foreclosures: Treasurer Shari Fredette asked the selectmen to review and approve a policy of accepting only bank checks, certified checks, money orders or cash in the last ten days before the end of the allowed time for payment for tax liens or tax lien foreclosure notices. If a check were accepted during that time and did not clear, the process for tax liens or foreclosures would have to be restarted. **Judy Colby moved to approve the foreclosure policy presented. Vote 5-0-0.**

#### 10. Town Manager's Report

A. Update on Town Manager search: Gerrish reported that the board will be interviewing five candidates on March 19 and 20. Second interviews of the two finalists will be conducted on April 16 or 17.

B. Signs: The State is responsible for putting up the "Blind Drive" sign that was knocked down. The State will, after a request from the School, be responsible for surveying the area on Route 218 for a

“School Bus” sign to determine if meets the criteria for such a sign. The State has been asked to expedite the process.

C. TIF approval: The State has approved the amendment to the TIF for Molnlycke.

11. Adjournment

**Judy Colby moved to adjourn. Vote 5-0-0.**