

WISCASSET BOARD OF SELECTMEN,
BOARD OF ASSESSORS AND OVERSEERS OF THE POOR
JANUARY 3, 2012

Preliminary Minutes

(tape recorded meeting)

Present: Chair Judy Colby, Bill Curtis, Pam Dunning, Vice Chair David Nichols, Ed Polewarczyk and Town Manager Laurie Smith

1. Call to Order

Chair Judy Colby 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: December 27, 2011 and January 3, 2012

Pam Dunning moved to approve the Treasurer's Warrant of December 27, 2011. Vote 5-0-0. Pam Dunning moved to approve the Treasurer's Warrant of January 3, 2012. Vote 5-0-0.

4. Approval of Minutes: December 20, 2011

Ed Polewarczyk moved to adopt the minutes of December 20, 2011 as amended. Vote 5-0-0.

5. Special Presentations or Awards:

A. Business Recognition Award for David Stetson and Wiscasset Hardware dba Wiscasset Old General Store: Town Manager Laurie Smith gave a brief history of what originally was the Wiscasset Hardware and which had subsequently changed its line of merchandise and was renamed Wiscasset Old General Store. Judy Colby presented a plaque to David Stetson and the Stetson family in recognition of 63 years in business in Wiscasset, being a valuable member of the community and an important economic contributor to the Town of Wiscasset. Linda Stetson thanked the board for the award and said they looked forward to serving the Town of Wiscasset in the future.

B. Doug Herling of Central Maine Power to discuss the Montsweag Dam Project: Town Manager Laurie Smith said that the board had previously expressed interest in potential ownership of the dam and had requested maintenance records from CMP and an opportunity to discuss the project with CMP. Doug Herling said that 11 of the 12 compensation properties CMP was to transfer to land trusts as part of the agreement for the CMP transmission project had been turned over and only the Montsweag Brook property remained. He said CMP had no maintenance records for the dam and had not done any maintenance. He said CMP had never used the pump house and had not been able to get into it.

Ed Polewarczyk voiced his objection to the way DEP operates, removing property from the tax base and putting it into a trust, penalizing all taxpayers. His concern with the dam was that it was a source of water for fire protection for nearby property owners and the town would lose control if it did not own the dam property.

Herling said CMP would provide \$100,000 to whoever took over the property for expenses of the dam, although members of the board who had seen the dam said it seemed to be in good condition. Under the covenant, the land in question cannot be subdivided, and since Woolwich has no interest in owning its side of the dam, there should be no problem about division. Marking the boundary lines, a requirement of the covenant, was discussed as was access to the dam for the citizens of Wiscasset through Freedom Song Road.

Although the CMP representatives had hoped for action by the town within the next month or two, as other parties were interested in the property, the selectmen informed them that a town vote

was necessary. **David Nichols moved that the Board of Selectmen direct the Town Manager to write a letter of intent to CMP on obtaining the Montsweag Dam, to put the matter on the ballot for the next election and to recommend acquiring the property. Vote 5-0-0.**

6. Appointments - None

7. Public Comment on Non-agenda Items

George Green referred to a newspaper article about the difference in market value and assessed value on a property in Yarmouth, which had resulted in a tax rebate. He cautioned the board about the problems associated with assessing property in the current market, which may have no relation to the selling price.

In response to Richard Hanson's question on the board's action on tax liens, Laurie Smith explained that because of the lengthy foreclosure process, those properties that were committed in 2009 would be foreclosed on January 20, the next foreclosure date. The total amount owed to the town on the 36 properties (which were foreclosed previously for taxes due from 1999 through 2008) is \$343,764, the majority of which is owed by Mason Station. Including the payments due in October 2011 and April 2012, Mason Station owes approximately \$700,000, \$400,000 of which will be foreclosed for taxes due through 2009.

There are six properties in foreclosure with asbestos problems. Smith proposed that the board meet in an executive session with an attorney in the future with regard to the board's legal rights in relation to those properties. Eleven properties have set up a payment schedule; 23 have not.

The board discussed the foreclosure process and whether to take ownership of foreclosed properties, which would involve being responsible for maintenance until the property could be sold. This might not be advantageous in the current real estate market. The properties would also be removed from the tax rolls. If the town takes ownership, the town can either auction the property or put it out for bids.

8. Department Head or Committee Chair Report

A. Ervin Deck, Airport Manager with update on Airport FBO: David Stapp, the Fixed Base Operator at the airport, has closed his business and will no longer rent space at the airport. The Airport Committee recommends managing the airport without an FBO. Although the loss of rent and cost of maintaining the building would amount to approximately \$13,000 per year, some of the loss would be made up in fuel sales by cutting out the FBO as middleman. The mechanic will stay on, run the maintenance facility, and perform some services. Deck offered to take over some of the responsibilities. Renting the tiedowns can be done at a lower price than the FBO was charging and may as a result attract more business. Deck asked the board members for their recommendation, operating the airport without an FBO for six months on a trial basis or advertising for an FBO. Hiring summer help was also suggested and Deck was asked to provide a job description. There was a consensus for a two-prong approach: development of a business plan and a sending out a request for proposals.

9. Unfinished Business

A. Community Marquee Policy: Smith provided the board with the revised policy to which had been added that the marquee may be used for "Meetings for citizens that provide information to make educated decisions in the voting process." **Ed Polewarczyk moved to adopt the Community Marquee Policy as amended. Vote 5-0-0.**

10. New Business

A. Easement Deed for Public Safety Tower: **Pam Dunning moved that the Board of Selectmen authorize the Town Manager to sign the utility easement documents. Vote 5-0-0.**

B. Review of Budget Committee Recommendations: The Budget Committee recommended that the Superintendent of Schools' building not be allowed to sit empty for another year, that the Art Center be given to the Artists' Guild, with the stipulation that it be given back to the town when no longer needed, and that the Scout Hall be given to the scouts with the understanding that it be given back to the Town if no longer needed. **Bill Curtis moved to take the recommendation under advisement until budget time.** Judy Colby recommended putting the superintendent's office building up for sale to avoid liability as a rental property. She said if Wiscasset needed a superintendent's office in the future, there would be room in one of the schools. There was discussion on dividing the property in order to separate the three-bay garage from the house and the possible use of the property by the Ambulance Department with the necessary improvements. Smith said the latter suggestion could be proposed as part of the budget process. It would provide more space for the Fire Department but would increase utility costs as the ambulance vehicles needed a heated space. Colby recommended looking into the cost to move the ambulance service and to construct a new garage. According to Ed Polewarczyk, moving the ambulance department would be cost prohibitive and he advocated selling the property. **Vote 1-4-0.**

The Art Center is currently maintained by the Town. Constance Schumann, chair of the Budget Committee, said the Artists' Guild preferred owning the building, which would facilitate obtaining grants for renovations. There were questions about the scouts being able to maintain their building. There was a consensus that the Town Manager speak to both groups and report to the selectmen.

C. Retirement Plan Update on Money Purchase Pension Plan: Smith reported that some employees have joined the Maine State Retirement Plan as of January 1, 2012. The unions have voted to give up their current plan. Smith is working with the attorneys on the wording to terminate the current plan. The new retirement plan will not affect Social Security.

11. Town Manager's Report

A. Roof repair bid: Smith said no bids were received. Bid documents will be sent out again with different timing requirements.

B. Aluminum Ramp Bid: Selectmen Curtis and Smith had met regarding the specifications for the ramp bid and will be bringing those back to the board. The original bid was \$6,204; \$7,000 is in the budget.

C. January 27 meeting with the Coalition of Nuclear Communities: Polewarczyk plans to attend. He said Wiscasset should support the organization in its efforts to have federal funds released to towns to assist in storage of spent fuel rods or compensating towns for loss.

D. General Update: An abatement hearing will be held on January 10 at 6 p.m. followed by an executive session to discuss the Mason Station. A goal-setting workshop for the budget process will be held on January 24 at 6 p.m.

12. Other Business

Bill Curtis recommended making the *Town of Wiscasset Accomplishments* available to the press.

13. Adjournment

At 8:55 p.m., **Bill Curtis moved to adjourn the meeting. Vote 5-0-0.**