

WISCASSET SELECT BOARD,
ASSESSORS AND OVERSEERS OF THE POOR
MINUTES, OCTOBER 3, 2017

Tape recorded meeting

Present: Bob Blagden, Chair Judy Colby, Kathy Martin-Savage, Vice Chair Ben Rines, Jr., Jeff Slack and Town Manager Marian Anderson

The chair called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Approval of Treasurer's Warrants

a. Kathy Martin-Savage moved to approve the payroll warrants of September 22 and 29, 2017. Vote 5-0-0.

b. Kathy Martin-Savage moved to approve the accounts payable warrants of September 26 and October 3, 2017. Vote 5-0-0.

3. Approval of Minutes

a. Ben Rines, Jr., moved to approve the minutes of September 19, 2017. Vote 5-0-0.

4. Special Presentations or Awards – none

5. Committee Appointments

a. Jeff Slack moved to appoint Preston Dunning to the Budget Committee. Vote 5-0-0.

b. Ben Rines, Jr., moved to appoint Marian Anderson as Deputy Code Enforcement Officer and Alternate Plumbing Inspector. Vote 5-0-0.

6. Public Hearings

a. First Public Hearing for Repeal of Historic Preservation Ordinance: Ben Rines, Jr., moved to open the public hearing for the repeal of the Historic Preservation Ordinance. Vote 5-0-0.

John Reinhardt, chair of the Historic Preservation Commission, read a letter previously submitted to the Select Board and spoke in opposition to the repeal of the ordinance. He referred to the comprehensive plan, which has as its primary goal to preserve the historic heritage of the town. He said historic preservation is a powerful tool in sustaining local economy-creating jobs and generating capital. He asked for support for retaining and supporting the Wiscasset Historic Preservation Commission.

Ann Leslie said historic preservation is a cultural benefit and economic strategy, attracting people to Wiscasset. She asked for support for the Historic Preservation Ordinance and the commission.

Judy Flanagan said she would not vote to keep this ordinance but was not opposed to preserving history and recommended starting over with a new ordinance.

Brad Sevald said he had mixed feelings after hearing about bad experiences but felt an ordinance was important to offer more advice and encouragement to current property owners.

Susan Blagden said the most distressing thing during her service on the Historic Preservation Commission was that the select board said everybody didn't like the commission, everyone was complaining, but no one had come to the commission with the complaints. She agreed that amendments were needed, and they had been submitted to the ORC but were dismissed by the select board.

In response to Susan Powers' question about the reason for getting rid of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Town Manager Marian Anderson said that because of the opposition to and support for the ordinance, putting the repeal on the warrant would bring the question back to the voters to determine if they wanted or did not want the ordinance.

Albert Konrath, Historic Preservation Commission member, said that Wiscasset was on the national registry of historic places and the commission was devised to protect that standing. He said that had there been a Historic Preservation Commission in the past overseeing the renovations of Haggett's Garage, the travesty of its being demolished by the MDOC would not occur.

Kim Dolce, who had applied to the HPC for a certificate of appropriateness said that the commission had bent over backwards to be accommodating. She said residents outside of the historic district should be as concerned as those living within the district because of the people in the historic district are paying an inordinate amount of taxes. She explained that the 253 taxpayers in the historic district represent 11.2% of all properties but pay 30.8% of the taxes. If the value of the properties in the historic district decreases, the rest of the tax payers will pick up the loss. The Historic Preservation Commission's purpose is to help buoy tax values.

In response to Ann Leslie's question why the ordinance could not be revised rather than repealed, the Town Manager said that the ordinance could be amended, but the board's decision was to place it on the warrant. Judy Colby said people had complained about the treatment they received from the Historic Preservation Commission, and the Town's attorney had recommended repealing the ordinance and starting over, reducing the size of the historic district and making it more user-friendly involving the Ordinance Review Committee, Planning Board and the Code Enforcement Officer.

Cordelia Oehmig, representing Historic New England, expressed support for the ordinance and the historic district. She added that the commission needed more time with the new ordinance, and she offered to help develop a package for new residents.

James Kochan said the Historic Preservation Commission, the Ordinance Review Committee and the Planning Board had recommended keeping the ordinance, which is a working document. If the ordinance is repealed, nothing will keep irreparable harm from being done to the district. The HPC was charged with revising the ordinance and changes were made, reviewed by the Ordinance Review Committee and submitted to the board where they were dismissed.

Kathy Martin-Savage, who was not on the board when the decision was made to place the repeal on the warrant, said there was no reason to think that the current ordinance could not be used to create a new one.

Several other speakers voiced opposition to repealing the ordinance, citing the ten years spent creating the ordinance, the lack of eligibility for federal grant money if repealed, the possibility of tax credits and the opportunity of delaying taxes on improvements for ten years. It was also suggested that if the ordinance were repealed, homeowners in the historic district could make changes to their properties which are not now allowed under the Historic Preservation ordinance, before a new ordinance is passed.

Kathy Martin-Savage moved to close the public hearing at 7:06 p.m.

b. Application for Special Amusement Permit-Wiscasset Speedway – Vanessa and Richard Jordan, owners: Ben Rines, Jr., moved to open the public hearing for a Special Amusement Permit. Vote 5-0-0. Vanessa Jordan expressed appreciation for the town's support. In response to a question about operating after 10 p.m., Jordan said that they try to end at 9:30 but they run past that hour only when delayed by bad weather. **Kathy Martin-Savage moved to come out of the public hearing. Vote 5-0-0. Jeff Slack moved to approve the application. Vote 5-0-0.**

7. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

Seaver Leslie, Public Advisory Downtown Committee and Citizens for Sensible Solutions, asked that DOT Commissioner Bernhardt and/or Governor LePage be invited to discuss a plan that will not destroy the economic validity of Wiscasset. He said removing storefront parking will have a severe negative impact on small businesses and the MDOT is aware of that. Dana Dow and Jeff Hamlin, advocates for Maine's small businesses, have introduced a bill to instruct Commissioner Bernhardt to cease moving ahead with Option 2 and seek a lower cost solution to Wiscasset's traffic problems. He said there was no need to eliminate parking and demolish Haggett's Garage.

Marian Anderson explained that the warrant article voted on by the town was worded by the petitioners to see if the voters would stop the changes to Option 2, not the project.

Erica Soule, owner of Rock Paper Scissors, said if the storefront parking is removed, her business could not survive and she encouraged the board to listen to the merchants, not the DOT who admitted that the plan would be detrimental to Wiscasset businesses.

Keith Oehmig, Wiscasset Bay Gallery, asked the board to stand with the businesses and said that he would have to consider moving if there was no parking within 200 yards of his business.

Bruce Marcus asked if the board had gone back to the DOT with the vote against the changes to Option 2 which would include the removal of federal funding. Anderson said the results of the vote were shared with MDOT. Marcus said he has been offered the right of first refusal to purchase the building housing his business, but he will not be able to exercise that if parking on Water Street is removed.

Kathy Martin-Savage said the MDOT's purpose is to move traffic and Wiscasset's is to take care of its citizens; it would be a travesty to take away parking when 50% of the merchants are thinking of relocating if there is no parking. She encouraged the public to attend the meeting with the DOT on Thursday, October 5.

Cordelia Oehmig, Wiscasset Bay Gallery; Bill Sutter; and Jenny Spaur also spoke in favor of retaining the parking.

Ben Rines, Jr., moved that the board does not support removing any downtown parking as it now exists. Jeff Slack said that in light of the motion, he would like to step down from the advisory committee. Bob Blagden said he never supported the project and removing the parking and demolishing Haggett's garage was wrong. Judy Colby said she supports the project and thinks the MDOT will not listen to the community, although she wishes they would. Kathy Martin-Savage said that everyone should write letters and call their representative and senator as parking elimination is not conceivable. **Vote 3-2-0 (Colby and Slack opposed).** Kathy Martin-Savage volunteered to be on the advisory committee. **Ben Rines, Jr., moved to see if the Commissioner or Governor would be willing to meet with us to discuss the issue. Vote 5-0-0.** The chair thanked Jeff Slack for his work on the committee.

9. Unfinished Business

a. Pier Sculpture Removal: Judy Colby said the Hesper sculpture at the pier was to be removed by October 1 but is still in place. Kathy Martin-Savage will take care of the issue.

b. Town Clock Update: Anderson said that the volunteer caretaker of the clock had provided photos of the condition of the building housing the clock and she has contacted engineering firms for an opinion on the structural soundness and cost to repair. Information and photos on the clock are on display in the meeting room. She expects a report from the engineer in time for the next meeting. In response to Bob Blagden's question, Anderson said the steeple belongs to the town. Arrangements will be made for Blagden to look at the clock.

10. New Business – none

11. Town Manager's Report

Anderson said the board had received correspondence from the following downtown businesses: Blythe House Antiques, Sylvan Gallery, Wiscasset Bay Gallery, Bruce Marcus, David Stetson, Michael Dunn Antiques, Debra Elizabeth, Matthew Robinson, James Beougher and Ted Talbert.

Anderson encouraged attendance at the MDOT meeting on Thursday.

Ordinance changes approved in June will be included in an updated ordinance book which will be available probably next week. Susan Blagden said the Historic Preservation Ordinance should be included in the book under Miscellaneous Ordinances.

Absentee ballots are available.

12 Adjournment

Ben Rines, Jr., moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:03 p.m. Vote 5-0-0.

