

WISCASSET SELECT BOARD,  
TAX ASSESSORS AND OVERSEERS OF THE POOR  
MAY 21, 2019

Preliminary Minutes

Present: Kim Andersson, Bob Blagden (arrived during the meeting), Chair Judy Colby, Kathy Martin-Savage, Vice Chair Ben Rines, Jr., and Interim Town Manager John O'Connell

Chair Judy Colby called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Public Hearing

**Ben Rines moved to go into a public hearing for the purpose of discussing the proposed increase in sewer rates. Vote 4-0-0.** Interim Town Manager John O'Connell said that sewer rates had not been increased for seven years and as a result the Wastewater Treatment Plant had fallen behind in state-mandated requirements. The WWTP is an enterprise account. The Department of Environmental Protection has issued a consent decree requiring the Town to finish projects, upgrade equipment and accounting into a standard format. Potential solutions include increasing sewer rates or borrowing from reserves or outside lenders. He explained the \$15,000 for contingency allowance which is 2.5% of revenues. The 2020 budget shows \$100,000 for depreciation, and \$61,000 per year in a sinking fund to replace the plant. An increase in sewer rates of 23% will be necessary to catch up on rate increases which did not occur over the past years. A 23% increase would result in a shortfall of \$150,000; a 35% increase would result in a shortfall of \$100,000, and a 56% increase would take care of the shortfall.

Pam Logan said water and sewer are bundled so customers who use water for watering lawns are paying an increased fee for sewer. She asked if ratepayers who used excessive water could get a separate meter for water for gardening, etc. so that the sewer bill would not be based on that use of water. She also asked why there was a lapse of seven years in sewer rate increases.

Kim Anderson said it was unfortunate that town had dropped the ball and it now had to fix it. She was in favor of a rate increase but not taking the shortfall from reserve.

Jason Putnam said it was time for people to conserve water. The rate increase would be the responsibility of the whole town and asked how much money would be required to replace the system.

John O'Connell said the wastewater treatment plant was an enterprise account and should not be the responsibility of all taxpayers.

In response to a question, Richard Gaeth, the WWTP manager said the storm water does not go into the wastewater plant. Going forward, Gaeth said that the town will be using Wright-Pierce and Chuck Applebee for assistance in applying for grants. He also said that the last upgrade of the plant was in 1992.

Judy Colby asked if a 56% increase in sewer rates would bring the plant up to par. Jim Crowley, a DEP water quality management employee and resident of Wiscasset, speaking as a resident only, said from his experience with treatment plants, the wastewater infrastructure appears to have been neglected for

many years. Funding the upkeep of the infrastructure is a long-term chronic problem. The treatment plant has reached and exceeded its useful life assuming it had been well maintained. The large increase in necessary fees is due to lack of maintenance in the past. He recommended looking into the future, as millions of dollars will be needed for the plant and treatment location as the current location is vulnerable to sea level increases. He recommended the Town pay attention to where it wants to be in the next 10, 20, or 30 years. He said the DEP's job is to protect the waters of the state. Richard Gaeth said that in addition to the repairs and upgrades, the possible future relocation of the facility should be considered, and the collection system needs to be upgraded as well.

Vernice Boyce said that there is a \$42,600 impact fee for this year only, but if budget stays the same, the board will have to come up with another \$42,600 next year.

Kim Dolce asked if the increases were anticipated for a year, two years, ten years. In response to her question, she was told that the increase would come from the ratepayers, not the taxpayers. Any shortfall would come from loans or grants. There are 811 ratepayers.

Bob Blagden said the town in the past has contributed to the pump station costs and upgrades with taxpayer money.

Judy Colby said eventually the subject will be on the warrant, but the board needed to do its due diligence to be fair to everyone and to see what avenues the board would need to take to get to the goal with no shortfall. Vernice Boyce said the budget would go up each year from this year's 56% increase.

Kim Dolce asked if there would be an increase in the budget the following year. She was told the increase would not go down, there would be no savings from expenditures as it would take two or three years to get the priorities taken care of. Rate payers have had a break with no increase for seven years.

John O'Connell said no grants are available now, but may be in six months; He said with increased maintenance, there may be fewer emergency repairs and the DEP may be more lenient if the town is following a program approved by the DEP.

The Town has been fined \$18,000-\$20,000 three times. Pam Logan asked why the system has not been maintained and now is in an emergency situation. Kim Andersson said the board had not been informed about the conditions and now with a new Treasurer and Wastewater Treatment Plant manager, the problems are being faced. Kathy Martin-Savage said the Town should look forward, not back, and the rate payers must accept that after no increases in seven years, they will now have to pay more

Treasurer Vernice Boyce said that with a 30% increase in sewer rates, an additional \$125,000 will be needed and next year \$167,000 will be needed. In addition, the Town's cash flow will be affected. She said this is not a one-time fix. If there is a shortfall this year, it will be larger next year. Judy Colby suggested a 30% increase this year and that the board revisit the situation next year.

Richard Gaeth said if the Town receives grant money, it will be for a study on the collection system, not repairs to the pump station which would be millions of dollars. In response to a question, he said water going into the river was pure enough. He said that DEP fines in the future if nothing is done will be significantly higher.

Kim Andersson said it would be cheaper to borrow than to take money from investments which are doing well.

**Ben Rines moved to come out of the public hearing at 6:37. Vote 5-0-0.**

Richard Gaeth said an increase in rates would have to be approved before the next billing cycle at the end of the month.

**Kim Andersson moved to authorize a 30% increase in user fees for the Wastewater Treatment Plant with the understanding that we will increase it to an amount which will leave us with a zero shortfall within three years and the difference during in the next three years will be raised in a way that will be the most economical for the town whether that is capital reserve drawdown or a loan.** Bob Blagden said taking the shortfall from next year's interest makes the most sense. **Vote 5-0-0.**

For the record, John O'Connell said he was not in favor of this course of action as not following protocol.

Inasmuch as the purpose of the public hearing was to afford the public the right to speak, it was decided to dispense with the rules and consider the motion under Other Business. **Ben Rines, Jr. moved to adjourn the public hearing. Vote 5-0-0.**

The regular meeting was called to order at 6:45 p.m.

**Ben Rines, Jr., moved to take Item 4 out of order. Vote 5-0-0.**

#### 4. Special Presentations or Awards

a. Town Report Dedication/In Memoriam Presentations: Ben Rines, Jr. read the dedication of the Town Report to Clara Dow Wentworth who "is a lady who has dedicated her life working to make life better for other people, not for the recognition of it, but because it was the right thing to do." The Town Report also recognized In Memoriam Roy Farmer and David Nichols, both of whom had served the Town in many ways and had passed away this year.

#### 2. Approval of Treasurer's Warrants

a. **Kathy Martin-Savage moved to approve the payroll warrants of May 10 and 17, 2019. Vote 5-0-0.**

b. **Kathy Martin-Savage moved to approve the accounts payable warrants of May 14 and 21, 2019. Vote 5-0-0.**

#### 3. Approval of Minutes

**Ben Rines, Jr., moved to approve the minutes of May 7, 2019 as amended. Vote 5-0-0.**

#### 5. Committee appointments

a. **Ben Rines, Jr., moved to approve the appointment of Pamela Logan to the Historic Preservation Commission. Vote 3-2-0 (Kathy Martin-Savage and Judy Colby opposed).**

**b. Ben Rines, Jr., moved to approve the appointment of Dan Sortwell to the Conservation Commission. Vote 5-0-0.**

#### 6. Public Hearings

a. To discuss and hear public opinion on all Annual Town Meeting warrant articles: **Ben Rines, Jr., moved to enter the public hearing. Vote 5-0-0.** John O’Connell read the articles on the warrant. Bob Blagden said Article 35 was misleading in light of the board’s decision during the meeting. He was advised that the ballots were already available and could not be changed. **Ben Rines, Jr., moved to close the public hearing. Vote 5-0-0.**

b. To discuss and hear public comment for the Special Referendum Town Meeting Warrant – expansion of septic system easement to Pam-Ann Chewonki, LLC: **Ben Rines, Jr. moved to go into public hearing. Vote 5-0-0.** John O’Connell said approval of the negotiations to compensate Chewonki Campground for noise interference from operations at the airport and extending the sewer would be on a separate ballot. An advisory will be given to pilots not to fly over the campground, although per the FAA this can not be mandated. **Ben Rines, Jr. moved to close the public hearing. Vote 5-0-0.**

#### 7. Public Comment

Ann Dill read a letter to the board regarding her use of the Wiscasset Community Center and urging the board to not close the center. She said the center was used by people of all ages and no other well-equipped facility was accessible because of lack of public transportation. She said the programs offered to seniors as well as to all ages were important and closing the center would impact the entire town. A copy of her letter is attached to the minutes.

Evan Kelsey, Pier Beers, said although his application was not on the agenda, he wanted to notify the board that the Police Chief had approved his pier vendor application, and that he had discussed with several members of the Planning Board whether site plan review would be necessary. He is waiting for a call from the health inspector. His application will be on the next agenda.

Kathy Martin-Savage said the board had never discussed closing the Rec Center. Kim Andersson said discussion of overtime at the center during the last meeting may have led to misunderstandings. The board had voted 4-1 to limit overtime and Andersson was not comfortable with the board slipping into the role of the director. She said the Town had lost several department managers recently for whatever reason, and it was not the select board’s place to micromanage departments. There was discussion regarding the board’s role in watching the budgets of the various departments. John O’Connell said he had been watching overtime, and short of an emergency, limiting overtime was not an efficient way of doing things. Judy Colby said she brought budget concerns to the Town Manager. Lisa Thompson, Director of Parks and Recreation, said she had spent only \$641 in overtime this year. She said she as well as the board had concerns about revenue and budget. She asked that concerns be discussed with her and not at meetings at which she is not present.

#### 8. Department Head or Committee Chair

a. Department Head Monthly Reports: Kim Andersson asked Chief Hesseltine to address the increase in recent crimes. Hesseltine said crime was up 150% and that level was consistent with much larger towns. He said the activity level has been high and both the County and State have been involved. He said

without consistent law enforcement due to lack of personnel, crime will come to Wiscasset. His overtime budget was \$12,000 per year and he has already spent \$27,000. He needs new full-time people in order to give consistent policing. He is planning to move to Wiscasset.

Kim Andersson asked that repairs of the Scout Hall be put on the agenda. She also asked if the properties that the Town has foreclosed were on the market. The Treasurer said she was waiting for the board's decision on mobile homes and will bring those properties to the board at the appropriate time. Andersson also asked that information on the changes in recycling be put on the town website.

## 9. Unfinished Business

a. FIX Marine Auto & Truck Business License: O'Connell said a complete application had been received. **Kim Andersson moved to approve the FIX Marine Auto and Truck Business License. Vote 5-0-0.**

## 10. New Business

a. Wiscasset Art Walk Information – Lucia Droby: Droby distributed information on the Art Walk and listed planned attractions such as musicians, guest artists, participating shops, galleries and restaurants who will be participating. Middle Street will be turned into a bistro space, and community groups will set up tables on the sidewalk. A new feature this year is a farm stand. Route 1 construction schedules will work around the Art Walk. She asked if a horizontal banner could be put on the railings and was given permission to do so.

b. Central Maine Pole Permit – Brown Road: **Judy Colby moved to approve the Pole Permit. Vote 5-0-0.**

c. New Business Licenses: Midcoast Craft and Maine Life Apparel: **Judy Colby moved to approve the business licenses of Midcoast Craft and Maine Life Apparel. Vote 5-0-0.**

d. Monthly Financials

- Department Year to date expense report
- H.M.Pason Statement of Accounts

e. Pier Vendor Permits

- Claudia Sortwell, Wiscasset Farmer's Market: A map showing the 10' x 10' spaces in the parking lot of the recreational pier was given to the board. The proposed farmer's market will be open on Thursdays from 3 to 6 p.m. from June 6 through September 26. Up to seven vendors will sell locally produced food and will comply with the farmer's market law. Sortwell said signs will be posted to limit parking where the vendors will have their kiosks on the days the market will be open. The applicant had the approval of the Waterfront Committee. **Kim Andersson moved to approve the Pier Vendors License of Claudia Sortwell for Wiscasset Farmer's Market. No fee will be charged. Vote 5-0-0.**
- Nick Heaberlin, Maine Life Apparel: The annual pier vendor application is for Maine-made apparel – hats, shirts, pants, etc. The annual permit fee is \$800. **Kim Andersson moved to approve the pier vendor application of Nick Heaberlin, Life Apparel. Vote 5-0-0.**

## 11. Town Manager's Report

- a. Lobstaholic Apparel Pier Vendor Permit Update: An error was corrected; **Kathy Martin-Savage moved to approve the business license of Mark Brewer. Vote 5-0-0.**
- b. Fourth of July Parade Committee update: There are eight volunteers.
- c. Sunken Garden Update: The garden will operate as it is this summer and the subject of the shed will be looked at in the fall.
- d. Brownfields Cleanup Grant Interviews: Ransom and Wood Co. were interviewed, and strengths and weaknesses will be evaluated before a recommendation is made. The DEP and EPA will be involved, although the decision will be made by the Town.
- e. MDOT Project Update: According to Ernie Martin, DOT, the State will provide eight benches, and trash receptacles, and three planters will be provided on each side of the street. There was a complaint from a woman in the audience about the construction noise at night. O'Connell will refer the woman's name to the DOT liaison person in town.
- f. Union Negotiations Update: A date will be set for negotiations with the police and attorney.
- g. Lincoln County Tax Assessment: The Lincoln County tax assessment is \$624,975.37.
- h. Pump Station Receptacle quote: Of the three contractors who had responded with a quote, Richard Gaeth had recommended Stevens Electric & Pump Service, Inc. to upgrade #16 Sewer Pumping Station at a cost of \$5,250.39. Ben Rines, Jr., questioned why the bids were not opened at the meeting for board approval per policy. O'Connell said the pump was not working and there were time constraints. **Ben Rines, Jr., moved to approve the bid of Stevens for \$5,250.39. Vote 5-0-0.**
- i. Disposal of Town Property – Mooring Blocks: There have been inquiries about purchasing the mooring blocks at the dump. Bob Blagden said they should go out to bid.
- j. National EMS Week: There will be some celebrations during the week.
- k. Restoration Resources. Bill Gemmell had suggested that a display cabinet be made for the Hesper and Luther Little artifacts and perhaps located on the waterfront. O'Connell will follow up with him.

## 12. Other Board Business

**Ben Rines, Jr., moved to authorize a 30% increase in user fees for the Wastewater Treatment Plant effective June 1, with the understanding that we will increase it to an amount which will leave us with a zero shortfall within three years and the difference during in the next three years will be raised in a way that will be the most economical for the town whether that is capital reserve drawdown or a loan. Vote 5-0-0.**

## 13. Adjournment

**Kathy Martin Savage moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. Vote 5-0-0.**