

WISCASSET SELECT BOARD,
TAX ASSESSORS AND OVERSEERS OF THE POOR
JANUARY 5, 2021

Present: Kim Andersson, Chair Pam Dunning, Vice Chair Kathy Martin-Savage, Jeff Slack, Sarah Whitfield, and Town Manager Dennis Simmons

Chair Pam Dunning called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

1. Approval of Treasurer's Warrants

Kathy Martin-Savage moved to approve the payroll warrants of December 18, 24, and 31, 2020. Vote 5-0-0.

Kathy Martin-Savage moved to approve the accounts payable warrants of December 23 and December 29, 2020, and January 5, 2021. Vote 5-0-0.

2. Approval of Minutes

Kathy Martin-Savage moved to approve the minutes as amended. Vote 5-0-0.

3. Special Presentations and Awards – none

4. Committee Appointments

Jeff Slack moved to approve the appointment of Timothy Merry and Stephen Wallace to the Budget Committee and the reappointment of Stephen Wallace to the Planning Board. Vote 5-0-0.

5. Public Hearings – None

6. Public Comment

Jason Putnam asked about the balance in the H.M.Payson account and was told it was over \$16 million.

7. Unfinished Business

a. Cenergy Update: William Pham reported that the PUC had ruled that solar projects could not be co-located as were the two projects originally planned at the airport, so one of the projects will be cancelled. The projected annual lease revenue for the two projects was \$56,000; but because of the ruling, the annual lease payment will be \$28,000. If the town will allow Cenergy to allow small subscribers, mostly residential, a higher value from the net energy billing credit could mitigate some of the lost lease revenue. By locating the Town meter at another location, the annual payment of \$28,000

could be increased to \$75,000. Dennis Simmons will provide board members with a spread sheet illustrating the change from two projects to one project at the airport.

Jeff Slack said the project had changed dramatically, and because it was so important it needs to be the only item on the agenda. It was the consensus of the board to postpone further discussion until it has had time to review the materials that will be distributed. A workshop with Cynergy will be scheduled when the board has had time to review materials and to formulate questions.

8. New Business

a. Warrant article request for June 2021 Town Meeting: Pam Dunning said the warrant article submitted to the board would create a committee of five residents to evaluate the financial impact to the town of discontinuing offering grades 9 through 12 and to tuition out the affected students to their school of choice. The committee would be made up of a selectman, a school board member and three members of the public. Pam Dunning said she thought it would be premature for the board to discuss the matter before the planned meeting with the School Committee. Sarah Whitfield said that according to the proposed committee handbook, a committee could be formed without a warrant article, but would require the select board's appointment. Kim Andersson said that it did not make sense for a committee to look at the impact of closing the high school, because the select board can't close the building, and the school board can't close it without permission from the Department of Education. She added that a committee of laymen would have to be educated to deal with legal issues, cost/benefit analyses, and impact on families, realtors, and development. Extensive discussion on the request by the board and the public attending the meeting via Zoom included the fact that the subject had been brought up many times in the past, that it was not the purview of the selectmen, that research would be necessary as would professional advice, that no decision should be made before meeting with the school board and that no decision should be made within the next four or five months because of the pandemic. Pam Dunning said the purpose of the meeting with the school board originally was to begin building bridges, to address challenges of the school board, and to start a dialogue, but now it will include a dialogue on the introduction of the warrant article. The Town Manager will send a brief agenda to Terry Woods before the meeting. Jeff Slack asked to be part of the group asking for the warrant article. **Kim Andersson moved to table the item until we can sit with the school board. Vote 4-1-0 (Slack opposed).**

b. Resignation – Donald Jones – Appearance of the Town Committee. **Kathy Martin-Savage moved to accept the resignation with regret and thanks for his 15 years hard work on behalf of the town. Vote 5-0-0.**

c. First National Wealth Management Proposal: Dennis Simmons said The First had suggested moving the town's accounts to The First. He added that the town has had a good relationship with the First. He recommended that the Advisory Committee meet and review both the proposal and past performance with H.M. Payson.

9. Town Manager's Report

Dennis Simmons reported that Sue Anderson had accepted the position of Tax Collector.

He also reported that he and the Police Chief have contacted the MDOT about seeing if the traffic lights can be switched to flashing during the winter months to facilitate cars and trucks moving up the hill in icy conditions without stopping for a red light.

Simmons said the report from Murray, Plumb and Murray on the Maine Yankee ISFSI assessment and taxation agreement had yet to be read. He will have information on the report at next meeting.

The Town Manager has been working to find a consultant to assist the board in making decisions going forward with the solar project.

Simmons attended a webinar by the Deputy Director of the Governor's Energy Office regarding a proposed Floating Offshore Wind Research Array and said he will watch developments closely as the offloading of electricity from the project could possibly come through Wiscasset, either at Maine Yankee or Mason Station.

Kim Andersson complimented the town manager, saying he was doing an amazing job researching and checking with other towns and airports on projects like those planned for Wiscasset.

10. Other Board Business

11. Adjournment

Jeff Slack moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 p.m. Vote 5-0-0.