

WISCASSET SELECTBOARD,
TAX ASSESSORS AND OVERSEERS OF THE POOR
MARCH 1, 2022, VIA ZOOM

Present: Kim Andersson, Pam Dunning, Terry Heller, Vice Chair Dusty Jones, Chair Sarah Whitfield, and Town Manager Dennis Simmons

Chair Sarah Whitfield called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

Town Manager Dennis Simmons asked that the rules be suspended to amend the agenda to rescind the February 1 vote on approval of harbor fees.

1. Approval of Treasurer's Warrants

a. **Pam Dunning moved to approve the payroll warrants of February 18 and February 25, 2022. Vote 5-0-0.**

b. **Pam Dunning moved to approve the accounts payable warrants of February 22 and March 1, 2022. Vote 5-0-0.**

2. Approval of Minutes

Terry Heller moved to approve the minutes of February 15, 2022, as amended. Vote 5-0-0.

3. Special Presentations or Awards – none

4. Committee Appointments – none

5. Public Hearings – none

6. Public Comment

Susan Blagden inquired about the status of the repairs to the façade of a building on Main Street. Town Manager Dennis Simmons reported the owner's engineers were working on possible solutions. Simmons has discussed the town's options with the town attorney and the board may have an executive session at the next meeting to discuss the matter.

7. Department Head or Committee Chair – none

8. Unfinished Business – none

9. New Business

- a. Donation for an Automatic External Defibrillator for the Wiscasset Community Center: **Pam Dunning moved to accept the donation of \$995 from the Wiscasset School Department for the purchase of an Automated External Defibrillator for the Wiscasset Community Center. Vote 5-0-0.**
- b. New Business License Application – Hilary Crowell, DBA The Cultivated Thread located at 227 Old Sheepscoot Road: **Terry Heller moved to approve the Business License Application for Hilary Crowell, DBA The Cultivated Thread located at 227 Old Sheepscoot Road. Vote 5-0-0.**
- c. Future meeting location discussion: Dennis Simmons said because a public hearing which requires a 15-day notice will take place at the next meeting, it was necessary to make the location decision before the current meeting, so the March 15 meeting is scheduled to be held via zoom. After a brief discussion, **Pam Dunning moved that the board authorize the Town Manager to use ARPA funds to purchase the equipment needed for the hybrid meetings of the board. Vote 4-0-1** (Andersson abstained). The April 1 meeting will be held at the town office meeting room.
- d. Correspondence: Terri Selby, 25 Harrison Lane (Wiscasset Speedway Noise Concern): There was no discussion.
- e. Alna ambulance contract: Simmons stressed the importance of building better relations with neighboring towns, and since Alna already uses Wiscasset schools and the community center, he asked that the board approve in concept the Alna ambulance contract before the Alna Town Meeting in March. **Terry Heller moved to ask the Town Manager to move forward with arrangements with Alna to provide EMS service. Vote 5-0-0.**
- f. Police Department Wages: Sarah Whitfield read a letter from Jonathan Barnes of the Wiscasset Police Department which is attached. Dennis Simmons said in the long term, if Wiscasset wants a police department and not just a training ground for other towns, it would be important to stay competitive. **Pam Dunning moved that the board authorize the Town Manager to sign the sidebar agreement to Article 18 - Wages to approve the \$4.00 per hour wage increase for the Police Department. Vote 5-0-0.**

10. Town Manager's Report

Dennis Simmons said he and Dusty Jones had met with Molly Ryan from Senator Collins' office regarding the Stranded Act which would provide resources to communities who are challenged by stranded nuclear waste. He said he was encouraged that the Stranded Act had received a hearing in the Senate Committee on February 9, 2022, which is the furthest the bill has gotten so far. Ed Polewarczyk noted that Maine Yankee is one of the largest taxpayers in the county and that nuclear waste has a lot of value. He said maybe the town shouldn't be in a rush to get rid of it.

Simmons said Maine Yankee's tax agreement expires in 2023 and negotiations are just beginning on a new agreement.

Simmons will meet on 3/4/2022 with Ransome regarding delay on the ash ponds at Mason Station. A meeting is scheduled for 3/2/2022 at Old Ferry Road on the stream crossing. Both meetings will be reported on at the next meeting.

11. Other Board Business

Terry Heller moved to rescind the vote to increase harbor fees. By ordinance, a public hearing is required to increase harbor fees which was not held. **Vote 3-0-1** (Andersson had left the meeting and Dunning abstained.)

12. Adjournment

Pam Dunning moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:34 p.m. Vote 4-0-0.

Letter from Jonathan Barnes

On behalf of the Wiscasset Police Association I wanted to convey our sincerest appreciation for the support we have received from the Town Manager as well as from the Select Board. The recent funds made available to town employees, to include the police department, showed we are appreciated and valued. We see the support we have and cannot say thank you enough. The work and research the Town Manager has put in to try to take care of our employees does not go without notice.

For a little over three years we have worked to build a great working relationship both with the town officials and the town citizens. Under the leadership of Chief Hesseltine we have accomplished great things. We saw records numbers for calls of service and arrests last year and led all municipalities by staggering amounts. Despite facing difficulties from Covid members of the police department pushed through and preserved. We have shown up day in and day out to ensure Wiscasset remains the Prettiest Little Village. The work we do behind the scenes accomplishes that. The support we receive from you all allows us to continue in our success.

Recently law enforcement around the country, as well as in our state, have taken a hit. We have been portrayed in a negative light and taken criticism from every side. I can proudly say we have done everything in our power to remain a community policing focused department. There has been record numbers of officers retiring or simply leaving the field all together. Maine law enforcement is facing crippling numbers if something doesn't drastically change.

Routinely the Wiscasset Police Department has been and remains the lowest paid agency in Lincoln County and in the surrounding area. The current employees have always been willing to take less money than we could make elsewhere because we believe in the mission we are accomplishing here. Chief Hesseltine has always been a family first leader. He understands the

toll this career takes on law enforcement and their families. Having that in a leader is invaluable and has made the money to date a non-issue.

That being said several agencies in Lincoln County have given their police departments' significant raises to ensure longevity in their employees. For example if an officer from Wiscasset transferred to Waldoboro they would make over \$16,000.00 more annually. Having a pay scale like that takes tremendous amounts of stress off the officer and their family. It begins to outweigh all the positive reasons we choose to work in Wiscasset. We are not asking for an astronomical amount like is being seen elsewhere. We are simply asking for enough to keep us relevant. Retaining and attracting future quality officers is paramount to our success here.

We continue to believe in the job we are doing here. We are willing to remain with a lower pay than other agencies because we feel the support we have from the Town officials, citizens and our Chief outweighs the benefits of leaving. Receiving the proposed pay increase just solidifies in our minds we are making the correct choice in staying employed with the Town of Wiscasset. Your continued support and appreciation for what we do is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Jonathan Barnes
Wiscasset Police Department