

ALTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Minutes
June 1, 2020
Approved – June 8, 2020

Chairman R. Wentworth convened the meeting at 6:00 PM and Chief R. Heath led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and a Moment of Silence. The following staff members were present:

Reuben Wentworth, Chairman
Virgil MacDonald, Vice Chairman
Philip V. Wittmann, Selectman
Paul LaRochelle, Selectman
Bob Holt, Selectman
Elizabeth Dionne, Town Administrator

Agenda Approval

V. MacDonald made a motion to approve the agenda as submitted and seconded by P. Wittmann. Roll call vote:

B. Holt, yes	P. LaRochelle, yes	P. Wittmann, yes
V. MacDonald, yes	R. Wentworth, yes	

R. Wentworth announced:

Until further notice: To keep our members and staff safe, and to comply with RSA 91-A, the State of Emergency, and Governor's Orders, restrictions on public gatherings, The Town of Alton is moving from "in-person" meetings to "remote audio participation meetings". To remotely attend the meeting (audio only) visit our website: www.alton.nh.gov for telephone access and remote access instructions listed under News and Announcements on the home page or telephone the Selectmen's Office 603-875-2113 or 603-875-0229 between 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM for the Dial-in Code and Meeting ID for each Selectmen's Meeting. There continues to be no Public Input at this time. If you wish to have something read into the record, please call the Selectmen's Office at 603-875-2113 or 603-875-0229 or email the Selectmen at selectmen@alton.nh.gov, or mail a letter to the Board of Selectmen at PO Box 659, Alton, NH 03809. Your comments, questions or concerns will be read at the next available meeting and answered at that meeting or the next available meeting.

Emergency Management Update by R. Heath

R. Heath thanked the Board and community for their support during the pandemic. The EMT meetings continue to meet twice a week to evaluate and monitor the current practices and protocol as it relates to information received from the State level to best suit the Town level. The hope is to open our community on a tiered level in conjunction with State standards. Currently the Town Government is still closed to the public however business is conducted online, by telephone or by email. Preparations will need to be made to institute a phased opening for Town Government and outfit buildings with proper PPE measures during daytime hours. This along with plastic shield/windows in the areas that have public access. There is a need to mark distance lines for social distancing. All of these measures are being done cautiously with a lot of thought while keeping in mind everyone's safety. A decision was made today to cancel the July 4th Fireworks display, there will be no concerts held in the Bay until at least mid-July (July 11th weekend). Not everything will be cancelled at once; things will be considered over time as information is received. Old Home Week decisions have not been determined and things later into the season will take further consideration so that there may be things to look forward to moving ahead. The hope is to not lose the entire summer and its events. Further events will be considered moving into mid-July. This is all being done so that the Town is not promoting any large gatherings. The outdoor Parks and Recreation facilities will remain open to the public with appropriate signage for social distancing. There will be no lifeguards on duty this summer however the swimming areas will remain open and will be "use at your own risk". There are several virtual programs that will be offered by the Parks and Recreation Department to keep the community engaged. Further discussions will take place on Thursday at the EMT meeting. There was a jump in numbers today possibly as a result of Memorial Day. R. Wentworth noted that the decision on the Fireworks was necessary in order for the Town not to lose the deposit that was placed on the event. V. MacDonald questioned the possibility of having the Firework display during Old Home Week (unknown at this time). In addition, revenues need to be considered for cost savings. P. LaRochelle questioned the June 20th water ski show and concert; this will also need to be postponed. P. Wittmann mentioned other Boards/Committees holding their meetings. R. Heath elaborated.

Smaller Committees that want to meet in an outdoor venue may be done this would allow public assess. Concerns were voiced regarding the Planning Board meetings and meetings in general. These would be considered on a case by case basis. The concern with the Planning Board was notification timelines and cleaning up the backlogs. In order not to have miscommunication someone from Planning needs to put a request in place, in writing for future meetings. L. Dionne noted that she will be sending an email to all Boards and Committees to put their requests in writing, send it to the EMT personnel for review, consideration and approval. R. Wentworth questioned calling back the rest of the employees that are working remotely from home; this was not specifically discussed today and can be discussed on Thursday. The Town Clerk's office should be consulted for a solution that best suits their needs for a permanent solution, estimates need to be obtained. The upstairs offices could be shut off with any Welfare Clients met in the Heidke Room with the proper PPE measures taken. Preparations need to be considered and put in place for long term planning. It was noted that any Chairman of any Board/Commission/Committee should contact the EM Team regarding the need for holding a meeting whether it is an emergency or not. We need to begin the process of moving forward. R. Wentworth brought forward several events that have taken place since Memorial Day, with July 4th approaching he questioned if folks would be contacted and if they plan to be doing something then they need to know that they need to contact the EM Team prior to an event. The Robert's Cove July 4th parade will be discussed on Thursday. The pig roast at the Legion was discussed; it was in compliance and met the criteria. P. LaRochelle questioned who put the flags out in the cemeteries; it is unknown. P. Wittmann noted that we are still under a State of Emergency and questioned the additional pay going to First Responders; they are receiving these funds and it is taxable with no contribution to retirement. Many thanks was expressed. Parking at Mt. Major may still need additional signage and was requested within the letter sent to NH DOT. There was a parking issue at the end of Alton Mountain with enforcement action being taken; more signage is on order. L. Dionne sent an email to the Highway Manager regarding the parking area which will be on a future agenda for a possible expansion; information and ideas will be forth coming from the Highway Department Manager and would be a good idea. V. MacDonald feels that G. Young from the Conservation Commission should be involved with the discussion when it moves forward. The abutter needs to be involved as well.

Submission of Public Comments - Questions - Concerns

R. Wentworth read the following email received today into the record:

Good Afternoon!

I am writing to you today in the hopes that you will discuss this email at your meeting tonight and pass along your thoughts to us.

Each year, the Community Church of Alton requests to use the bandstand for outdoor Church service early on Sunday mornings during the summer months. This Sunday June 7th, we will be allowed to gather in the church building once again, carefully following the guidelines for religious gatherings. The CDC has also recommended that Faith based services take place in the out of doors as an even safer alternative to meeting in a church building. We are hoping that you will consider allowing us to once again host an early morning service at the Alton Bandstand. We believe we can do this safely, using ushers to pass through the crowd and make sure everyone is social distancing while listening to the message. We could cap the number of listeners in the immediate area. The service is also broadcast on a AM station to people who would like to listen in their cars while sitting by the bay. We can also ask people to bring their own lawn chairs so that no one is sitting at the public picnic tables. We have been in contact with the Parks Department and they have referred us to you for the decision on this matter. We have waited several weeks before bringing it to the attention of the selectmen because we wanted to make sure NH was well on its way with the Governor's 2.0 plan before asking to hold services there once again. So far it looks as though New Hampshire's flattening of the Covid curve is working and we are staying with a solidly low infection rate in Belknap County.

Thank you for your discussion of and decision on this matter.

Respectfully,

*Janel Pierson
Office Administrator
Community Church of Alton
info@ccoalton.com*

Discussion amongst the Board transpired. It was the consensus of the Board that the Church can hold their service while self-policing. This should be passed on by L. Dionne to bring to the EMT meeting on Thursday. They can hold off one more week.

Announcements

None

Appointments:

None

New Business:

1. Request for Sign - Trask Side Road & Fort Point Road

A request came in from Adelia & Charles Drake requesting a sign “Not a Thru Way” to be placed at the fork of Trask Side Road and Fort Point Road. The departments agreed that it would be appropriate. K. Roberts recommends a “Dead End” sign to be installed 10 feet from the intersection on the right side of the roadway. V. MacDonald mentioned the cost of the sign being paid for by the requestor. K. Roberts remotely joined the meeting noting that only certain specialty signs are paid for by the public; this is a regular public sign.

B. Holt made a motion to approve a “Dead End” sign, installed by the Highway Department on Trask Side Road and Fort Point Road as recommended by the Highway Manager and seconded by P. Wittmann. Adding the Town will pay for the sign. Roll call vote:

B. Holt, yes P. LaRochelle, yes P. Wittmann, yes
V. MacDonald, no R. Wentworth, yes

2. Water Department - Summer Water Credits

A letter from the C. Mitchell, Water Superintendent was submitted for potential Board approval regarding summer water credits. The credits are based upon when the line was turned on and made available to the users. It was noted that there is a system that needs to be operated 365 days of the year with costs involved for operating the system. The water rates are some of the lowest in the State. It was the consensus of the Board that the Water bills will go out and deny any credits. At this time, C. Mitchell remotely joined the meeting; she is fine with the decision the Board made but wanted the Board’s input as the overseers of the Department. The Board is in support.

V. MacDonald made a motion to send out the Summer Water bills and P. LaRochelle seconded. Roll call vote:

B. Holt, yes P. LaRochelle, yes P. Wittmann, yes
V. MacDonald, yes R. Wentworth, yes

3. Belknap County Conservation District - Stream Restoration Project

R. Wilder from the Conservation Commission remotely joined the meeting. The Conservation Commission has been working with the BCCD for a trout stream improvement project. Hurd Brook is a great choice and runs from Hidden Spring Road down to Camp Brookwood. There are three (3) property owners. In 2010, the BCCD found 30 brook trout in a sample on Town property. This is good habitat for Eastern Brook Trout. They are working with Trout Unlimited and Fish and Game placing trees in the brook to create a better fishing habitat. They are asking the Town for permission to do so on Town property other properties affected are in favor of the project. V. MacDonald offered his services if needed. B. Holt urged caution being familiar with a similar project in another Town who had major problems during the springtime with the river flow; this will be taken into consideration as well as a large buffer zone across Route 28.

R. Wentworth made a motion to approve the Belknap County Conservation District stream restoration project for the Hurd Brook habitat program and P. LaRochelle seconded. Roll call vote:

B. Holt, yes P. LaRochelle, yes P. Wittmann, yes
V. MacDonald, yes R. Wentworth, yes

Old Business:

1. Request for Sales & Solicitation License & Location Approval- Stage Road Farm

Previously requested was for L. Dionne, Town Administrator and J. Dever, Code Officer to look at the areas that were discussed for use allotting up to five (5) parking spaces in front of the Historical Gazebo which would be limited to Farmers Market for produce that is raised in their own gardens. If there are more than five (5) requested then a waiting list should be created. The five (5) spots delineated would be for future planning purposes. Currently, the request is for Steve Bell for the days and hours he requested. He is requesting a half-fee cost for the services at \$250. V. MacDonald differed with the spots. P. LaRochelle agreed with the five (5) spaces. This can be revisited at any time. B. Holt agrees with the request but has concerns that no insurance has been received; once approved it will be required.

B. Holt made a motion to approve the Farm Stand five (5) spots as discussed in front of the Historical Gazebo in the Bay area for the Farmers Market for two (2) days a week, Wednesday 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM and Saturday 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM for three (3) hours each at the ½ cost of \$250 for the year for produce and farm products. This will be for one (1) parking space and P. LaRochelle seconded. Roll call vote:

B. Holt, yes	P. LaRochelle, yes	P. Wittmann, yes
V. MacDonald, yes	R. Wentworth, yes	

2. East Side Drive - Map 33 Lot 36A - Collapsed Retaining Wall

P. LaRochelle feels that this has gone on for far too long. The owner of the property bought the property three (3) years ago and was not aware of any issues that the wall did not have any permitting. Due to the construction that took place, P. LaRochelle feels that it was a result of the work done by GMI while installing the abutting wall at Harmony Park by digging out behind said wall and leaving it over the course of time; feeling that the Town is responsible. The pictures tell the story! V. MacDonald feels the contractor is responsible. P. Wittmann mentioned the fact of no record of permitting; how can the Town be responsible. V. MacDonald stated the tax card shows a bad lean on the retaining wall dating back to 2007. It was dug out behind the collapsed wall. B. Holt voiced two (2) serious concerns with this. With all received information he feels that the Town is not really responsible to a degree; one of the pictures definitely shows that the subject wall was disturbed which is why it collapsed. B. Holt asked where that particular picture came from (unknown); we are responsible. R. Wentworth stated that a legal opinion was provided. Someone needs to correct this. At this time K. Roberts was remotely brought into the discussion. K. Roberts has no problem with fixing the wall and feels that GMI would not be responsible if someone took pictures in December and the wall was still standing. This happened over the winter and he does not want to point fingers at GMI as it was still standing when they left. Once the wall is fixed he does not want to take any further responsibility for the wall. The Highway crew is capable of reinstalling the wall the way it was constructed without guarantee. It should be replaced "in kind". R. Wentworth inquired about amending the current permit, noted was it would need to be done by the current landowner; the Wetlands Engineer would need to be consulted. P. LaRochelle asked who removed the vegetation (unknown) in the collapsed wall location. The only problem voiced by P. LaRochelle was he does not feel that the homeowner should pay for the permitting. K. Roberts can speak with GMI but does not know if they will take responsibility because it was still standing when they left. V. MacDonald stated that GMI should be responsible because they are the ones that did the work and did not secure the site for the winter which is in the contract. B. Holt agrees and feels that GMI is the responsible party. K. Roberts feels that a letter should come from the Selectmen to GMI telling them that they need to fix the wall and pull the permit. R. Wentworth thinks that a claim needs to be filed with GMI with their insurance company depending on the outcome. The Town Attorney's letter stated that the Town is responsible. A debate on a letter first then a possible filing against their insurance took place.

V. MacDonald made a motion that L. Dionne write a letter to GMI explaining the situation with the wall and the site changes made; showing them the pictures and B. Holt seconded for discussion.

Further discussion: The pictures submitted tonight should be provided to GMI so they can see them. The Selectmen should sign the letter and the shrubbery was not on Town property. B. Holt feels that the letter should be reviewed by the Town Attorney before it goes out.

R. Wentworth clarified the motion on the table:

V. MacDonald made a motion to have L. Dionne write a letter explaining the situation with the wall and the site changes made; showing them the pictures, signed by the Selectmen and P. LaRochelle seconded.

Further discussion: L. Dionne questioned the \$1,900 Wetlands fee. Fixing the wall correctly or “in kind” was debated. L. Dionne was asked to clarify the debated motion. V. MacDonald disagreed he had nothing regarding the permitting. B. Holt feels regardless GMI is responsible for fixing the wall. P. LaRochelle would like to amend by adding vegetation replacement.

The previous motions and seconds were rescinded.

V. MacDonald made a motion to have a letter sent to GMI, to replace/fix “in kind” the abutters collapsed wall due to the construction project at the Harmony Park location, replacing the vegetation. They should contact the property owner to remedy fixing the wall and P. LaRochelle seconded. Roll call vote:

B. Holt, yes P. LaRochelle, yes P. Wittmann, yes
V. MacDonald, yes R. Wentworth, yes

B. Holt still wants to know where the questioned picture came from. L. Dionne will provide him the information.

Selectmen Reports

P. LaRochelle had nothing to report.

P. Wittmann had nothing to report.

B. Holt had nothing to report.

V. MacDonald had nothing to report.

R. Wentworth thanked K. Roberts on a good job on Hayes Road and the other roads that are being worked on. P. LaRochelle agreed.

Town Administrator Report by L. Dionne

Assessing Department - Letter to DRA - Change of Revaluation Years

L. Dionne requested to remotely allow R. Jutton, Tax Assessor to join the meeting. A draft letter from the Assessor was provided to the Board for both him and the Board to sign if in agreement. He is requesting that the DRA to change the revaluation years from 5 and 0 to 7 and 2. We are due for a revaluation this year and are not prepared. R. Wentworth noted that nothing was put into the budget for this year by the previous Assessor. R. Jutton stumbled upon this and has been working with DRA. A full revaluation was done in 2017 and feels that this information will suffice for DRA. This will allow the Assessor another year to get the new software running which is not fully implemented. At this time, R. Jutton joined the meeting. A statistical update was done in 2017 by T. Sargent, DRA considers this to be a partial update of the Town, as if the Town were coming to a statistical normalization of the equalization rate instead of a full market value revaluation. The work that was done in 2017 was a full revaluation of the Town and in 2021 a full revaluation will be done. In 2020, the Town is due to have a full revaluation however, nothing was budgeted and he was not aware this was to be done. With this request it will avoid the Town being brought to the Board of Tax and Land Appeals (BTLA) for not performing a full revaluation when it is supposed to be done. With what was done in 2017 it would reset the dates when a full revaluation would need to be done. The request is to ask the DRA with Board permission to re-review the 2017 work that was done by T. Sargent under RSA 75-8-a instead of RSA 75-8; difference being a partial revaluation opposed to a full market value revaluation. V. MacDonald brought forth concerns on valuations. R. Jutton offered to sit down and explain in detail. DRA is currently expecting the Town to perform a revaluation in 2020, which will not happen. The intent of this is to avoid this matter going before BTLA and get a full revaluation done under the years 7 and 2.

V. MacDonald made a motion to allow R. Jutton, Assessor to send the letter to DRA from the Board of Selectmen and the Assessor and B. Holt seconded. Roll call vote:

B. Holt, yes P. LaRochelle, yes P. Wittmann, yes

V. MacDonald, yes R. Wentworth, yes

Assessing Department - Revaluation Vendor

Currently we have a vendor who provides the services for performing a revaluation. L. Dionne recommends using Whitney Consulting.

No audio on the discussion.

R. Jutton feels that Whitney Consulting would be the winning bidder. The Whitney contract is for the cyclical and lists portion of the revaluation and are not contracted to do the data analysis for the resetting of the values. This should go out for a RFP. The consensus of the Board is to send it out for a RFP.

Tax Information - Suncook Valley Solar Project

R. Jutton remained remotely on the line. A chart was provided from the Assessor. L. Dionne looked at the Planning Department records for the Suncook Valley Solar project; 138 acres was added into the chart to recalculate. The current use taxes would be \$194.22 the regular taxes would be about \$3,500 Ad Valorem and the PILOT value would be \$10,000; all are per year. B. Holt questioned the land being taken out of current use and asked what the penalty would be; 10% of the market value of the land at the time of disqualification which currently would be approximately 27K +/- (one-time fee). This would show the proportion, depending on how much of the land would be taken.

Non-Profit Appropriation Request

A sample of a request from one of the approved appropriation requests was provided. The Finance Manager asked if the Board wanted to pay these requests, hold off until the end of the year or not pay them at all. V. MacDonald feels that we have to pay them as the people of the Town voted for them to receive the funding by Warrant Article. L. Dionne agrees. L. Dionne hopes that these will eventually go into the debt service budget so that the Selectmen has more control. This can be paid and have until the end of December to pay. R. Wentworth would like to wait until the end of the second/third quarter. Board members voiced their concerns. It was the consensus of the Board to hold off until July 15th. We do not notify them, they have to request their money.

2020 Budget Proposal

June 1st is when L. Dionne sends out an annual email to the Departments to remind them to start preparing for budget season. According to the Employee Manual, the next meeting is when the Board needs to set the Merit/COLA percentages and Oil and Propane is being looked into. V. MacDonald asked about working and combining with the school for better rates. L. Dionne is requesting that the Board not set a Cap on the department budgets and let them do their jobs and come in with the best budget they can. The Board was in agreement.

Castleberry Fairs - Approved Special Event Permit

The permit was already approved and paid for. It was decided at the EMT meeting to cancel the event. An email was sent to Terry Mullen informing her. The Board was in agreement to either refund the money or carry the money over to next year. The Board was in agreement to either, it can be her decision.

Approval of Minutes

May 11, 2020 - Regular

P. LaRochelle made a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Session, May 11, 2020 as presented and P. Wittmann seconded. Roll call vote:

B. Holt, yes P. LaRochelle, yes P. Wittmann, yes
V. MacDonald, excused R. Wentworth, yes

May 14, 2020 - Workshop

P. Wittmann made a motion to approve the minutes of the Workshop Session, May 14, 2020 as presented and B. Holt seconded. Roll call vote:

B. Holt, yes	P. LaRochelle, yes	P. Wittmann, yes
V. MacDonald, yes	R. Wentworth, yes	

May 14, 2020 - Non-Public

B. Holt made a motion to approve the minutes of the Non-Public Session, May 14, 2020 releasing none and P. Wittmann seconded. Roll call vote:

B. Holt, yes	P. LaRochelle, yes	P. Wittmann, yes
V. MacDonald, yes	R. Wentworth, yes	

May 18, 2020 - Regular

V. MacDonald made a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Session, May 18, 2020 as presented and P. LaRochelle seconded. Roll call vote:

B. Holt, yes	P. LaRochelle, yes	P. Wittmann, yes
V. MacDonald, yes	R. Wentworth, yes	

May 18, 2020 - Non-Public

V. MacDonald made a motion to approve the minutes of the Non-Public Session, May 18, 2020 releasing none and P. Wittmann seconded. Roll call vote:

B. Holt, yes	P. LaRochelle, yes	P. Wittmann, yes
V. MacDonald, yes	R. Wentworth, yes	

Consent Agenda Approval

R. Jutton, Tax Assessor remotely joined the meeting. V. MacDonald questioned the Land Use Change, Release Only item \$0. He explained it was only to release the liens and is a house keeping item. Discussion ensued. R. Jutton was excused from the meeting. V. MacDonald further questioned item #2 with L. Dionne commenting and explained.

At this time, the Board was informed that the audio experienced technical difficulties and was no longer recording therefore the meeting was required to be adjourned.

Adjournment

P. LaRochelle made a motion to adjourn at 8:19 PM and V. MacDonald seconded with all in favor of the motion.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary K. Jarvis

Mary K. Jarvis
Recording Secretary