

ALTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
Minutes  
November 14, 2023  
*(Approved December 12, 2023)*

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Chairman P. LaRochelle convened the meeting at 6:00 PM.

P. LaRochelle led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and a Moment of Silence. The following staff members were present:

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Paul LaRochelle, Chairman  
Brock Mitchell, Vice- Chairman  
Andrew Morse, Selectman, Excused  
Nicholas Buonopane, Selectman  
Richard Shea, Selectmen  
Ryan Heath, Town Administrator

Agenda Approval

N. Buonopane made a motion to approve the agenda as presented and R. Shea seconded with all in favor of the motion.

Announcements

- The Public Participation Policy applies to all Selectmen meetings. A copy of it is on the back of each agenda, posted outside this meeting room, and on our website.

Public Input ! (limited to 3 minutes per person on agenda items only)

None

Appointments

Donna Richardson - Town Departments Disputes

D. Richardson approached the table. She asked what the Town was going to do to rectify this problem. R. Heath stated that there was a new survey that was done on the other property and it was recorded at Belknap Registry of Deeds. It shows that they own the property that is at the center of this problem. This brings up the problem that was discussed before where Barry Engineering testified before the Zoning Board that they were continuous lots. You had an engineering company saying that they were continuous lots and now you have a surveying company saying the same thing. D. Richardson stated that what she was about to say is not meant to be disrespectful. The Board has had the information in front of them since August. There was nothing she could do until this appointment before the Board tonight. Now that someone gets a new document, you get to sit on your hands again. It's not right. R. Heath stated that is not what happened. You were told exactly what you should do and that was filed and administrative appeal. D. Richardson stated that they should have been notified as abutters and that is not what happened. It created a ripple of events. R. Heath stated that you went down and filed with Zoning but withdrew your application. D. Richardson stated that she did not withdraw she postponed it. The survey in question was referenced in relation to the property lines. D. Richardson asked if she has to pay for the Town's mistake of not notifying all the abutters. R. Heath stated that it is not the Town's mistake. It clearly stated that the applicant is responsible for providing the abutter list. It was not the Town that provided that list it was Berry Engineering. D. Richardson stated that she cannot go to Berry Engineering and stated they made a mistake. R. Heath stated that she was told what to do, go to the Zoning Board and file an appeal. D. Richardson stated that she still has not received in writing anything from the Town's Legal Counsel on what to do. R. Heath stated that she would not receive anything in writing. They are not her attorney. R. Heath stated that the Town Attorney provides advice and counsel to this Board. D. Richardson asked if she will ever receive in writing what she is to do. R. Shea stated that the minutes from tonight's meeting will be recorded and asked if she would accept that. D. Richardson stated that she would not. According to her attorney that until the Town's attorney takes a stand and cites some case law that hold the Town's position then the Town doesn't have a position. Case law in this instance supports her side. She stated that this is her fifth time coming to the Board which doesn't look good for the Town. She still can't do anything because the Town has not put in writing what their stand is or what the actions should be. R. Heath stated that he has been on records five times that an administrative appeal needs to be done. This Board does not have the authority to challenge a Zoning Board decision. D. Richardson stated that this Board had the authority to act on everything that happened after that that are illegal. This Board has had every piece of evidence since August and nothing has been done. She went on to state everything the Town has not done. She should at least have a week as to whether this document is valid. She is being blindsided by that. R. Shea asked what she would view as a reasonable settlement. D. Richardson stated that absent the new document she would have the Town right as many wrongs as they can. She went on to list all of the things that could be done. Discussion ensued about what needs to happen to the property in question. R. Heath stated that this is the wrong venue to have this problem heard.

## New Business

### 1. DPW/Parks & Recreation - Jones Field Fence Extension

S. Kinmond, Public Works Director and C. Mitchell Water Superintendent approached the table. The memo is following up on an inspection that was done by Primex on Jones Field playground. One of the things they suggested be done was to extend the fence along the Merrymeeting river. They met with three different vendors. The Parks & Recreation Director indicated that she may have surplus fund at the end of the year. If that doesn't happen he is asking permission that the funds be withdrawn from the CRF.

B. Mitchell made a motion to 125 Fence, Inc. for \$4,690.00 to come from the Parks & Recreation operating budget or the Jones Field CRF and R. Shea seconded with all in favor of the motion.

### 2. Default Budget

R. Heath presented the Default Budget. This Default Budget does not contain any of the 10% approvals that were done mid-year, COLA, or merit increases. It includes long-term contract obligations, Election Law issues, or State Law. They went through each page and R. Heath highlighted the lines that did increase.

R. Shea made a motion to approve the Default Budget for 2024 as presented with a net increase of \$229,257 for a total of \$9,521,748 and N. Buonopane seconded with all in favor of the motion.

### 3. Preliminary Tax Rate

R. Heath stated that before them are DRA forms with the tax breakdown. The preliminary tax rate as of right now \$13.18. The overall increase in the tax rate is \$1.81. The municipal portion is \$.53 increase. It went from \$3.91 to \$4.44. The County portion went up \$.45. Local Education went up \$.34. State Education went up \$.49. He stated that some of the things that effect the tax rate are estimated revenues. He stated that last year they had an auction that totaled approximately \$190,000. They had to hold that by law. That amount does not carry over. It also included an ARPA payment of \$278,000. The State provided an additional \$165,700 for a Highway Block Grant. They also received another \$106,960 in Bridge Aid. Just shy of 1 million dollars to offset. He reference some of the tax rates from previous years. He explained buying the tax rate down and why it is not a good idea. P. LaRochelle stated that he didn't realize that in 2004 it was almost \$17.00.

R. Shea made a motion to approve the 2023 tax rate in the amount of \$13.18 and B. Mitchell seconded with all in favor of the motion.

R. Heath stated that he missed the Water Default Budget and would like to address it.

R. Shea made a motion to approve the Water Default Budget for 2024 in the amount of \$538,475 and N. Buonopane seconded with all in favor of the motion.

## Old Business

### 1. Prosecutors 2024 Contract

R. Heath stated that this is the renewal for the Prosecutor's Contract the was presented in a previous meeting. He explained the increase in the contract and the increase in work. It was a little over \$4,000 a year increase and brings it to an even \$5,250 a year.

B. Mitchell made a motion to accept the Prosecutor's contract with the increase and R. Shea seconded with all in favor of the motion.

## Selectmen Reports

R. Shea stated that the Hazardous Waste operations continue smoothly. The Budget Committee has met.

N. Buonopane had nothing to report.

B. Mitchell had nothing to report.

P. LaRochelle had nothing to report.

**Town Administrator Report**

R. Heath stated that the first thing is informational. It is a memo from J. Collins, Tax Collector/Town Clerk. During her presentation the Board approve the purchase of a new voting machine and printer. At that time the printer had not been approved from the State. It did not change the approved amount at all.

It is the consensus of the Board to move forward.

R. Heath stated that he received an email from the Public Works Director. He was approach by the Dirt Doctors to haul off excess wood chips. We are over run with them right now.

It is the consensus of the Board to allow this.

R. Heath stated that on the table is the deed for the Freeze property that the Conservation Commission did a presentation on previously. It is the Mt. Bet project. They did a consensus when it was presented. They are asking the Town Administrator to sign the deed on behalf of the Town.

N. Buonopane made a motion to accept the Warranty Deed and allow the Town Administrator to sign on behalf of the Board and R. Shea seconded with all in favor of the motion.

R. Heath stated that the last thing that he had was the Ambulance Revolving Fund. There is a copy on the table. This does not go to the Budget Committee. The Fire Department recently had a meeting with Lakes Region Fire Dispatch. They increased their fees by a percentage. The increase is \$1,014.00.

P. LaRochelle made a motion to accept the increase of \$1,014.00 in the Ambulance Revolving Fund Budget and B. Mitchell seconded with all in favor of the motion.

**Approval of Minutes**

**October 10, 2023 - Public Session**

B. Mitchell made a motion to approve the minutes of October 10, 2023 Public Session and N. Buonopane seconded with all in favor of the motion.

**October 10, 2023 - Non-Public Session**

B. Mitchell made a motion to approve the minutes of October 10, 2023 Non-Public Session and and N. Buonopane seconded with all in favor of the motion.

**October 18, 2023 - Public Session**

B. Mitchell made a motion to approve the minutes of October 18, 2023 Public Session and marking everyone present except for P. LaRochelle and R. Shea seconded with all in favor of the motion.

**October 24, 2023 - Public Session**

B. Mitchell made a motion to approve the minutes of October 24, 2023 Public Session and R Shea seconded with all in favor of the motion.

**October 24, 2023 - Non-Public Session**

B. Mitchell made a motion to approve the minutes of October 24, 2023 Non-Public Session releasing none and N. Buonopane seconded with all in favor of the motion.

**Consent Agenda Approval**

R. Shea made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda for November 11, 2023 and N. Buonopane seconded with all in favor of the motion.

1. Water Department

Johnson, Diane	25 Pearson Road	Wrong read	Credit \$118.74 TO ACCOUNT
Francis, Daniel	90 Suncook Valley Road	Wrong read	Credit \$490.44 TO ACCOUNT

2. Building Department

Appointment, Pedro Avila, Code Enforcement Officer

3. Fire Department

Appointment, Deb Pendergast, Interim Fire Chief

4. Waiver of Liability

Private Road/STR, 15 Wentworth Way, Map 40 Lot 6, Existing 3 Bedroom Home

Discretionary Action on Requests for Appointments (No discussion, majority vote required to allow/not allow appointment)

None

Public Input II (limited to 5 minutes per person on any Governmental/Town Business)

L. Carr approached the table. He informed the Board that in this morning's paper there was an article about a court ruling in Meredith with Short Term Rentals. He asked what the Fire Department study cost. R. Shea stated that it was \$35,000.00. He asked if the Highway Department was still short employees. R. Heath stated that they do have one and are working on others. He asked about the Clean Water Solutions and if it was going to be addressed. R. Heath stated that there is nothing in the Ordinance.

L. French approached the table. She asked if the Swap Shop at the Transfer Station could be opened. The Board explained why it cannot be opened. She is going to do a Warrant Article.

B. Holt approached the table. He referenced the shortage of employees at the Highway and asked if there are any procedures. S. Kinmond explained some of the ways they have put it out to the public. He doesn't think the Town should have to have CDL licenses.

L. Carr approached the table again. He feels that his heritage is disappearing.

D. Richardson approached the table. She asked where the survey came from. R. Heath stated that it was brought into the Assessing Department. The minutes on the website are labeled incorrectly.

Non-Public Session

P. LaRochelle moved at 7:55 pm to enter into Nonpublic Session under RSA 91-A: 3, II, a (personnel matters) B. Mitchell seconded. Roll call vote:

P. LaRochelle - yes                      B. Mitchell - yes                      R. Shea - yes  
N. Buonopane III - yes                      N. Buonopane - Excused                      Roll call vote carried unanimously.

5-minute recess

At 8:00 pm Chairman LaRochelle convened the nonpublic session with the following people present:

P. LaRochelle, Chairman  
B Mitchell, Vice-chairman  
R. Shea, Selectmen

N. Buonopane III, Selectmen  
R. Heath, Town Administrator  
S. Kinmond, PWD  
C. Mitchell, APWD / Water Superintendent

P. LaRochelle moved at 10:41 pm to exit nonpublic session. B. Mitchell seconded. Roll call vote:

P. LaRochelle - yes                      B. Mitchell - yes                      R. Shea - yes  
N. Buonopane III - yes                      N. Buonopane - Excused                      Roll call vote carried unanimously.

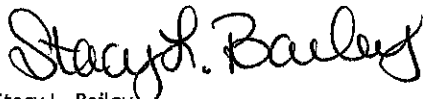
P. LaRochelle moved to 'not divulge' item two of the minutes because divulgence of the information likely would affect adversely the reputation of any person other than a member of this board or render the proposed action of the board ineffective. N. Buonopane seconded. Roll call vote:

P. LaRochelle - yes                      B. Mitchell - yes                      R. Shea - yes  
N. Buonopane III - yes                      N. Buonopane - Excused                      Roll call vote carried unanimously.

Adjournment

P. LaRochelle moved at 10:42 pm to adjourn. B. Mitchell seconded. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,



Stacy L. Bailey  
Recording Secretary