

ALTON BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Minutes
July 25, 2023
(Approved - August 22, 2023)

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
Nicholas Buonopane, Selectman
Richard Shea, Selectmen
Ryan Heath, Town Administrator

Agenda Approval

B. Mitchell made a motion to approve the agenda as presented and A. Morse 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 in this meeting room, and on our website.

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

A. Butler approached the table. She is here about the name change. She is opposed to the name change. Her grandparents lived on the road. Her grandfather was a doctor for the community. She feels it would be unfortunate to diminish their memory. It could take years for the electronic mapping programs to be updated.

M. Smart approached the table. He has owned property at 62 Butler Drive for about 12 years. He opposes the idea of changing the name of the road. He feels it would make it more difficult for people to find their house.

J. Forti approached the table. He has concerns about Sunset Lake dam. The information that they are getting is that the lake will be at winter level all of next year. He has concerns. He hands a list of questions to the Town Administrator for the State to answer.

Appointments

Jonathan Findon-Henry, NHDES - Sunset Lake Dam

J. Findon-Henry and C. Krautmann approached the table. They wanted to come and introduce themselves and let the Board know what is happening with the project. There will be a virtual information session on August 2 at 6:00 pm. Anyone who wants to be involved in the informational session can grab a business card. The summary of the project is that the State recognizes that Sunset Lake Dam has hydraulic issues and structural issues. It is scheduled for reconstruction. The project will last for approximately one year. It will mean that the lake level is drawn down to the winter level for the next summer season. It has been since the 1960's when it was last worked on by Fish and Game. There are some deficiencies that the State wants to take care of. R. Heath stated that this is informational only and they will not be open to taking questions.

New Business

1. Road Name Change - Butler Drive

B. Mitchell stated that after reading all the letters that were received, he would make a motion to not change the name and N. Buonopane seconded. P. LaRochelle stated that he feels the same way and it will be a problem with E911. He doesn't see the advantage to changing that portion and it should remain the same. The vote was called and all were in favor.

2. Changes to Employee Retirement 457b

R. Heath stated that this has nothing to do with the New Hampshire Retirement System. He stated that there have been some requests in the past and people have requested to utilize that money. They looked into what it would involve to change the plan to employee friendly plan that they can borrow from it. We can change the plan whenever the Board chooses. We have to answer a couple of questions for policy reasons. It would allow employees to borrow off it. It just wouldn't be an emergency plan. The only thing that needs a decision on is the loan purpose, amount, and length of time.

N. Buonopane made a motion to accept the modification of the 457b on section 3 to be a. all purposes, section 5 to be limited to 1, section 7 to not exceed 5 years and R. Shea seconded with all in favor of the motion.

N. Buonopane made a motion to rescind his motion and R. Shea rescinded his second with all in favor of the motion.

N. Buonopane made a motion to accept the modification of the 457b on section 3 to be a. all purposes, section 5 to be limited to 2, section 7 to not exceed 5 years and R. Shea seconded with all in favor of the motion.

3. Retention/ Retention Proposal

R. Heath stated that this is about the Board previously asking for hiring and retention proposals as far as wages go. This proposal is a 10% wage increase. He went to Finance for the numbers. As of right now, we are 9 positions down. Over the last three years Cost of Living has been based CPI. He has looked at the numbers and gone through them with Finance and that 10% would be covered for the rest of this year with the full-time open positions. B. Mitchell asked if this would allow the Town to hire people at a better rate. R. Heath stated that the only positions that it would not include would be ones that already have previous agreements or were just made adjustments. These are for the other positions that have not been adjusted across the board. It will also raise the minimum levels on the wage scale. It doesn't cost the Town any more money it just changing that scale so that we have the ability to hire at a higher rate. P. LaRochelle asked what R. Heath was thinking of for a higher rate. R. Heath stated that would be the 10%. R. Shea asked if there was information available about State averages from the Municipal Association or other organization. R. Heath stated that they have done a number of payroll studies. They have shown that we are deficient in those areas. N. Buonopane asked if what is being asked for is a 10% increase across the board also includes new hires with a more flexible scale to be able to hire them based on experience. R. Heath stated yeas. P. LaRochelle asked if the reason that we could fund this is because of the open positions. R. Heath stated yes. P. LaRochelle asked what if all of those positions were filled all of a sudden. R. Heath stated that they are still about 4 or 5% of about \$9,000,000.00. He wants to put out there for the tax payers that are out there and listening is our tax base isn't solely the Operating Budget. The Operating Budget is a big portion of it. R. Shea asked if this were to be done what would the time frame be and what would it have for an impact on the current planned increases. R. Heath stated that there are no planned increases right now. He stated that it would go into effect immediately. N. Buonopane asked if this will cover increases next year or will there be a Cost of Living on top of this. R. Heath stated that this recommendation wouldn't be a separate Cost of Living but a Merit increase would happen. P. LaRochelle would like any equipment to be held off unless it is a total necessity. He wants every department to know that they will be holding off on new equipment. B. Mitchell stated that they are going to have to have a real hard look at the Warrant Articles. R. Shea stated that it would be nice to know if fully staffed next year what kind of impact this would have on the bottom line and tax rate. R. Heath stated that he does have that number. He went to the Assessor for that answer. It would put the tax rate up to \$2.18 for the wage portion per thousand. Discussion ensued about the increases on different priced homes.

N. Buonopane made a motion that the departments that do not already have reclassifications or agreements for this year get 10% for new hires and existing employees and R. Shea seconded for discussion. He thought it was a 10% across the board meaning all current employees. N. Buonopane stated that there were departments that already had increases. N. Buonopane stated that before this is put to a vote he would like to recognize all Town employees for everything that transpired over the last week. The vote was called and 4 in favor and 1 abstention (BM).

Old Business

1. Insurance Buy Out Policy

R. Heath stated that this goes along with the discussions on trying to find different ways to entice employees or new hires. This one does not cost any more money. The current policy is that the Town has had an insurance buyout meaning that if you opt out of our health insurance plan you would get an end of the year check of \$3,000.00 if you were employed for the whole year. Every year now insurance goes up about 22%. He would like to break it out so employees get a buyout based on the plan that they are saving the Town. It would be effective January 1. The proposal would be for anyone who opts out of a family plan the buyout would be \$7,000.00. The employee would be required to produce a letter of coverage from their existing plans. The increase would be from \$3,000.00 to \$7,000.00 for a family plan, for to people it would be from \$3,000.00 to \$5,000.00 and a single plan would be the same.

P. LaRochelle made a motion to increase the benefits plan from a \$3,000.00 for a single plan, \$5,000.00 for a two person plan and \$7,000.00 for a family plan and R. Shea seconded with all in favor of the motion.

2. Prosecutor Contract

R. Heath stated that this is just advisory. The contract is good until January. The prosecutor gave us the courtesy of sending an email out to give us an overview that he is looking to make changes to his contract.

3. Consolidation of Non-Profit Warrant Articles

R. Heath stated that he spoke to legal and they had a very solid answer. The Board can choose to do whatever they want. It does not need to go to Town Meeting and didn't need to the last time. The Warrant Articles belong to the Selectmen and they put them on as they see fit as long as DRA approves.

Selectmen Reports

R. Shea stated that met with Hazardous Waste and the Budget Committee has not started meeting yet.

N. Buonopane stated that his first ZAC Committee meeting did not have a great turn out. The Planning Board is having some big stuff coming up and the Old Home Week Committee is getting very excited.

A. Morse stated that there is a CIP Meeting on the August 2.

B. Mitchell stated that he was not able to make the Milfoil meetings.

P. LaRochelle stated that he is totally flabbergasted as to how great this Town responded to this last storm that we had. They pulled together quickly. All of the departments worked around the clock. He cannot stress enough how happy he is to see what they were able to achieve in a short period of time.

Town Administrator Report

None

Approval of Minutes

June 27, 2023 Public Session

N. Buonopane made a motion to approve the minutes of June 27, 2023 Public Session and R. Shea seconded with all in favor of the motion.

June 27, 2023 Non-Public Session

N. Buonopane made a motion to approve the minutes of June 27, 2023 Non-Public releasing all and R. Shea seconded with all in favor of the motion.

July 11, 2023 Public Session

N. Buonopane made a motion to approve the minutes of July 11, 2023 and B. Mitchell seconded with all in favor of the motion.

Consent Agenda Approval

R. Shea made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda for July 25, 2023 as presented and A. Morse seconded with all in favor of the motion.

1. Land Use Items - approval

Timber Tax

Fitzpatrick; Map 12 Lots 86-90; Bear Pond Road; \$1,219.71
Kellar; Map 8 Lot 6-1; Youngtown Road; \$1,014.81

2. Water Department

Zelanakas, Elizabeth	Map 34- Lot 33-02 99 Mount Major Highway	Billing Error Acct: 107/120	Credit \$384.22 To Account
Beherrell, Brenda	Map 33 Lot 16-00 70 East Side Drive	Billing Error Acct: 1416/386	Credit \$50.00 To Account

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

T Parker Schuerman, Audubon Society - 83-acre Parcel Map 6 Lot 6

R. Heath stated that there was a parcel of land that was left by an estate. It was left to the Audubon Society, but they do not want to keep it. It will go to the Lakes Region Conservation Trust. There is a tax lien on the property and that transferred with the property. There is a law firm that expresses that the estate has taken care of any outstanding bills and costs. The estate should settle the tax lien before it transfers ownership.

N. Buonopane made a motion to allow the appointment.

N. Buonopane rescinded his motion.

B. Mitchell made a motion to deny the appointment and P. LaRochelle seconded with all in favor of the motion.

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

D. Fortier of Stockbridge Corner Road approached the table. He would like to address the new drag strip in front of his house created by the stop sign. It has been a place for people to test their 0-60 mph capabilities in their vehicles. It has been quite the nuisance waking up at 3:30 am. He feels that if people can't do the speed limit and not crash into each other that tax paying home owners should have to suffer due to that. He would like the Town to go back to the drawing board. He feels that the second stop sign is not a solution.

Non-Public Session

P. LaRochelle moved at 7:45 pm to enter into Nonpublic Session under RSA 91-A: 3, II, a (personnel matters). N. Buonopane seconded. Roll call vote:

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

5 Minute recess.

At 7:50 pm Chairman LaRochelle convened the nonpublic session with the following people present:

- P. LaRochelle, Chairman
- B Mitchell, Vice-chairman
- R. Shea, Selectmen
- A. Morse, Selectmen
- N. Buonopane III, Selectmen
- R. Heath, Town Administrator

P. LaRochelle moved at 8:39 pm to exit nonpublic session. N. Buonopane seconded. Roll call vote:

P. LaRochelle - yes B. Mitchell - yes R. Shea - yes
N. Buonopane III - yes A. Morse - yes 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. B. Mitchell seconded. Roll call vote:

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

Adjournment

B. Mitchell moved at 8:40 pm to adjourn. A. Morse seconded. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stacy L. Bailey